

WHY BRING STUDENTS TO THE THEATRE?  
AN EXPLORATION OF THE VALUE OF PROFESSIONAL THEATRE FOR CHILDREN

by

Lois Adamson

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts  
Graduate Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning  
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education  
University of Toronto

© Copyright by Lois Adamson (2011)

**WHY BRING STUDENTS TO THE THEATRE?  
AN EXPLORATION OF THE VALUE OF PROFESSIONAL THEATRE FOR  
CHILDREN**

**Master of Arts 2011**

**Lois Adamson**

**Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning  
University of Toronto**

**Abstract**

Experienced by thousands of children every year, professional theatre for young audiences (TYA) is still a relatively new and understudied phenomenon in Canada. The purpose of this research has been to learn why teachers bring their students to the theatre, specifically Young People's Theatre (YPT), and to determine how these connect to the perceptions of those who work at and with the theatre. In order to understand the complexities of the impetus to bring students to YPT, the limitations and successes teachers encounter in doing so, this ethnographic study was situated at the intersection of spatial and curriculum theories and has included surveys, interviews and participatory observation. This research provides greater understanding of the challenges and benefits of including theatre-going in one's educational repertoire. These new insights contribute to contemporary scholarship on aesthetic education and arts-based community building and provide opportunities for further research about teaching and learning through theatre.

## **Acknowledgements**

First and foremost, with special thanks to my research participants for all they have given to this project.

With deep thanks to my teacher and thesis supervisor, Kathleen Gallagher, for her constant guidance, patience and generosity throughout this process.

With thanks to Larry Swartz, my thesis committee member, for his significant contribution to this work, and thanks to my teachers at OISE, in particular Kathy Bickmore and Rod Michalko, for their support.

With thanks to my teachers in the Department of Drama at Queen's University, especially Judith Fisher, Natalie Rewa, and Jenn Stephenson, for encouraging me to continue learning.

With thanks to my associate teachers: Caroline Auray, Ann O'Brien, Richard Higgs and Margaret Murray, for allowing me to explore the pedagogical possibilities of Drama.

With thanks to my first and best teachers: my mother, Jean Wilson, and my grandmother, Lois Wilson, for their unending love and guidance.

## Table of Contents

### Chapter 1

Introduction .....	1
Do You Remember the First Play You Ever Saw? .....	1
This Research Project .....	3

### Chapter 2

Literature Review .....	8
An Overview of the History of Theatre and Education, and Specifically TYA, in the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada .....	9
The United Kingdom .....	9
The United States .....	12
Canada .....	17
A Review of Recent and Current Research in Drama Education and TYA in the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada .....	20
The Particular Value of this Research Project within the Existing Body of Literature .....	34

### Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework .....	36
Rationale .....	37
Mobility and Access .....	37
Opening Borders and Inviting Change .....	39
The Possibilities of Space within the Aesthetic .....	41

Human Constructions of Space .....	42
Encountering the Unfamiliar .....	44
Spatial Theory as it Intersects with Curriculum and Education .....	45
Experiential Education .....	45
Collaboration and Change .....	47
Active Engagement .....	48
Aesthetic Education, Imagination and the Practice of Hope .....	51
 Chapter 4	
Methodology .....	55
Arriving Here .....	56
Drama Education and Research Experience .....	56
Teaching and Learning .....	56
Getting Lost .....	57
Finding YPT .....	58
Ethnographic Research .....	60
Young People's Theatre .....	62
Research Methods .....	66
Recruitment and Surveys .....	67
Interviews .....	68
Participatory Observation .....	69
Rehearsals and performances. ....	69
Workshops. ....	70

The Drama School. ....	71
Other theatre(s). ....	71
Analysis .....	72
Validity .....	73
Methodological Interventions .....	74
Researcher Participation .....	74
Participating in the Drama School. ....	75
Broadening my participation. ....	77
Research Participant Anonymity .....	80
Recognition as protection. ....	81
Making a change. ....	82
Making a Contribution .....	82
Temporal Currency .....	82
Speaking Broadly .....	84
 Chapter 5	
Findings and Analysis .....	86
Theatre and (In)Accessibility: Beyond Cost and Funding .....	86
Financial. ....	86
Scheduling. ....	87
Educational worth. ....	87
Insular school culture and coming into the space. ....	88
Access to Theatre. ....	93

Inclusion and policing. ....	96
Storytelling. ....	101
YPT as Unique .....	103
Making Room for Change .....	104
New Audiences .....	106
Fluidity .....	108
Why TYA? .....	110
The Value of the Young Audience .....	112
The Educative Value of Theatre: An Extension and Interruption of School Pedagogy .....	116
Curriculum Connections .....	116
Connecting Curriculum to Pedagogy in Experiential Education .....	119
Theatre as Pedagogy: Storytelling and Dramaturgy .....	120
The Importance of Meeting in an Aesthetic Space .....	126
Authenticity and Professionalism .....	126
Immersion and Engagement .....	129
Lighting. ....	130
Possibility: Connecting the Real and the Imaginary .....	133
Q&As. ....	133
Tools of the Trade. ....	141
The Importance of Going to the Theatre: Disrupting Space .....	144
Encountering the Unfamiliar .....	154
Liveness .....	155
Actively Engaging .....	156

Surrendering Control .....	159
Privileging the Collective .....	161
Vulnerability .....	164
 Chapter 6	
Implications .....	171
Methodological Constraints and Openings .....	171
The Need for Students' Voices .....	173
The Value of Quantitative Research .....	173
The Value of Ethnographic Research .....	174
Benefitting my Research Participants .....	175
Making a Contribution .....	175
 References .....	 178



## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

One of the questions I asked all of my research participants in this project was whether they remembered their first theatre experience as an audience member and, if so, could tell me about it. Most people's faces immediately lit up at this question; they remembered the show exactly and were able to share with me specific details of their experience. Others replied that no, they did not, but after thinking about it for a moment, slowly, but surely, images, feelings and memories started to flood back with surprising clarity and intensity. Almost all of my participants, even those whose memories of the show itself were hazy, could recall the theatre at which they saw the performance, where, in particular, they were sitting, and how they felt in that moment; years later, memories of the space and those with whom they shared this experience remain strong.

I had not anticipated just how personal and moving this question would be. Truthfully, it was not until one of my participants, after sharing his experience with me, asked to know about my own, that I realized the intimacy of this question and its centrality to this study. It has become my favourite question to ask in interviews because by reminding us of both the immediate and lasting power of the theatrical experience, it has helped me and my research participants to come together and focus on the value of this particular research in drama education.

#### **Do You Remember the First Play You Ever Saw?**

Every year, my grandmother, my mother and I go to the Stratford Shakespeare Festival to see a play for my birthday. We have been going since the day I turned 10. I remember that day distinctly.

We went to see *Little Women* at the Avon Theatre. It was not just the play itself that I loved, but everything surrounding it: the whole day. My birthday is in June and this particular year, it was a really hot day. I wore a special white, button-up blouse. My hair was cut short and I wore it down. I remember the back of my legs sticking to the seat of the car on the way there. I remember feeling really excited as we drove the long roads through the warm, green farmland between Hamilton and Stratford.

I remember walking into the theatre and my grandma handing me my ticket, ripping it apart from my mom's and her own. I gave the ticket to the usher on the way into the theatre and she told us where we would find our seats. Walking in, I remember thinking how lucky we were to have gained entrance into this magical place. I remember sitting down and waiting for the play to begin. It was nice and cool in the theatre. I looked through my program. I examined the theatre around me, watching it fill up as people came in and took their seats. I noticed that there were not a lot of children there, which made me feel special, but also little out of place.

I watched the empty stage, waiting for something to happen. The lights came down and, at that moment, I took in and held my breath. I still feel that excitement whenever I go to see a play. During the show, I remember distinctly the feeling I had being nestled into the dark space of the theatre, sitting between my grandmother and my mother, surrounded by hundreds of strangers, all facing forward, and focused on the same place. I felt safe, but very nervous; captivated, but still in control. I remember that tension, that feeling of being held in between.

I knew and loved the story of *Little Women* well. My favourite character had always been Jo. She was so brave and smart; so unlike her family, in many ways. It was completely different to see it played out on stage. For one thing, having read the book and seen the movie, I had always purposefully skipped the part where Beth dies. Reading it, I had the sense something tragic

was going to happen, so I jumped ahead, unwilling to meet with such sadness. I remember watching the movie with my mom, but again, choosing to go to the washroom during that part, so as not to have to encounter her death. In the play, however, I was forced to witness it. I remember crying in the theatre. I felt so close to it. After the play, the lights came up and the actors came out on stage to bow. Everyone clapped. I felt so joyful, so alive. We then filed out of the theatre, a flood of people.

Every year, we see a different play. It is always a new experience, but surrounded with the same rituals. We always make a day of it. Afterward, we talk about the play all the way home: what we saw, what we loved, what we hated, what we thought. That is one of my favourite parts, because we always notice different things and bring to light elements of the production for each other that we otherwise would have missed. In speaking about the show, more and more layers of it appear and, in our conversation, our experience of it deepens.

### **This Research Project**

Reflecting on this experience with the understanding I now have about theatre and education, I realize what an impact it has had on me. It strongly connects to what Eisner (1976) asserts is the importance of supporting children's engagement with the arts:

We live at a time when we desperately need people who are sensitive, who are sympathetic, who can read the metaphorical qualities of life, who can see beneath the surface of experience. The arts have, I believe, an extremely important contribution to make in developing such human qualities... The arts in the lives of children will not guarantee the attainment of such ends, but I know of no human enterprise more centrally concerned with their realization. Art is, ultimately, not for art's sake; it is for the sake of us all. (p. 17)

The fact that my grandmother has made it possible for me to participate in theatre all my life has allowed me to see the theatre and the arts, not as luxuries, but as bare necessities. Early on, she really normalized theatre for me as part and parcel of being alive. It was, I think, one of the ways she taught me what it means to be human. In participating in theatre, children are allowed “the opportunity to examine the real significance of their shared knowledge... When students appreciate that culture [and knowledge] can be produced, through drama and other means, they can also see the power they have” (Doyle, 1993, p. 146). With this pedagogical approach, knowledge becomes supple and subject to both change and possibility.

My grandmother was one of my first teachers. I have been very lucky in my life to have been surrounded by wonderful educators like her, both at and outside of school. While I loved and respected these teachers for their kindness and intelligence, I recognize now that what was most important to me was the way in which they allowed me to have educative experiences by doing what Dewey (1938) argues is a “primary responsibility of educators” (p. 40), that is to “recognize in the concrete what surroundings are conducive to having experiences that lead to growth” (p. 40) and to utilize and expand these. Following Dewey (1938), my best teachers never directly told me the answers to my questions. Instead, they told me stories.

My parents exposed me to literature. My grandma provided me with entrance into the theatre. My French teachers gave me access to a whole new language. These teachers allowed me to take an active role in meaning-making. They valued my knowledge and imagination and demonstrated to me that, not only were they legitimate, but required. In order to understand language and literature, or to engage in theatre, though, I had to become comfortable with encountering something new, which is something I continue to have difficulty with. I had to gain confidence and learn to trust myself in the process of learning. In order to discern the multiplicity

of meanings that lay in the bodies of knowledge put before me, I had to develop these skills. My favourite teachers discovered that art, specifically theatre, was the best way for me to open up, the best way for me to learn. In realizing this about me, my teachers ensured that, above all else, I developed a “desire to go on learning” (Dewey, 1938, p. 48). By looking at my particular needs, they ensured that I had educative experiences and, rather than separating learning from life, as is often done in formal education, they helped me to see education as life itself and learning as what it means to be alive.

One dictionary definition of “to teach” is “to impart knowledge”. Others include “to make known”, “to share” or “to reveal”. To teach is to reveal what might be discovered, but not to tell, not to dictate. Teaching, then, is a pulling back of the curtains, as on a stage, to make known to the audience what lies behind them. Holding these curtains, my teachers opened me up to learning. In November, I saw Soulpepper’s production of *Death of a Salesman* at the Young Centre for the Performing Arts. The character of Willy Loman, feeling desperate about his relationship with his sons, shouts: “How should I teach them?” Not what, but “how”. In watching this scene, the importance of pedagogy hit me. Good teaching, like good theatre, is about showing, rather than telling. More often than not, it is not simply the content, but the experience itself that is of educative importance (Dewey, 1938). Curriculum and pedagogy, then, are not separate, but happily entangled in the process of teaching and learning.

For many people, going to see a play is a privilege, and one that not everyone experiences. Professional theatres, by and large, are foreign places of inaccess, especially for children. In one of my teaching placements last year, I was lucky enough to be one of the teacher supervisors on a trip to take the Grade 9 Drama class to Stratford to see a play. I was surprised that it was the first theatre-going experience for a number of the students. Many of them felt

nervous and did not know what to expect: “Is it like going to the movies?” they asked, “What should they wear? Would there be time to eat?” Sitting in this huge, professional theatre in front of an empty stage, they wondered what was going to happen. They were in completely unfamiliar territory.

After this experience, I felt frustrated, because so many of my students had never gained access to the world of theatre before. I was upset, because I noticed such a wonderful change in them after the performance. They were so talkative and open. They were full of questions about what we had shared together. I saw an incredible difference in how they performed in Drama as well, not only in the technical and aesthetic theatre they created, but also in the way they related to one another and to me. We came alive as a class. I thought about how unjust it is that the majority of our artistic and cultural locations are not made to embrace children. Art galleries, museums and theatres are built away from and above children. Reflecting on this teaching experience made me return to thinking about my own understanding of theatre, particularly about the potential power of formal education in making theatre accessible and valuable and the particular role of Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) therein.

I believe that watching a play is an incredible experience, because it is at once deeply personal and highly social. It allows you to retreat into your own heart while simultaneously entering into those of others. It invites you into a community, a special world that is at once real and imagined, at once solitary and collective. Hector, a character in my favourite play, Alan Bennett’s *The History Boys* (2004), articulates perfectly why I believe drama education to be fundamental to human experience:

The best moments... are when you come across something – a thought, a feeling, a way of looking at things – which you had thought special and particular to you. Now here it is,

set down by someone else, a person you have never met, someone even who is long dead.

And it is as if a hand has come out and taken yours. (p. 56)

This embodied connection of people reaching out, of hands holding hands, is what I feel when I participate in theatre. Eisner (2002) argues that the arts are “mind-altering devices” (p. 39) that help us to understand what it means to be human, not only cognitively, but affectively. Author Philip Pullman (as cited in Reason, 2010) asserts that for this reason and many others, experiencing theatre should be recognized as a basic human right: “Children need to go to the theatre... as much as they need food and drink. They need to read and listen to proper stories as much as they need to be loved (p. 15). Theatre brought me to life. I believe that, for many children, engagement in theatre is the key to this kind of awakening.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

Experienced by thousands of children every year, professional TYA, that is, theatre created and performed by professional adult artists for children and youth, is still a relatively new and understudied phenomenon, particularly in this country. Its history, though just over 100 years old worldwide and only about 75 years old in Canada, is diverse and complex, particularly with regard to its development in connection with education. TYA is a global happening and one that cannot be separated by geographic borders, but at the same time, it is shaped by particular spatial and political circumstances. Unfortunately, there is not space or time in this study for me to fully analyse the ways in which TYA, in a wide range of countries throughout the world, influences and in turn is affected by what is created in Canada.

For the purpose of this study, I have looked primarily at the general histories, current contexts, contemporary research trends and development of professional TYA in the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada. I then examined TYA in relation to drama education, particularly in Ontario, and lastly, I turned my attention to the country's leading TYA company, Young People's Theatre (or YPT), as this has been the site of this ethnographic study. This study is informed by, and complements, the existing body of knowledge on the subject of drama and education in Canada. I offer a review of the existing literature in the fields of drama and education and highlight the particular studies to which this research contributes.



## **An Overview of the History of Theatre and Education, and Specifically TYA, in the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada**

### **The United Kingdom**

In the United Kingdom, TYA began in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The first documented theatre performance that was explicitly geared toward young people was a 1904 production of J.M. Barrie's play "Peter Pan" (Swortzell, 1990, p. 114). In the early 1900s, many professional theatres provided programming for children, particularly family shows around the Christmas season, as well as matinees for school-aged children (p. 114). In 1924, the School Board in London provided subsidization for schoolchildren to see Shakespearean productions, as these could more easily be justified as educative (p. 115). World War II brought increased, though still unstable, government funding to professional theatre. With this renewed attitude toward the necessity of the arts in times of crisis, regional and national touring children's theatre companies were established, but they proved to be financially unsustainable (p. 116). Targeted and consistent government funding was not instated until 1966, when the Arts Council put forth a report that demonstrated the educative value of theatre and thus, the need for stable funding for touring children's theatre companies, curriculum-based productions and workshops at established adult theatres and, in particular, Theatre-in-Education (or TIE) programming (p. 117).

TIE programming was operated by actor-teachers who helped schools initiate or develop theatre projects within schools. Peter Slade, and later Brian Way, were immensely influential in the growth of TIE in the UK in the 1950s and 1960s (Swortzell, 1990; Hornbrook, 1998). Rather than solely emphasizing exposure to or participation in formal theatre, they both highlighted the necessity of placing drama work at the centre of the curriculum as a vehicle for students'

personal and social development (Swortzell, 1990, p. 118). Both privileged children's participation as audience members and creators, as well as the necessity of non-interference and student-directed learning in the natural and creative processes of play (Hornbrook, 1998, p. 10). Many TIE organizations of one kind or another operated out of theatres throughout the country and, by the 1970s, TIE had become a central tenet of TYA in the UK and elsewhere (Swortzell, 1990, p. 118). TIE was a valuable and much sought-after resource for educators and the relationship between theatre and education in the UK continued to expand, develop and change, perhaps most notably in the 1970s and 1980s, when the work of Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton became popular. Though Slade and Way were not wholly in agreement with Heathcote and Bolton, and the latter two did not work particularly in TIE programming, they too reinforced the centrality of the child in teaching drama and the inherent value of the partnership between drama and education. Furthermore, rather than a subject of teaching like any other discipline, Heathcote and Bolton developed their work from the standpoint that drama was "pedagogy itself" (Hornbrook, 1998, p. 13). Heathcote's "objective for the participants [was] to immerse them in the dramatic experience rather than teaching them how to convey this experience to others" (O'Farrell, 2011, p. 255). This use of drama in education also reflected the political and social movements of the time, with a focus on using drama to help children grapple with, and find alternative solutions for, issues of inequity and power regarding race, sex and gender (Swortzell, 1990, p. 119).

TIE and dramatic play remain important elements of drama education in the United Kingdom, but they are situated alongside and within many other models or ways of teaching (through) drama. These include professional theatre companies, both touring and those housed in theatres, which create theatre that is explicitly designed for teenagers and for younger children,

as well as workshops, productions or special events put on by adult theatres that serve to enhance the study of literature or plays within the existing school curricula (Swortzell, 1990, p. 120). It is the former that is of primary interest to this study.

There are many challenges, previous and current, that professional TYA companies encounter, because of their particular purpose to serve children and young people. Play development is an ever-changing and exigent task for those working in TYA in the UK and one that continues to be influenced by TIE programming. Striking a balance between educational and aesthetic goals in playwriting and playmaking is a continuing challenge for TYA companies, as well as for educators, schools and curriculum-makers. In recent years, there has been special attention paid to this struggle. Originally a product of the TIE model, in 1967, Unicorn Theatre became London's first children's theatre with a permanent home (Swortzell, 1990, p. 114). This theatre company currently offers a range of performances with the artistic and the aesthetic at the centre and education as an afterthought of its mandate (p. 114).

In connection to this challenge and in line with the global trend, governmental funding of TYA in the UK has historically been much lower than that of adult or mainstream theatre (Swortzell, 1990, p. 121). As a result, many TYA companies have had to depend on commercial sponsorship and agreements to operate out of and under the mandate of existing adult theatres (p. 121). The UK branch of the Centre of the International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People (ASSITEJ) advocates for the governmental funding of theatre for young people to be increased, with the acknowledgement that not only is it more than a vehicle for other learning, as is so often the justification for its inclusion, but that theatre is an essential part of education in its own right (2010). There is a focus in the UK in the spheres of theatre and education and at the level of governmental policy on the need for research and practice that focuses not only on

learning about and through drama, but on the necessity of placing drama at the level of other art forms with regard to valuable aesthetic and cultural education in its own right (Hornbrook, 1998, p. 138). One of the areas of drama education that is most lacking and, thus, perhaps most in need of greater attention in both research and practice, is the value of theatre experiences, that is, of granting young people the opportunity to participate as an audience member in live, professional theatre performances and structuring this experience (Goldberg, 2011, p. 272).

Currently, thanks to the global notoriety achieved by particular theatre companies, targeted funding and a greater interest in the quality of TYA in the UK, it has “now gained a level of respect and attention like that traditionally accorded children’s theatre in Europe and the United States” (Reason, 2010, p. ix). Still, there continues to be comparatively few theatres for young people in the UK with permanent and exclusive ownership of performance spaces in which to present their work. The ones that do exist, which include, but are certainly not limited to the Unicorn Theatre, The Polka and Egg Theatre in England, work nationally and globally alongside touring companies and festivals, such as the Imagine Festival in Scotland, Spectacle Theatre in Wales, and Contact Theatre in England to continue to develop the calibre of, and interest in, TYA worldwide (Reason, 2010).

### **The United States**

As in the UK, TYA in the United States began in the early 1900s. The year 1903 is considered the official date of establishment for TYA in the US (Schonmann, 2007, p. 3), as it was when the Children’s Educational Theatre in New York City presented “The Tempest” as its premiere production (Swortzell, 1990, p. 333). Founded by settlement worker Alice Minnie Herts, from the start, TYA was explicitly connected to community development and progressive education, particularly that of new immigrant populations (Wilmeth, 2007, p. 162). This model

spread quickly to other urban centres, including settlements in Chicago and New York (Swortzell, 1990, p. 334). In addition to productions for children, drama classes and other activities were added. This supplementary programming was spearheaded by the Association of Junior Leagues in America, a women's social service organization (Wilmeth, 2007, p. 162). The Junior Leagues also fostered play development and organized conferences on the topic of TYA and, toward the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many professional TYA companies developed out of this organization (p. 162).

In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were few exclusive professional TYA companies (Wilmeth, 2007, p. 162). Broadway regularly staged revivals of plays for children, though their work was not focused primarily on TYA (p. 162). The Drama League of America fostered the development of regional, community theatres in non-urban centres and though the league disbanded in 1931, many of these theatres continue to offer TYA programming as an important element of their organization (Swortzell, 1990, p. 335). The Goodman Theatre at the Art Institute of Chicago was another organization that provided TYA programming as part of their general programming. In a professional theatre facility, they produced plays for children on weekends, showcasing in particular the work of Charlotte Chorpenning, one of the leading American playwrights for young people (p. 336). Chorpenning was unique in her time, in that she researched young audiences and developed a system for those wishing to write for this particular theatre audience (p. 336). In 1921, Clare Tree Major, a British actress, established the Threshold Players of New York, a professional, repertory touring TYA company (p. 335). With her death in 1954, the company came to an end, but remains the longest-running touring TYA company in US history (p. 336). The Federal Theatre Project, an initiative to provide employment for artists

affected by the Depression, funded the production of professional, innovative TYA from 1935-1939 (p. 337).

This was a time of increasing professionalism in TYA. “In 1935, Sara Spencer established the first publishing house devoted exclusively to plays for children” (Wilmeth, 2007, p. 162). This era also marked an important distinction between theatre in which young people act as audience members and drama in which they participate in its creation. Winifred Ward, an academic at Northwestern University, noted this difference (p. 162). Ward was instrumental in the TYA movement and, in particular, in the formation of the American Theatre Association, an organization established in 1936 that fostered the development of theatre curriculum at all educational levels and one that was especially productive and influential in the 1960s and 1970s, but which ceased operation in 1986, due to increasing budget cuts and the reduction of arts programming throughout the nation (Swortzell, 1990, p. 338).

In line with the general global context, especially for professional TYA, resources and funding remain a constant challenge. Since the 1960s, theatre in the US has come mainly from three sources: professional, community and educational (Swortzell, 1990, p. 339). Despite commercial and governmental support, “children’s theatre is far behind adult theatre in budget, staffing, and public respect” (p. 340). This is in part due to the construction of TYA “as something ‘other’ than ‘adult’ theatre” (van de Water, 2000, p. 101) and the fact that TYA “has historically been more the product of the educator and the social worker than the producer or the theatre artist” (p. 107). The constructed divide between aesthetic and educational purpose, as well as the prevailing view of young people and childhood in the US have contributed to the marginalization of TYA “from ‘adult’ theatrical discourse into a liminal space, that is often regarded inferior to ‘real’ (adult) theatre” (p. 101).

Few playhouses have been constructed in the US exclusively for young people's theatre, though this number is growing (Swortzell, 1990, p. 345). As is the case in the UK, in the context of TYA, touring companies continue to dominate. Most professional TYA companies are, for economic reasons, comprised of small casts and many employ actor or artist-educators, in order to make connections with education and school audiences (p. 340). Plays that are explicitly linked to education predominate. Much play development is done collaboratively, either by playwrights-in-residence or by whole companies. Founded in New York City, the Paper Bag Players came together in 1958 to provide professional theatre for children, with the mandate of creating innovative and imaginative short sketches with set and costumes comprised only of simple household items, so as to educate and empower young people to, in turn, make their own theatre in this way (Wilmeth, 2007, p. 162). The Honolulu Theatre for Youth, founded in 1955, was unique at the time in its mandate to provide theatre for all children by developing new plays and initiatives with special attention toward diversity in cultural and economic backgrounds (Swortzell, 1990, p. 344). Today, this focus on equity and accessibility is not atypical of TYA companies. Especially since the 1960s and 1970s, TYA plays have developed in both form and content far beyond the standard TIE model to include traditional and contemporary plays from around the world, as well as issue-based plays, especially for older audiences (p. 341).

Still, the ability of TYA companies to push boundaries and disrupt the status quo is restrained by their intimate relationship to schools:

Part of the problem of theatre for young audiences' persistently marginalized status is that it often needs to commodify the mythical notion of its educational and social significance, in order to legitimize its right of existence and obtain the necessary funds...

Theatres for young audiences know they have to maintain their educational outreach programs to obtain and maintain subsidy. (van de Water, 2000, p. 108)

“TYA companies throughout the country, large and small, resident and touring, perform primarily either for school groups bussed to their theatres, or they perform in the schools themselves. Consequently, virtually every professional TYA company relies on school audiences for the majority of its earned income” (Bedard, 2003, p. 90) and as the “existence of most TYA companies depends on this relationship, and because this dependence is not shared equally with the schools, the resulting binary marginalizes both the work of the theatre companies and companies themselves (p. 90). With the current educational rhetoric of accountability and measurement, there has been a decline in the frequency and amount of theatre integrated into the curriculum. “Schools are in fact seeing fieldtrips and assemblies more and more as distractions from that which they are held accountable: tests.” (p. 99) According to Bedard, this is both a challenge and an opportunity for TYA companies in the US, as some companies may:

implicate themselves more explicitly as educational agents, with even more affinity to the schools. Yet the decline of school audiences will force others to signify themselves quite differently and redefine their priorities outside of educational objectives. While this re-definition will bring economic disruption and re-orientation in a search for new audiences, it will also open new possibilities for artistic exploration outside of the dominant education ideologies. (p. 99)

This remains an ongoing challenge for this art form in the US, and elsewhere, including here in Canada.



## Canada

“Theatre for children,” argues Joyce Doolittle (1979), “is an invention of our era – an infant art form” (p. 15). A result of the constructed conception of childhood as “a separate and increasingly sheltered time of life” (p. 15), TYA, like formal education, has, in the past, often served to perpetuate the relegation of children and the common view of the child-like as innocent and something to be outgrown. It has been and continues to be the occupation of those working in education and TYA to undo this (Doolittle, 1979): to re-evaluate and reconceptualise childhood, to give respect to the experience of young people, and to value children and teenagers as unique and important citizens in their own right.

TYA began about 50 years later in Canada than it did in the United Kingdom or in the United States. Holiday Theatre in Vancouver, B.C., established by Joy Coghill and Myra Benson in 1953, was the first professional TYA company in Canada, offering weekend and holiday shows for families and children, as well as small touring productions for school audiences (Doolittle, 1979, p. 11). In 1966, Holiday Theatre was subsumed by The Playhouse, though they still provided TYA programming, especially work that was influenced by TIE techniques (Swortzell, 1990, p. 33).

It was not until the 1970s that professional TYA really came into its own and this was a decade of great growth for TYA in Canada, thanks to the nation’s “favourable economic climate, increased government support, and the availability of trained students who had graduated from university drama departments” (Swortzell, 1990, p. 34). There were a few regional theatres in the 1960s that offered TYA shows in conjunction with regular programming for adult audiences. These included the Charlottetown Festival and The Globe in Regina, as well as the Winnipeg Actors’ Showcase, Citadel Theatre and Theatre Calgary, which toured to rural communities (p.

34). Of the theatres that came to fruition during the 1970s, those that are still active, though not exclusive, in creating professional TYA include Carousel Theatre, Green Thumb Theatre and Kaleidoscope Theatre in British Columbia; Alberta Theatre Projects; Prairie Theatre Exchange; Manitoba Theatre for Young People (formerly Actors' Showcase); Marmaille and Théâtre L'Oeil in Québec; Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia (p. 34).

In 1977 in Toronto, Young People's Theatre became the first professional TYA company in Canada to have a permanent playhouse of their own (Doolittle, 1979). In a country the size of Canada and one with such geographic diversity and socioeconomic inequity, touring companies are valuable and necessary in TYA, if the goal is to allow all people living in Canada the chance to engage with live, professional theatre, but "the advantages of a building are many and substantial" (p. 56). Theatres with a home base can also facilitate the dissemination of TYA throughout the country and foster touring by working with fellow theatres and presenting the work of other TYA companies. It is for this reason and many others that YPT has grown to become Canada's leading professional TYA organization.

The 1970s also saw the emergence of international collaboration through the Centre of the International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People (ASSITEJ) and the organization of International Children's Festivals of Theatre and Arts. A global focus continues to be an important aspect of professional Canadian theatre for young audiences (Swortzell, 1990). Currently, ASSITEJ has national centres in 80 countries (ASSITEJ International, 2011). ASSITEJ fosters worldwide meetings and festivals, promotes research and creative collaboration between theatres and theatre artists, governments and professional organizations worldwide, and also advocates for the creation of quality TYA worldwide. In 1972, Joyce Doolittle, chair of ASSITEJ Canada, organized a festival of this kind in Montreal. At this time, there was also a

strong UK TIE influence in schools and theatre companies in Canada (Swortzell, 1990).

Typically, Canadian TYA companies offered a plethora of programming to complement the professional productions they produced, including talkback sessions with theatre artists, tours of the theatre, workshops in-house and at schools with artist-educators, study guides and supplementary resources for teachers, drama classes for children, as well as professional development opportunities for teachers and theatre artists (Swortzell, 1990; Doolittle, 1979). This supplementary programming remains a defining element of TYA in Canada and continues to develop.

As in the global context, there continues to be a strong correlation between theatre and education in Canadian TYA. “Many of the plays chosen for school audiences are considered not only for their intent to entertain, but also for their mission to ‘educate’” (Swartz, 2003, p. 201). Education in this context is broadly conceived and this breadth is matched by the diversity of the form and content of plays being produced in this country, which include historical and contemporary Canadian plays, international children’s stories, plays that deal with current social issues, especially those pertaining to teens, mythical and fantastical stories, as well as plays developed and told through dance and puppetry (Swortzell, 1990; Doolittle, 1979). David Craig and Robert Morgan, former artistic directors of Ontario TYA touring company Roseneath Theatre, argue that TYA must respect the fact that “children experience life’s joys and sorrows as powerfully as many adults do” (as cited in Swartz, as cited in Gallagher & Booth, 2003, p. 201) and that students deserve to see good theatre, that is theatre that “respects integrity, imagination, beauty, balance, and humanity” (Swartz, as cited in Gallagher & Booth, 2003, p. 201).

As with all theatre, the aesthetic element of theatre affects and is, in turn, informed by the technical and practical elements of creation. Some technical requirements in TYA include presenting shows in a relatively short amount of time; playing in a variety of spaces, from professional theatres to school gyms; telling stories with relatively small casts; and doing much with little money (Doolittle, 1979). Funding continues to be one of the largest challenges to TYA. “As a result of the federal Canada Council’s subsidy of professional theatre for young audiences in 1971, more children’s theatre companies emerged and more plays were written for these companies to perform” (Swortzell, 1990, p. 39). With the current climate of measurability and accountability and the continual devaluation of the arts in schools, there is not the same support for TYA development, playwriting or otherwise, today. Funding typically comes from five sources: ticket sales, federal grants from the Canada Council, provincial funding, private foundation donations, as well as individual and corporate givings (p. 36). TYA constitutes over a quarter of professional theatre in Canada, but it is consistently underfunded (p. 36). In spite of this challenge, TYA continues to develop and contribute to the fields of theatre and schooling in this country and, in particular, to the precarious intersection of drama education that falls somewhere between and within the two. Following is a comparative review of more recent research in the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada, with a special focus on the latter.

### **A Review of Recent and Current Research in Drama Education and TYA in the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada**

Despite the longstanding connection between theatre and education, particularly with regard to children and young people, and the ever-increasing interest in the potential for educational and social development through the arts, there has been comparatively little research in the area of TYA (Reason, 2010). This is in part due to its relatively young life as an identified

discipline, its uniqueness within the long-standing tradition of theatre, as well as its history of policing and misunderstanding as a subject within schools (p. 6). This is not to say that researchers, teachers, theatre practitioners, policymakers and governments alike have not brought into existence a wide-ranging, multifaceted and exciting body of literature that continues to develop on the topic of TYA, but this complexity is one of the challenges of doing research and practice in this field. There are many openings in the existing research that demand further inquiry. I situate this study in one of these, with the hope not only that it will begin to fill, but also that this research will force the field to expand and produce fissures, thus creating further opportunities for inquiry.

One challenge of TYA research is that it is nestled within the different, albeit interconnected fields of aesthetic education, arts education or drama education. Shifra Schonmann's *Key Concepts in Theatre/Drama Education* (2011) is the first of its kind, in that, in one book, voices from around the world are brought together in conversation with one another, conveying points of connection and difference in recent and emergent scholarship and communicating "the zeitgeist of the field" (p. 3). Scholars, teachers and theatre practitioners with a particular interest in professional TYA are included in this volume. In their respective chapters and in connection with each other and others in the anthology, Manon van de Water, Roger L. Bedard, Moses Goldberg, Jeanne Klein, Belarie Zatzman and Anthony Jackson highlight some of the most pressing issues in TYA practice and research today, particularly in the UK, the US and Canada.

These include a variety of issues in drama education in educational and aesthetic environments. One continuing challenge in TYA is the resistance of parents and educators to complex and controversial content in educational theatre. This, as I have mentioned previously,

has to do with the cultural construction of childhood: “While some contemporary theatre artists struggle against what they see as artistic limitations in TYA, many of those limitations grow logically from societal expectations of what is perceived as appropriate for children” (Bedard, as cited in Schonmann, 2011, p. 284). Bedard argues that the:

historically dominant (and, by most accounts, the prevailing) ethos in the US [and elsewhere in North American culture] is one of the ‘innocent’ child who must be protected. According to noted child historian Philip Aries, this has ‘resulted in two kinds of attitude and behaviour towards childhood: firstly, safeguarding it against pollution by life and particularly by... sexuality; ... and secondly, strengthening it by developing character and reason’ (Jenkins, 1998, p. 16). (p. 285)

As a result, those working in education and, in particular, in TYA grapple with how to meet, challenge and expand these expectations. I say that those involved in TYA are particularly entrenched in this battle, because they operate in the “world of art, which, by definition, questions, interrogates and offers new ways of understanding reality” (p. 286). Moreover, some educators and administrators, in part due to the current school climate in many countries, are resistant to the theatre art form itself as an element of educational experience. “In today’s educational environment, accountability is a (maybe the) driving force, and principals and teachers are often reluctant to spend school time on activities that may not translate into higher test scores” (Goldberg, as cited in Schonmann, p. 272). “Today’s schooling seems increasingly focused on expedience and delivering, and less concerned with exploration, reflection and encouragement for facilitating change (Erikson, as cited in Schonmann, 2011, p. 69). The unquantifiable dynamism associated with the arts is at odds with the push for certain and measurable educational outcomes today, despite the fact that there are identifiable and valuable

benefits of theatre engagement that align with other current educational research, theories and initiatives. Jackson (as cited in Schonmann, 2011) argues that this:

shift away from traditional ‘one-way traffic’ models of education, rooted in positivist notions of epistemology, has been accompanied by the increased development of participatory models of education, constructivist theories of learning and a belief in the importance of ‘experiential learning’ (Kolb, 1985); likewise, aesthetic theories and the growth of interest in reception studies, that emphasize the readers’ and audiences’ roles in making meaning (Jackson, 2007), have all helped to create a more receptive climate.

(p. 237)

In connection with recent scholarship such as this, as well as with the work that emerged in the past couple of decades, particularly in the Canadian context, including that of Doyle (1993), Gallagher (2000; 2007), Pitman (1998), Gallagher and Booth (2003) and others on the value of drama education in schools and, particularly the drama classroom, I situate this research study. Despite the diversity and richness of this body of literature, there remains relatively little research on the educative value of live TYA performances, especially those that take place outside of schools in professional theatres.

The governmental research that has been conducted includes the 2000 study of arts education in secondary schools which was carried out by the UK National Foundation for Education Research. The results of this study pointed to the plethora of outcomes that engagement with the arts can provide, including enhanced knowledge and skills in creativity, thinking, communication and expression; increased understanding about particular art forms, as well as about social and cultural issues; and improved knowledge and skills in other subjects and contexts, both inside and outside of school (Reason, 2010, p. 7). In 2003, the UK National

Foundation for Education Research performed research on the role and value of the arts at the primary level and discovered that many teachers supported the arts as a vehicle for helping students to develop wholly, particularly with regard to expanding their understanding of the world, their expectations of themselves and others, and their ability to express and communicate (p. 7).

Echoing this research, recent studies conducted in the US also illuminate the multiple educative values of youth engagement with the arts. These studies, as published by the Arts Education Network, include “Making a Case for the Arts: How and Why the Arts are Critical to Student Achievement and Better Schools” (2006) and “Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning” (1999). The researchers who conducted the 1999 “Champions of Change” study examined arts engagement in schools across the US (Fiske, 1999). In line with previous studies, the findings of this research project demonstrated a strong correlation between academic achievement and arts engagement (Reason, 2010, p. 8). The researchers found that experience in the arts, particularly in music and theatre, affects higher cross-curricular academic achievement, especially for students from low-income backgrounds (Fiske, 1999, p. 8). They also discovered that the arts are distinct, in that, unlike many other disciplines, they can help students to develop multiple skills at once (p. 9). Across the different studies that comprised this report, major themes consistently emerged. These findings include the ways in which the arts help students connect to themselves and to one another, as well as the strength of the arts in affecting change in the greater school community (p. 9). This study also suggests that experience in the arts provides new challenges for high-achieving students, encourages sustained engagement in learning and directly connects students’ experiences in education to the greater world around them (p. 10).



In this country, the Canada Council for the Arts funds research on national engagement with the arts. In an exploratory study on the effects of culture, there appeared to be a connection between attending a live performance and increased social engagement (Hill Strategies Research, Inc. [HSR], March 2008, p. 36). In its Annual Report for 2006-07, the Canada Council for the Arts recognized that early arts education is a key factor in the long-term enjoyment of, and involvement in, the arts (HSR, May 2008, p. 26). In 2008, 10 million people living in Canada saw a live performance of some kind (HSR, November 2008, p. 2). Despite the fact that culture is a growing market in Canada, not-for-profit organizations in the arts, which include professional theatres, receive much lower government funding in comparison to other nonprofits and artists also typically make much less than the average labour force; this earnings gap is increasing (Canada Council for the Arts, June 2008). This attitude toward theatre speaks more generally to the position of drama in formal education and also to its place in public life.

The conception of theatre, in education and more broadly, has long been fraught with anxiety and misunderstanding. In a study of arts education in Manitoba Schools, for instance, there appeared to be greater value consistently placed on visual art and music than on drama and dance (Morin, 2010, p. 2). As Juliana Saxton and Carole Miller (1998) write:

Historically, the transformative act which lies at the heart of the art form of theatre has been viewed as something mysterious, often dangerous... educational drama is further isolated by our colleagues in both theatre and education because of drama's apparently sacrilegious operation of theatricality and, paradoxically, its 'everydayness'; its lack of respect for the sacred conventions, its limbic ambiguities. (p. 175)

Drama, particularly in the realm of education, constantly struggles with the ambivalent task to be accurately recognized as a discipline that is both academically legitimate and socially and pedagogically powerful.

In *Drama Education in the Lives of Girls* (2000), Gallagher situates her work on the value of participation in drama in the existing body of literature in Canada and elsewhere. She outlines recent work on the arts in Canadian schools, particularly Walter Pitman's *Learning the Arts in an Age of Uncertainty* (1998), an analysis of the perception of the arts in Canadian schools as light and frilly, despite the rigor, intensity and high quality of education that is evident in drama and other arts classrooms in schools (Gallagher, 2000, p. 4). Gallagher notes that this is certainly not the case in other parts of the world, but in this country, drama's "stigma as lacking weight and seriousness prevails" (p. 5). Perhaps this explains why, regardless of the research that has demonstrated the correlation between arts engagement and academic achievement and despite the preponderance and professionalism of TYA companies in Canada and the world today, there remains comparatively little financial or political support in this country.

Some argue that the construction of TYA as a means for teaching and learning, rather than an art form in its own right, has compromised its professional integrity (van de Water, 2011, p. 277), but I think this demonstrates a narrow and rather limiting conception of what constitutes education. In a study performed by the UK National Foundation for Education Research, teachers stated that the three top purposes of teaching the arts in schools were first, to help students develop creative and thinking skills, second, to foster students' capacities for communication and expression and third, to give students a pleasurable educational experience (Reason, 2010, p. 10). Reason (2010) argues that with regard to TYA, the "aesthetic perspective... is often neglected in considering all the other good things theatre might do –

although the real danger is that without being good in its own right theatre may not be able to do good at all (p. 13). The value of aesthetic experience in education has long been written about by educational philosophers, perhaps most notably in the Western context, by John Dewey (1934; 1938). As of late and with particular attention to theatre, scholars, educators and researchers have taken up this subject, leading much-needed and historically neglected research on the experiences of young people in aesthetic education as audience members in professional TYA. This project comes out of the need for further research in this particular area of drama education that have been produced as a result of the work of these researchers and others.

Shifra Schonmann (2007; 2011) has written about how children are immensely affected by the physical and architectural space of the theatre venue, and are often disengaged from the performance by theatres that are built without the interest of young audiences in mind (Schonmann 2007, p. 147). Drawing on the previous work of Moses Goldberg (1974), in her research, which included attending hundreds of high quality, large-venue theatre performances for young people in New York City, Schonmann (2007) looked at what characterizes the theatrical event as part of a school excursion, with a focus on the effects of preparation, viewing and processes as separate, but interconnected elements of this experience (p. 149). Using one particular performance as an example, she interpreted the children's pre-performance applause as the lights dimmed in the house and came up on stage as an indicator of their growing excitement (Schonmann, 2007). At this point in the theatre, she noticed a "sense of transcending into another time and space" (p. 150). After the play, however, their applause was muted and more to do with social convention encouraged by adults than a genuine way to communicate their response to the performance (p. 150). In addition to that which preceded the show, Schonmann wrote particularly about the structured question and answer session immediately following the

performance, noting how similar to a conventional school lesson it appeared to be (p. 152). She argues that this diminishes the theatrical experience and the complexity of the play for the students (p. 153).

Using another performance experience she researched, Schonmann (2007) critiqued the pre-show announcement to the audience of what kinds of behaviours are permitted and forbidden in the theatre for reducing the special world of the theatre to one of a “school-like atmosphere” (p. 154). Schonmann concluded her research analysis on this particular element of TYA by suggesting that the “educational framing” surrounding the theatrical performance be critiqued, reconceptualised and recreated as a way to move away from a didactic approach to this curriculum event (p. 156). In particular, she criticizes the practice of having students attend theatre “*en masse*” (p. 163). Instead, she suggests giving students the option to attend a play independently as part of a general audience (p. 164). While this is an interesting alternative and I admire Schonmann’s effort to privilege the importance of pleasure in educational experience, there are complex pedagogical, economic and technical aspects that must be more deeply considered. Echoing Jonathan Levy (1998) who argued that “when art is used to teach, either the teaching or the art must suffer” (p. 8), Schonmann calls for a renewal of the aesthetic in theatre education.

I appreciate their interest in raising the bar in theatre education, as this demonstrates respect for the complexity and intelligence of children, but I am troubled by the way in which they position art and education in hierarchal opposition. It is important to remember that schools, like theatres, also have the capacity to be dynamic and exciting institutions and conversely, that theatres are not immune to the imposition of particular norms and expectations similar to those enacted in schools. Instead of operating within this binary, I wonder if there is a way in which,

particularly in the context of TYA and the theatre performance as a curriculum event, the two may be brought together as complementary and perhaps, even as one and the same.

In an analysis of their ethnographic research on two urban drama classrooms in Toronto, Kathleen Gallagher, Barry Freeman and Anne Wessels (2010) bring to light the complex interplay between the aesthetic and social values of theatre, particularly with regard to youth engagement. They learned that both of these teachers, despite their disparate approaches to teaching drama, conceived of their work as inclusive of “both of these agendas simultaneously” (p. 11). One of the teachers worked especially hard to make her students a part of the greater theatre community, in part by regularly taking them to see professional performances in the city. “Of course, feeling a sense of membership in these wider communities was not a given; on one memorable occasion the group spoke angrily about how poorly they had been treated by a theatre’s staff during one of their fieldtrips” (p. 12). This is but one of many instances in their research which illustrates the fluidity of the social and aesthetic work of drama and the importance of paying attention to this relationship and, rather than divorcing the two, using each to augment the other.

Furthermore, as evidenced in Kathleen Gallagher and Dominique Rivière’s (2007) analysis of a production of Trey Anthony’s “Da Kink in My Hair” at a Toronto high school, there are particular problems and possibilities that emerge in using theatre to raise controversial issues and push boundaries, especially in school institutions: “drama, as teaching practice and as research method, is an ongoing quest, an ongoing set of complex relations, an upsetting of notions of authority, and an art form which most certainly does not fit into tidy positivist scientific/educational discourses” (p. 328). Unique to this art form is its malleability and the fact that the performance, as it is enacted, is changed by its participants, artists and audience

members alike and, in turn, that the piece affects and can transform its spectators, creators and the world as we know it. Jonothan Neelands (2004) writes about how the “collision of actualities/realities/fictionalities between the stage and the social space” gives “the sense of instability between what has been, what is and what might be” (p. 53).

“Jackson (2005, p. 110) examines the inscription of the audience into the play as the means for creating a dialogic encounter that is at the heart of theatre as a learning medium (Greenwood, as cited in Schonmann, 2011, p. 50). Jackson emphasizes that theatre’s pedagogical power is heightened “when it is aesthetic as well as discursive” (p. 50). This illuminates the importance of aesthetic space in drama education and, in particular, in performance. Immersion in the world of the play may help the audience to listen and to participate in the piece, even if what they are met with elicits feelings of discomfort or disagreement. In this way, the aesthetic enhances the pedagogic. Aesthetic engagement fosters learning, because it “gives us experience, both embodied through our participation and empathetic through exploring another’s world. It allows us to absorb a multiplicity of new stimuli, cognitive and visceral, that we can unpack and play with. It permits ambiguity, incompleteness, contradiction and complexity” (p. 51). At its best, there is a symbiotic relationship between the aesthetic and pedagogic values in theatre education.

TYA is also aesthetically and structurally special in its focus on the audience and, in particular, their participation. “Arguably, all theatre is participatory... Even the audience sitting in formal rows in a traditional auditorium are not passive: their engagement in the drama is an active process of de-coding, responding, and constructing meaning” (Jackson, as cited in Schonmann, 2011, p. 235). Good TYA “will go well beyond the mere delivery and illustration of a message and will engage its audience at many levels: emotional as well as intellectual, making

full use of what live theatre can achieve” (p. 235), either during the play or “outside the framework of the dramatic narrative” (p. 236). With regard to education, this assumes that “young people learn best through doing; that they should be encouraged to take a degree of responsibility for, and ownership of, their own learning; that the degree of engagement, effort and two-way dialogue required in dramatic participation... are beneficial... [and] finally, that participation in drama can be in part a way of rehearsing for ‘real life’” (p. 237). One of the many openings left in this body of research is the perception of teachers and creators of TYA on this particular element of drama education and their role in the important work of critically analysing the state of TYA and drama education in schools and theatres.

With regard to this particular issue, Kathleen Gallagher and Ivan Service (2010) outline their findings of an Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario’s (ETFO) Education and Poverty Project initiative performed in partnership with Roseneath Theatre and their production of “Danny, King of the Basement”. The focus of this study was to learn the possible benefits of viewing a live, professional theatre performance with regard to education and professional development on poverty in these school communities. Gallagher and Service learned from teacher participants in this research that “seeing a live production made possible conversations that would not otherwise have happened” (p. 240). Dialogue was opened up through the shared reference point of the play. Discussion was facilitated, in part, because it dealt with issues that were personal to the students in the community, but by way of a distanced narrative. (Gallagher & Service, 2010). The emotional or affective element of theatre helped the students and teachers to make these connections not only to their own lives, but to each others; viewing theatre fostered new insights and a kind of empathy (2010). “Among the teachers, there was a general sense that attending a live performance leads to some form of reflection within the students that

involves connecting the material or messages of the drama with experiences or realities of their own lives” (p. 243). As a result, drama became a kind of “pedagogical tool” for teachers to use “as a new way of communicating” (p. 248) in their classrooms. Gallagher & Service (2010) theorize that it is the dialectics, a fundamental element of theatre, that:

invites us to take up points of intersection and confrontation, so that our dramatic explorations do not simply calcify cultural and ethnic boundaries. Instead, theatre opens up a capacity to manoeuvre across borders and develop capacities for functioning in diverse situations (Gallagher 2003). These are leaps of imagination, not concrete skills or causal relationships. Theatre does not necessarily make us better at understanding the worlds of others, but it does have an uncanny way of making us see both commonalities and differences, to dis/identify in tangible, often affective and visceral ways. (p. 240)

This particular research project speaks to the value, not only for students, but also for teachers, of engaging as audience members in TYA.

Fusing together a variety of voices on the subject of theatre and education in Canada, including those of professional theatre artists and scholars, particularly those in teacher education, Gallagher and Booth’s edited collection of essays entitled *How Theatre Educates* (2003) brings to light still more reasons for having students and teachers engage with theatre for the purpose of education. In the introduction, Gallagher writes about how, as a teacher in search of relevant curriculum, she “often turned, instinctively, to the theatre” as a way to forge connections with and between her students (p. 4). In his research, Goldberg (as cited in Schonmann, 2011) found that teachers, among many other reasons, noted that engaging in arts experiences like watching a play allowed their students to see models of what is possible and, in this way, helped them to apply their understanding and own personal experiences of how theatre



operates and is created (p. 273). Maja Ardal, former artistic director of YPT, asserts the intelligence and complexity of young people and argues that the educative value of theatre is collective inquiry: “We are here to question, and to invite our audience to question with us” (Gallagher & Booth, 2003, p. 196). Ardal writes about the challenge and potential dangers of having separate TYA companies and the need to merge with adult theatres. Conversely, in the following chapter, Larry Swartz, a drama specialist and instructor in the teacher education programme at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, argues that separate TYA companies and specifically those that cater to the school audience are an absolute necessity, as for many children, this may be the only way for them to experience the power of a live, professional theatre experience (p. 201). In Schonmann’s *Key Concepts in Theatre/Drama Education* (2011), Moses Goldberg puts forth a chapter about the challenge, especially in this age of accountability, in having drama experiences, that is, participation as an audience member in professional theatre performances, recognized as uniquely important alongside drama processes and instruction. Goldberg reiterates that the majority of research on drama education focuses on process and instruction (p. 272).

As evidenced in this scholarship, imperatives for having young people experience theatre range from democratic citizenship to character education, community-building to peace-making, curriculum to pedagogy, numeracy to literacy, imaginative pleasure to academic engagement, artistic appreciation to technical skill development and much, much more. The sheer diversity of reasons for having students experience TYA as audience members confirms the necessity for more research on the subject.

### **The Particular Value of this Research Project within the Existing Body of Literature**

While Goldberg (2011) suggests that, in particular, quantitative research on this subject would be beneficial, I believe that especially at this time of increased measurability and accountability in education, it is counterintuitive to attempt to discern measurable effects of engagement in the performing arts (Reason, 2010, p. 6). “We live in a world dominated by economics: profit is the obsession of our society,” (Pitman, 1998, p. 10) and education is no exception. This is not to say that quantitative research is not of value, because the stories it generates can be very important, but I am more interested in the complexity and richness offered by way of qualitative inquiry and the inventive and problematic stories that may be uncovered and understood through such research. While I agree that it is vital to learn more about what it is about arts education that is beneficial, I wonder if looking to quantify these experiences might be reductive, as it is, in part, their incalculability and unpredictability that makes them valuable to students and teachers.

Drama, and performance, in particular, “is an exercise in uncertainty” and an “intense and continuing experience with the arts allows children to become accustomed to the new, the innovative, the unexpected” (Pitman, 1998, p. 18). Despite our efforts as human beings to measure and predict, it is undeniable that the world in which we live is, in many ways, beyond our control. “Live performance... depends on an uncertain mix of the known and the unpredictable, created in the encounters between participants, actors and audiences in the immediacy of the performative moment” (Nicholson, 2010, p. 147). The power and agency of the audience are of great interest to me, particularly with the understanding that the theatre audience, as opposed to the film audience, for example, can be very much a co-creator of the art, albeit to varying degrees. I am concerned with how theatre, as a particular art form, offers greater

opportunities for its participants to resist the status quo and to remake what is, into what could be. With specific regard to teaching and learning, I believe that theatre allows us to reimagine and to transform the world.

Having canvassed this body of literature, it became clear that the educative benefits of theatre are varied. This pushed me to focus this particular research project on the reasons why teachers bring their students to the theatre, specifically YPT, and to learn how these relate to the perceptions of those who work at and with the theatre. In order to do so, I used a variety of qualitative research methods and situated this ethnography at the intersection of spatial and curriculum theories. In the following two chapters, I will outline in greater detail how, theoretically and methodologically, this research reveals the complexity of teachers' decisions to include theatre-going in their curricula.

## Chapter 3

### Theoretical Framework

While in my initial research design, spatial theory was included as one of the components of my theoretical framework, it has, as this project has developed, come to the fore as a core tenet from which to make sense of this research. This research focuses on the reasons why teachers choose to bring their students to see live, professional theatre, particularly at YPT. I have been both surprised and excited by the centrality of space in their desire and rationale to make this a part of their students' educational experience. For the following reasons, the theatrical event at YPT as an educational experience has become, for the purposes of this research project, essentially and strongly connected to "social space", a concept first introduced by Henri Lefebvre (1991, as cited in Gallagher & Fusco, 2006). According to Lefebvre (1991), social space "is not a frame or a container that is designed simply to receive whatever is poured into it" (pp. 93-4). "Social space incorporates social actions" (p. 33) and it is the bodies that encounter it and each other that shape the space. Social space is dialectical and contradictory; it is changeable (p. 15) and connected to both time and geography. Following the work of Lefebvre (1991), British feminist geographer and social scientist Doreen Massey's (1994; 2003; 2005; 2006; 2010) analysis of space has become a central theoretical underpinning of my research.

Spatial theory is a particularly apt component of the theoretical framework for this research, as space plays a central role in drama education and is an emergent focus of studies in performance and applied theatre. As Helen Nicholson (2011) writes, "Practices in drama education and different forms of applied theatre and performance depend on an ability to re-imagine space, to reshape identities in space; learning how to produce space creatively is inherent to the art-form and its methodologies." (p. 1). In 2007, *Research in Drama Education*

(RiDE) published a special issue in which several scholars explored the relationship between space and performance, and the tensions and possibilities therein. In connection with this thesis project, they also looked at how space informs human interaction and how drama practices serve to reinforce, reveal or alter social space. “The site of the performance is largely a cultural expression defining the physical surroundings and conditions in which the audience and performers interact. Similarly, the character of the theatrical occasion is often shaped by the place designated for the event. (Nwadiuwe, 2007, p. 65). Through drama, stories are spatialized and, it is the hope of this study along with other research in the field, that by examining drama “as a space for journeying, for navigation, where we can encounter the difference of others... we [may] become more likely to encounter difference with curiosity rather than mistrust [and] come to see alterity as a potential source of delight” (Winston, Lo & Wang; 2010, p. 22).

### **Rationale**

#### **Mobility and Access**

Like me and my research participants, as well as many other educators and researchers, Massey (1994) is preoccupied with the effects of mediatisation on space and social relations. She writes about how in this era of “time-space compression” (p. 146) the world we live in seems to be “speeding up, and spreading out” (p. 146), who and how people inhabit and move through space and thus, the production of space itself, has changed. Massey (1994) argues that the mobility through and between, as well as the occupation of space is now differentiated due to economics, gender, race and other social categories:

Different social groups have distinct relationships to this anyway differentiated mobility: some people are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement,

others don't; some are more on the receiving-end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it. (p. 148)

According to Massey (1994), an examination of social mobility and access is important, because “the time-space compression of some groups can undermine the power of others” (p. 150).

Echoing this, Robbins (2008) writes that in the construction of space “time is a central component, and it is pedagogical as it defines the rhythms of social practices and how these are related, dialectically, to the spaces in which they are engaged, and the access citizens have to temporal codes that either reinforce or disrupt conceptions of the past, explanations of the present, and visions of the future” (p. 112). Social spaces “imply greater and lesser degrees of access to *the time needed to participate in civic action...* Space and time are categories that people create and define. They are categories that citizens inherit” (p. 110).

Professional theatres in this city are, by and large, spaces of inaccess to the majority of citizens. Going to most live theatre in Toronto requires of its audiences a certain luxury of time and money, as well as a particular level of literacy. The make-up of the audiences who attend YPT differs greatly from that of theatre for more general audiences; attending theatre as part of their school program grants students access, thanks to the scheduling of the performances, the low, and often subsidized, cost of tickets and transportation, as well as the resources and learning opportunities made available by YPT and by teachers to prepare students for this event.

Consequently, with regard to socioeconomic status, culture, age, and level of education, the audiences at YPT are much more diverse and thus, more reflective of the population of Toronto, than those who patronize other professional theatres in the city. Furthermore, while many of the teachers who bring their students to YPT may have seen a play before, for some teachers and for many students, participating in a live performance at a professional theatre is a cultural activity

in which they may not otherwise take part, either because it is not an interest or, more commonly, it is not a viable option for them or their families. Attending performances both at YPT and at other theatres in the city, this is something I've noticed firsthand, but this observation has also been corroborated in interviews with both teachers and those who work at the theatre.

Granting students the opportunity to meet with and learn about other young people in their community who may be different from them and to experience new public and artistic spaces in their city have emerged as two of the main reasons teachers choose to come to YPT. Both teachers and theatre artists alike have spoken about the power of the live theatre experience in connection with the fact that YPT acts as a public meeting place in which students and teachers, particularly those who might not otherwise meet, assemble together. In the interviews that I have conducted, I have learned that this is true for teachers who work in schools that serve both high and low socioeconomic neighbourhoods because, though admittedly for different reasons, these students are, on the whole, largely confined to their particular home and school communities.

### **Opening Borders and Inviting Change**

More broadly, Massey (1994) writes about how time, and specifically speed, has become synonymous with movement and progress, while space or place denotes inertia and entrenchment (p. 151). "Many of those who write about time-space compression emphasize the insecurity and unsettling impact of its effects" (p. 151). With the divorce of time and space and the dichotomization of the global and the local, there has been a problematic and romanticized notion of space, and particularly local space, as a source of "stability and a source of unproblematical identity" (p. 151).

Kathleen Gallagher and Caroline Fusco (2006) have written about the ways in which current neo-liberal ideologies of space, security and identity are reproduced in public spaces, especially public schools. According to Gallagher and Fusco (2006), “These ideologies, and the policies that proceed from them, place a premium on security, police the borders of home/school, and prevent the penetration of the other/the outsider/ the risk, in everyday life” (p. 303). As my research concerns a TYA company, the majority of those who attend performances are school-aged children, specifically classes who are on fieldtrips with their teachers. The dominant school culture of preventative policing, bordering of what constitutes school space and organizing of who is included, bleeds into the theatre space, despite the work YPT does to resist this. A meeting place for students and teachers, YPT mirrors school practices of “privatization, accountability, zero tolerance, and militarization” (Robbins, 2008, p. 111), while at the same time working to destabilize them.

Massey (1994) and Gallagher and Fusco (2006) urge us to question how control over mobility fosters inequitable relations of power, as this has particular material effects for how we live in the world together. Massey asserts that while places may have boundaries, these borders are open and porous. Spaces inform and are informed by, the outside. In this way, spaces should find definition, not by exclusion, bordering and ordering, but by the specific “constellation of social relations” (Massey, 1994, p. 154) within and around them.

What is important about the audiences that convene at YPT, it seems, is that it is an assembly of strangers. Students and teachers are not just experiencing theatre with their friends or family; they are not just sitting with their classmates, colleagues or other people who go to or work at their school. YPT works against the ways in which public space in this country has been increasingly constructed as private in the past few decades; social space is now protected and



exclusionary, wrongly conceptualized and created as free from conflict and heterogeneity (Kawash, 1998). Not only is the equation of the security or safety of social space with sameness problematic, it also contradicts the complexity of what it means for people to come together.

### **The Possibilities of Space within the Aesthetic**

Massey argues for a more progressive sense of place (1994; 2003; 2006; 2010). She understands space as inherently connected to time and thus, as dynamic and shifting. “Movement, encounter and the making of relationships take time” (2003, Encounters section, para. 2). Massey argues that just as we cannot travel back in time, we cannot travel back in space (2003). Simply put, spaces “are processes” (1994, p. 155). Experiencing theatre in an aesthetic space, especially a professional theatre with a full complement of technical elements, emphasizes the possibilities of space as dynamic, rather than static.

Teachers, as well as those who work at and with YPT have spoken about the importance of the theatrical experience in teaching students that the world in which they live is changeable. Unlike the highly structured and predictable temporal and spatial architecture of schools where rules and codes of social interaction are literally forged and embedded into the space and, as a result, become a given and reproduce, rather than transform human relations (Hebdige, 2006), YPT is a changeable and deliberately fluid space and thus, one of unpredictability. Consequently, it seems that participating in performances at YPT opens teachers and students up to new possibilities of relating to one another and of being about the world. At the same time, it is important to remember that schools, like theatres, also have the capacity to be dynamic and exciting institutions and, conversely, theatres are not immune to the imposition of particular norms and expectations similar to or, in the case of YPT, synonymous with those enacted in

schools. One of the most powerful things that sets YPT apart from schools in this respect, however, is its designation as an aesthetic space and the pedagogical potential therein.

Many of my research participants have spoken about the fact that it is by entering into and participating in the professional theatre space and experience of a live performance that helps to disrupt the reproduction of naturalized and normative codes and expectations. At YPT, more than eight different shows are performed in the theatre over the course of the season, each with new scenic and sound designs and some with different configurations of the house in which the audience sits. Even during the course of one performance, the environment undergoes a multitude of changes; it transforms. Within the world of a play, time and space can be manipulated and experienced in creative and magical ways that had formerly seemed impossible, but within the space of the performance and the pedagogical and social events that surround this experience, students have the opportunity to conceive of space differently, as something that can change, and to imagine what might be.

### **Human Constructions of Space**

Furthermore, they have the chance to learn that the world in which they live, like the world of the play, is humanly constructed and thus, dynamic. This is of particular importance today, as we are part of a culture where mass media not only dominates, but constitutes our common understanding of human interaction (Debord, 1983). Mass-mediatised representations of the world provide an unquestioned and naturalized monolith of human experience, despite the fact that these images are highly constructed. I would be remiss to suggest that theatre, as a medium, never reinforces conservative ideals or normative understandings of the world and, particularly considering its historical ties to schooling, TYA is certainly not invulnerable to

reproducing dominant discourse, but as it is enacted at YPT, it seems that theatre is used to probe and to transform, rather than to replicate the world as we know it.

Attending a theatrical event at YPT fosters an understanding of, not only the fact that arts and entertainment are humanly and collectively made, but also makes explicit to its audience members how this is achieved. Importantly, students who attend YPT are pushed to recognize their participation in this, to question what they see and hear, and to consider the ways in which the fictive world of the play connects to the construction of the actual world in which we live.

Massey (2006) writes about how instantaneous global communication and the pervasiveness of the myth of the shrinking world, an idea that is perpetuated by the rich and the powerful, presents us with the illusion that we know the world (and each other) perhaps more than we actually do. This effacement of space ignores the ever-present material dimensions and implications of human existence. It flattens the diversity of the world in which we live and limits opportunities and spaces for conflict and thus, the growth that comes out of such debates. Massey (2006) argues that in this way, it becomes “difficult for alternatives to be developed, and so easy for tentative attempts at alternative ways of doing things to be crushed”. What Massey (2006) calls the “geographical imagination” is threatened.

Teachers and theatre artists alike have spoken about the possibility that live performance in which bodies come together in one shared space, as opposed to digital or recorded media, allows students to actively engage as spectators and to contribute to that which is created. The physical proximity and implication of the audience in the performance fosters a more active kind of partnership and a deeper connection to the piece. The particular pace, artistic and technical elements of theatre demand a unique kind of participation. Due to its particular spatial and temporal conditions, the theatre audience is required to exercise their imaginations, collaborate

and communicate, and surrender individual control over what and how they observe and experience. In this way, students are pushed to encounter the unfamiliar, not only in the world of the play or in the house of the theatre, but within themselves.

### **Encountering the Unfamiliar**

“To meet” is “to assemble for a common purpose” or “to encounter”. The latter definition is most commonly used to imply unexpected or novel situations. “To meet” also means “to face directly or without avoidance”, “to collide with” or “to come together in opposition or conflict”. In this way, meeting is about uniting, but not necessarily comfortably or uniformly. And there are still further definitions: “to meet” also means “to compromise” or “to meet halfway”. Meeting, then, is not about sameness at all, but about coming together and communicating through difference.

The last definition of meeting that I encountered and the one that I find to be most appropriate to the research is that of “receiving”. To be received or to be welcomed is literally to be “well met”. YPT demonstrates the reconceptualization of space that Massey (1994; 2003; 2006; 2010) demands in the way in which it invites the unexpected. Following Massey (1994), I conceive of the theatre space as an “articulated moment” or a “meeting place” (p. 154) in which social relations play and intersect. It not only welcomes difference, but forces its audience members, its students and teachers, to encounter it as well. It is not a homogeneous space, but one that is full of internal conflicts and connections. Judith Slater (2004) argues that in order to open up spaces and change them, collaboration is vital: “Only with others is there the opportunity for the free possibility of choice” (as cited in Callejo Pérez, Fain & Slater, p. 45). YPT is this kind of collaborative space in which a “simultaneity of stories” is shared and produced (Massey, 2003, Multiplicity section, para. 1).

In this way of working in and with public space, YPT offers its participants the opportunity to cultivate an active, open and perhaps even “geographical imagination” within the walls of the theatre and beyond. As a result of the theatre that is created there, YPT explicitly demonstrates that it, like other public places, is a dynamic and always unfinished space, open to possibility and full of potential.

### **Spatial Theory as it Intersects with Curriculum and Education**

This brings us to the second theoretical tenet within which I frame this research. The collection of theory I have chosen to mobilize for this study includes the work of several curriculum theorists, primarily John Dewey (1938), Madeleine Grumet (1989) and Kevin Kumashiro (2000; 2001), with secondary support drawn from the work of Philip Auslander (1999), Peggy Phelan (1993), Eugenio Barba (1993), as well as Paolo Freire (1994), Jonathan Neelands (1984, 2010), Christopher Robbins (2008) and Maxine Greene (1995). In connection with the aforementioned spatial theory of Doreen Massey (1994; 2003; 2006; 2010), by bringing together their particular theories as they pertain to experiential learning, aesthetic education and hope, I have been able to make sense of the data.

### **Experiential Education**

In *Experience and Education* (1938), Dewey asserts that the educator must “select those things within the range of existing experience that have the promise and potentiality of presenting new problems which... will expand the area of further experience” (Dewey, p. 75). Dewey (1938) writes of a kind of pedagogy that builds from what is already known and one that continually provides students with rich opportunities to connect existing knowledge to what is yet to be discovered. Applying this concept of continual growth out of actual experience is a theory of education that is grounded in the lived experiences of students. Dewey (1938) also

explains that knowledge must be understood “not as a fixed possession but as an agency and instrumentality for opening new fields which make new demands” (p. 75). Following Massey’s progressive conception of the world and of particular places as “processes” (1994, p. 155), Dewey (1938) visualizes teaching and learning in this way: as an open-ended, dynamic and “continuous spiral” (p. 79).

Grumet (1989) theorizes similarly about reconceptualising the essence of knowledge and how this might be beneficial to students: “Working through the medium of the curriculum, the accomplished teacher is able to express knowledge about the world and to make that knowledge open to the participation and interpretation of students” (p. 16). This connects to Kumashiro’s (2000) claim that all knowledge is partial, so the goal of education should not be final knowledge, “but disruption, dissatisfaction, and the desire for more change” (p. 34) in what is already known.

This understanding of teaching and learning is held by many in the field of education, particularly educators in the arts. In reflecting on my empirical observations and in speaking with teachers and those at YPT, the value of the live theatre performance in connection with this kind of experiential learning has come out as a strong theme. My research participants have emphasized that this event, in all that it includes, is rife with opportunities for students to make connections, to challenge what they already know, to extend their thinking and thus, to broaden their experience of the world.

Dewey (1938), in his analysis of education as a social process, claims that in order for students to have educative experiences that prompt “the desire to go on learning” (p. 48), teachers must “survey the capacities and needs of the particular set of individuals... and must at the same time arrange the conditions which provide the subject-matter or content for experiences

that satisfy these needs and develop these capacities” (p. 58). Kumashiro (2000), on the other hand, states that the “assumption that educators can accurately assess the needs of their students” (p. 31) is problematic. He argues that “teaching involves a great degree of unknowability” (p. 31). I understand this to mean the importance of being cognizant, as educators, of our own implication and position in the production, reproduction and dissemination of dominant and marginalizing discourses and how this affects our conceptions of ourselves and our students (Kumashiro, 2000). As a possible way to address this, Kumashiro (2000) suggests that rather than making assumptions about what students need, educators should attend to changing how students learn. This goes back to his claim that all knowledge is partial and, in concert with Dewey (1938), that knowledge is “a means toward the always-shifting end/goal of learning more” (p. 34). In this vein, teachers must focus on instilling first in themselves and then in their students a desire for change and a will to disrupt what is already known in order to construct new knowledge (Kumashiro, 2000; 2001). Engaging in teaching and learning with this attitude requires both students and teachers to commit to a willingness to wade through the unknown toward still uncertain and unfamiliar possibilities of what might be.

As mentioned previously, it has emerged in this research that a disruption of space and, in particular, entrance and engagement in an aesthetic space, opens teachers and students up to new ways of being together and in the world.

### **Collaboration and Change**

These three curriculum theorists’ intersect with the idea that learning is lifelong, unending and ever-changing. This perspective of education as process-oriented, rather than simply a means to an end, highlights the importance of the contributions of students and teachers alike. Grumet (1989) underscores the danger of a transmissive type of education: “When the

teacher is seen as the conservator, custodian, or dispenser of knowledge, pedagogy melts into passivity. Life as we know it ceases” (p. 16).

Rather than a one-way diffusion of knowledge, the process of education as it is imagined by these theorists becomes dynamic and discursive: it is a “meeting place” (Massey, 1994, p. 154) of a variety of experiences in which education “is not an end in itself, but a means toward the always-shifting end/goal of learning more” (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 34). With this conceptualization of learning as inherently continuous and utterly reliant on a multiplicity of interruptions and interpretations, I think that many students benefit. As interrupters and interpreters, students and teachers might become more hopeful, because they are better able to see their own and each other’s necessity and agency in the process of education.

### **Active Engagement**

Many drama scholars and performance theorists have written about the concept of liveness in theatre, particularly in relation to or rather, in opposition to media or art forms that are recorded and reproduced. Philip Auslander (1999), an American performance theorist, explores the ways in which theatre has been affected by mediatization, particularly the growth and ubiquity of television. This is an important consideration for this research, in part because many of the audience members who attend this theatre are of a culture and generation who cannot remember a world that is not highly mediatized. In his book *Liveness* (1999), Auslander argues that television has subsumed theatre by appropriating and enlisting that which made it unique. Since its inception, television in particular has competed with theatre in its level of intimacy. According to Auslander: “Television’s intimacy was seen as a function of its immediacy—the close proximity of viewer to event that it enables—and the fact that events from outside are transmitted into the viewer’s home” (1999, p. 16). While I appreciate the connection



that Auslander (1999) makes between intimacy and closeness, what I think he fails to take into account is the importance of proximity, not simply to that which is presented, but to other bodies within a shared space.

Intimacy usually refers to a close bond or a strong affinity that has been created between two or more people. It is the possible result of deep interaction between living beings. Television and film allow for closeness between audience members, but it is certainly not a requirement, whereas in order to be enacted, theatre demands the immediate and close proximity of actual audience members and performers in a single, shared space. Eugenio Barba (1992) also writes about the subject of liveness and mediatisation, but with a particular focus on the relationship between the performers and the audience members. He claims that at its best, live theatre should be the creation of something that “cannot be possessed either by those who do it or by those who see it” (Barba, 1992, p. 78). It must be held in-between. For these reasons and others, which I will subsequently outline, theatre has the capacity to foster a deeper level of engagement.

As I have said, liveness in the context of theatre is in reference to the fact that what is created is contingent upon the presence and action of living beings. It is due to this liveness and the dynamic nature of this art form that every theatre performance is a unique and a dynamic happening. American, feminist performance theorist Peggy Phelan (1993) argues that: “Performance’s only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations *of* representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance” (p. 146). Liveness in theatre, then, intimates the inimitable, the changeable, the human, and perhaps most importantly, the collective.

Unlike music, visual art, film or television, theatre, except for drama with self-spectatorship, cannot exist without a live audience. As I have mentioned above, I have repeatedly

noticed the necessity and power of the audience in my observations of the performances at YPT. These observations have been corroborated by interviews with my research participants who have spoken about the high level of engagement and active participation this experience demands of their students.

Theatre is utterly dependent on its participants' engagement with their own and with each other's imaginations. British novelist Philip Pullman asserts that unlike film, theatre cannot actually make everything happen. It is limited and, according to Pullman, it is precisely these material and spatial limitations that "allow the audience to share in the acting" (as cited in Reason, 2010, p. 15). Theatre requires the audience to pretend, to willingly suspend their disbelief, to take part in the making of the world of the play. Audience members must become part of the performance, in order for it to work.

Building on this, Jonathan Neelands (2010) writes that just as the powerfulness of theatre is in the shared ownership of the piece between the audience and the performers, it is also in the intersection of the real and the imaginary: the strength of its form "is neither in our own subjective experience nor in the play – it emerges through the dialectic and dialogue between" (Theatre as mirror; using God's scissors section, para. 17), a result of the simultaneous fictive and actual, individual and communal worlds in which it takes place. As a result, what is created is always in flux and demands a willingness from its participants to meet with the unknown, to share in dialogue together and, in doing so, to enter into and take part in creating a world of possibility.

With this understanding of teaching and learning through the event of live performance, the practice of hope becomes all the more important. As I have outlined above, engaging with the aesthetic facilitates entrance into the unfamiliar and the possible, with the place of the theatre as

a place in which to bridge different viewpoints, identities, communities and experiences, so as to imagine together and create new ways of knowing and being in the world.

### **Aesthetic Education, Imagination and the Practice of Hope**

Paolo Freire (1994) argues that hope “is an ontological need” (p. 8). Echoing Freire (1994), Zygmunt Bauman (2004), asserts that without hope, that is, “the ability to construct and cast visions of different, more desirable futures – a peculiarly human capacity, we cease to be human” (as cited in Robbins, 2008, p. 169). Following Frye (as cited in O’Grady & French, 2000; as cited in Neelands, 2010), Giroux (1999) suggests that the purpose of education is “to recognize the benefit and limitations of reality in order to enter into critical dialogue with it and transform it when necessary” (1999, p. 55). In this way, hope is intimately tied to aesthetic education.

Freire (1994) asserts that hope, though in and of itself insufficient in making social change, is necessary: “The revelatory, gnosiological practice of education does not itself affect the transformation of the world: but it implies it” (p. 31). A dream and picture of a different world are necessary to action, just as it is requisite for the “artisan first to have in his or her head a design, a ‘conjecture’, of what he or she is about to make” (p. 39). In the way in which an artist brings a personal concept into being for public appreciation, Christopher Robbins (2008) defines hope as “the composite of private dreams translated into public visions and commitments, one that expands human possibility” (p. 168). He maintains that hope “inherently has a critical edge... by claiming publicly that a different type of human existence is possible” (p. 168). It is this public and collaborative creativity that strengthens the practice of hope.

Drama, in particular, is intensely social and cooperative art form, not only in its presentation, but also in process. When students engage in theatre, particularly as audience

members, they have the opportunity to practice hope by seeing new visions of the world in which they live, reimagining it and helping to recreate it into something new. Performance is particularly valuable to cultivating a sense of possibility, because of the physical and sensory immersion into another world it allows.

The theatrical event “is designated a special and limited place and time” (Neelands, as cited in Saxton & Miller, 1998, p. 150). The world of theatre is created through a physically shared experience. “Theatre (unlike other art processes such as writing, painting, music) occurs in time *and* space” (Neelands, 1984, p. 71), but these categories are made malleable by the aesthetic experience:

Once a group enters the imaginary world of drama, the normal rules of time become suspended. Time becomes flexible and passages of time can be organized in a variety of ways to suit the group’s purposes... Drama should move... slowly enough to allow the material suggested by the present to be fully explored and understood. The effect of such a way of working is to offer... an understanding that is empathic rather than intellectual.  
(p. 70)

As audience members, we are able, not only to think about what could be, but to actually enact it and to discover what this new world would sound, look, taste and feel like. Theatre has the potential to demonstrate “both through its treatment of the world and through its means of production that the social, educational and political structures we work within are capable of being reimagined and transformed by creative human action” (Neelands, 2010). Northrop Frye (1963) asserts that “The fundamental job of the imagination in ordinary life, then, is to produce, out of the society we have to live in, a vision of the society we want to live in” (as cited in Neelands, 2010, Theatre as dynamo; man is a helper to man section, para. 8). As students and

teachers, we must learn to dream. As Freire (1994) writes, conceiving of the world “as *opportunity* and not *determinism*... would be unintelligible without the *dream*, just as the *deterministic* conception feels uncomfortable, in its incompatibility with this understanding and therefore denies it” (p. 91).

This connects back to Kumashiro’s (2000) assertion that what is essential in education is a desire for change and the courage to disrupt what is, in order to construct what might be. In this way, it also aligns with Massey’s (2006) argument for the importance of cultivating a “geographical imagination” in which diversity and alterity are fostered. Dewey (1938) also emphasizes that to learn, is not to know, but to imagine. Experiences in education, such as those provided at YPT, help students to understand knowledge as imagination: “as an agency and instrumentality for opening new fields which make new demands” (p. 75).

Maxine Greene (1995) writes that when we extend our lived experiences into the aesthetic, we cultivate hope:

When we see more and hear more, it is not only that we lurch... if only for a moment, out of the familiar and the taken-for-granted but that new avenues for choosing and for action may open in our experience; we may gain a sudden sense of new beginnings, that is, we may take an initiative in the light of possibility. (p. 123)

These theories of hope pertain to aesthetic education and to pedagogy and, in particular, to the aforementioned spatial and curriculum theories. It is the collection of these theories that have allowed me to make sense of my empirical research. I purposefully conclude this chapter with an analysis of hope, as it is my belief that this theoretical consideration is particularly valuable to the practice of research in drama education. Research, I have learned, like the work of theatre

artists and teachers, requires a willingness to trust possibility, rather than probability. Instead of the pursuit of knowledge, this research has been an exercise in imagination.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Methodology**

In this exploratory ethnographic study, I have drawn from the work of many education scholars and social science researchers in order to conceptualize a particular methodology to employ. Specifically, this research builds upon and is illuminated by the work of Patti Lather (1991; as cited in Gallagher, 2008), Jane Gaskell (as cited in Gallagher, 2008), Kathleen Gallagher (2007; 2008), Isabelle Kim (2007), Caroline Fusco (as cited in Gallagher, 2008) and Jo-anne Dillabough (as cited in Gallagher, 2008). These researchers' stories about their respective projects and the various dilemmas they stumbled upon therein have been invaluable in helping me not only to design and implement this study, but also to navigate through a variety of particular challenges that I have encountered in this process of inquiry.

I have met with a number of "methodological dilemmas" (Gallagher, 2008, p. 2) in this research, particularly regarding the location of my research participants; the breadth and depth of my engagement in this study, especially as a participatory observer; the contradiction of anonymity as protection for my research participants; and the purpose of this research, more generally. Finally, how best to represent and disseminate my research, so that it will contribute to the lives of my research participants and to the intersecting spheres in which this study is located, is a dilemma I find myself grappling with and one that, in future, will require greater attention.

In this chapter, I will detail how I discovered and worked through each of these challenges. While these dilemmas have been both surprising and difficult, following the aforementioned researchers who have gone before me, I have chosen to accept them as unanticipated, yet serendipitous gifts. Like Dillabough (as cited in Gallagher, 2008), I have

embraced these challenges as opportunities for “methodological intervention” (p. 187) through which new avenues for learning open up.

### **Arriving Here**

#### **Drama Education and Research Experience**

I applied to the MA program in Curriculum Studies and Teacher Development in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at OISE because I wanted to conduct a study that would contribute to the existing body of research on how theatre can transform given environments and contribute to both individual and collective development. I had an interest in theatre spaces, because of my academic and co-curricular experiences as a student in the Department of Drama at Queen’s University. In particular, my education as a student in Judith Fisher’s Theatre History class and later, as her teaching assistant for this same class, I developed a keen interest in the complex history, diversity and uses of theatre spaces worldwide. This interest intensified when, in the last two years of my undergraduate studies, I was given the opportunity to assist Natalie Rewa in her research on scenography regarding Richard Wagner’s *Ring Cycle*, particularly the Canadian Opera Company’s 2006 production at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts. As part of this research, I coded libretti for spatial elements and examined the construction of new opera houses worldwide, including their architecture, location and accessibility. This work sparked my curiosity about how social space affects who experiences theatre, as well as the ways in which space can be manipulated in the creation of theatre.

#### **Teaching and Learning**

Alongside my studies in Drama, as a Concurrent Education student, I also had the privilege of completing teaching placements in a variety of schools and classrooms. In these



placements, I noticed the creative ways in which teachers and students moved within and beyond their limited and confining school spaces in order to develop and create theatre. In the final year of my B.Ed., one of my favourite placements was with a group of “at risk” students who had been (re)moved to an alternative school. This school had no theatre spaces or programming, but during my short time there, my Associate Teacher gave me the opportunity to do some drama work with the students. I was struck not only by how much the space affected our work together, but also by the ways in which our engagement with drama had an effect on the space. During this time, Jenn Stephenson, one of my professors in the Department of Drama, gave me a copy of Kathleen Gallagher’s *The Theatre of Urban: Youth and Schooling in Dangerous Times* (2007), which turned me on to the influence of social space on schools and pushed me to think critically about how the public spaces of schools, particularly those that are constructed as unsafe or criminal, might be positively affected by having students and teachers engage in drama education.

### **Getting Lost**

In the summer of 2010, I had the privilege of travelling to Europe with some friends. Having just completed a five-year Concurrent Education degree and in anticipation of beginning this program in September, ideas about theatre, social space and education were constantly bouncing around in my heart and in my head. While we were travelling, my particular interest in space, especially in relation to education, developed even more deeply. Everywhere we went, I was amazed at the creative manipulation and aesthetic appreciation of public space. On a solitary mission for a standing-room ticket at the Vienna State Opera which, despite my previous research experience, remains my first and only visit to the opera, I began thinking about access to public space and mobility within it. Our visit to the Pinkas Synagogue which houses the

collection of the Terezin children's drawings illuminated for me the ways in which public space can build peace by providing meeting places for aesthetic and critical education. When I reflect on this trip, I am still overwhelmed by the ways in which we were received in each of the nine countries we visited. I remain cognizant of the fact that our reception on this trip was not mere coincidence, but had much to do with our complex identities as young, able-bodied, middle-class women with the luxury of Canadian passports. While we were most often met with acceptance, I should say that our experiences arriving, departing and moving through each of these places were complicated, unusual and often uneasy. Not a day went by that we did not wander, get lost or find ourselves somewhere unexpected. At the time, I was both perplexed and delighted by the paradoxical sense of total unrest and complete belonging I felt travelling so far away from home.

In reading Patti Lather (1991; as cited in Gallagher, 2008), I have since come to realize that this journey marked the beginning of a new kind of learning for me and one that would continue in my MA studies this year. In quite literally "getting lost" (Lather, as cited in Gallagher, 2008, p. 225), I began to appreciate the unexpected and to welcome the unknown. Rather than accepting knowledge as definitive and concluding, I began to open up to learning as a process of disruption (Lather, as cited in Gallagher, 2008). This trip has been invaluable to my education as a student, drama teacher and educational researcher. It has particularly shaped my understanding of research as a constant unravelling and has pushed me to take this particular thesis project as an opportunity to learn, rather than to know.

### **Finding YPT**

Since my acceptance into the MA program in Curriculum Studies and Teacher Development, I have been in regular contact with my thesis supervisor, Dr. Kathleen Gallagher. From the beginning, she has listened carefully as I have spoken about my past experiences and

interests, in order to help me discern this particular study. Kathleen has pushed me to read widely and to think broadly on the subject of research in drama education. I knew what kind of work I was interested in undertaking in my time at OISE, but it was not until September that, with her help, I established exactly where and how I would be conducting my research.

On September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2010, one week after having started my studies at OISE, I met with Kathleen to talk about my ever-developing interest in the relationship between theatre, education and social space. During this meeting, she sent an email to Karen Gilodo, the Educational Services Coordinator at YPT, explaining to her who I was and how well-suited for each other she thought we might be. At an earlier date, Karen had expressed to Kathleen that YPT was interested in engaging in research. That day began our research partnership and placed YPT at the heart of my thesis research. Since the inception of this project, everyone at YPT has been exceptionally open and welcoming to having research conducted on their company and in their theatre space. Karen, in particular, has worked closely with me in this research and I am grateful to her for her patience, support and thoughtfulness during the whole of this process. All of the teacher participants in this study have demonstrated an interest in learning about what it is exactly that I am exploring. I am very appreciative of their generosity and curiosity throughout this research project. It has been a pleasure to learn together.

As I have previously explained, as a result of my teaching experiences with young people in both traditional and alternative educational settings, in applying to OISE, I was initially interested in investigating how the creation of theatre affects particularly criminalized educational environments. It may seem somewhat strange, then, that YPT has become my thesis research site, but as Gallagher points out in *The Theatre of Urban: Youth and Schooling in Dangerous Times* (2007), “in the current political moment of *homeland* and *otherland* safety and

security, there is unprecedented attention being paid to the containment, movement, and dispersal of people in public spaces; the manifestation of fear and the priority of ‘security’ has never before been so acute in public schools” (p. 14). As Canada’s premiere theatre for young audiences, YPT is a social space that is deeply affected by the culture of schools. YPT is strongly influenced by the current obsession with the control and movement of youth in public spaces. For this reason and many others, it has turned out to be the perfect research partner for this study.

### **Ethnographic Research**

This research methodology is informed by ethnographic studies in education. Ethnography can be identified as a “methodological orientation... that emphasises the importance of studying at *first hand* what people do and say in particular contexts” with the aim “to understand people’s perspectives” over a lengthy period of time (Hammersley, 2006, p. 4). The roots of ethnographic research lie in the discipline of anthropology, particularly social anthropology in which the purpose is to learn about human culture in such a way that acknowledges the mutual construction of this kind of research. Therefore, an ethnographic analysis of culture is not “an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning” (Geertz, 1973, p. 5).

Following this position toward qualitative inquiry, educational ethnographer Wendy Luttrell (2000) argues that “social science research demands a distinction between researcher and researched, observer and observed” (p. 515), but that these are not necessarily fixed or clear differences and they need not engender research relationships that are marked by “domination and submission, or idealization and devaluation, or detachment and (over) involvement” (p. 515). Instead, good ethnographic researchers, argues Luttrell (2000), must strive to name and appreciate working within these tensions by practicing reflexivity, which requires “sustaining

multiple and sometimes opposing emotions, keeping alive contradictory ways of theorizing the world, and seeking compatibility, not necessarily consensus” (p. 516).

Ethnographers not only face tension in interpersonal positionality, but also with regard to context. Martyn Hammersley (2006) argues that choosing an ethnographic research site is “arbitrary, in the sense that a host of different stories could be told about any situation, each one placing it in a different temporal and spatial context... ethnography is simply one means among others for telling stories about the social world” (p. 8). I am acutely aware that this research is the result of my own subjectivities, approach to research and the theoretical framework with which I have chosen to understand what I have learned. Furthermore, ethnographers are charged with the task of constructing an analysis that connects, to varying degrees, the local to the general (Luttrell, 2000; Hammersley, 2006). While there is a focus on detail and on the particular, ethnography, especially those that align with critical and feminist research standpoints, strives to speak more broadly. In this way, the work of ethnographers become expressly personal and, therefore, political. I remember my supervisor, Kathleen, saying to me early on this year that social science researchers often “make much of a little”. In this work, I have endeavoured to make this particular research speak more broadly while, at the same time, attending to that which makes it unique.

Ethnographic research presents an ambivalent challenge. The generative potential that comes in recognizing and working this ambivalence is partly why I was drawn to conducting ethnographic research for this project. Ambivalence can be defined as an “uncertainty or fluctuation, especially... by a simultaneous desire to say or do... opposite or conflicting things”. In researching the etymology of the word “ambivalence”, I was pleasantly surprised to discover that the second part of the word is rooted in the meaning for strength. Despite its historical sense,

this word carries with it contemporary connotations of hesitation or passivity. In this research, I have come to understand ethnography's characteristic uncertainty as one of strength, with hesitation, not as weakness, but as the power to make connections and operate in the in-between, rather than foreclose the possibilities allowed by way of ethnographic research in favour of clear, concrete conclusions.

Qualitative research such as this approach to ethnography is especially apt, I think, for research in the field of drama education and, in particular, live performance, because like much theatre, it thrives in simultaneity and disrupts the idea of a single truth. Ethnography, like theatre and education, is about learning about how multiple truths intersect, contradict and strengthen one another. Ethnographic inquiry also seemed particularly appropriate to my thesis research site, YPT, as it is a place which is both naturally in flux and sturdily grounded. Over the course of a season, eight different shows are performed by various companies and every day, hundreds of new students and teachers enter into the space. At the same time, YPT has, for decades, been a trusted Toronto institution and a place where grandparents who attended the theatre when they were young now bring their grandchildren.

### **Young People's Theatre**

As space has emerged as a central component of this research project, I think it is important to describe some of the particular characteristics of the theatre at which I conducted my empirical research. The theatre is located in downtown Toronto at 165 Front Street East in the neighbourhood of St. Lawrence, which is currently a popular residential and commercial neighbourhood. Before becoming a theatre, the YPT building housed the horses that pulled the city's streetcars, operated as an electrical generating plant, and also acted as a warehouse (Young People's Theatre [YPT], 2011). This area, formerly known as Old Town, was originally the heart

of the city, with the first City Hall erected here, but in the early 1900s, due to the commercialization of the Yonge Street area, St. Lawrence was neglected and unused (City Planning Division, Heritage Preservation Services, City of Toronto, 2011). Its revitalization began with the restoration of St. Lawrence Hall in Canada's centennial year (2011).

About 10 years later, YPT purchased the building, the last one standing of its kind in that area. Having converted it into a usable theatre space, and specifically one for young audiences, it opened its 1977-1978 season in a newly renovated building (Doolittle, 1979). YPT is located on the corner of a block and is a large, square brick building. Inside, there is a kind of circular, labyrinth-like feel to the space, as it retains certain unique architectural elements from its many former lives, including spherical ramps that were necessary in order for the horses to move up and down in the building. The main performance space can be found on the second floor of the building. It is a 468-seat proscenium-style theatre with a raised stage that is equipped with full theatrical lighting and sound systems (YPT, 2011).

One level up, there is a smaller, black box style studio theatre that accommodates 115 people in pull-out bleacher seating (YPT, 2011). It triples as a classroom, rehearsal hall and theatre space. All of the production shops, including carpentry, props and wardrobe, are self-contained and located onsite in the building, which allows YPT to collaboratively build full production shows and to assist neighbouring companies in creating their own productions. Having ownership of a permanent and well-established performance space allows this company to accommodate large audiences and to focus on high production and aesthetic values, as well as to develop and offer a variety of supplementary programming in addition to its professional productions. This permanence does not excuse YPT from facing the same difficulties that all

theatres in Toronto must confront and, as a TYA company, funding and budgetary restrictions are a particular challenge.

On April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2001, YPT announced a gift of 1.5 million dollars, received from Kevin Kimsa, in honour of his mother, Lorraine. In acknowledgement of this donation, YPT was renamed Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for Young People (YPT, 2011). This donation permitted the theatre, not only to survive a time of great economic difficulty, but to flourish. This contribution, among others, fostered the theatre's continual growth (2011). One decade later, on March 22<sup>nd</sup> of this year, it was revealed that LKTYP would be, as of July 1<sup>st</sup>, returning to its original name: Young People's Theatre (2011). As someone without a previous connection to the theatre, I had not realized just how contentious an issue this name change has been. Part of what makes YPT unique is its longstanding history and, it seems, its title is an expression of the spirit in which it was founded and part of what its patrons hold dear about this place. YPT continues to express its gratitude to the Kimsa family for their generosity and continued support, but there is a general consensus at the theatre and even more strongly by those in the Toronto theatre community, in particular by public patrons of YPT, that this return to its original name is a welcome change.

Apart from its title, YPT has undergone much change, but its focus and attentiveness to its unique audience has remained paramount in its 46 year history. Founder Susan Rubes carved out a special place for TYA in Canada and worked hard to produce theatre of the highest quality for young people, a challenge that has been undertaken by the theatre's subsequent leaders (YPT, 2011). With each new artistic directorship, Rubes' vision has changed and expanded. Richard Ouzounian succeeded Rubes as Artistic Director and, in 1980, Peter Moss, formerly at the Stratford Festival, spent 11 years at YPT and took the lead in renovating the building, so that the space could accommodate the theatre's growing audience (Charlebois & Nothof, 2011). "The



1991-1992 season saw Maja Ardal take over as Artistic Director. A well-known stage and television actress, she brought with her several seasons of involvement with YPT as actor, director, and Associate Artistic Director” (YPT, 2011, History section, para. 9). She continued the theatre’s development by introducing new playwriting workshops for professional playwrights, as well as young people, forming and expanding the Drama School., and creating a Community Advisory Group (YPT, 2011). Following Ardal, Pierre Tetrault took over as YPT’s Artistic Director until 2002 (Charlebois & Nothof, 2011). Currently, with Allen MacInnis as Artistic Director and Hugh Neilson as Managing Director, the theatre continues to grow and develop in the spirit of Rubes’ vision. YPT “is regarded as a treasure, and its caring for teachers and students has reached legendary proportions while the quality of its productions has thrilled its young clientele” (Pitman, 1998, p. 236).

“The company’s theatrical productions are intended to open young minds and hearts and validate the common experiences and challenges of today’s children, who are growing up in an increasingly complex world” (Swartz, 2003, p. 204). Every year, over 150, 000 people, primarily students and their teachers, come from different areas of the city and province to attend live, professional theatre at YPT (Swartz, 2003, p. 203). YPT plays to children from 3-18 years and predominantly those aged 7-12 (p. 204). Each season centres on a particular theme. YPT offers three types of performance: firstly, classical children's literature from around the world; secondly, contemporary Canadian works; and finally, theatre for youth by youth (YPT, 2011). YPT creates original productions and also presents work from other Canadian TYA companies. As Canada’s largest TYA company and Toronto’s oldest not-for-profit theatre, it is an influential institution, not only in this city, but on the world stage (Pitman, 1998, p. 236). Now in its 46th year, it continues to evolve.

YPT is a special institution among the theatre community in this city and elsewhere. Its distinctiveness, the data suggest, comes from its high level of professionalism, strong reputation, unique work environment, and keen expertise. There is no question that YPT is a company that contributes to Toronto's artistic and cultural life and operates at the same level as Canada's leading professional theatre companies, TYA and otherwise. What is interesting, however, is what this research reveals with regard to the reasons why YPT has developed into such an expert institution, as well as what this distinction means for the theatre and its principal patrons: students and their teachers.

### **Research Methods**

Methodologically, "one of the central beliefs of ethnography is that multiple methods should be used in any investigation" (Walford, 2009, p. 118). As such, I have used a variety of research methods, specifically interviews, surveys and participatory observation, and approaches to analysis in order to learn about the culture of the theatre and the experiences of the teachers who choose to attend performances here. Considering the magnitude of YPT, in my initial proposal, I had planned to interview teachers, YPT staff members, as well as those who work at neighbouring theatres. For several reasons, this plan changed. First of all, in the course of this research, it has become clear to me that there is a wide breadth of knowledge, experience and material at YPT itself. As I had no previous relationship with the theatre, this was not something I had anticipated. However, in discovering this, I learned that to look beyond this would require me to collect and manage an unfeasible amount of research data. It might also create a less focused study and, as this research is in the tradition of ethnography, an emphasis on contextual and situated knowledge is important. Additionally, in designing this research project, I had not considered the transitory nature of theatre workers at most theatres in Toronto. The majority of

theatres in this city are comprised of a combination of permanent staff members and contractual workers. As a result, many of my participants, though employed by YPT at the time of the research, work concurrently or additionally for other companies both in and outside of the industry.

### **Recruitment and Surveys**

Teachers were located primarily by way of a survey, as well as through snowball sampling. With the help of Karen, as well as Megan Brady and Shawn McCarthy at the Box Office, I developed three questions to be added to the general questionnaires that they distribute using SurveyMonkey (<http://www.surveymonkey.com/>) to teachers who have attended the theatre with their classes. These questions were added at the end of the survey for two of the shows in YPT's current season: "Routes" and "A Year with Frog and Toad". We chose these two shows because they were aimed at very different audiences. "Routes" is more of an issue-based play and is geared toward students in grades 9 through 12, while "A Year with Frog and Toad" is a musical aimed at children in pre-school through to grade 5. "Routes" was presented in the studio theatre, while "A Year with Frog and Toad" played on the main stage. The questions, as they appeared on the survey, are as follows:

- 1) What do you find to be the value of bringing your students to this particular theatre?
- 2) What is unique or special about this experience for you and your students?
- 3) Are you willing to be contacted by a graduate student conducting research on theatre for young audiences?

30 teachers responded to the surveys and of these 30, 18 answered affirmatively to the third question. I analysed these 18 teachers' responses to the questions and I then contacted them via e-mail and explained in more detail my research and their potential involvement in it. I

requested an interview with each of them. Ten responded and I conducted in person interviews with each of them. The remaining four teachers were located by way of snowball sampling. I met with Kathleen to discuss what, if any, follow up I should undertake for the teachers who had yet to respond to my e-mails. She suggested that though they might not have the time for an interview, they may still be interested in participating in the research in another way. Thinking this could be an opportunity to include another method with which to collect and interpret the data and thus, bolster my efforts toward valid and rigorous research (Lather, 1986), I sent an e-mail to the remaining eight teachers soliciting a different kind of participation from them: rather than engaging in an interview, I asked if they would be interested in corresponding via e-mail to a few questions on some of the main themes that have come out of the other teacher interviews. Unfortunately, I did not hear back from any of these teachers.

Still, I cannot be anything but thrilled by the level of participation from teacher participants. When Kathleen and I were discerning my research design and, in particular, discussing how to go about recruiting teacher participants, we anticipated that at best, five teachers might be willing and able to participate in an interview. As a teacher who understands the demands of the profession, I imagined how I might have responded to such a survey. I have been both surprised and delighted at the high level of interest and participation from these teachers.

## **Interviews**

Between January 2010 and June 2011, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 14 teachers and 50 theatre artists and staff members who work at or with YPT. Participants were provided with a general overview of the research focus prior to meeting. All but one of these interviews was performed in person: many at the theatre, some in coffee shops, workplaces and

homes, and still others at schools. Most interviews were conducted individually, but in one case, I spoke with two of the teachers at once. The interviews ranged from 25 to 60 minutes, with the majority lasting about 35 minutes. I recorded all of the interviews with a cassette recorder and then manually transcribed these interviews verbatim, except in the case of the one interview which was conducted by way of e-mail and phone communication.

### **Participatory Observation**

In addition to the aforementioned surveys and interviews, participatory observation has comprised a large part of my research with YPT, and is one of the most valuable methods in my ethnographic research design. From September 2010 to June 2011, I have had the privilege of observing and participating, to varying degrees, in a variety of activities at YPT. As part of these observations, I have taken extensive field notes and engaged in informal interviews with teachers, staff and theatre artists.

From September to December, I engaged with YPT and, in particular, with Karen, in a research-partnership consultation to discern the research design and focus of the project. I spent some time at the theatre, particularly in observations of rehearsals and of the Drama School, though I did not really immerse myself in extended observation until January 2011. From the beginning of January to the beginning of June, I spent, on average, approximately 50 hours at the theatre each month. Other than my observations of the Drama School, which took place regularly on Saturday mornings, the days and times I spent at the theatre fluctuated according to rehearsal and performance schedules, workshop dates and interviewee availability.

#### **Rehearsals and performances.**

I have observed rehearsals for four of this season's shows: "A Year with Frog and Toad", "The Big League", "i think i can" and "As You Puppet". As YPT both presents and produces

plays, I have had the opportunity to observe only those shows that were produced by YPT. These rehearsals have been wide-ranging, including read-throughs of the plays, initial rehearsals, technical rehearsals, and dress rehearsals.

I have also attended several performances of every show this season, including the four aforementioned shows, as well as “The Invisible Girl”, “Routes”, “Alice in Wonderland”, “The Shape of a Girl” and the theatre’s youth ensemble’s “Breaking Away”. I have attended weekday morning and afternoon performances with audiences comprised mostly of students and teachers, weekend shows with public audiences made up primarily of families, as well as evening previews designed particularly for teachers. I have attended both English-language and French-language performances. I have observed both full and nearly empty houses in both theatre spaces at YPT.

### **Workshops.**

Following the majority of these performances, I observed post-show question and answer periods (or Q&As), most of which were facilitated by Karen Gilodo and some by Stephen Colella, YPT’s Dramaturge, as well as technical talkbacks (or TOTTs), which were presented by Karen Gilodo, along with YPT’s Head Electrician, Jacquie Lazar; Scott Kitcher, the theatre’s Stage Carpenter; and Aiden Nagle, the Head of Audio. As a way to engage in the research from a different perspective, I have also had the chance to conduct some of the Q&As. Additionally, I have been able to participate in some of the other supplementary programs and workshops offered by YPT, including production workshops, guided tours of the theatre, student workshops both preceding and following performances, as well as teacher workshops.

**The Drama School.**

Finally, I have acted as an observer/volunteer in five different Drama School classes offered on a weekly basis on Saturday mornings by YPT at the theatre itself and at Market Lane Public School. These classes consisted of a JK/SK class, a Grade 1/2 class, a Grade 3/4 class, a Grade 7/8 audition class, and a Grade 9-12 class. Each of these classes was taught by a different member of the YPT Drama School faculty and several classes benefitted from the support of one or two community volunteers.

**Other theatre(s).**

In addition to my participant observation at YPT, I have made a point of attending and writing about my experiences as an audience member at a wide range of professional theatre performances in Toronto over the course of this research. This has been another way to reflectively engage with this research and think about the subject position of 'audience'. These have included, over the course of this year, productions presented at and by Canadian Stage, Theatre Direct, Theatre Passe Muraille, Factory Theatre, Tarragon Theatre, Roseneath Theatre, Soulpepper Theatre, Berkeley Street Theatre, Hart House Theatre, Robert Gill Theatre, Elgin Theatre, Princess of Wales Theatre, Buddies in Bad Times Theatre and Canon Theatre.

As a drama educator and as someone who has, for a long time, been personally involved in creating theatre, this is something I would have done anyway, but for the purposes of this thesis project, I have used my attendance at these productions as a methodological opportunity to analyse and reflect on what might be distinctive about the theatrical space and events at YPT. I will discuss my observations in more detail in the following analysis chapters, but engaging in this particular method has strengthened my belief that, as it is enacted at YPT, the cultural

practice of theatre-going is a unique and an expressly democratic pedagogical event for students and their teachers.

### **Analysis**

Wendy Luttrell (2000) writes about the challenge of operating in between realist and reflexive forms of qualitative research, that is, understanding that the work of an ethnographer is to take what participants say as factual accounts of their experiences and, at the same time, to challenge what they hear in order to learn how these constructed stories might be reflective of a larger culture (pp. 503-504). Following Luttrell (2000), in order to make working within this tension productive, I developed a particular way of coding the data.

“Fieldnotes are the basis on which ethnographies are constructed” (Walford, 2009, p. 117), because they allow researchers to make a lasting record of what they notice to be of importance to the project. Throughout my observations, I have paid particular attention to human interaction in relation to the space. I have been mindful of my own behaviour in this way as well. I have taken extensive, hand-written field notes in my research of each of the aforementioned activities. I have also done both hand-written memos and typed journal entries after each of my interviews.

I have reflected on these empirical research notes and formally analysed them in conjunction with my interview transcripts. I employed NVivo 9 ([http://www.qsrinternational.com/products\\_nvivo.aspx](http://www.qsrinternational.com/products_nvivo.aspx)) as a tool with which to manage and organize my analysis. I coded for main themes across the data, paying particular attention to the sense I make of this data using my theoretical framework. After transcribing the interviews, to the best of my ability, verbatim, I read through each several times. I then looked at each interview again, this time with a particular purpose for each reading. The first time I read an



interview transcript I looked for the main themes that surfaced. The second time, in connection with these larger thematic ideas, I analysed what was said about the spaces of the schools and of YPT, and to the movement and behaviour of students and teachers within these two separate, but interconnected, institutions. During my third reading of each transcript, I looked for particular stories that participants told to illustrate their understandings and beliefs and how these influenced my discernment of the predominant themes that I had identified. Lastly, I looked for patterns – commonalities and tensions – across all of the data, among the 14 teachers and the 50 people who work at or with YPT, and in my fieldnotes.

### **Validity**

In an attempt to move toward catalytic validity (Lather, 1991), early on in the research, I conducted a semi-structured, thematically-based small group interview with Karen Gilodo, the Educational Services Coordinator at YPT, Allen MacInnis, the theatre's Artistic Director, and Mary Ellen MacLean, the director of this season's production of "The Big League". In observations of and in individual conversations with each of these participants, I was struck by the particular way in which they spoke on the subject of the playmaking process at YPT. Rather than keeping my observations private and interviews separate, I hoped that meeting together subsequent to my preliminary analyses might help us to engage in a different kind of knowledge construction together.

In line with Lather's (1991) notion of construct validity, I have also paid close attention to my own subjectivities and to my social location in an effort to remain cognizant of how these affect my perceptions and the ways in which my methodology influences how I create meaning and understanding in this process of inquiry. Following this and with an effort to adhere to Lather's (1991) conception of face validity, I followed up with each participant by

communicating to them the main themes that I took from our interviews, in order to clarify my understandings of what we had shared in the course of research. This is also why I decided to include multiple research methods in my design for this project.

Fusco (as cited in Gallagher, 2008) has reminded me, however, that despite attempts to align one's research with these practices, validity is always variable and incomplete, and therefore must consistently be reframed and reconceived in order to open up new possibilities for learning about and through research, so that it will honour research participants and make a valuable contribution.

### **Methodological Interventions**

#### **Researcher Participation**

My understanding of what it means to engage in participatory observation as a researcher has been both complicated and expanded in the course of this research. Jane Gaskell's (as cited in Gallagher, 2008) reflections on her experiences in research partnerships and Kathleen Gallagher's (2008) reimagining of social science research as a "collaborative science" (p. 79) have helped me to make sense of the challenges in my own research with YPT, particularly with regard to the breadth and depth of this research and specifically in my engagement as a participatory observer.

Gaskell (as cited in Gallagher, 2008) details her journey in coming to embrace "the ambiguity and the shaky methodological premises of research studies that are collaborative, vaguely specified, and risky" (p. 122). In particular, Gaskell outlines her scepticism regarding the necessity of clear agreements in research partnerships. Gaskell argues that in developing a research plan "some ambiguity is not only inevitable but helpful" (p. 123), in part due to the shifting and differential power of participants and researchers in these projects. In sharing

control, researchers must commit to the research, wherever it may go, and be willing to compromise (Gaskell, as cited in Gallagher, 2008). While my project differs in many ways from the one that Gaskell writes of, it connects to the issues she raises, because it is exploratory in its design, and thus open to change. It is both the first research of its kind to be conducted with YPT, as well as my introduction to ethnographic research. Furthermore, this research will not result in an evaluative report, but in an interpretive discussion of the findings. As a comparatively open study, it has been a collectively negotiated process and, as a result, has extended far beyond what I imagined it would.

Much like Gaskell's own project, this study has benefitted from deep, extended engagement at the theatre as well as a circular process of questioning, analysing, reframing and further questioning, in order to learn about the particular environment and culture of YPT (Gaskell, as cited in Gallagher, 2008). With this kind of immersive inquiry, the development of relationships is not only unavoidable, but important, and with these connections come a number of unforeseeable challenges and opportunities. Gaskell has helped me to understand that in this kind of research, expectations, definitions and plans change and that, though often unanticipated, these developments should be welcome. There have been many instances of the unexpected in my research with YPT and, upon reflection, each of these has changed, opened up and contributed to the methodology and to the depth and extension of the findings of this research in unanticipated ways.

### **Participating in the Drama School.**

The most notable example of one of these unanticipated opportunities has been my participant observation in the Drama School. Early on in this study, Karen put me in touch with Isaac Thomas, the Drama School Coordinator at YPT, and with his help, I figured out which

classes I would observe. While it has always been important for me in this research to get a wide-ranging understanding of all that goes on at YPT, the focus of the study remains the live, professional theatre experience and the reasons why teachers choose to bring their students to performances at YPT. For this reason, extensive observations of the Drama School classes did not seem to me to be of vital importance, but as the research has unfolded, I have spent much more time in these classes than I had initially planned.

From the start of this project, Karen expressed to me how strongly she felt about the necessity of participation in observation. She illustrated this point to me with the example that watching people do a physical drama warm-up is very different from actually engaging in an exercise of this kind with them. An emphasis on my participation was something that Isaac made clear to the teachers with whom I would be working, and although my experience in each class was different for a number of reasons, active participation on my part was welcome and encouraged by all of the teachers. As these classes are mainly centred on performance and playmaking, this required me to observe as an audience member, to teach alongside the instructors, and to participate in drama exercises and performances with the students. While I agreed with Karen with respect to the value of participation in observation, I was still unsure that learning about the Drama School was really connected to the core of my research, and I felt somewhat frustrated at the amount of time I would be spending there. Nevertheless, I committed to attend regularly, in part because I would be engaging so deeply with the teachers and their students.

As a teacher, I have some appreciation for how classes and classrooms operate, as well as the particular challenges that both students and teachers encounter. I understand the importance of planning and scheduling, especially when classes are only offered for one hour each week. My

experiences as a teacher candidate made me aware of the importance of reliability and regular interaction in building relationships and creating trust, particularly when you are coming into an established community. I did not want to interrupt these classes, but contribute to them. I am grateful to the teachers and students who welcomed me into their classrooms and allowed me to take part. I felt that in order to reciprocate, it was important for me to attend their classes regularly and to offer my assistance wherever possible.

Gallagher (2008) writes about her own dilemma regarding participant observation in a drama classroom and the methodological shift from observing to understanding that she and her fellow researchers chose to make. By reflecting on early field notes, Gallagher noticed the need to move away from the more traditional focus on seeing and observing in research, in favour of a feminist methodology aligned with listening and understanding. Along with her research assistants, she decided that actually “engaging in drama with the students” (p. 73) was the best way to enact a more dialogical research frame. In the case of my observations at YPT’s Drama School, I also stumbled upon this understanding, though not quite as purposefully: it was in feeling obliged to fully participate in these classes that I realized how valuable this kind of participant observation is to the process of ethnographic research and, more specifically, to the project’s focus. While it took me some time to realize the value of my time spent in these classes, I learned, as I will discuss in greater detail in the following analysis chapters, just how central what takes place at the Drama School is to the whole of my research at YPT. Had I not been pushed to engage so extensively, I would never have discovered this.

### **Broadening my participation.**

Beyond the Drama School, the depth and variety of my participatory observation at YPT has also evolved. In my research plan, my intentions for observation at YPT were broadly

defined. As the focus of my research is the live theatre experience, I knew it would be important to observe actual performances, as well as the spaces in which these take place and the ways in which those who create and take part in these experiences interact with each other and the space before, during and after performances, but much like my experience with the Drama School, what I had not considered was the importance of looking at these contextually and as part of a greater process, which meant paying particular attention to the rehearsals and the Q&As, in addition to the performances themselves.

With Karen's help, I have been able to observe a variety of rehearsals, performances and Q&As. I have also had the opportunity to facilitate several Q&As. Just as observing students perform an exercise is different from actually participating with them, engaging in a Q&A as part of the audience is very different from engaging in the role of facilitator. Occupying both positions in the Q&A has been valuable to this research, as each has allowed me to focus on different elements of this activity. In the following analysis chapters, I will discuss these experiences in greater detail and describe more thoroughly their benefits to the findings of this research. In this chapter, I briefly explain how observing rehearsals and performances, as well as Q&As, has opened me up to a variety of perspectives from which to learn, both my own and others and I will write about how I have dealt with the challenges that have come in occupying these different spaces.

The biggest challenge, but perhaps the greatest opportunity in observing rehearsals and performances has been balancing between the imagined and actual worlds that exist when a play is made: the playworld(s), the "real" world in which we live and the connection between the two. Gallagher (2008) writes about the value of entering into the play world with research participants. She writes about how moments of improvised drama allowed her research team and

the participants with whom they worked to partake in an experience together and to develop a shared context (2008). It also gave them a way of relating to one another that tuned into experiential ways of knowing and improvised methods of communication (2008). I noticed similar benefits in my own research, though my engagement was as an audience member and not as an actor, but I also struggled with being in and between these worlds. Observing rehearsals and performances, my attention would oscillate between the imagined world of the play and the actual world. In a room of such multiplicity, discerning where to focus my observations was sometimes difficult. It has been a constant challenge to simultaneously take note of changes in myself, as well as to pay attention to the shifting dynamics of the people and spaces around me.

Gallagher (2008) calls the kind of social science research she conducted in drama classrooms participatory, in part due to the fact that theatre privileges collectivity and celebrates precariousness. She writes about how one of the most valuable outcomes of engaging in theatre with her co-researchers and their research participants was that it pushed them to turn “away from certainty” (p. 75). In letting my attention fluctuate between such a diversity of things, I embraced the constant dissonance and uncertainty that theatre can incite. This helped me to remain cognizant of the fact that it is not only the imagined world of the play that is created in this way, but also the actual world in which we live. Though Gallagher’s (2008) study differs in many ways from my own, her reflections on the uniqueness of doing ethnographic research in settings in which theatre is created has helped me to embrace the instability that this kind of inquiry not only allows, but provokes, as an opening to focus on the variability of the social environment that is YPT and the possibilities therein.

### **Research Participant Anonymity**

Since the inception of this research project, I have been thinking about the question of anonymity. In designing the protocol for this research project to submit to the Ethics Review Board (or ERO) at the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Toronto, I had to consider the confidentiality of my research participants. In conversation with Kathleen, I came to understand that this would differ depending on the participant. As outlined in my initial protocol submission form:

While ensuring the confidentiality of teachers and their institutions is not a concern, there are limitations with regard to the anonymity of the theatre company participating in this research. While I will strive for anonymity, being Canada's premiere theatre for young audiences, many people in and beyond the industry may be able to identify it. The theatre company is aware of this and finds it acceptable. Again, we will work for anonymity, but the likelihood is low.

The ERO accepted my research design and protocol and I moved forward with this project. It was not until I began interviewing theatre artists and staff members at YPT that I returned to the issue of anonymity. In interviews with YPT employees, I was surprised by the widespread ambivalence about their pseudonyms. Several questioned both the necessity and viability of attempting to keep the identity of the theatre confidential. Many expressed that they were fine with me using their actual name and, as this happened more and more, I began to consider that this response might be pointing to a greater problem.

Isabelle Kim's (2007) problematizing of the equation of anonymity with protection of research participants in her doctoral thesis research has helped me work through this dilemma in my own project. She has pushed me to reconsider my research design and ethics protocol and,



more broadly, to trouble traditional conceptions of what is ethical. Kim has also provided me with insight into how to develop possible solutions to this problem and to discover ways in which to take advantage of this opportunity so as to benefit the research to a greater degree.

**Recognition as protection.**

In her thesis, Kim (2007) writes that anonymity can render abstract research participants and can divorce them from their particular, material living histories and current conditions. She draws on the wisdom of one of her research participants who, when questioned about this matter, contradicted the popular and often unquestioned idea that confidentiality equals protection. Kim (2007) then goes on to trace and reflect upon the history of unethical research, particularly the representation of Aboriginal peoples and the ways in which anonymity served to exoticize and disembody them, while the researchers of these projects were recognized and their research was attributed to them. In this case, anonymity prohibited protection.

My research participants have also helped me to grapple with this question and to realize that anonymity is not categorically necessary and, furthermore, that in some cases, it is actually detrimental. As mentioned previously, despite efforts to conceal it, the likelihood of the theatre's identity being discerned by readers is quite high, so there is a fear shared by myself and my research participants that this may end up trivializing the research. Further, in striving for anonymity, I am also hiding the contributions of the participants. Like the research participants in Kim's (2007) study, those involved with this project are deeply invested, personally and professionally, in their work at YPT, including their contributions to this research. They feel a responsibility to make this known and a desire to be associated with their viewpoints in the publication of this research.

### **Making a change.**

As a result, I have privately contacted all of my research participants at YPT in order to discern whether or not this is a change that they would like me to seek. In the responses I received, there was complete unanimity supporting this change. With Kathleen's guidance, I developed an amendment form to submit to the ERO, which outlined my rationale for this change. This was submitted for review and I received approval to make the change. Not only has this methodological dilemma pushed me to intervene in this case in particular, but it has also helped me to think about the concept of ethicality in research more critically and prompted me to turn my attention toward the potential value of this research to my participants and the importance of making explicit their immense contribution to this project as a whole.

### **Making a Contribution**

#### **Temporal Currency**

In formally analysing and representing this work in the form of a written MA thesis, I anticipated that I would struggle with how best to craft and curate this research, so that it would benefit my research participants, YPT and, more generally, the field of drama education. As predicted, this has been a challenge that I continue to consider though, within the institutional limitations inherent in this kind of research at a Masters level, I have, to the best of my ability, worked to create a piece of research that makes a contribution.

Gaskell (as cited in Gallagher, 2008) writes about the challenge of making research generalizable, especially when its purpose is to understand the particular and the contextual. This is true for my study, as it is an ethnography that centres on why teachers choose to bring their students specifically to YPT. Its particularity is not only geographic, but temporal. It is an exploration of a place at a specific time. There is a fear, then, that this research will be limited,

not only spatially, but temporally as well. That their work will never be current is a concern that many researchers share. I have found Jo-Anne Dillabough's (as cited in Gallagher, 2008) writing about her own ethnographic research extremely illuminating with regard to this issue. Dillabough writes about her struggle to carefully and respectfully represent disadvantaged young women, particularly the connection between the lives of those in the past with those living in the present. She writes that in order to achieve research that honours its participants, researchers must expand their notions of time:

This duty is best expressed in terms of the debt that the living, who always enter a world that they have not made, owe to the dead and to their capacity to have suffered and acted in the space of their own time. (Dillabough, as cited in Gallagher, 2008, p. 208)

According to Dillabough (as cited in Gallagher, 2008), the passage of time allows us to reflect upon and change history. I find this idea of temporal distance to be exciting for my own conceptions of research, particularly considering the ways in which it mirrors how I have been analysing what spatial distance in drama education allows or precludes. Historical and seemingly fixed representations of events and people are changeable and it is the duty of the researcher to enact this change by making the past present (Dillabough, as cited in Gallagher, 2008). This can be done by responding to historical representation as ever-unfolding (Dillabough, as cited in Gallagher, 2008). In my own review of the history and scholarship of theatre for young audiences and in my research on the particular evolution of the place called YPT, I have tried to adopt this orientation toward the past. Beyond making one-way connections to what has come before, I have attempted to animate history in order to continue its unfurling. I have tried to illustrate the dynamic relationship between the past and the present as symbiotic. Rather than a fixed and conclusive account of what I have learned, it is my hope that this research will act as a

starting point for others, will spark further questions and will generate new openings in research in drama education. With the temporal reflexivity Dillabough (as cited in Gallagher, 2008) suggests, the concern that research always comes a step behind is assuaged, because if it too can be remade, it will never be out-of-date.

### **Speaking Broadly**

The currency of research is not simply a temporal consideration; it is also spatial. The eventual publication and circulation of this study is a challenge that I will have to face when it comes time to represent my findings, but it is also one that I currently attend to in the processes of data collection and analysis. Fusco (as cited in Gallagher, 2008) brings to light the necessity of troubling the uniformity of typical procedures and protocols mandated by university EROs, in part because of the ways in which these offices police and oversimplify research on the body, thus limiting the kinds of research that can be done. In this way, argues Fusco, research tends to reproduce cultures of fear and systems of oppression that projects of inquiry should really be working against. Research should not be reproductive, but transformative; educative and not prescriptive (Fusco, as cited in Gallagher, 2008).

Like the work of Fusco (as cited in Gallagher, 2008), my research is concerned with social space and the ways in which people operate within particular environments, namely schools and the unique social and artistic space of YPT. It is not about capturing the true nature of a space or the real stories of what goes on within it, but about understanding their experiences of how the space “enabled and/or constrained their bodies and about their adherence to, or disruption of” the norms associated with occupying public space (Fusco, p. 167). This methodological standpoint affects both the design of the project and how the empirical research data has been analysed. For example, Fusco has helped me to understand the desired purpose of

an interview in qualitative research as a site for knowledge construction, rather than as a way to get to the truth. Fusco suggests that this allows the researcher to respect her participants by hearing their stories and, rather than evaluating these as true or real accounts, working with them to learn something new.

Research conceived in such a way is not about attaining knowledge, but about creating it and, as in making theatre, this can be an unpredictable and destabilizing process. Importantly, this approach to research aligns with my theoretical framework and connects to Lather's (as cited in Gallagher, 2008) focus on learning, rather than knowing. In the design of this project and how I have chosen to approach each of the aforementioned difficulties, I have, throughout, tried to stay true to this conception of inquiry.

## Chapter 5

### Findings

#### **Theatre and (In)accessibility: Beyond Cost and Funding**

In choosing to include an excursion to YPT in their curricula, teachers face a plethora of challenges. In addition to the variety of financial and scheduling issues they need to consider in planning a fieldtrip, teachers must work to prove the educational worth of theatre-going and demonstrate the benefit of taking students out of their regular environment. In the following section, I will outline what the data reveal with regard to the challenges that teachers encounter arranging a fieldtrip to YPT and thus, the necessity of ensuring that each excursion they plan is of great value to their students' education.

#### **Financial.**

The data demonstrate that support for the arts, particularly Drama, and funding for fieldtrips vary greatly from school to school. YPT strives to make an excursion to the theatre a viable option for all schools. Financially, they work to keep their prices low. The theatre acknowledges that this is of special importance for certain populations by providing a variety of programming at a lower cost especially for schools with limited resources, such as those identified by the Toronto District School Board as ranking high on the Learning Opportunities Index

([http://www.tdsb.on.ca/wwwdocuments/about\\_us/external\\_research\\_application/docs/LOI2011.pdf](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/wwwdocuments/about_us/external_research_application/docs/LOI2011.pdf)), which is a comparative analysis of schools that gauges external challenges, such as poverty, to students' academic success. Considering the additional cost of transportation that many teachers must include when planning such a trip, this is of vital importance.

### **Scheduling.**

Beyond financial viability, scheduling is one of the most important factors teachers say they must consider when planning a trip for their students. There are a number of times during the year when it is impossible or very difficult for teachers to plan excursions. This varies according to grade, school and discipline. For example, high school teachers must contend with exam schedules and semestered timetables. Those teaching grades 3, 6, 9 or 10 must take account of provincial testing:

Timing is so important too with the school schedule, because there are only so many weeks in the calendar you can actually go, because many times it's exam schedules or there's, you know, there's just too much going on.

(Frances<sup>1</sup>, Teacher, Interview, 25 January 2011)

The school day is relatively short and teachers must choose whether they will go to the morning or afternoon show and how they will travel to and from the theatre. Schools are busy places, the data reveal, and there are scheduling limitations that teachers must struggle with in planning these trips for their students. YPT strives to accommodate and work within these confines.

### **Educational worth.**

It is evident that planning a fieldtrip takes a lot of time, effort and careful consideration on the part of the teacher, so it is vital that it be a significant experience for their students. The data suggest that YPT is of value to teachers, because of its expertise in catering to the school audience. The understanding at YPT of how schools operate is of great importance to many teachers, it seems, in planning where to take their students. One teacher, in particular, expressed this succinctly in our interview. She told me about the need to have theatres in the city she can trust and the anger she feels when certain theatres, rather than focusing on the needs of teachers

---

<sup>1</sup> This and all other subsequent teacher participant names in this thesis are pseudonyms.

and students, educational and otherwise, infuse their shows with an educational slant and market to school groups in order to sell more tickets:

Mackenzie: They have no idea what it's like for students who are scraping by, literally scraping by, to put together \$30 to go and see a show.

Lois: You feel it's exploitative.

Mackenzie: Absolutely. It is, because we bring in a lot of profits for the theatres, but you have to be on our side and I feel [YPT] is, they're on our side... They're very generous and they really make it accessible and, considering we come from a school where it really, really varies what the kids are able to afford, that was really helpful. Um, that and then also the fact that you didn't have to pay everything all up front. They're very lenient with their dates, their deposits and stuff, because again, I think that [YPT] understands how schools work a little bit more than larger theatre companies... They just get it. They understand where, even when I said, "We're a semestered school," the people at the Box Office, right away, said, "Okay, so that means you're just getting these kids, I totally understand." Like, we're not going to have thousands of dollars sitting in our account. Like, they get it, which is really helpful.

(Mackenzie, Teacher, Interview, 25 May 2011)

### **Insular school culture and coming into the space.**

Simply leaving the school is a huge hurdle in itself. Many schools, the data illustrate, have a limit on how many fieldtrips teachers are allowed to plan each year:

Marilyn: Just doing it, all the approvals, collecting money, the bus, the all, the bureaucracy involved. I have to say, it's, I don't blame them when I hear about how difficult it can be to organize a trip. It takes a really dedicated teacher to go through that...



It's, the whole, you maybe could speak better to this than I could, but the whole environment and psychology of the education system is changing where um, as I understand it, teachers are more, are encouraged to find what they need within the school environment as opposed to going outside of it and I know that principals and school boards can get quite defensive about the notion, seeing it as though they aren't providing sufficient arts education within the school.

Lois: So, it's become a bit insular and protective in that way?

Marilyn: Yeah, so that's been a challenge in the last few years. It's trying to find ways around that, trying to find what makes us different, why it is important to get outside of the school environment.

(Marilyn Hamilton, Director of Marketing, YPT, Interview, 12 May 2011)

This insular school culture is at odds with what participants believe to be the educational value of learning outside one's usual milieu and the necessity of experiencing theatre in a professional, aesthetic environment, one of the strongest themes that has emerged in this research and one that I will delve into in greater detail later on in this chapter. The data show that participants believe it takes a courageous teacher to make the choice to include a fieldtrip in their educational repertoire. In so doing, teachers must trust possibility, rather than probability. By opening ourselves in this way, Maxine Greene (1995) argues, we learn:

When we see more and hear more, it is not only that we lurch... if only for a moment, out of the familiar and the taken-for-granted but that new avenues for choosing and for action may open in our experience; we may gain a sudden sense of new beginnings, that is, we may take an initiative in the light of possibility. (p. 123)

In coming to YPT with their students, teachers work against the ways in which current neo-liberal ideologies of space, security and identity are reproduced in public spaces, and particularly schools (Gallagher & Fusco, 2006). By leaving their usual environment, teachers endeavour to define their communities, not by the walls of the school, but by their connections to the world beyond the classroom (Massey, 1994; 2010):

Veronica: Experiential learning is, I believe, the best kind of learning, no matter what kind of learner you are. You will appreciate better by doing. And for me... a crucial part of that is not to stay in a contained classroom. In fact, I'm kind of anti-classroom in a lot of ways, I believe it should be more of a base and then you pick up and you leave all the time. I'm outside with my students a lot. I would actually love to be doing more field trips, though I don't like that term.

Lois: Why not?

Veronica: Because I think that the connotation behind it is that it's not learning. It's a fun day.

Lois: It separates it.

Veronica: And I'd rather have like, um, that school is a fieldtrip, if you will. It's like, when you come to school, there are different ways to learn and so whether we're in or out, or we're riding our bikes or we're walking or we're swimming or whatever you might be doing, it's part of your learning experience. I think the separation and the segregation that we do is damaging.

(Veronica, Teacher, Interview, 15 April 2011)

Going to YPT, participants believe, helps students to develop a more fluid understanding of education and an appreciation that learning is a continuous process that occurs both inside and

outside of school. Yet, YPT also mirrors school practices, while at the same time working to destabilize them. For example, students enter into the space of YPT, separated by school and, usually two by two, they are brought into the theatre and ushered to their seats. Several teachers have spoken particularly about their aggravation at having to wait outside of the theatre upon arrival and of the highly regimented manner in which they and their students are brought into and monitored in the space:

I guess I should start by saying that I know when you have a lot of people coming through one, you know, who aren't there very often you have to have routines and I know that they've thought about it, but it was so militaristic when we arrived and I always find that a little bit, it doesn't really fit with the fact that we're coming to a theatre to see a show... they made us wait outside, when really there was no reason we couldn't have come in and they're very, like, kids have to line up single-file and it's just so rigid.

(Erin, Teacher, Interview, 21 April 2011)

I just hope that, um, well I don't know, my childhood experiences with theatre... we were taken in very, very small groups and it didn't really feel like being herded and, so I'm just not sure the way, you know, when we load schools – I mean even the vocabulary we use – I don't know if that's, you know, something that could be sort of improved on... because for me, it's always very exciting and very thrilling and you go and there's a special entrance.

(Lilya Sultanova, Sales Coordinator, YPT, Interview, 29 April 2011)

Students are not granted the opportunity to explore or navigate the space independently in their own time, despite the fact that it is explicitly designed for their enjoyment and development. The data suggest that some of this organization might be necessary in order to accommodate the

needs and limitations of the school audience: the time constraints of the school day, the budgetary restrictions of bus transportation, the challenge of seating large groups of people quickly all at once. More importantly, however, the data illustrate that teachers believe bringing students into the space in such a way is incongruent with the purpose of going to live theatre and really affects their own and their students' engagement with the whole experience:

Julia: The initial, um, entry to the theatre was very poor and actually set us off on a bad foot, because we were asked to wait outside for quite a lengthy period of time and it was in the middle of winter and it was cold... They [the students] were very aware of it and they were just unhappy and cranky, because we were standing outside for 15, 20 minutes... it wasn't a welcoming feeling initially. I feel like as soon as we sat down, you know, there was that sense of excitement and that energy that is there before a show, right? And, um, you know that energy that the other kids had, as our girls sat down, they started to feel that energy and that excitement, so you know, I think we were quickly able to cut the strings from that negative experience and then move forward and then seeing the set... so there's that excitement from the other people, but then seeing that visual, seeing the set, um, was so powerful for them, like it was just, aesthetically, it was just so beautiful and then, um, and then, um, as soon as the actors and actresses came on you just felt, I don't know, I just felt because it was so well done and it was just so amazing, you know, we just engaged deeply and then, you know, anything that was negative was just, kind of gone away. But I still think, you know, when we left, you kind of remembered that.

Lois: Absolutely. It remained a part of your experience.

(Julia, Teacher, Interview, 28 March 2011)

The data indicate that students usually endure regimented practices such as these in school as well. Teachers see their students go through similar routines on a daily basis. If YPT were to offer students and teachers a similar kind of experience in the rest of the space as they are granted within the theatre itself, the data suggest that this fieldtrip, in particular, would help to interrupt “the repetition of commonsense and tradition” (Kumashiro, 2001, p. 11) with concern to the insularity of school culture and the ways in which, youth especially, are limited in their access and engagement in public space. The ways in which students and teachers are escorted into and directed at YPT is incongruent with the energizing and unconstrained aesthetic experience they are granted within the space of the performance. Furthermore, the highly regimented manner in which school groups are brought into YPT also contradicts the openness of this theatre to young people with regard to the particular cultural milieu and practices of theatre. YPT is unique in the ways in which it provides an accessible theatrical experience, especially for first-time theatre-goers.

### **Access to Theatre**

What has been illustrated in the research data is not only why teachers choose to bring their students to YPT, but who these teachers are. It seems, unsurprisingly, that teachers’ personal experiences going to the theatre and, in particular to YPT, with their families as children is one reason why they now think it is important to offer their students similar experiences:

I think, maybe because I had strong experiences in theatre at a young age, you know, I remember... I went to YPT as a kid, so, um, I think that, you know, I value that, so clearly I’m putting that upon them, which I think is a valuable thing.

(Julia, Teacher, Interview, 28 March 2011)

As a child, my mom really loved the theatre, so I spent a lot of time going to professional performances, whether it was like really, really big performances, so I've seen opera, all kinds of theatres, ballet, my mom took me to everything, so I really like live theatre... I have a real appreciation for the theatre.

(Jane, Teacher, Interview, 27 May 2011)

While the vast majority of teachers who bring their students to YPT have seen a play before, for many of their students, participating in a live performance at a professional theatre is a cultural activity in which they may not otherwise take part, either because it is not of interest or, more commonly, it is not a viable option for them or their families:

A big majority of the students in our schools would not have had a chance to see a live performance like a play in a theatre.

Great, relevant shows that introduce the world of theatre to students who have not otherwise been exposed.

I think many students are used to watching TV and do not experience theatre due to the high costs of many professional shows.

For many students it is a new experience because they are unable to afford the cost to go with their parents.

Some have never seen live theatre.

(Survey Results, 2011)

The data illustrate that, for many, coming to see a show as part of their school program is one of the only ways they will gain entrance into the theatre:

I think the biggest value is experiencing something that they will never normally see themselves. For me, it's very precious, because given our students come from very

working-class families, new immigrants, and being able to experience live theatre on their own, it's very unlikely, certainly at this young age, so for me it's all about sparking or creating that love in them or that interest and for me, I tell them, it's nothing, no movie will ever compare to this and, you know, and that, especially the intimacy of the smaller theatres is so, so special, so I think... that's just something you can never possibly see or reproduce in the classroom, so, yeah, I think that whole, that's the value. They get to see and experience something that they will probably never experience at this age [13-18], unless they have the opportunity through their classroom teacher.

(Frances, Teacher, Interview, 25 January 2011)

Because of where I teach, in Rexdale, the kids don't have that opportunity to go... live theatre is an invaluable experience that they will never get unless they go with me or they go with their parents and because of where I teach, that's highly unlikely.

(Scarlet, Teacher, Interview, 5 April 2011)

Once again, teachers express that they are aware of the constraints of the classroom and of the world their students experience beyond the classroom. It is important to note that teachers are often speculating about their students' lives and that these speculations do not always correspond to reality. One assumes that socioeconomic status is always a barrier to theatre-going, or that those in lower SES categories are culturally bereft,. While it is true that real financial hurdles do exist, we must also guard against such sweeping generalizations.. Further, not only might their students not be provided this type of experience outside of school, but the physical space of the classroom, in many teachers' eyes, is also very limiting.

I learned that for most of the teachers I interviewed, their formative theatre-going experiences were with their families, rather than with school. The data suggest that these teachers

are individuals who themselves were, in some ways, privileged. Perhaps this partially explains why, with regard to pedagogy, there is an understanding of a teacher's role as one of the distributor of knowledge, rather than as a co-creator in the process of teaching and learning (Grumet, 1989). At the same time, the data reveal that going to most live theatre in Toronto requires of its audiences a certain luxury of time and money, as well as a perception of a particular level of cultural literacy with regard to the expectations and norms of theatre-going behaviour that most students, at a young age, have yet to develop, even if they have the opportunity to go with their families or with school. It seems that while teachers are, in this sense, in a position to offer their students this experience and guide them through it, what demands further consideration is how this perception of theatre might be changed, so as to make theatre-going a more accessible experience.

#### **Inclusion and policing.**

The research suggests that YPT might help to accomplish this goal of greater accessibility, not only in terms of granting access, but also with regard to how young people are treated upon entrance to this particular place in comparison to other theatres. In learning about why teachers choose not only to bring their students to the theatre, but why they decide to come specifically to YPT, the data show that much of it has to do with the marginalization of youth at other theatres.

Teachers see value in having their students surrounded by other children, rather than lost in a sea of adults. The data also indicate that this fosters a sense of ownership and belonging among audience members:

There are a lot of theatre companies that do shows that sometimes, you know, the



audience could be children, but I find it doesn't matter what show you bring your children to at [YPT], your children will be satisfied at minimum... they walk out completely ecstatic and full of life. They love it, because they see children around. They see some teachers and adults, but it's children, so they feel that they're part of a whole, as opposed to going to the theatre, because their teacher brought them there and they're really the only kids there. So, they really feel as if they're a part of it.

(Nick, Teacher, Interview, 2 May 2011)

Further, teachers who work with particular groups of young people, such as youth of colour, young people living in poverty or students with developmental disabilities, spoke especially about the value of the community at YPT in making their students, and others, feel welcome and included. One teacher, Sheilagh, who works with children with developmental disabilities, spoke with me about her experience seeing "A Year with Frog and Toad" with her students at YPT this year:

Sheilagh: There was a point that one of our students was starting to be a bit noisy... And then another student, he was singing. Non-verbally, just kind of making vocalisations. We don't know what he sees, he's got CVI, Critical Visual Impairment, and I thought he was complaining at first, but he was really listening.

Lois: And he was enjoying it? Like doing it along with them?

Sheilagh: Yeah, he was making his happy sounds. And, and it's very, uh, possible in a performance that someone could be scared or frightened and make unhappy sounds and so to do that, it takes a certain amount of courage on the part of the teaching staff, because they know for the whole audience that's there, they don't want to ruin it and they

don't want to ruin it for the professional actors, but at a certain point you have to really believe in wanting to go-

Lois: -and the benefits of it-

Sheilagh: -the benefits of everything that I've described... And at YPT, they make us welcome, they really make us welcome... We definitely had a sense when we were in the audience that, you know, the actors knew we were there and that as they're looking to their audience, they included us as who they were looking to, because the energy that you get back from the audience helps the performance and there's a dynamism that's happening and so you're brought in, but you're also contributing.

(Sheilagh, Teacher, Interview, 11 May 2011)

Sheilagh also explained that YPT makes itself financially accessible to her class of students who, due to their particular needs, require a higher number of adult supervisors than most other groups.

Another teacher, Jacklyn, spoke with me about how what makes her students reluctant to engage with the art form, she believes, is the historical and continuing designation of theatre as a luxury:

Jacklyn: I think theatre is middle class and there's a set of social expectations that come with attending the theatre that my students have never necessarily learned or had the opportunity to learn or seen modelled or anything and in a way, they resist the conformity of the expectations in theatre.

Lois: What do you mean exactly? I think I know, but...

Jacklyn: I don't know, it's like, there's a certain amount of privilege in having the time to go to the theatre, the resources to research and hear about theatre, um, yeah, the time is a

big one, like not looking after siblings, not worrying about money, not working two jobs, not, all of those things... And then the cost of going to the theatre, um, the sort of... the uh, valuing of the arts in that way and taking that time out, um, isn't... can be maybe culturally specific sometimes in different ways and a lot of the theatre in Toronto - not all, it's great in some ways - is pretty white and middle class and my youth are not normally white and middle class.

(Jacklyn, Teacher, Interview, 1 April 2011)

This perception of theatre as culturally specific makes it difficult for some of her students to engage in the experience. In our interview, Jacklyn told me several stories about several different experiences she had previously with her students at a variety of theatres in Toronto other than

YPT:

Jacklyn: The kids, it was all like private school kids there and everyone looked at me and the students like we'd just broken out of jail, um, you know? Who were we? What were we doing? In another circumstance, um... I took three young women, um, all of them would identify as mixed-Black background and, um, they were pretty much almost the only people of colour there at this matinee and they really enjoyed the show, they would respond verbally to the show, sometimes sighing or, uh, saying "Mm-hmm."

Lois: Because it's resonating.

Jacklyn: Because it's resonating for them. They were so captivated... And some of the women – older, white, elderly, older women - were constantly shushing them and looking at them and kind of shamed them in their own experience of the theatre and I thought that was really oppressive for them, because they weren't doing, they weren't talking to each other, they weren't being... They were just so engaged in the theatre, um, and again, it

was like all eyes on us kind of thing... It's just an example of how whenever I go out into the community with them, well no wonder my students feel guarded... It's true, Young People's Theatre and Theatre Passe Muraille were the only places that I haven't felt policed, but any other place, yes. So badly, and even the students experiencing racist remarks and things like that, which totally shuts them down. Like I know two of my students didn't believe me at "The Secret Garden" that there was an orchestra under the stage, and I was like "There really is! Walk up with me. I'll show you." Um, and one of the students returned from the bathroom and something had happened and he totally shut down, um, and he just like sat in his chair and was like "No, I'm not going to go" and I was like "No, no walk with me, I'll show you" and he wouldn't, so it was like their treatment just shut them down and the ushers were all over us, shushing us and they weren't even talking and just like... it was clearly that they weren't dressed fancy enough or they were youth of colour or they wore puffy jackets. I mean, who knows? They decided that we didn't look like whatever, which is bullshit and I wish that theatre didn't feel that sort of middle class pull that I think sometimes it – not all theatre in Toronto, which is cool – but it should be more accessible.

(Jacklyn, Teacher, Interview, 1 April 2011)

Jacklyn's experiences with her students are representative of what this research reveals with regard to the necessity, not only of granting audiences entrance into the theatre, but also of making their experience within it an accessible and welcoming one. It also demonstrates that while a school (or teacher) can make a space accessible for their students, they can still be made to feel as if they do not belong. How students are treated in these public spaces is not within the complete control of their teachers which, the data show, is frustrating for them. In connection

with the previous section, this is another example of how other factors beyond the parameters of the play itself can interfere with the pleasurable and educative value of the experience as a whole.

### **Storytelling.**

As I will explain in greater detail in this chapter, in the stories it chooses to tell and in the ways in which it communicates, YPT strives to make its audience welcome. Many teachers have spoken about the importance of theatrical storytelling in making the experience accessible to all of their students. While this is certainly not true of all theatre, the medium makes it possible to foreground types of communication beyond the oral. In my conversation with Conrad Alexandrowicz, the Director of “i think i can”, he spoke about his commitment to the physical nature of storytelling in theatre and the fact that, in the way in which it communicates with its audience, TYA really fosters this:

Conrad: I mean, obviously physical theatre for adults, I’m totally committed to that, but there are certain things that you have to be really aware of in storytelling for children, because there are things they’re not going to get unless you...

Lois: Help them?

Conrad: Tell the story a certain way, yeah... I guess what it’s about is just tuning in to the child within you, which of course, we carry with us until we’re 85, 90 and we die.

Essentially, what we have to do is reconnect with the child within us so we know how to tell stories for kids who are chronologically children.

(Conrad Alexandrowicz, Director, “i think i can”, YPT, Interview, 6 April 2011)

This focus on privileging types of communication other than oral is illustrated in the data throughout:

Certain scenes are not really reading. It seems there is no motivation behind the steps. Shawn [Byfield, Choreographer, “i think i can”] speaks to the cast about the importance of understanding dance as a language and the necessity of every dancer knowing what they are saying with each move. He reminds them that every rhythm in the play has words that accompany it and he explains that the audience will pick up on whether or not the intention is there.

(Fieldnotes, Participatory Observation, “i think i can” Rehearsal, YPT, 24 March 2011)

Several teachers explained that they feel the shows at YPT are unique in this way. They shared what they perceive to be the benefits of this visceral kind of storytelling for their students:

One of the most interesting ones was two years ago: it was the gentleman, there was no, there was a lightbulb and there were some sounds, but he did a lot of movement, did a lot of dance. The kids were just floored. They had a bit of difficulty getting into it, because they were looking for the words, but as soon as they realized that, you know what, we’re getting it, we have them. That’s why I like them [YPT], because they take those risks for the Primary kids and they do those kinds of things and they get them, they hook in right away with them... This year, I brought them to two: “Frog and Toad” and “Alice”. They were challenged with “Alice”... because it was one backdrop, one scene, essentially, and only a few things changed in it and they were mesmerized... it was just how everything was portrayed, they thought “Oh my goodness, yes, essentially it was ‘Alice’, but in a different light.” It made them think then about, you know, all of the other versions they had seen and that it was “Alice”, but one interpretation.

(Nick, Teacher, Interview, 2 May 2011)

Another teacher spoke about her experience of seeing “i think i can” with her students this year:

Jane: It was just so different. The idea that they told the entire story through tap without any, except for the teacher, there was no dialogue really. Dialogue in the sense that we would think of.

Lois: Right, it's a different way of communicating, speaking.

Jane: Absolutely. And for kids that all come from different backgrounds and have different languages and stuff like that and at first when it started, I mean, I knew it was tap, but I didn't know the whole thing was tap, and after the first five or six minutes, I started to think to myself, okay, is this whole thing going to be tap and then I started to worry, as a teacher, right? Because you're looking down, are they going to be good, are they going to listen, are they going to be engaged?

Lois: Of course.

Jane: Are they going to get this story? And they sat there, mouths open, fully engaged through the performance, and I actually think they got the story more, because there wasn't the dialogue to struggle with.

(Jane, Teacher, Interview, 27 May 2011)

In subsequent sections of this chapter, I will write in more detail about how participants perceive the aesthetic space at YPT and how it influences the audience's experience of the live theatre performance. With regard to accessibility, the data indicate that in the stories it tells and the way in which it chooses to tell them, YPT privileges the physical, the visceral and the sensory and thus, helps all students to engage with the medium of theatre.

### **YPT as Unique**

The data show that YPT walks the line between stability and change and strives to find a balance between constancy and innovation. This is of particular importance, in view of the

strong, albeit changing, reputation of YPT. In connection with the theatre's professionalism, its reputation has emerged as one of the reasons teachers choose to bring their students to the theatre. Many of the teachers I interviewed spoke about the fact that, though it is certainly not the sole explanation for what brings them back year after year, YPT's reputation was the initial reason they chose to attend this particular theatre. Much of YPT's success has to do with the fact that, for over 30 years, it has had a permanent space to call home. In this respect, it is unique among most other TYA companies in Canada. This has allowed YPT to develop a place in people's personal histories and to build a strong reputation. This permanence of place, however, also comes with particular challenges.

### **Making Room for Change**

YPT struggles to counter the romanticized and somewhat nostalgic public view of the theatre. This is perhaps best illustrated in the data by the controversy surrounding the name change of Young People's Theatre to Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for Young People, and back again. Regular patrons of this theatre have a strong connection to this theatre; it holds a special place in their memory. The idea that YPT is an institution of "stability and a source of unproblematical identity" (Massey, 1994, p. 151) is, the data suggest, reinforced by popular conceptions of childhood as blissful and uncomplicated. This was particularly illuminated in my conversation with Marilyn Hamilton, the Director of Marketing at YPT, regarding the benefits and challenges of having a theatre designated specifically for children:

Marilyn: I definitely think there is ownership here. Certainly, as people grow up, become adults and start to bring their own children here. We felt it when we changed the name. I can't imagine another company having the kind of visceral reaction that that...

Lois: Elicited?



Marilyn: Thank you. It's because of that ownership that made them feel somehow violated by the name change.

Lois: And now changing it back?

Marilyn: We're getting all kinds of positive feedback. Relief, mainly.

L Interesting. That must be hard to deal with.

M Yeah, because I'm trying to think of anywhere else... You know, companies change their names all the time and no doubt they have some backlash, but not this "how dare you" approach.

(Marilyn Hamilton, Director of Marketing, YPT, Interview, 12 May 2011)

This speaks to the particular challenges, be it in their marketing, in the stories they choose to tell or in the way in which they communicate with their audiences, that YPT faces in evolving as an institution. What is significant about this, I have learned, is the necessity for YPT, and for theatres more generally, to recognize that the community they serve is evolving. This was most succinctly expressed in my interview with Isaac Thomas, YPT's Drama School Coordinator:

Isaac: In the past, we could rely up on our name, the fact that we were the largest organization, the fact that we've been here for 45 years.

Lois: Your reputation.

Isaac: Our reputation. It's all there, but the city is changing, the city's expanding. There are people moving in. It's much more mobile than it was 40 years ago, 20 years ago, even 10 years ago.

Lois So you need to meet that.

Isaac: The change has been enormous in terms of the city, in terms of immigrant population, even within Canada. The population. Who is coming here? We can't take it

for granted that we are in the minds of everybody, that we are in the minds of the teachers, that culturally, we are there... We have to, I think, we have to change our perspective enormously and we should change it very quickly before it becomes too late and we find ourselves stuck.

(Isaac Thomas, Drama School Coordinator, YPT, Interview, 7 April 2011)

While their reputation remains strong, the data reveal that the audience at YPT is ever-changing. The make-up of the audiences who attend YPT differs greatly from that of theatre for more general audiences in the city. This is in large part because it is a not-for-profit organization that is explicitly designed as a professional TYA company. As a result, the audiences at YPT are composed primarily of school-aged students, whereas the patrons of theatre for general audiences are, for the most part, adults. Attending theatre as part of their school program grants students access, thanks to the scheduling of the performances, the low, and often subsidized, cost of tickets and transportation, as well as the resources and learning opportunities made available by YPT and by teachers to prepare their students for this event.

### **New Audiences**

Consequently, with regard to socioeconomic status, culture, ability, age, and level of education, the data show that the audiences at YPT are much more diverse than those who patronize other professional theatres in the city. There is a sense, the research indicates, that YPT, along with other theatres, should not only mirror their audiences, but should ignite change in them. One of the greatest challenges the theatre community in general faces is discerning how best to usher in new audiences. This challenge is not unique to YPT, but the ways in which they address this problem, the data suggest, are dependent on their existing audience, artistic vision

and company mandate. One effective way of drawing in new teachers, many participants at YPT believe, is to work with other teachers to do so:

Allen: We hope people who have been who have confidence in our work or in the value of the experience relate that to other people. They become our advocates. In fact, there's a guy on our Teachers' Council who said he had to be convinced by, I think, his partner. She, um, had brought kids and said no, you've got to go, like it's great, it's valuable and you would find this extremely useful... When he came with his kids, he was so impressed with the piece and the work, because he didn't really get, I think, that the actors would be professionals, that it would be a kind of accomplished aesthetic experience and the impact on his students was very strong and the connections curriculum-wise just flew open for him and so, he became very active in coming every year and looking for stuff for his teens. And he does special needs teens so, um, he found it extremely useful, powerful and is a total believer now in the power of the theatre to have an impact on kids.

Lois: But it took someone he trusted-

Allen: -to convince him.

(Allen MacInnis, Artistic Director, YPT, Interview, 19 April 2011)

Dewey (1938) emphasizes the importance of the work of teachers in opening their students up to innovative experiences. As evidenced in the data, teachers are no different from their students in this way. They, too, need teachers or guides to foster new learning. In this research, it is evident that teachers are often reluctant to step out of their normal milieu and to try something new, unless they are supported or pushed by a trusted friend or colleague to do so. Kumashiro (2000; 2001) acknowledges that a desire to disrupt what is already known and an openness to encountering the unfamiliar is not an easy task, but it is the root of education and it

is something teachers must do themselves, if they are to help their students to do the same. This research data illustrate the simultaneous work of teachers: to educate and to learn, and the symbiotic relationship between these two efforts. It points to the importance of collegiality, peer education and a commitment to lifelong learning in order for educators to serve their students.

### **Fluidity**

Despite its perceived constancy, YPT operates similarly to many other non-repertory theatres in the city, in that its resources and talent are transient and shared throughout the community. While it has a permanent base of employees, with each show YPT welcomes into its company a new collection of designers, actors, stage managers, etcetera. Those who work at the theatre more permanently are also active in making connections with their colleagues at other theatre companies in the community. YPT is not an insular place. By literally opening its doors to new and diverse groups of people, YPT enacts a reconceptualization of space that aligns with Massey's (1994) desire for people to understand and define places, not by exclusion, but by the ever-changing inclusion of a variety of social relations.

YPT's fluidity is equally true within the company. Among theatres, YPT is special, because it is one of the few in which all of the departments are housed in one shared space. In the research, it was revealed that the theatre's architecture, though not the sole reason for a heightened level of interdepartmental communication, helped to foster cohesion and collaboration within the company. In interviews, I was especially struck by the number of those who work at or with YPT in production or stage management who spoke about the uniqueness of this community in this way. This theme was strongly articulated in my interview with Ryan Wilson, the Head Scenic Carpenter at YPT:

Ryan: The structure of this company, as far as production goes, is a lot different than

other theatre companies.

Lois: So, that must make a difference.

Ryan: Yeah, there's a lot of support for me and I get a lot of say over what we're going to do and how we're going to do things and we have a lot of meetings with everybody else.

Lois: And that kind of support for production, it isn't necessarily like that at other theatres?

Ryan: No, it's not. Not like it is here. There's a lot of theatres where things just happen and they let things go and everyone works really hard, but it's not as organized as it is here, which is a really attractive thing for a lot of people... here it's a lot more comfortable and everyone's part of the team and part of the family.

(Ryan Wilson, Head Scenic Carpenter, YPT, Interview, 4 May 2011)

May of those who work at or with the theatre attributed YPT's particular environment to the theatre's current leadership:

I think it's just, it's a wonderful place and, you know, helmed by Allen and Hugh who are just such generous, warm, truly, truly loving people. They're truly amazing people and they create a sense of, you know, it's such a, I feel like rarely do you walk into a building where everybody is so happy and people really love their jobs and it's just an exciting building to be in. It just has such a good, warm energy.

(Amy Lee, Actor, "The Invisible Girl", YPT, Interview, 18 May 2011)

Jill: I think the leadership in this company is pretty outstanding... just vision, vision, um, and care taken... I mean, the shows are all chosen with care and, um, and thought regarding their impact on people.

Lois: And so that affects everything that's done?

Jill: Yeah, top to bottom.

(Jill Ward, Manager of Education and Participation/Community Volunteer Coordinator, YPT, Interview, 24 March 2011)

It appears that they wish for their guests to have the same positive experience that they have, as employees of the theatre. Furthermore, the data suggest that the dual artistic and educational mandate of the theatre tends to draw a certain focus to the audience and to what is created at YPT. For me, this signalled that while YPT's distinctiveness and success must be attributed to the employees and, in particular, to those who lead the company, its capacity for change and for transformation must be credited, in particular, to its designation as a TYA company and thus, the children and young people who make up the audiences at YPT.

### **Why TYA?**

One of the questions I asked my participants was what striking differences or similarities, if any, they had noticed working in TYA in comparison to theatre for more general audiences. Beyond the general composition of the audiences at YPT, the implications of which I have spoken of in previous sections of this chapter, most of my participants were quick to remind me that comparisons between the two are difficult, as each theatre and its mandate is unique and its focus specific to its audience, TYA or otherwise. In conjunction with this query regarding the characteristic identity of TYA within the world of theatre, I asked my participants why they chose to make TYA part of the work that they do:

I'm drawn to want to have an impact with the work, whether it's adults or not and with young people it is, um, very acceptable to be concerned about what the play is saying about the world, to communicate values, to offer some developmental opportunity.

(Allen MacInnis, Artistic Director, YPT, Interview, 19 April 2011)

I think it's [theatre] a catalyst, you know? I don't know that any piece of theatre necessarily is able to provide more clarity on an issue or an idea or history, but I think that it engages so directly that it can... I think that, conceptually, when we talk about issues we can categorize a lot, but I think that theatre personalizes it and so people see characters and not groups or ideas. They see people and they connect with those people... So, it's odd that maybe with more specificity it can actually be applied to something a lot bigger, but by going in, it allows you to go back out.

(Mark McGrinder, Actor, "The Big League", YPT, Interview, 9 April 2011)

I am dedicated to the idea that theatre can transform people... It is an art and art provides space for expression, confidence, collaboration, self-esteem, ensemble-building, social development and finding one's voice.

(Kate Fenton, Artist-Educator, YPT, Interview, 16 June 2011)

Margaret: You know, it's, there's a lot of personal growth, personal reflection going on in the individual as they gauge how they're reacting to what they're seeing and that's not, you know, you can't pause it, turn away from it and you can't go get a snack, you can't, all these kinds of things, but being put through that, it's almost endurance is, uh, gently forces a new experience.

Lois: And it can surprise you.

Margaret: And it can surprise you, exactly, and you cannot do that in, uh, with film and television and computers and you know, a lot of times I think nowadays, students, or children can control the pace of their own entertainment and they don't get to control the pace of this entertainment.

Lois: They have to give it up.

Margaret: They have to give it up and they have to engage with it as it comes and all that kind of thing and I think that that's, it's really strengthening to character.

(Margaret Smith, Development Officer/Events, YPT, Interview, 13 May 2011)

A striking number of these participants explicitly made the distinction that they do not choose to work in TYA, but in theatre and that, at present, a focus on young people simply happens to be what they do. Although I initially found their reluctance to be somewhat strange, upon careful analysis, I realized that the impetus to work in theatre, for many of these participants, was, in my estimation, pedagogical in nature. This perhaps explains, in part, why they have found themselves working in TYA. Those who work at and with YPT endeavour to make the audience the first priority, despite the limitations of the theatre space:

### **The Value of the Young Audience**

As with all theatre, in order to succeed, an understanding of and connection to the audience is paramount. The research shows the centrality of the audience in the work of YPT, as illustrated in the section above. However, in the way in which the physical theatre was constructed, it seems that the audience was not the primary consideration:

Karen explains to the students and their teacher why the chairs in the mainstage theatre are all different colours. They are bright orange in the centre, but become darker brown as they spiral outward. They were purposefully designed this way, she says, so that the actors would feel as though the House was full, even if it might not be.

(Karen Gilodo, Educational Services Coordinator, YPT; Fieldnotes, Participatory Observation, Post-show Theatre Tour, 4 May 2011)

The data reveal that the actors are privileged in this particular space. This seems to be at odds with what the data indicate with regard to the perception of those who work at YPT that the



audience is of central importance. However, this may not actually be such a contradiction. If the actors feel good, they may perform better, which benefits the audience. YPT endeavours to make the audience its first priority, despite the limitations of the theatre space:

I am struck by the fact that the audience is always at the forefront of the conversation.

(Fieldnotes, Participatory Observation, “A Year with Frog and Toad” Rehearsal, 25

October 2010)

This demonstrates, along with other data, the fact that spaces are dynamic; they both affect and are changed by what happens within them (Massey, 1994; Robbins, 2008).

In the Drama School, students have the opportunity to rehearse and perform scenes and, in order to do so, the other students and the teacher often take the position of the audience. In these classes, students are also encouraged to be reflective and to practice self-spectatorship. This helps them to remember that they are communicating, not only with each other on stage, but first and foremost, with their audience. This focus is also present in rehearsal:

Mary Ellen: Focus on what the audience will feel. You know what will help me is where you look. You’ll make me look there too.

(Mary Ellen MacLean, Director, “The Big League”, YPT; Fieldnotes, Participatory

Observation, “The Big League” Rehearsal, 10 January 2011)

YPT’s special focus on the audience is felt by teachers and students in the stories the theatre chooses to tell. YPT works hard to produce pieces that are topical and of relevance to the community it serves. As I have explained, the research demonstrates that the audience is more variable and transient than those of other theatres. Telling stories that appeal to the sensibility of young people, then, requires a willingness to change, adapt and listen:

Well, it's fluid too. Like he's [Allen] changed over the years and he's the first one to admit it. Having watched the shows and watched the kids and talking to people, he's grown and also changed in what he feels he can do.

(Florence Gibson, Playwright, "i think i can", YPT, Interview, 17 May 2011)

In this research, I was surprised to learn that it is actually, in large part, the particular audience they cater to that puts the pressure on YPT to achieve professional standards that meet or exceed those of regular theatres. It is a trite saying in the theatre community that the young audience is the most difficult. The data reveal that it is not that young people's aesthetic appreciation is superior, but that their inexperience as audience members, subsequent illiteracy in theatre etiquette and resulting inhibition in expressing their (dis)engagement pushes those who work at and for YPT to not only do their best, but perhaps more importantly, allows them to learn from their audience and to adapt and grow as needed. The value of the young audience was expressed by many in this research:

I feel like adults have a sense of decorum, they have a sense of propriety that often stifles their response. And kids... if they don't like it, they will let you know and that's really refreshing.

(Mark McGrinder, Actor, "The Big League", YPT, Interview, 9 April 2011)

What's exciting or interesting about being with kids is that they, they are learning that, like that, they're learning to be an audience member, right? And being an audience member for a theatre is different than being an audience member for a film, so they're learning what they can say and when... not when to say and when not to, because I think anything they say is fabulous, but you just get a different interaction, because they're not as reserved, they're going to react.

(Alexis Buset, Technical Director, YPT, Interview, 25 March 2011)

Children, as an audience, many of those who work at and with the theatre believe, offer the actors a different experience: they not only take something from the performance, but they also leave something behind. Furthermore, while YPT strives to know and speak to its particular clientele, they are the first to admit that they do not always hit the mark. As Hugh Neilson, YPT's current Managing Director, explained:

You can set an idea of how the work is going to be perceived and what you want to get across, but what you can't interpret or anticipate is how young kids are going to perceive it or feed it back and here, where learning is at the centre of everything we do... we learn as much from them.

(Hugh Neilson, Managing Director, YPT, Interview, 6 May 2011)

This perspective on teaching and learning can be explained by Kumashiro's (2000) assertion that teaching, despite the preparation and intention it demands, "involves a great degree of unknowability" (p. 31). As such, it is required of arts educators to exercise humility. Rather than making assumptions that their experiences or understanding of the world are shared by others (Kumashiro, 2000), those who work with young people must demonstrate an openness to other viewpoints and a desire to continue to learn. Communicating with young people in this way fosters a kind of success in education that is only possible by opening oneself up to the unpredictable. As a theatre that serves, first and foremost, children and young people, YPT is pushed to continually evolve. It is also this distinction, the data suggest, that affords those who work at and with the YPT to make teaching and learning integral to its purposes as a professional theatre.

### **The Educative Value of Theatre: An Extension and Interruption of School Pedagogy**

In connection with the focus on the young audience at this theatre, the data illustrate the centrality of education in all that is done at YPT. YPT integrates educative values and practices in ways that go beyond simple curriculum connections, so as to both extend and interrupt school pedagogy. YPT, as a TYA company, is simultaneously an artistic and educational organization:

We're an arts organization first and we define ourselves as an arts organization through our professional theatre and our education activities.

(Hugh Neilson, Managing Director, YPT, Interview, 6 May 2011)

Not all theatre is educational, perhaps, in part, because not all theatres are aware of or strive to maximize their educational potential, but in conjunction with the plethora of other activities that take place there, YPT demonstrates both the educational and aesthetic benefits of theatre and the value of bringing these together.

### **Curriculum Connections**

In discovering the reasons why teachers bring their students to YPT, I was surprised to learn that connections to the curriculum, though important, were not always of primary concern in choosing this particular excursion. The most prevalent curriculum connections that teachers made and found to be of value in this experience, and those which I will outline in more detail later on in this section, were those related to literacy skills and, in particular, communication. At present, I would like to share one element that emerged in almost every interview with both teachers and those who work at and with YPT: the importance of pleasure in making this experience an educative one (Dewey, 1938):

I want my students to enjoy coming to school.

(Sheilagh, Teacher, Interview, 11 May 2011)

Um, well, I think in our school at least, they don't have a lot of chances, opportunities to see any kind of performance and they love, they love an assembly, when we have, sometimes there are, you know, we have a troupe come in, in the past anyway, or a motivational speaker, so you know, they do love an assembly... many of them have not gone to live theatre, almost all... and I say, "If you remember nothing from our Grade 10 course together, you will remember this trip and, you won't realize that now." And often in yearbooks, or if you talk to graduates about, what they remember about high school, they mention the trips. Every time.

(Frances, Teacher, Interview, 25 January 2011)

Despite the possibility that enjoyment in education fosters learning (Dewey, 1938), many teachers explained that this seems to have been forgotten by fellow educators and by the larger system of schooling in this province, in favour of more measurable, particular educational outcomes:

If I can tie it in with what I'm doing, that's great, but that's not really my main thing, like I'm not, I think a lot of people in education have gotten to the point where everything has to be so integrated. Like, you can't just do it, because it's fun to go to the theatre.

(Erin, Teacher, Interview, 21 April 2011)

And also, I really do not see this experience as a vehicle for curriculum. It's not a curriculum tool and I don't bring them because it connects to "curriculum". Like, it isn't for that. It's something in itself.

(Julia, Teacher, Interview, 28 March 2011)

Mark: Like what's the first class to get cut? It's the music class or the drama class or the art class, because it doesn't have a measurable, um...

Lois: Outcome?

Mark: Outcome. Learn your times tables. You can't measure the enrichment of a child reading poetry and yet we look and we talk about, you know... we talk about anything in the past and we always evaluate it by, you know, our sense of history is so coloured by the artist and attributed to that and yet, you know, that is only measured after the fact.

(Mark McGrinder, Actor, "The Big League", YPT, 9 April 2011)

Along with other research data, this theme speaks to the pressure teachers in this province feel to meet curriculum demands, despite the fact that this contradicts the way teaching and learning operates. In fact, the data reveal that this experience is valuable, because it makes possible multiple educational outcomes at once, both during and after the event:

They seem to acknowledge that all aims are not predictable or within control of the "givers of knowledge"... the complexity of the learning process is explicitly acknowledged.

(Fieldnotes, Participatory Observation, "A Year with Frog and Toad" Rehearsal, YPT, 25 October 2011)

We do have to be open, um, open-hearted and open-ended, we can't just have singular kind of learning outcomes. That's not our role. We have to open it up and they find some of their own.

(Allen MacInnis, Artistic Director, YPT, Interview, 19 April 2011)

This research illustrates the richness of this experience with regard to education and the fact that, while specific curricular outcomes can be made, it is unnecessary and unfeasible to know or to measure all of these. The ways in which teachers understand the value of this fieldtrip to the theatre illuminates the importance of understanding knowledge "not as a fixed possession

but as an agency and instrumentality for opening new fields which make new demands” (Dewey, 1938, p. 75). Coming to YPT, the data show, breaks teachers free from the confines of education as it is often enacted in schools and grants students the opportunity to experience teaching and learning as an open-ended, dynamic and “continuous spiral” (p. 79). This also indicates that teachers are cognizant of the fact that not all learning experiences are measurable and, in this way, they disrupt commonsense notions of what it means to teach and to learn (Kumashiro, 2001).

### **Connecting Curriculum to Pedagogy in Experiential Education**

With regard to pedagogy, many participants, particularly teachers, perceive the value of this experience in allowing students the opportunity to learn from someone other than their teacher. This is particularly important, it seems, for those who teach Drama at the Intermediate and Senior levels.

Mackenzie: I think it reinforces a lot of pedagogy... in terms of certain things we had taught, the kids understand how it comes together in a professional way or that we're not just making these up... so what I like about it is that we can often use the shows that we go and see as references, as examples, and there's these concrete examples that all of us share within the class, so it really reinforces my teaching:

Ernie: Yeah, I would agree with that. There are things that actually occur quite naturally when you come back to the classroom after seeing a show, when you see the students actually making the connections... when the students start to make those connections and use certain theatrical language and, you know, that you can sort of try to instil in them and-

Mackenzie: -they get it-

Ernie: -and all of a sudden, they get to use it in context.

Lois: It solidifies it.

Ernie: Yeah.

Mackenzie: And there is something to be said that they realize that their teachers aren't just sort of making these things up or it's not just sort of part of the curriculum. They get that, okay, on stage in a very real, professional manner or setting, this works, right? Like, the stuff that you're learning is up there on stage and for them it's also like a validity as well of the work that they're doing in their own little studio.

(Mackenzie and Ernie, Teachers, Interview, 25 May 2011)

Coming to YPT helps students to recognize the practical value of what they are learning; it extends curricular requirements beyond the classroom. This aligns with Dewey's (1938) criterion of experiential learning with regard to the necessity of heightened curiosity and the desire to learn more. In this way, education becomes process-oriented, rather than a means toward a measurable end (Dewey, 1938; Kumashiro, 2000; Grumet, 1989). 79).

### **Theatre as Pedagogy: Storytelling and Dramaturgy**

The research data reveal that this conception of education is often at odds with the enactment of the formal curriculum in schools, but that teachers, in including experiences such as these in their educational repertoire, feel they have the capacity to manipulate, shape and extend the curriculum to better serve their students. This speaks to the importance of pedagogy in relation to curriculum and the possibilities that theatre affords teachers in this regard. Theatre, the data suggest, lends itself to a particular type of pedagogy.

In speaking with teachers, the value of storytelling to teaching and learning emerged as a strong theme, no matter the age, discipline or special focus of the students.



I really love story, so I read a lot to the children and they write a lot, so that's just another way to experience stories, is by going to the theatre, so it's nice to have stories in a different representation than say, reading them from a book or having the kids write it, you know, this is them going and seeing it acted out, so I think that connects nicely.

(Erin, Teacher, Interview, 21 April 2011)

I suppose that I like to do a lot of teaching that has to do with imagination, with the arts, especially with retelling things.

(Brent, Teacher, Interview, 27 April 011)

For all of the teachers I interviewed, it seems that going to the theatre, for a variety of different purposes, is an extension of their own pedagogical practice of employing story in the classroom. The data also illustrate the fact that teachers, as well as those who work at and with the theatre, believe that YPT tells stories in a way that meets their audience with respect, rather than in a didactic manner:

“I think we do a fairly good range... and we take it deadly seriously too. There's no sort of talking down to kids... there's stories about being friends and... they're all, they're all teaching without the kid noticing and I think that's important to, you know. When they're onto you and they know you're being educational, that's when you lose them.

(Elaine May, Assistant Head of Wardrobe/Dresser, YPT, Interview, 1 March 2011)

Teachers, especially those at the Intermediate and Senior levels, explained how much their students appreciated this approach to teaching, especially with regard to non-academic curricula, such as character education. One teacher explained that even though her students were acutely aware that education about bullying and power relations was integrated into “The Shape of a Girl”, they felt respected in the way in which this was communicated:

Mackenzie: My class thought that they get this information so often - this anti-bullying stuff - but they really liked the way it was presented and the point of view of Braidie as well, they really thought that that was great, because had it been from the point of view of the victim, I think they thought potentially that that would have been like, we've heard this before, we get it.

Lois: We don't want to be made to feel guilty or whatever?

Mackenzie: Exactly. That's it exactly. They really liked it.

Lois: That's interesting. And the sense that they know, like, "I've heard this before, you tell me everyday", but even a different way of doing it made them more receptive.

Mackenzie: They liked it, they appreciated that. They really liked not being spoken down to.

(Mackenzie, Teacher, Interview, 25 May 2011)

The research data show the possibility that theatre such as this offers students the opportunity to learn, because rather than teaching in a didactic manner, it meets them with respect and engages them as agents in the process of education. Instead of the transmission of knowledge, teaching and learning becomes dynamic and discursive, with the play as a "meeting place" (Massey, 1994, p. 154) of a variety of experiences and perspectives. Many participants who work at YPT believe that coming to the theatre affords students and teachers a unique opportunity to learn together:

Stephen: You could give it to them in book, but at the same time, it's always just going to be in the book and maybe in their head. When you give it to them on the stage, they're actually experiencing it in a way that they don't get to on the page, right? So, I think by making that experience real for them it makes them more... they're actually experiencing

it, because... they're experiencing it, I mean obviously not in the exact same way, because everybody experiences everything differently, but they're having a group experience of the same thing. You may all say, go read this book, but let's face it, somebody may skim through it, somebody, we read in different ways, but I think we tend to have a more communal, group experience and you can even discuss it, if somebody says, "Well, no, I didn't see that", everybody else can chime in.

Lois: It's shared in a different way?

Stephen: It's shared in a different way. In a more group way, so I think it lets them open up more easily than they might with a book.

(Stephen Colella, Dramaturg, YPT, Interview, 1 March 2011)

This event provides teachers and students with a complex, dialogic and mutually constructed learning opportunity in which education "is not an end in itself, but a means toward the always-shifting end/goal of learning more" (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 34).

Dramaturgically, YPT tells stories with a focus on education and with careful attention to how they are told. Among those participants who work at and with YPT, there was a general consensus that, at its core, all theatre shares the same lifeblood: the story. In conversation with Jeff Cummings, YPT's Production Manager, I learned about the centrality of the story in theatre, TYA and otherwise:

Jeff: I think the storytelling is the thing that's comparable. Are you telling good stories?

Are you telling interesting stories? Are you serving - for us, in production - are we serving the story? Are we supporting the story?

Lois: Mm-hmm.

Jeff: Well, and that, that's new to me.

Lois: Yeah?

Jeff: Yeah, it's been in the last four or five years of my career where I've realized the importance of that and the value of that. And it doesn't matter, I don't think, where you're working... the story's, the play is there. There's a story within that play and are we serving it? Are we telling that story the way that we want to?

(Jeff Cummings, Production Manager, YPT, Interview, 1 March 2011)

What the data illustrate is what participants perceive to be the unique pedagogical power of theatre is the way in which stories can be told and thus, experienced. Karen Gilodo explained the distinct dramaturgical requirements of TYA succinctly:

Karen: Dramaturgically, there's a lot of difference in TYA plays where there are dramaturgical devices to help students, uh, process what's happening, so, um, in "Hana's Suitcase" for example, the role of the Japanese kids who are learning about Hana's story express what the students in the audience might be thinking at any given moment: I don't want to carry on, I don't want to hear the end, this is sad, this hurts my feelings, you know? And that, having your emotions mirrored by the characters on stage and worked through helps you to work through it as you watch, so I think that dramaturgically, people who write for TYA generally try to write into the students' experiences.

Lois: They really have the audience in mind, a particular audience?

Karen: Yeah, it's all about the audience, whereas I would say in whatever, regular theatre, um, it has, I think sometimes playwrights get more caught up in what they want to say and not so much how they want the audience to hear it, what they want the audience to take from it, where the audience should be at any given moment. I don't think

that's as much at the forefront and I think that is a bit of a shame, actually, because it's really important as a playwright to know exactly where your audience is at all times... If you have a desired effect, you need to be thinking about where they are in the experience. So, I think that that's a real difference.

(Karen Gilodo, Educational Services Coordinator, YPT, Interview, 24 May 2011)

This dramaturgical focus bolsters the theatre's pedagogical possibility. Like a good educator, YPT strives to make this experience accessible to students by meeting students where they are and, from there, providing students with the opportunity to make connections between what they know and what is yet to be learned (Dewey, 1938).

Nevertheless, this is not to say that all students have the same lived experience. In fact, it is quite the opposite and, as Kumashiro (2000) reminds us, there is a certain unknowability in the process of teaching and learning that educators must recognize. The research data suggest that storytelling, especially through theatre, is an educative tool, because it acknowledges this inscrutability, respects difference and, most importantly, teaches students to do the same. One teacher spoke very passionately about the particular educative value of going to the theatre:

It's a place to better understand themselves, better understand other people who we think are different from ourselves and understand our place in this world, whether we are an 18-year-old with no credits who's living in a shelter or whether we are in grade 12 and going to university and our parents love us and you know, whatever that is, it's understanding your place and your story in the world and your relationship to others and not being so threatened by other people's stories and other people's differences.

(Jacklyn, Teacher, Interview, 1 April 2011)

In speaking with this teacher and others, I learned that, in their experience, going to YPT helped their students to make connections between themselves, the story and each other and, in this way, fostered a sense of place in the world. This was made possible, they explained, because of the dialogic pedagogy opened up through theatre. As Jonothan Neelands (2010) explains, the strength of the medium of theatre “is neither in our own subjective experience nor in the play – it emerges through the dialectic and dialogue between”. It is a communal art form and an opportunity for shared experiential learning (Dewey, 1938). As a result, what is created is always in flux and requires its participants to, together, meet with the unknown.

### **The Importance of Meeting in an Aesthetic Space**

In the previous sections of this chapter, I have outlined YPT’s particular attention to young people and education and, in particular, the centrality of theatrical storytelling in the pedagogical value of this experience. In connection with this, the data indicate that what is equally important about having students come to YPT as an educative experience is that it occurs in a professional, aesthetic space. Entering into such an environment affords teachers and students new possibilities for learning.

### **Authenticity and Professionalism**

While teachers and those who work at and with YPT were quick to exalt the importance of touring TYA companies to schools, considering the fact that they make theatre accessible to schools that, for economic and geographic reasons, would not otherwise have entrance into the world of theatre; teachers, in particular, spoke about the fact that these shows were not as professional, due to the constraints of time and space and the limited technical elements possible in school venues. Among teachers especially there was a sense that in order to have an authentic theatrical experience, students must attend an actual theatre:

So, you go to the theatre and there's the actual theatre set up, so we don't have that, we don't have an auditorium. The lights, the sets, the everything, so they can't, when we're studying it, be in that situation.

(Veronica, Teacher, Interview, 15 April 2011)

The data reveal participants believe that students who attend YPT are granted a more complete experience of what it means to go to the theatre and, in particular, that the professional aesthetic space has much to do with this fullness. The level of professionalism, teachers reported, is felt by their students:

We have had the theatres here and they like it, but there seems something - and they've said it themselves - really juvenile, it's actually really corny and I said, "Pardon me? Okay, what do you mean? They said, "It's because we're sitting on the gym floor, we're not sitting in the fancy chairs, we're not sitting like we feel in the theatre, it's a whole feeling, it's the atmosphere as well for them... They do enjoy it, but they don't feel it's complete.

(Nick, Teacher, Interview, 2 May 2011)

I was struck, in this research, by the centrality of the space of the theatre in participants' memories of their most significant formative theatre-going experiences:

Lois: Why do you choose to work specifically in TYA?

Katie: Well, on a personal level, this is the first place I ever saw a play.

Lois: Really? What did you see?

Katie: I saw "A Christmas Carol"... I was at a Montessori school, which was neat, because I had kids all the way up to grade 6 in my class and yeah, we came to see... I even know whereabouts in the theatre I was sitting.

Lois: Really? You remember it.

Katie: Yeah, I remember the experience of looking down and seeing it... on a personal, very emotional level, I've always identified with this as an important place.

(Katie Pounder, Administrative Coordinator, YPT, Interview, 2 May 2011)

Giselle: I remember sitting there and the House going out, the House lights going out, and the conductor breathing and I remember the down beat... and I remember that feeling of absolute joy as the orchestra played and it was a concert series, so there were no actors or anything like that... um, I remember sitting and we were close, we were close to the Orchestra Pit, because I was fascinated by watching their fingers move over the strings. I remember that and I remember turning to my mother and saying, "I want to play that."

(Giselle Clarke-Trenaman, Stage Manager, "i think i can", YPT, Interview, 18 April 2011)

Lois: Do you remember your first live theatre experience as an audience member? Can you tell me about it?

Kate: Yes. The first thing I remember seeing was a production of "Annie". I memorized all of the songs and performed them frequently for myself and for my family. I can remember the theatre vividly... I can see it very clearly in my mind's eye. I was enraptured and knew I wanted to do that.

(Kate Fenton, Artist-Educator, YPT, Interview, 16 June 2011)

Lois: Do you remember your first theatre experience as an audience member and if so, could you tell me about it?

Nick: Yeah, "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" with Donny Osmond. I don't remember how old I was. I know I was in high school... And it was at one of the



theatres downtown, so I remember we went to an evening show as well... We all went together as the group of us from the class. Our parents were there as well and I remember it was... I literally sat with my jaw down, because I remember where we were sitting, because it was left orchestra and literally, jaw was to the ground the entire time, because to see it, I mean... I had never been to a show, so to actually see a professional, it was just, the coat. I remember it was the coat. When he put the coat on, that was just the biggest thing too, we were close, we were that close. No, it was very... I was at a loss for words, because I didn't know what to compare it to, because I had never been, I thought, this is the most amazing show I've ever been to, because it was at the time. Having been to other ones, I still, because it was the first show, it still was one of the best shows, because it was the first.

(Nick, Teacher, Interview, 2 May 2011)

The data also illustrate the important fact that, as one of my research participants succinctly put it, "The space is only going to represent the experience it provides." (Mark McGrinder, Actor, "The Big League", Interview, 9 April 2011).

### **Immersion and Engagement**

The particular medium of theatre and the aesthetic possibilities provided by the professional theatre environment, teachers' perceptions suggest, allows students to experience the story more deeply. At YPT, the full complement of technical and production elements - lighting, props, sound, set, costumes - helps students to engage with the story on multiple levels:

It's just another form of storytelling, right? I think it's a great literacy experience, it's a great learning how to listen experience, um, and it's a sensory experience, right? It's auditory, it's visual, it's participatory!

(Renée, Teacher, Interview, 3 May 2011)

Participants feel that the professional technical elements at YPT offer its audiences the possibility not only to engage with the story, but to enter into it:

The whole experience, like you're not just seeing a show, but you're seeing a show with full lighting, full set, full sound and those are things you just can't recreate the scale that we have here in a gym at all. It's impossible and so I think you bring them here and you get that full professional theatre, um, experience that you can't get in a gym. Like if we brought the shows to them, they would get the professional actors and stuff, but they wouldn't get the whole thing. You know, the sets wouldn't be as big, we wouldn't be able to do as fun tricks as we do and flying things and having things, um, in fog and all that kind of stuff and I think that's a big portion of what this space offers to schools and students, because it's really like they are taken somewhere else.

(Jacquie Lazar, Head Electrician, YPT, Interview, 26 April 2011)

### **Lighting.**

In particular, lighting has emerged in this research as being of central importance to engagement:

I think it's different when you're in a theatre with the lights off. You know, and it's, you're really focused on the stage.

(Erin, Teacher, Interview, 21 April 2011)

One of the most interesting moments in observing the performances at YPT is when the house lights come down, signalling the start of the show. Amid the giggles and shrieks of discomfort and pleasure at being in the dark, there emerges a focused energy, as the attention of the audience, now blanketed in black, turns toward the illuminated stage. YPT remains ever

cognizant of its audience in this respect. I learned, in this research, that the lighting, along with other technical elements, is understood in a very particular way:

I think the challenge sometimes with what I do, uh, is to, um, not freak the kids out, like not go too dark, you know what I mean? Not set a scene that's going to scare them, you know, you want to engage them and you want them to have a reaction, but you don't want to freak them out either, depending on the age group, so you have to, I think you have to really tailor some of the things that we do, some of the tricks that we have on stage, to not freak out the kids if it happens to be a scary scene or whatnot. You want them to get the point, but without scaring them... I think you can do that in adult theatre a little bit more, you can, because the adults choose to go there, right? I think with children's theatre, you have to push the boundaries, but we have to be super careful about where you push them and how you push them.

(Jacquie Lazar, Head Electrician, YPT, Interview, 26 April 2011)

Isaac: I was just thinking that then the lights go dark. That's one of the big things. We don't take, in school shows, we don't take the lights to black, we take them to a quarter, particularly at the beginning of the show and quite often, we keep it at a quarter, so House Management can see the students, teachers can see the students, the students are not completely in the black. Two reasons: they can be seen and so that they don't freak out, so younger ones don't freak out, you know, in the black, it's a new space. The vibe in the theatre's way different from the vibe in a cinema hall, you know?

Lois: Yeah, oh yeah... So it never goes totally black, though?

Isaac: Yeah.

Lois: For any shows?

Isaac: For school shows... The initial thing, we're at grey or 25%, 25% House and then we put out the House, um... ease into that, because it's new, it's new for a lot of people.

(Isaac Thomas, Drama School Coordinator, YPT, Interview, 7 April 2011)

While everyone is directed toward a common focus, with the aid of theatrical lighting, what happens in the world of the play and in the whole of the theatre is multifaceted, immersive and often disorienting, especially for students who have not experienced theatre before. While there is value in the discomfort of encountering this newness, in that this other environment allows for a change in perspective and fosters a sense of wonder, there must also be a sense of assurance in order for students to be open to what this novel experience permits. The data suggest that what is most important about having the space in a semi-lit state allows everyone in the theatre to see one another, while still maintaining a certain level of privacy:

The thing is about theatre, you know, the lights go out and you are experiencing the piece on your own... but at the same time, there's an inherent respect that one has to have when they're watching someone put themselves out there on stage... Um, I mean, I have, I've been in theatre a long time, so of course I have big ideas about the importance of sharing space with live bodies who are telling you a story and the real exchange that goes on there. Nowhere else, you can't get that anywhere else... and when the students see that, it's very surprising and exciting for them that their reactions are influencing the way this piece is being told... And even just as the lights are coming down and then being in the dark and seeing lights come up and focusing, you know, pushing focus.

(Margaret Smith, Development Officer/Events, YPT, Interview, 13 May 2011)

Participants believe that this affords further opportunities for learning, because, being in the dark, students feel secure in having their own reaction to the piece, but are also able to recognize that

their responses matter and, in turn, they can affect and be affected by others. When they make eye contact with one of the performers on stage, notice they are laughing at the same joke as a fellow student, hear an actor adlib a response to the audience's reaction or see their teacher moved by the play, students, both teachers and those who work at YPT have reported in this research, learn the value of theatre, in that it is a simultaneous communal and independent experience.

### **Possibility: Connecting the Real and the Imaginary**

Entering into this darkness together not only helps to give audience members an engaging sensory experience, but it also separates, to some extent, the actual world from the one of fiction that is created on stage. While quality theatre will draw the audience into that imaginary sphere, the light and configuration of the theatre, the data reveal, offers a constant physical indication that the two, though connected, are separate.

#### **Q&As.**

This connection between the real and the imagined world, participants believe, is further emphasized in the different question and answer (Q&A) sessions that follow each show at the theatre:

Tamila: I think the stage sort of separates real life, um, because we live in an imaginary world, so I think at the end when the kids can, you know, ask questions it sort of brings it into reality for them. And also, I think it's quite courageous of kids to sit in a big audience with 400 other people and raise their hand and ask a question... And, I think that sort of feeds into the culture of it, um, I think it allows them to think about things and it, it doesn't isolate it from an hour-long show... I think it sort of breeds a dialogue that they can have past the show.

Lois: It extends the experience.

Tamila: It extends it... I think the talkback can be a bridge... because the illusion that we've worked so hard to create is then demystified for them.

(Tamila Zaslavsky, Actor, "The Big League", YPT, Interview, 23 February 2011)

Talkbacks are not typically a part of most professional adult theatre, but immediately following most of the shows at YPT, there is a discussion facilitated by Karen Gilodo, along with one or more actors from the play. In this research, I have had the great opportunity to observe several of these Q&As for each of the eight plays presented this season. I have also had the chance to conduct some of these sessions myself. What was interesting about this methodological choice to both observe and conduct these sessions was that in taking a greater role in participating by leading some of the sessions, I felt I was constrained in my ability to make rich and detailed observations:

While I feel I am learning about teaching by conducting these sessions, I am better able to observe when I am in the audience. I am surprised that, in participating to a lesser degree, I feel better able to do research.

(Fieldnotes, "i think i can"/"As You Puppet" Performances & Q&As, YPT, 12 April 2011)

Upon reflection, I have realized that I was not participating more or less intensely in either role, but simply differently. As the facilitator, I felt outside of and also responsible for the success of the Q&A, so I felt my first priority was to conduct a valuable discussion, whereas as an audience member, I felt more a part of the conversation, as well as in a position to make observations.

Throughout my experience with the Q&As, I was continually surprised at the high level of participation: the active listening of the audience members, the increasing number of hands

that go up as the session goes on, and the questions and remarks that continue after it has finished. Giroux (1999) argues that, at its best, “education fosters self-reflection and public responsibility” (p. 54). The data show that while participants perceive watching the actual performance to be an active experience in and of itself, engaging with others in dialogue about the experience is integral to the educative value of the event. These sessions, many teachers reported, demonstrate the importance of the discussions that follow theatre:

It [the Q&A] was important for them, I mean, to a large extent, because they wanted to know how things work in the theatre. “How did that happen?” “How do you change clothes so fast?” Um, so I think it was really important in order for them to get a sense of how theatre works and, you know, who’s changing the lights and those sorts of things that they really needed to think through and be able to ask questions about before they can really focus their attention on subsequent performances.

(Brent, Teacher, Interview, 27 April 011)

I think, they, you know, just watching things on screens all the time, you get a little bit detached and you forget that a person is doing a job and that that’s not real life. It’s not for real, those are different people and anybody can do that... you can do it too. You can act and pretend. That’s all it is... Especially with the Q&A at the end when they come out of character, they see that and that’s, um, that’s again, coming down to role playing and you know, a text to self connection when you’re doing literacy and comprehension, that’s what you want to see. Can you step away from it and can you change your point of view? So there’s a whole bunch of things about literacy.

(Ann, Teacher, Interview, 26 April 2011)

They're great about answering everything... and they maybe demonstrate and you don't get that unless you have a very special situation. And I think that is a huge component of [YPT]: to have the full experience. It kind of wraps it up nicely and it doesn't just leave you hanging... It's a kind of learning. It's a part of pedagogy to introduce that and to bring theatre into that kind of, um, learning context, so that it's not just we're going, we experience it and then we leave. Actually, this is for you, this is theatre for you and we're interested in what you have to say. And I think that's what's great about this theatre in particular and that's another reason why I choose to go there.

(Veronica, Teacher, Interview, 15 April 2011)

At YPT, these Q&As are content-driven, with a focus on sparking deeper consideration and dialogue of the social issues or themes examined in the play:

Allen: We recognize that art has an element of reflection in it, whatever the art form is, that's part of the experience... Reflection, contemplation, you know, and it, although very often the kids have enjoyed the experience, it's not, we're not, our goal isn't to get them to like art... Our goal is to get them to have an aesthetic experience and part of that is reflection.

Mary Ellen: Mm-hmm. That's right.

Allen: And, and so it's, it's, we're instilling that kind of aesthetic education, I guess, not by calling it that, but by having the Q&A where they get to talk back to us and think a bit about, um, what they've seen and to talk about it.

Lois: It initiates that.

Allen: Yeah, and the questions they ask might initiate comments that we don't get to hear as they talk to each other on the bus home or whatever.



Lois: Right.

(Allen MacInnis, Artistic Director; Mary Ellen MacLean, Director, “The Big League”; Karen Gilodo, Educational Services Coordinator; YPT; Focus Group Interview, 25 February 2011)

The research data illustrate that participants believe that these Q&As are of great significance in that they model the necessity and value of reflection in aesthetic education:

I think it’s great for them to clarify all together what they need to take away from the experience to discuss further, you know, there’s only certain questions we can answer for them in these sessions. It’s a really great way to acknowledge collectively what is at issue in these plays and what they need to go and think about further. You can’t, seeing the show once is not enough. The thing that is so great about these pieces is that they can stimulate discussion that can go on and on and on in time and the way you can have a real impact on what they’re experiencing in their own classes.

(Conrad Alexandrowicz, Director, “i think i can”, YPT, Interview, 6 April 2011)

In the Q&As, students not only have the opportunity to learn from those who work at the theatre, but also from their peers. Karen is especially adept at opening up students’ questions and soliciting responses from their peers in the audience. I noticed the value of this during the Q&A following the final show of the season:

A student asks why Sofie was the one who was excluded from the group. Students give a variety of answers: “Because she was new”, “Because she was different”, “Because she was weird”. Then, one student suggests that it probably had nothing to do with how Sophie behaved. Their actions were about power. Karen really took hold of this and reiterated to the audience how important this perspective is.

(Karen Gilodo, Educational Services Coordinator, YPT; Fieldnotes, Participatory Observation, “The Shape of a Girl” Final Performance and Q&A, 19 May 2011)

While the play has finished, there is the hope that its impact will continue to be felt, not only individually, but collectively through discussion among its audiences. Among participants, there is an understanding that the dialogue extends beyond the parameters of the Q&A session, but that it is vital to sparking this communication:

I think if we, in the theatres, start the conversation there, then it’s more likely to continue on, because even if a kid says to a friend, “Oh, you know what I really wanted to ask, I really wanted to ask this...”, or “Wasn’t it funny that she was so different than the character? Like, I just think that that type of dialogue is really important and then, hopefully, will cultivate a practice of dialoguing after the show, through the Q&A. (Mackenzie, Teacher, Interview, 25 May 2011)

According to many participants, these talkbacks serve to extend their students’ learning. It seems that, having seen the play, the students develop a strong connection to the performers and to the story and thus, a desire to enter into conversation with the actors and with each other about it:

Jan: You know, some kids might ask questions that you wouldn’t even dream of asking, so that is very important.

Lois: And if they were learning about it at school, maybe they wouldn’t ask those questions? Being in a different space and having just shared something, it kind of pushes you to do that?

Jan: Yeah, because you’re in a different space, you’re not at school and that makes you behave differently, because you’re not talking to your teacher, you’re not talking to your

parents, you're among friends and you're talking to someone who may look more easy to talk to.

Lois: What do you mean by that?

Jan: Like, if they have the courage to act in front of you, it's like an example of that they can talk to you.

Lois: Yeah, okay, that's interesting. There's a trust that develops there.

Jan: Yeah.

(Jan Borkowski, Graphic Designer/Marketing Coordinator, YPT, Interview, 6 May 2011)

The data indicate that, by no means, are all of the Q&As successful in achieving these aims. However, even if they are ineffective in sparking dialogue or a deeper analysis of the issues brought up in the play, these sessions allow students to see that theatre is humanly made and constructed:

Ernie: Now, sometimes Q&As can be brutal, in the sense that, you know, sometimes students will ask ridiculous questions, which was the case, but none of our students.

Mackenzie: You know, it's also interesting for them to see the actors outside of role though.

Ernie: For sure... It gives them an opportunity to see the human side of a character. If the character's someone who's truly evil or, you know, really depressed or what have you, and then they come out and you see the difference between the two, I think that that's really important.

(Ernie & Mackenzie, Teachers, Interview, 25 May 2011)

The data also suggest that these talkbacks are of great educative value to teachers as well, because they have the chance to listen to their students and to learn about them in a way in which they might not be able to at school.

I think it's an important part. I think, when it's available, you should always take advantage, because for the students, it gives them an opportunity to ask any questions that they may have and it's not something that is sort of sanctioned by us as teachers. It's not us giving our typical, sort of, teacher answer. It's actually them, you know, exploring their own curiosity about certain aspects of the show that they may, you know, honestly want the answer to.

(Ernie, Teacher, Interview, 25 May 2011)

The data reveal that the whole experience of seeing a play as a class and then taking part in a Q&A opens students and teachers up to conversations that would not usually or easily occur, despite their importance. This is, it seems, for many reasons, several of which I will go into greater detail in the subsequent sections of this chapter, but in connection with the Q&As, it seems that this is fostered by the simultaneous distance and intimacy provided by way of connecting the fictive space of the play to the actual world. Mary Ellen MacLean, the Director of "The Big League", expressed this eloquently in our conversation about the value of these sessions:

Lois: So, it initiates a conversation about their own lives?

Mary Ellen: Yeah, yeah.

Lois: Which, they arguably could have otherwise, but this maybe-

Mary Ellen: -I think what it is, it's outside of them, but it speaks to them. It's giving

voice to something that they actually are feeling and thinking and may be wanting to do, so they're actually seeing it happen and they're also seeing a positive outcome.

Lois: So, they're seeing possibility?

Mary Ellen: Yeah, yeah, and also that to get there, it's not easy. You have to make mistakes, get in conflict, be uncomfortable.

(Mary Ellen, Director, "The Big League", YPT, Interview, 1 April 2011)

Students are taken out of themselves and offered a vision of what might be. While this has been something they have felt or experienced individually, it is brought to light in a public domain. As Robbins (2008) articulates it, they are provided with hope, that is "the composite of private dreams translated into public visions and commitments, one that expands human possibility" (p. 168). It is the public element of practicing hope that is of importance in this regard. The data illustrate that, in participating in this public forum, it appears that, in connecting their own experience to that of others, students are able to imagine new possibilities in their own lives.

### **Tools of the Trade.**

There is a second kind of talkback offered at YPT called "Tools of the Trade" (TOTT) that I was able to observe in this research. In theatre for general audiences, a talkback such as this is even more of a rarity than a content-driven Q&A and, the research data show, this opportunity is of great importance to teachers and their students. Conducted by Karen Gilodo, as well as Jacquie Lazar, Head Electrician, Scott Kitcher, Stage Carpenter, and Aiden Nagle, Head of Audio at YPT, and presented once a week for certain shows produced by YPT during the season, this session offers its audiences with further insight into technical production.

Karen usually opens the TOTT session by asking the audience who they think is responsible for making all of the sound, light and video projection effects happen. Answers from

the audience vary, but few students, especially those at a younger age or those not in a Drama class, seem to know what a Stage Manager is. When Karen explains that this is the work of a Stage Manager, she points up to the booth at the back of the House, helping the audience to learn where they are located during the performance. Then, wearing a headset, she, along with Aiden and the show's Stage Manager, demonstrate how a particular cue or series of cues from the show is enacted. Following this, there is the chance for audience members to ask questions. Unlike the usual Q&A, the TOTT usually elicits questions about the mechanics of theatre production and how the show physically comes into being.

Many participants believe that along with the Q&As, during these TOTT talkbacks, students learn that theatre requires a lot of work by a team of highly skilled, committed professionals. They gain insight into the time, repetition and revision required in aesthetic creation. They see the level of risk-taking it requires. They learn the value of communication and collaboration in practicing creativity. In speaking with teachers, I have discovered that learning about the process of technical production is important to students, they believe, because it connects to what they do in their own lives and also gives them a model for what they can achieve. This provides students with new understandings about viable careers and the practicality of the arts:

I want them to see live theatre, because I want them to see what they're capable of...

What can be done and what other things, when you add all these other elements of theatre, how your story can take on a life bigger than, it can multiply and "Wow, when you have lights like that, that's really effective! Oh, and the music. And adding a soundtrack." How the layering that I'm hoping one day that we could do with our scenes and our shows here, that, um, that layering of all the theatrical elements. So, I'm always

hoping and I'm always setting the bar high... Like, oh yeah, we could do that too. We could do that. We could do that.

(Jacklyn, Teacher, Interview, 1 April 2011)

It shows that it's not... that it's possible. It's magical, but at the same time it's not magical. They can aspire to do that.

(Paul Lacey, Faculty, the Drama School, YPT, Interview, 16 March 2011)

Most importantly, the data illustrate, the TOTT sessions help to demystify the magic of theatre and, in so doing, give students entrance into thinking critically about how it is created. Above all, these talkbacks function as a disruption of the fictive world of theatre and explicitly make public the magic of the medium and that which was purposefully and artfully hidden during the performance. Many participants believe that this is best taught in an actual, professional theatre:

Mike: They get the theatre experience. I mean, I spent years touring school gymnasiums where we set up at one end and the kids sit on the floor and they watch us, that's fine.

Lois: There's value in that.

Mike: Of course, because we're bringing it to them, but what they get when they come here, is they get the full palette of everything the theatre has to offer. Not just kids, but all viewers, adults alike. The lights, the sound, all of the arts that go into creating theatre is available to them here... They're not only learning about what might be inherent in the play itself as far as thematic content. They're not only learning that, but they're learning about theatre itself.

Lois: And what it means to both go to the theatre and to create it.

Mike: Exactly.

(Mike Peterson, Usher/Actor, “As You Puppet”, YPT, Interview, 4 May 2011)

If you don't have a theatre at your school, this is a hard thing to teach, maybe. Or even if you have a theatre, oftentimes high school theatres are, uh, what's called a hand-crank, they just go up or down, there's no real moving anything like that or you're stuck with whatever lights are there. You don't get to change anything.

(Matt Jordan, Studio Technician, YPT, Interview, 20 April 2011)

In particular, the facilitators of these talkbacks demonstrate how the physical space of the theatre is humanly changed. More than eight different shows are performed in the theatre over the course of the season, each with new scenic and sound designs and some with different configurations of where the audience sits. Even within the space of one performance, the environment undergoes a multitude of changes. Unlike the highly structured and predictable temporal and spatial architecture of schools where rules and codes of social interaction are literally forged and embedded into the space and, as a result, often reproduce, rather than transform human relations (Hebdige, 2006). YPT is a changeable and deliberately fluid space. As the data indicate and as I will detail in the following section of this chapter, many participants believe that this opens teachers and students up to new possibilities of relating to one another and of understanding the world. This connects back to Kumashiro's (2000; 2001) assertion that what is essential in education is a desire for change and the courage to disrupt what is, in order to construct what might be.

### **The Importance of Going to the Theatre: Disrupting Space**

Following this, one of the most surprising themes shown in the data, and also one of the most prevalent, was the educative value of breaking out of the ordinary and the benefit to students and their teachers of leaving the school to experience live theatre. The reasons for this,



the data illustrate, are many. Firstly, the act of going and the importance of transportation emerged as being of central importance. The data show that leaving the school and going to the theatre by foot, bus or public transit, teachers believe, marked the excursion as a special occasion for their students. This research suggests that this is especially important for students who, for a variety of reasons, do not normally have the opportunity to leave their home or school communities:

They're also, they're out in the community, which is another benefit. They're seeing what Toronto has to offer, because so many times, students who have even grown up in Toronto, they don't really leave their neighbourhood and see that the city has lots to offer.

(Jacklyn, Teacher, Interview, 1 April 2011)

Okay, um, when I'm in the school setting, I find that we can kind of get cabin fever and what we've had provided in the last few years is access to a bus, an activity bus... so we've gone on a trip once a month and that's very important, because I've got six wheelchairs and only two staff and myself, which means for us to go for a walk around the block I need three volunteers, so to go and get on a bus and to travel out of the area of the school, it just is quite freeing and it's a very important experience for our students. A lot of our students, my class particularly, live in apartment buildings and so they don't actually go out every day, they don't have ground level access every day. Sometimes parents have no wheel trans or ability to take the kids anywhere, so if we can take them once a month in a bus, take them someplace, that's a real treat for our class.

(Sheilagh, Teacher, Interview, 11 May 2011)

Veronica: Being a private school, a lot of them haven't experienced a smaller theatre or

even going on the subway. Going there is valuable.

Lois: Do many of them spend time in that area?

Veronica: No, no. I remember last year, you know, this was a grade nine/ten class and that we were going on the subway south of Bloor was a huge deal... I mean, you can live in your glass house or whatever, but you want to experience what this city is about and I think that's part of the experience of going to theatre and not having things brought to you or watching things on a screen or being very limited, so it's more than just that... There's an involvement. And last year, I took them over to St. Lawrence Market to eat. So, it's an experience begin in your city.

(Veronica, Teacher, Interview, 15 April 2011)

Jane: And even just going downtown. For a lot of our kids, because they're from Scarborough and because a lot of them don't have a family vehicle, so they will have been as far as the bus will take them, they'll have been, a lot of ,especially our girls spend time at school, at the grocery store, at home, at the mosque, but not a lot beyond their immediate community... a lot of my students, because they're new to Canada or even if they were born here and just don't have a lot of experience with travel within Canada, within their city, within their province, within their country... that we just sort of take for granted sometimes, in other environments, in other schools, where the students are maybe born in Canada or their parents have the means to take them places. Not saying that a lot of our kids don't travel, they do, but when they travel, they tend to go back home, so they take trips back to India, back to Pakistan, wherever. A lot them do get to travel to places like Niagara Falls and stuff, because people will come to visit and they want to show them the sites, but they haven't necessarily been to a lot of places within the city, so if we

can, we try to combine it with lunch at the St. Lawrence Market or we'll try to walk them past George Brown College, we'll go down the street to the Toronto Star mural and talk about the history of Toronto, and even just driving down the DVP on a school bus, there's the CN Tower, there's all these things. They get really excited.

Lois: It is exciting. It's a whole event.

Jane: It's a whole event and to kids from Scarborough who don't really get downtown very often, it's really exciting. And that's part of it.

(Jane, Teacher, Interview, 27 May 2011)

Leaving the school together broadens students' understandings of the world and becomes a shared reference point between students and their teacher.

The data also suggest that, even for those students who do have the opportunity to venture into other parts of the city with their families, doing so as part of their school program is a more independent experience and one that, importantly, fosters school community:

Julia: Well, I think it's just that experience of having the opportunity to go and travel as a group and then all of the etiquette that comes along with theatre, like theatre behaviour as audience members, that was, that's something that's also, something that isn't necessarily seen when kids are sitting on the floor of a gym... um, I think so many positive things of just the collective, of that group going. I see really positive... a positive, um...

Lois: Among your students and your sort of classroom community?

Julia: Yeah, I don't even know if they're aware of it, but I see, I guess it's my belief, but I see that whole experience of going is so beneficial for them, even if they are privileged and have those opportunities, having the opportunity to do that independently and going with their teachers and, you know, with their friends and sitting in a big chair and having

that experience, you know, it's really valuable in terms of building community.

(Julia, Teacher, Interview, 28 March 2011)

It seems that experiencing the unknown and the unusual together is what some participants believe serves to build community:

Nick: It actually bonds the kids. They get a little closer... You can see groups of kids that normally wouldn't socialize, I mean, they say hello and good morning and are polite, but they're actually walking together. I mean, the best example is when you're on the subway together. All of a sudden, because they're a little afraid, they all huddle together and become a family... with experiences like that, when we go to the theatre and arrive on the subway, it's literally, you see a bond between them..., They're not this person has a status in school and this person is, you know? It brings them closer together and it brings them to an equal playing field, because on the playground, they know who is popular and who...

Lois: There are particular codes and ways of being?

Nick: Yup, yup, but on a fieldtrip like that, it's literally an equal playing field.

(Nick, Teacher, Interview, 2 May 2011)

Anne-Marie: Well, number one, just to get out of your regular environment is always better.

Lois: Why is that?

Anne-Marie: Because, um, well, I think for any student, any type of outing or fieldtrip is good for you physically and mentally. Just to have exposure to something outside of the classroom. Even dealing with your peers and students in another environment is actually something that might help relationships.

(Anne-Marie Woods, Artist-Educator, YPT, Interview, 17 May 2011)

Many teacher participants report that entering into a new space makes it possible for their students to change patterns of behaviour and the ways in which they normally relate to one another. It destabilizes the norms of school and makes strange the familiar:

Jacklyn: They are more likely to adhere to the expectations if they're in a theatre. When we've had people come here, they'll just get up and go to the washroom, they'll get a drink, they'll get up and use their cell phone, like and so you're always sort of mitigating that.

Lois: But it's more sort of immersive in the theatre?

Jacklyn: Yeah, in the theatre, I think they feel like they have to... it's an unknown space. Here, they have lots of ownership around the space, because they spend all day in this tiny little school, so they kind of, like it is their space and they're very comfortable in this space and you see them show and puff up around this space when new students arrive, when guests arrive, when there's a supply teachers, things like that, but in a theatre space, it's really unknown for them.

(Jacklyn, Teacher, Interview, 1 April 2011)

David: It's all about removing that sense of this is your home or this is your school. To go into a theatre and do something, you have many more variables that you can work with: you've got lights, sound, a set, I mean, you can bring costumes and some of that stuff to schools, but not in the same way that you have set it up in a theatre setting, so bringing the schools to the theatre offers a more full experience than taking a show to a school. And it's not their home. They feel like they're somewhere special or someplace where they have to sit and be attentive, because they don't know what's in the corner or

it's their first time, a lot of them, entering the theatre. If it's in your gym, you sort of know it inside and out.

Lois: Yeah.

David: And I think for teachers as well. Definitely.

(David Cox, Actor/Dancer, "i think i can", YPT, Interview, 12 April 2011)

This research suggests that this change in behaviour is not only beneficial with regard to peer interaction, but also for the ways in which teachers and students relate to one another. The data indicate that leaving the school disrupts patterns of authority. Attending the theatre, teachers must also adhere to the expectations of the professional theatre space and event, whereas at school, participants believe, they remain in a position of control and authority over the space:

Sheilagh: Coming to [YPT], it was one of our first like really professional shows, because I mean, there was a point when, I think, one of our staff went to the washroom and she just thought she was going to be able to get back in and it was like, "Sorry, doors are closed, performance has started, show's on, and we're not going to open the door until a certain time." And she was like, "Whoa." So for her, she was really surprised by that, but I know that experience for the various, like, Massey Hall performances I've been to, but like you open the door and you can throw an actor off their lines, the light coming at them, so it's very important.

(Sheilagh, Teacher, Interview, 11 May 2011)

Giselle: I think it's good for teachers to know they are not the be all and end all of authority.

Lois: It displaces their authority a little bit?

Giselle: Way so, because, you know, they show up and they're like, "We want to go in."

Well, the House isn't ready yet or we have to wait for another school group or whatever. And I find it really interesting when teachers don't have that power... And their students get to see that their teacher isn't all-powerful like they think they are.

(Giselle Clarke-Trenaman, Stage Manager, "i think i can", YPT, Interview, 18 April 2011)

Isaac: You're coming into a space where even the teachers are, in some ways, guests... so teachers and students are then negotiating authority within this space, so not neutral, but the power has shifted in a different way and the expectations, I feel, it becomes a very interesting thing... It becomes a very interesting question, because then when the students come into the building, um... their first interaction is with the House staff. Is it like coming into another school? I don't feel it's like coming into another school. I feel it's like coming into a public space and the expectations of a student's role in a public space are different from a student's role in a school.

Lois: Do you think the teacher's role changes too?

Isaac: Very much, yes. I mean, from what I've seen and felt, it's kind of like their role... it becomes... they are mediators between, between what we are presenting and the students.

(Isaac Thomas, Drama School Coordinator, YPT, Interview, 7 April 2011)

Many participants believe that this helps to foster "a geographical imagination" (Massey, 2006), a sense of the world, which is held in the mind. As Massey (2010) suggests, space "is the dimension of the social: it presents us with the existence of others." Thinking geographically requires an encounter with human diversity and thus, an understanding that the world is not uniformly perceived or experienced (Massey, 2006). Entering into the theatre allows students

and teacher to see and experience the possibility that places and the ways in which we interact within them are changeable. In this way, it cultivates “an outward-lookingness of the imagination” (Massey, 2010). As I have previously mentioned, the data illustrate that many participants, in particular those who work at and with YPT, believe that schools do not always foster this sense of hope:

Well, when they get to see the stage and when every show is different and there’s always something that kids have never seen before, um, so you know, like the show on stage now seems to be unique and different and there’s not a lot of that in school. The school that I grew up going to was pretty stale-looking and there wasn’t a lot of colour and there was a bit of artwork on the walls sometimes, but for the most part, there wasn’t a lot of big, exciting things to look at or do, so the theatre has... there’s so much happening to get different people’s attention, because every person, especially kids, is interested in something different. Like, I always look at the way things are built or put together, but a lot of other people look at how things are designed or how things are painted or how things are set up or the words on things or pictures, so there’s always something different for each kid, because every kid learns in a different way.

(Ryan Wilson, Head Scenic Carpenter, YPT, Interview, 4 May 2011)

Giselle: It’s a sense of an entire world. They enter into a world, immediately, as soon as they enter they have a lighting present, they have a set present, they have all of these things and not just with this show, but with any show, it’s a matter of you are now in this world. You now have, um, you have entered into this space and this space is a magical space and it can be anything. For example, for the next three weeks, it’s “i think i can”, three or four weeks ago it was “Alice in Wonderland”, before that it was something else,



it was something else, it was something else. It's a constant evolving space, so when you have students that come year after year after year, it shows them that no one space is fixed.

Lois: Whereas schools?

Giselle: Schools are very, very rigid and this is the way that it is and your gym is exactly this size and it will never grow, it will never shrink, you will always sit on this side, you know? Your principal will always be on that side. Yeah, it's very, schools are very rigid and structured so that everybody has a chance to learn, whereas learning in the theatre is unstructured in a way and it doesn't matter if you pick up on one item or another, you're still learning. You don't, there's not specific route about learning.

(Giselle Clarke-Trenaman, Stage Manager, "i think i can", YPT, Interview, 18 April 2011)

Those who work at the theatre echo what many teacher participants believe with regard to progressive conceptions of teaching and learning (Dewey, 1938; Kumashiro, 2001). This research demonstrates the value of leaving school in order to learn, not only about theatre, but about the world and the fact that it is changeable, unfixed and full of possibility. Getting out of your comfort zone is a way of fostering this kind of learning and one that is of particular value to students who are studying drama:

You need to go out. You need to explore what's out there, what's in your city, what's in your community. Get out of your comfortable, safety zone and that's part of it too. It's part of Drama, pushing yourself out of your safety zone and there are different ways of coming at that. Even taking them on the subway. If it helps achieve that, then that's great.

(Veronica, Teacher, Interview, 15 April 2011)

It goes back to that whole thing about being outside of the school and maybe being more willing to open up.

(Brad Trenaman, Lighting Designer, “i think i can”, YPT, Interview, 26 April 2011)

Leaving one’s usual environment also teaches students how to move through and interpret the world in which they live. Much of the educative value of this experience, participants believe, has to do with pushing students out of their usual milieu.

### **Encountering the Unfamiliar**

The data illustrate the importance many participants, both teachers and those who work at and with the theatre, place on having students meet with strangers in making this an educative experience. When students and teachers come to YPT, they are not only transplanted out of their regular environment, but they are ushered into a new space as a group and meet with others, usually people they don’t know, to become audience members and take part in a particular performance. In the company of strangers, they are held together for a set period of time to engage in a shared experience:

Hugh: This is one of the few organizations that allows them to have an experience of an artistic event outside of their regular place of comfort in schools... and that experience of the art in an environment where they’re surrounded by strangers, having to address, you know, what they’re viewing on stage together and then talking afterward is valuable for development.

Lois: Why is that?

Hugh: Because you need to engage with the world outside of your immediate comfort zone and if you never have those opportunities, then your view of the world is somewhat limited. I mean, even travelling to a theatre downtown is different, the experience of

going somewhere to experience something, rather than having it being brought to you, because it's kind of the way most things are received these days. We've made it very easy for us to receive our entertainment without having to leave the confines of our made up little world.

Lois: So this experience pushes them to move out of that.

Hugh: It pushes them, yes.

(Hugh Neilson, Managing Director, YPT, Interview, 6 May 2011)

YPT works against the ways in which public space in this country has been increasingly constructed as private in the past few decades; social space is all too often protected and exclusionary, wrongly conceptualized and created as free from conflict and heterogeneity (Kawash, 1998). Massey asserts that while places may have boundaries, these borders are open and porous. Spaces inform and are informed by, the outside. In this way, spaces should find definition, not by exclusion, bordering and ordering, but by the specific “constellation of social relations” (Massey, 1994, p. 154) within and around them. The data reveal that YPT affirms Massey's (1994) reconceptualization of space and, according to their teachers and to those who create theatre for them, broadens students' understandings of the world and the city in which they live. As I have outlined earlier on in this chapter, it is not simply being somewhere else that affords this educative opportunity, but entering together into the aesthetic experience of the play.

### **Liveness**

The learning opportunities provided by live theatre are of particular importance today, the data suggest, as we are part of a culture where mass media not only dominates, but constitutes our common understanding of human interaction (Debord, 1983). This is especially pertinent to this research, as the audiences who attend YPT are now, more than ever, deeply immersed and

relentlessly connected to media technologies (Buckingham, 2003). The data show that the live theatre experience is markedly different from that of the movies or from the experiences permitted by other media.

### **Actively Engaging**

Often, when schools first come into the space, you can hear students talking with one another, speculating when the movie will start. While this may signal that their teacher has not adequately prepared them for this event, it is equally reflective of the fact that for many of these students, for a variety of different reasons, their only experience of going to the theatre is cinematic. Mass-mediatised representations of the world provide an unquestioned and naturalized monolith of human experience, despite the fact that these images are highly constructed. The data show that many participants believe that at YPT students begin understanding that theatre, like all other forms of art and entertainment, is literally humanly constructed and, with the help of supplementary programming provided by the theatre, they are able to recognize their contribution to that creation.

In fact, the live experience at YPT allows students to share in the creating. Liveness in the context of theatre is in reference to the fact that what is created is contingent upon the presence and action of living beings. It is due to this liveness that every theatre performance is a unique and a dynamic happening. American, feminist performance theorist Peggy Phelan (1993) argues that: "Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations *of* representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance" (p. 146). Liveness in theatre, then, intimates the inimitable, the changeable, the human, and perhaps most importantly, the collective. The world of theatre is created through a shared experience and is utterly dependent

on its participants' engagement with their own and with each other's imaginations, because it is limited. It cannot actually make everything happen and, according to Pullman, it is precisely these material and spatial limitations that "allow the audience to share in the acting" (as cited in Reason, 2010, p. 15). Theatre requires the audience to pretend, to willingly suspend their disbelief, to take part in the making of the world of the play. Audience members must become part of the performance, otherwise it will not work and it is the job of the playwright, technicians, actors, set designers, etcetera to push its audience to enter into the playworld:

Don't show us. Help us to experience it. Bring us into the world.

(Laura Nordin, Faculty, the Drama School, YPT, Fieldnotes, Participatory Observation, the Drama School, 30 April 2011)

Space and time really sort of fall away when watching an engaging show. It's hard to resist being brought into the playworld.

(Fieldnotes, Participatory Observation, "i think i can" Performance, YPT, 30 March 2011)

One of the last shows of the season, "i think i can", was told through tap dance. Very simply, the play is about how a class of students learn the value of difference and the importance of collaboration. Considering the dominance of the verbal and the primacy of the individual in the Western, capitalist society, it is both a courageous and a challenging play to produce. In watching audiences take part in this show, I always noticed their initial surprise and discomfort. At the beginning of the show, I heard them shift in their seats, whispering and even groaning. I heard them say to one another: "Why aren't they talking? When do you think they're going to start to speak?" But, as the show went on, I noticed them slowly accept the clacks and taps of the dancers' shoes as a kind of language, a different way of communicating. At every performance I

observed, I noticed a shift, at some point, in the way in which they encountered the play. They began to listen to the dance. They giggled, gasped and clapped in response. They came to know the characters. In this show, the audience was given the opportunity to learn another language:

I hear tapping all around me as I exit the theatre. The lobby is so much louder than it was before the play. There seems to me to be more conversation, more laughter and so much more movement. The space is totally energized!

(Fieldnotes, Participatory Observation, “i think i can” Teacher Preview Performance, YPT, 6 April 2011)

After each performance, the house and lobby of the theatre echoed with the tappety-taps of hundreds of feet. It became filled with dancers who were not there before.

At one point during “A Year with Frog and Toad”, another one of the eight plays presented in this year’s season at YPT, one of the characters, Toad, is gardening. She plants a row of seeds. Impatient for the seeds to become flowers, she tries all manner of things to encourage speedy growth: Toad yells at the seeds and serenades them; she dances for them and, down on her knees, she implores them to grow. But nothing happens. Finally, discouraged and exhausted, she falls asleep. In the morning, she is roused by her friend, Frog. He points to where she had planted her seeds and remarks at how much they have grown. Toad rejoices, taking in the beauty of the sprouts, and the audience celebrates with her. This series of scenes takes place over the span of about five minutes, throughout which, in one of the performances I observed, I noticed the audience members around me became transfixed. After the show, I listened to some of the students talking with each other about the play, reflecting on what they had experienced together. I heard two students chatting excitedly. They must have been about six or seven years old. One said to the other, “I wonder how they made the flowers grow.” Neither student seemed

to realize that they were responsible. There never were any actual flowers on stage, but like the actors in the play, these audience members imagined the seeds and the sprouts and, in this way, had brought them into being. In the space of this particular theatre, they had created a garden together. The limitations of theatre allowed them to use their imaginations to actively engage in creating the play.

### **Surrendering Control**

Within the space of a single performance of theatre, audiences are offered simultaneous access to a multiplicity of perspectives and sensory experiences. It becomes an “uncharted excursion” (Giroux, 1999, p. 41) of the imagination:

Jane: Yeah, it's a continuous, it's almost, in relation to all the technology, it's in slow motion. It's in continuous slow motion. You know, my mind goes to, I think of – I'm free associating a bit – is going into nature and people so need to do that, I think. I need, I need to do that a couple of times a year. When I don't, it's such a huge deficit and maybe coming to the theatre is kind of like that. It's something sort of natural, well it's not, but...

Lois: Right, it's constructed.

Jane: Yeah, but there's something in the tempo of it... and it is said that all things that are created are directly inspired by nature. So, visual art, theatre, dance, music: the root is nature.

(Jane Kline, Head of Props, YPT, Interview, 11 March 2011)

Many teachers spoke about the challenge they faced in helping their students to enter into and appreciate this slower, more dynamic kind of storytelling. Their students, they said, are accustomed to film and television where everything is fast-moving. They are also used to feeling like they have control over what they consume. In coming to the theatre, students learn that they

cannot stop, repeat or rewind the performance. Theatre audiences cannot choose when or what they see and hear. Unlike their everyday, usually private contact with digital technologies, this interaction is public and beyond their individual control. Therein lies the possibility for learning. Theatre, the data reveal, allows for a certain intimacy to develop between its participants and, as a result of this connection, a greater openness to the unknown or the uncomfortable:

Theatre... is a way of moving into another world, thinking in another world and then being able to make some connection between that imaginative or fictive world and the actual world in which we live and to be able to have meaning flow back and forth between those two. Um, I think another thing that live theatre does for kids, and for me, is it can surprise you with your own response or your own emotion and give you this experience which then you need to contend with or integrate in some way and that often results in some learning or extension of the self or expansion that is stimulating (Brent, Teacher, Interview, 27 April 011)

I think there are plays that we do, I mean all of our plays touch on various issues and some of them are very, very specifically issue-oriented productions, and I think that sometimes the plays might open up some area of somebody's life that they so identify with that it's almost hard for them to watch or respond or it raises more questions about their own experience that they're not sure necessarily how to answer... it can be, you know, it can stir the pot a little bit. Um, I suppose if we're presenting a show that also contradicts their own beliefs, that can be quite interesting. I've sat in shows where we've, you know, done things on homophobia and I've been surprised and shocked at the kids who, because of their background or what they've been taught, still believe that that's wrong and when... I think we want people to maybe reassess some of their beliefs and



maybe rethink those things and maybe get a wider perspective. It may not change their perspective, but maybe they'll be more respectful of other people whose beliefs are different than their own.

(Shawn McCarthy, Sales Manager, YPT, Interview, 2 May 2011)

Theatre such as this, the data illustrate, forces an encounter with the unfamiliar and, as a result, broadens the world and the possibilities of the world. Massey (2006) explains that fast-paced global communication and the pervasiveness of the myth of the shrinking world presents us with the false impression that we understand the world (and each other) more than we actually do. Representations of the world in the media and the extensive individual control over what we see and experience flattens the diversity of the world in which we live and limits opportunities and spaces for difference (Massey, 2006). Massey argues that, as a result, it becomes “difficult for alternatives to be developed, and so easy for tentative attempts at alternative ways of doing things to be crushed” (2006). The limitations of theatre, many participants believe, especially those who work at and with the theatre, as well as teachers who work in the Primary and Junior divisions, push students to imagine and bring into being new ways of living in the world.

### **Privileging the Collective**

Furthermore, good theatre, such as that created at YPT, will encourage its audiences to surrender private control, but this relinquishing of power is not passive: it is an active submission of the self in favour of contributing to something larger. This was perhaps best articulated in my conversation with Cathy Nosaty, the Sound Designer for “i think i can”:

Cathy: One of the things I've always really loved about theatre is everybody has agreed to leave whatever they're doing and meet in this, you know? The audience has left behind whatever they're doing and they're coming to show up at this particular time and giving

themselves over to say, “Okay I’m going to give you my attention. What do you have to say?” And likewise, all of the performers and the crew and everybody, everybody is there to engage in a communal arts event... I guess a lot of performing arts organizations are hurting, because popular media is putting out the idea of like, “Have it your way! You’re at the head of the line! 24/7 on demand! Whenever you want: anything, everything is just up to you when you want it!”

Lois: “You control it.”

Cathy. Yeah, and it’s a bit dangerous, because each person is not, I mean they’re the centre of their own universe, but we’re communal beings and it’s very important to understand that and respect that.

Lois: And practice it.

Cathy: Practice it and with that comes practicing empathy. Empathy is huge. It’s a really important quality of human beings and I think sometimes people are so used to just watching screens and not participating and not being engaged. That’s the missing element of it.

(Cathy Nosaty, Sound Designer, “i think i can”, YPT, Interview, 19 April 2011)

One teacher spoke with me about how important experiencing live performance in an intimate venue is for her students with regard to practicing communication. She suggested that, because this experience is novel for her students and due to the confines of the studio theatre at YPT, they become, at once, more critically engaged and more intimately connected:

Lois: So, this gives them a chance to not be voyeuristic? And to think?

Scarlet: That’s right. And they become more distanced in that respect, because it’s foreign to them. They don’t know how to communicate anymore on a 1:1 level. They

don't know how to sit and chat. They text. It's easier that way. I don't have to look at you. I don't have to look you in the eyes, because you might see that I'm lying or you might see that I'm embarrassed or something.

Lois: But the theatre makes you?

Scarlet. Yes. Exactly.

Lois: So, in that small space, maybe if it was uncomfortable, there is some value in that?

Scarlet: That's right. That's right. Yeah.

(Scarlet, Teacher, Interview, 5 April 2011)

The data indicate that teachers believe students are pushed to engage more actively and deeply in a live performance than they do with recorded or digital media because of the recognition they feel as audience members:

Katie: I think it's very easy to be anonymous when there's a screen in front of you as opposed to a live person and I think it's dangerous.

Lois: To have that anonymity?

Katie: Yeah. I think it's really important to see - to be part of - the live. Like, it's an exciting experience, because it's live and you never know what could happen: a prop won't be there or this is funny to one audience and it's not funny to another... it's a two-way exchange which is really important. I think there's a responsibility in that exchange as an audience member where you're, you're encouraged to be expressive, but also encouraged to be respectful and I think a lot of that is lost in technology, because there's no one to see you and there's no one that you're accountable for and it's hard to see the effect of what you're putting out into that two-way exchange.

(Katie Pounder, Administrative Coordinator, YPT, Interview, 2 May 2011)

In this research, I have learned that the value of the live performance is in giving students the opportunity to learn experientially how to communicate with friends, teachers, strangers and neighbours alike:

Mary: We need to communicate and the technological revolution has been fantastic in terms of being able to reach across the planet, but in so doing, when we reach across the street, we do so electronically, we don't actually walk there, so we don't have experiences anymore and, um, I really see it as absolutely vital that things like drama education and dance take, cannot be lost.

Lois: Because they are so important in teaching that?

Mary: They are.

Lois: And it's something that you have to learn how to do?

Mary: It's something you learn how to do. Relational experiences are, have to happen in relation. You can't learn it from a book. You can't learn it from the internet. You have to actually go.

(Mary Fulford-Windsor, Head of Wardrobe, YPT, Interview, 10 March 2011)

### **Vulnerability**

I'm constantly surprised by the openness of everyone at this theatre to me being here, especially in rehearsals when there is such vulnerability.

(Fieldnotes, Participatory Observation, "The Big League" Rehearsal, YPT, 13 January 2011)

The final theme that the data illustrate with regard to the live performance is that of vulnerability. This has been a central focus of mine throughout this project. Initially, I noticed it in the form of generosity, particularly in my participatory observation of rehearsals and of the

Drama School at YPT. Cultivating generosity seemed to be of central importance to the creative process:

Being in the now makes you more available. It opens you up to whatever might come at you in the future.

(Laura Nordin, Faculty, the Drama School, YPT, Fieldnotes, Participatory Observation, the Drama School, 16 April 2011)

Mary Ellen: There are, things are presented to you and you have to be in the room, read the moment, and be generous. What's happening to this little person right now or to the person I'm speaking with onstage or in the rehearsal hall that's falling over or can't, can't get to that place, you know?

Lois: Yeah.

Mary Ellen: That you want them to get to. So to me that is, again, feeds into being alive, generous, you've got to be there, because you don't know what's coming out of this person. You don't know what kind of night they had.

Lois: So you have to-

Mary Ellen: I think that, that it is connected in that way. And it makes certainly for a much more... big feast of fun if everybody's being generous in the room. It is, you're already, if everybody walks in with that, you're already way ahead. It's exciting, you can taste it, you can feel it, you can feel when you're not in a generous space.

(Allen MacInnis, Artistic Director; Mary Ellen MacLean, Director, "The Big League"; Karen Gilodo, Educational Services Coordinator; YPT; Focus Group Interview, 25 February 2011)

Practicing generosity in creating theatre, the data reveal, connects to Dewey's (1938) theory of education and the understanding that to learn is not to know, but to imagine:

I notice the language everyone uses in rehearsal: "I wonder...", "My sense is...", "Let's try". It really privileges discovery and seems to open everyone up to playing with possibility. There is a feeling of wanting to play more, to try things again, and to learn from one another in this way.

(Fieldnotes, Participatory Observation, "The Big League" Rehearsal, YPT, 10 January 2011)

This is not to imply that the creative process is free from conflict, but mindful of being open to and giving to one another, people are better able to communicate and work through problems or moments of disagreement. Operating in such a collaborative manner requires more time and patience than an authoritatively directed procedure, but, the data suggest, this group effort allows for a richer creation in the end. In speaking with my research participants and in delving more deeply into this project, I learned that generosity is actually rooted in vulnerability. I was interested in how this related to the rehearsal process:

Repetition is always about growth, I'm learning in observing rehearsal. It is not about perfection or finality, but a constant opening up.

(Fieldnotes, Participatory Observation, "As You Puppet" Rehearsal, YPT, 6 April 2011)

After having to redo a particularly difficult scene several times, Mike speaks about the meaning of the word "repetition". He says that he believes the word for "rehearsal: in French is repetition. "I believe in repetition", he says. Mike shares with us that in Polish, the word for "rehearsal" is "próba," "as in to probe, to delve," he explains. To rehearse, then, is about depth, growth and learning.

(Mike Peterson, Usher/Actor, “As You Puppet”, YPT, Fieldnotes, Participatory Observation, “As You Puppet” Rehearsal, 7 April 2011)

Rehearsal, then, reflects the process of education as an open-ended, dynamic and “continuous spiral” (Dewey, 1938, p. 79) and therefore, requires an extension of the self and an openness to digging deeper into the unknown. It is also present and of equal importance in performance:

Allen: I think, too, that if the kind of acting that, um, is live, so that it truly is, not exactly the way you rehearsed it or the way you did it yesterday, but playing off of what you’re getting from each other, if that’s possible, you have to open up to each other, which that, that’s a, that requires generosity and also, you know, a certain amount of bravery, because you’re going to let somebody affect you and you’re going to be responsive to them, and they’re looking to you to be responsive. And I remember uh, in acting school, um, an acting teacher pointing out that even if your goal is to be the best in the room, the, you have no hope of being that if you don’t take what other people are offering, if you aren’t opening yourself up to them.

Lois If you’re not open-

Allen: -you don’t stand a chance.

(Allen MacInnis, Artistic Director; Mary Ellen MacLean, Director, “The Big League”; Karen Gilodo, Educational Services Coordinator; YPT; Focus Group Interview, 25 February 2011)

There is vulnerability required of all participants in live performance to give oneself over to the imagined:

Jacklyn: I think it’s a great opportunity to plug out of electronics: computers and phones and TV and all that sort of stuff and see something live and to see what it is for someone

to be offering something like that.

Lois: Offering.

Jacklyn: I still think it's such an amazing, um, it's so virtuous. It's so generous to see someone do that and I know even if they don't like the play, they're in awe of the ability to do that and what it would take to sustain what they're doing on stage and it's a different relationship between what's happening on stage and being an audience member than it is with a screen or a TV and maybe they don't quite feel their agency yet, but that's what I'm hoping that they feel, that they are, that theatre doesn't have to be totally passive and that you can be contributing to the experience, because I'd really like them to think about, when we do our own creating, our own shows, what is the audience's experience?

Lois: So, thinking about others that way.

Jacklyn: Mm-hmm. And taking, sure, maybe they're still in their own narratives and what they're sharing, but how does that translate and communicate to who they're talking to?

(Jacklyn, Teacher, Interview, 1 April 2011)

This, participants believe, is not felt as deeply in digital or recorded technology; it is particular to meeting together in space:

Simon: That's the coolest thing when, as an actor and as an audience member, I feel myself breathing with the person on stage. Or the people in the audience. And it's... you know you've got them.

Lois: When you're there together.

Simon: Yeah... because you hold your breath when the character holds their breath and you let it out when they've said their piece. It's pretty cool.



Lois: And that opens up... there's room for connection there.

Simon: Exactly. Exactly.

(Simon Rainville, Actor, "The Big League", YPT, Interview, 16 February 2011)

You're surrounded by people who you're not normally with. That's going to have an impact on your experience, because you're looking at how they're reacting and vice-versa and although it's not a verbal communication, it's a type of communication that's happening in that room. It can be very exciting, it can be energetic, it can be sad, happy, and in some cases, transformative. It's that group dynamic that lends itself to that possibility.

(Hugh Neilson, Managing Director, YPT, Interview, 6 May 2011)

The data suggest that vulnerability is required in collaboration. In the collective experience it offers, YPT affords its audience members and artists alike the capacity for transformation. Judith Slater (2004) argues that in order to make change, collectivity is vital: "Only with others is there the opportunity for the free possibility of choice" (as cited in Callejo Pérez, Fain & Slater, p. 45). YPT is a collaborative space in which a "simultaneity of stories" is created and shared (Massey, 2003, Multiplicity section, para. 1). Many participants in this research have reported that by collectively engaging in a live performance students are granted a freeing experience full of possibility.

In its multiplicity of meanings and incarnations, the definitive roots of culture lie in the aesthetic tradition (Hebdige, 2006). Following Williams (1965), Hebdige (2006) writes that the study of culture is about knowing and revealing that which appears quotidian and natural. In this way, I understand the aesthetic not only to be a representation of the broader social relations that constitute human culture (Hebdige, 2006), but also a way in which to examine and expose their

construction. Following this, Northrop Frye (as cited in O'Grady & French, 2000) puts forth a definition of education:

as the encounter with real life, whereas the world which involves us as citizens and taxpayers and readers of papers and people with jobs is not real life but a dissolving phantasmagoria. Of course, it is possible that this encounter with real life can go to the point of making one maladjusted to the dissolving world. This is, in fact, one of the functions of education. The last thing that education ought to try to do is to adjust anybody to the appearance of a society which will not be there by the time he has become adjusted to it. But it can and should make one to some extent maladjusted. (p. 415)

Education, then, is not simply learning about the world as it is, but imagining what it might become. It is about hope. The data suggest that in the stories YPT chooses to tell through the medium of theatre and in structuring performances with accompanying events particularly designed to elicit reflection, initiate discussion and encourage new insights, this theatre affords students and teachers the opportunity to experience and imagine new possibilities of living in the world together.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Implications**

The purpose of this ethnographic research project has been to learn the reasons why teachers choose to bring their students to live, professional theatre, particularly at YPT. In so doing (and perhaps this is always the case with research), I am left with more questions than answers. In this chapter, I will explain what I have been unable to accomplish in this project, as well as how this study makes a contribution. This is the first research of its kind to be undertaken at YPT and, as evidenced in the previous chapter of this thesis, both the imperatives for having young people go to theatre and the challenges in making this a viable experience for all students are wide-ranging. While this research offers new insight into the educative value of theatre for young audiences and contributes to the existing body of literature on ethnographic inquiry on theatre companies and the importance of live theatre experiences to students' aesthetic education, there is much more work to be done. This project is a starting point from which further inquiry can develop.

### **Methodological Constraints and Openings**

As this is the first research of this kind to be conducted at YPT, as well as my introduction to ethnographic research, this project has been largely exploratory and has extended far beyond what I imagined it would. Gaskell argues that in developing a research plan "some ambiguity is not only inevitable but helpful" (p. 123). Having such an open research design has been bittersweet.

In one sense, this has allowed me to gain a fuller picture of what goes on at the theatre. I have had the great opportunity of conducting interviews with 14 teachers, of speaking with over 50 people who work at and with YPT, of observing everything from the Drama School to

rehearsals to teacher workshops to performances, and of deepening my participation in all spheres of this empirical work. I have been opened up to a wide range of diverse perspectives and experiences and I have used a variety of methods in this research project. In moving the work forward, I hope to strengthen the catalytic validity (Lather, 1986; Fusco, as cited in Gallagher, 2008) of this research.

Still, having such breadth comes with its own limitations. This methodological design has prevented me from being able to engage as deeply as I would have liked with each research participant. Apart from the one focus group interview I conducted, I was only able to perform one interview with each participant, despite the fact that each conversation elicited for me further questions that, if pursued, might have proved valuable to the research. For instance, many teachers expressed the fact that they felt constrained by the physical limitations of their schools in their ability to teach Drama and while I had the opportunity to learn about how coming to YPT helped them break out of these restrictions, I would have liked to learn more about how they resisted or expanded these constraints within their schools and whether or not Drama helped them to do this. In speaking with those who work at and with YPT, many participants suggested that new and strong writing is what TYA currently requires. They expressed that this was a pressing concern for TYA, in particular. I would have liked to explore this further.

With regard to scope, this has also prevented me from looking outside of the YPT community to find opportunities for research and analysis. This research does not delve deeply enough into the reasons why teachers might choose to bring theatre to their students, nor does it consider the challenges and opportunities of teachers and students who live outside of the city or who do not have access to YPT. This project provides great insight into the general community at YPT, but there is need for further research. The limited scope of single-site ethnographic work

leaves room for research of a comparative nature that might include the perceptions of teachers who do not have access to YPT and of those who work at neighbouring theatre companies, particularly those whose main purpose is touring to schools and communities beyond the city. Research that privileges the perspectives of students themselves would also be valuable.

### **The Need for Students' Voices**

Learning about students' experiences first hand was not within the scope of this research, nor was it part of the project's methodological design. This thesis tells but one of many stories that could be told about YPT and, in favouring particular theories of education and, in particular, the perspective of the teacher, one of the most striking limitations of this research project is that it is missing students' perceptions of their learning experiences at YPT. While this research reveals much about teachers' perspectives on teaching and their insights into their students' experiences, further research that privileges the student perspective would offer new insight into the educative value of coming, as a class, to see live theatre at YPT.

### **The Value of Quantitative Research**

The theoretical framework I have employed for this project has provided unique insight into the value of seeing live theatre at YPT as part of one's educational repertoire. The data reveal the value in having students experience theatre in a professional, aesthetic space, as well as the importance to students and teachers in moving outside of their usual environment in opening them up to new learning. What this research has also illustrated are the particular challenges teachers and students encounter in undertaking a fieldtrip and the fact that this is, for many school communities, a rare experience. In learning the reasons why teachers bring their students to YPT and, in particular, the challenges they face in doing so, I realized that, while I

was interested in learning more about these particular difficulties, the scope and nature of this research did not allow for me to delve deeply enough into these issues.

In previous chapters of this work, I wrote about my interest in the complexity offered by way of qualitative inquiry and the value of the stories that can be discovered through such research. I wrote of my concern in attempting to quantify learning experiences, especially those in the arts, as it is precisely their intangibility and unpredictability that makes them valuable. As I have tried to write throughout this thesis, it is important to embrace the uncertain and the possible, rather than the measurable. As Pitman articulates, “We live in a world dominated by economics: profit is the obsession of our society,” (1998, p. 10) and education is no exception. While, in many ways, I think it is important to work against this quantifying culture in the education system, especially in the arts, I wonder if there might be important quantitative inquiry to be done on the subject of accessibility. This research project demonstrates the immense value to teachers and students of experiencing live theatre in a professional, aesthetic venue, so it seems vital to learn the reasons why fieldtrips, particularly to the theatre, are not feasible for many teachers. Further research on the subject might spark new insight on this topic and, most importantly, how such theatre experiences might be made available to all schools.

### **The Value of Ethnographic Research**

Ethnography strives to learn, through empirical research, about human culture (Geertz, 1973). Its purpose is to “understand people’s perspectives” (Hammersley, 2006, p. 4). In this particular research project, I have focused on social space and the ways in which the particular environment of YPT affects how teachers and students learn together and how they engage with the world around them. Consequently, the data reveal my own perceptions, through particular theoretical lenses, and what I understand about my research participants’ experiences, as well as

what they perceive to be the experience of their students who make the journey to YPT. While there is great value in having learned about these perspectives, this research tells a particular story that privileges my participants' and my own perceptions primarily.

### **Benefitting my Research Participants**

As evidenced in the previous chapters, everyone at YPT has been very open to this research and to me as a researcher. In sharing their insights with me and in granting me access to the plethora of activities that take place at this theatre, they have been very generous and trusting. I recognize how lucky I have been to have entered into such a positive working environment. This study has benefitted from deep engagement at the theatre. With this kind of immersive inquiry, there comes the challenge of how to reciprocate. From the beginning of this project, it has been of the utmost importance to me that this research relationship be a mutually beneficial one. Consequently, in developing the methodological design and specific focus for this project, I engaged in a research partnership consultation with the theatre, so as to ensure that it would be of benefit to them as well. I have learned so much from this research and I have worked hard to ensure that, with this research, my research participants would gain new insight into their work as well. Throughout this process, I have also spoken with Karen Gilodo, the Educational Services Coordinator at YPT about how this research might contribute to the life and work of YPT. It is our intention, upon the completion of this thesis, to work together in order to make these findings public.

### **Making a Contribution**

This research project makes known the value of ethnographic research on theatre companies. This study demonstrates the educative potential of YPT, as well as the challenges and benefits associated in achieving this end. The promise of ethnographic inquiry, this project

reveals, is in understanding the richness and complexity of a particular community, learning and interpreting the stories within it , and bolstering communication among and between those who work for arts organizations such as these, as well as those who patronize them.

As evidenced in detail in the previous chapter, this research corroborates existing scholarship on the educative value of the live theatre experience with regard to academic and social learning outcomes, including enhanced creativity and critical thinking skills, the ability to communicate with others and express oneself and an increased understanding of the theatrical medium (Reason, 2010, p. 7). The data illustrate that teachers conceive of theatre as a “pedagogical tool” to use “as a new way of communicating” (Gallagher & Service, 2010, p. 248) with their students. In line with other studies, this project demonstrates the high level of engagement required of the audience in the theatrical event and suggests that the active audience is what creates the “dialogic encounter that is at the heart of theatre as a learning medium (Greenwood, as cited in Schonmann, 2011, p. 50). In particular, this research suggests that this engagement is fostered through the aesthetic and the simultaneous personal and collective practice of imagination it requires.

This research also points to the ways in which the aesthetic experience enhances the pedagogic values of theatre. Aesthetic engagement fosters learning, because it “gives us experience, both embodied through our participation and empathetic through exploring another’s world. It allows us to absorb a multiplicity of new stimuli, cognitive and visceral, that we can unpack and play with. It permits ambiguity, incompleteness, contradiction and complexity” (Greenwood, as cited in Schonmann, 2011, p. 51). At its best, the data reveal, there is a symbiotic relationship between the aesthetic and pedagogic values in theatre education.

Specifically, this research contributes to existing research (Schonmann, 2007, 2011;



Goldberg, 1974) on the effects of the space of the theatre venue on teaching and learning. The data show the importance of designated aesthetic spaces, such as professional theatres, in drama education. Immersion in the world of the play, it seems, may help the audience to listen and to participate in the piece, even if what they are met with elicits feelings of discomfort or disagreement. This, participants in this research believe, helps teachers and students to disrupt what is already known in order to construct new knowledge (Kumashiro, 2000; 2001).

This research also reveals the possibility that attending live theatre, as it is enacted at YPT, fosters an understanding, not only of the fact that arts and entertainment are humanly created, but also how this occurs. Students who attend YPT are given the opportunity to speak with those who work at and with the theatre and to learn how a play is constructed. They are also pushed to recognize their participation in this, to question what they see and hear, and to consider the ways in which this connects to the making of the actual world. Participants believe this helps to foster an understanding that the world in which we live is also changeable, opens students up to its diversity and teaches them to imagine new ways of living within it (Massey, 1994; 2006).

This connects to what this ethnographic research reveals with regard to theatre's potential to cultivate hope "both through its treatment of the world and through its means of production that the social, educational and political structures we work within are capable of being reimagined and transformed by creative human action" (Neelands, 2010). A hopeful education such as this requires a commitment to the unfamiliar and a desire to move "toward the always-shifting end/goal of learning more" (Dewey, 1938, p. 34). In the hopeful spirit of this thesis, I conclude by expressing my ardent wish that this research will promote further inquiry on the educative potential of live theatre.

## References

- Ardal, M. (2003). Theatre for young audiences and grown-up theatre. In Gallagher, K., & Booth, D. (Eds.). *How theatre educates: Convergences and counterpoints with artists, scholars and advocates*. (pp. 191-7). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Arts Education Partnership. (2006). *Making a case for the arts: How and why the arts are critical to student achievement and better schools*. Retrieved from <http://aep-arts.org/files/publications/MakingaCaseforarts.pdf?PHPSESSID=9e3afe3e5fcff452c785e0581e288819>
- ASSITEJ International. (2011). *International association of theatre for children and young people*. Retrieved from <http://www.assitej-international.org/english/home.aspx>
- Auslander, P. (1999). *Liveness: Performance in a mediatized culture*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Barba, E. (1992). That which will be said afterwards. *The Drama Review*, 36(2), 77-80. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1146197>
- Barker, H. (1989). *Arguments for a theatre*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Bedard, R.L. (2003). Negotiating marginalization: TYA and the schools. *Youth Theatre Journal*, 17(1). 90 – 101. Retrieved from <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=g924157848~db=all>
- Bedard, R.L. (2011). Theatre for young audiences and cultural identity. In S. Shonmann (Ed.), *Key concepts in theatre/drama education* (pp. 283-7). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Bedard, R.L., & Tolch, C.J. (Eds.). (1989). *Spotlight on the child: Studies in the history of American children's theatre*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, Inc.
- Bennett, A. (2004). *The History Boys*. London: Faber and Faber Limited.
- Bolton, G. (2011). From a distance. In S. Shonmann (Ed.), *Key concepts in theatre/drama education* (pp. 353-57). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Booth, D. (2003). Towards an understanding of theatre for education. In Gallagher, K., & Booth, D. (Eds.). *How theatre educates: Convergences and counterpoints with artists, scholars and advocates*. (pp. 14-22). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Buckingham, D. (2003). Media education and the end of the critical consumer. *Harvard Educational Review*, 73(3), 309-327.
- Canada Council for the Arts. (June 2008). *Report on the Outcomes of Performing Arts Touring Grants, 2005-06*. Retrieved from <http://www.canadacouncil.ca/NR/rdonlyres/0B93FE25-CDC7-48FF-BDAB-18F23A414408/0/200506TouringGrantsReportFinalEN.pdf>
- Charlebois, G., & Nothof, A. (11 February 2011). Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for Young People. In *Canadian Theatre Encyclopedia*. Retrieved from <http://www.canadiantheatre.com/dict.pl?term=Lorraine%20Kimsa%20Theatre%20for%20Young%20People>
- City Planning Division, Heritage Preservation Services, City of Toronto. (2011). *Toronto's downtown heritage*. Retrieved from [http://www.toronto.ca/heritage-preservation/pdf/herit\\_dwntwn\\_1.pdf](http://www.toronto.ca/heritage-preservation/pdf/herit_dwntwn_1.pdf)
- Debord, G. (1983). *Society of the spectacle*. Detroit, MI: Black and Red.
- Dewey, J. (1934). *Art as Experience*. New York, NY: Capricorn Books.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

- Dillabough, J. (2008). Exploring historicity and temporality in social science methodology: A case for methodological and analytical justice. In K. Gallagher (Ed.), *The methodological dilemma: creative, critical and collaborative approaches to qualitative research* (pp. 185-218). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Doolittle, J., & Barnieh, Z. (Eds.). (1979). *A mirror of our dreams: Children and theatre in Canada*. Vancouver: Talonbooks.
- Doyle, C. (1993). *Raising Curtains on Education: Drama as a site for critical pedagogy*. Toronto: The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education Press.
- Eisner, E. (1976). *The Arts, Human Development, and Education*. Berkeley, CA: McCutcheon Publishing Corporation.
- Eisner, E. (1991). *The Enlightened Eye: Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice*. New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing.
- Eisner, E. (2002). *The Arts and the Creation of Mind*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Erikson, S.A. (2011). Distancing. In S. Shonmann (Ed.), *Key concepts in theatre/drama education* (pp. 65-71). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Fiske, E.B. (1999). *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning*. Retrieved from <http://aep-arts.org/files/publications/ChampsReport.pdf>
- Freire, P. (1994). *Pedagogy of hope: Reliving pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, NY: The Continuum Publishing Company.
- Fusco, C. (2008). 'Naked truths'? Ethnographic dilemmas of doing research on the body in social spaces. In K. Gallagher (Ed.), *The methodological dilemma: creative, critical and collaborative approaches to qualitative research* (pp. 159-184). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Gallagher, K. (2000). *Drama education in the lives of girls*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Gallagher, K. (2003). Emergent conceptions in theatre pedagogy and production. In Gallagher, K., & Booth, D. (Eds.). *How theatre educates: Convergences and counterpoints with artists, scholars and advocates*. (pp. 3-13). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Gallagher, K. (2007). *The Theatre of Urban: Youth and schooling in dangerous times*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Gallagher, K. (2008). The art of methodology: A collaborative science. In K. Gallagher (Ed.), *The methodological dilemma: creative, critical and collaborative approaches to qualitative research* (pp. 67-81). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Gallagher, K., & Fusco, C. (2006). I.D.ology and the technologies of public (school) space: An ethnographic inquiry into the neo-liberal tactics of social re(production). *Ethnography and Education* 1(3), 301-318. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17457820600836939>
- Gallagher, K., & Rivière, D. (2007). When drama praxis rocks the boat: struggles of subjectivity, audience, and performance. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 12(3). 319-330. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13569780701560412>
- Gallagher, K., Freeman, B., & Wessels, A. (2010). "It could have been so much better": the aesthetic and social work of theatre. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 15(1). 5-27. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13569780903480971>

- Gallagher, K., & Service, I. (2010). Applied theatre at the heart of educational reform: an impact and sustainability analysis. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 15(2), 235-253.
- Gaskell, J. (2008). A measure of trust in an era of distrust: Informed consent meets critical analysis in the study of effective schools. In K. Gallagher (Ed.), *The methodological dilemma: creative, critical and collaborative approaches to qualitative research* (pp. 121-135). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of culture*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Giroux, H.A. (2000). *Impure acts: Practical politics of cultural studies*. Florence, KY: Routledge.
- Giroux, H. A. (2001). *The mouse that roared: Disney and the end of innocence*. New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Goldberg, M. (2011). The theatre product in relation to teaching dramatic process. In S. Shonmann (Ed.), *Key concepts in theatre/drama education* (pp. 271-4). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Greenwood, J. (2011). Aesthetic learning, and learning through the aesthetic. In S. Shonmann (Ed.), *Key concepts in theatre/drama education* (pp. 47-52). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on education, the arts and social change*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Grumet, M. (1989). Generations: Reconceptualist curriculum theory and teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(13), 13-17. Retrieved from [https://portal.utoronto.ca/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp?tab\\_tab\\_group\\_id=\\_2\\_1&url=%2Fwebapps%2Fblackboard%2Fexecute%2Flauncher%3Ftype%3DCourse%26id%3D\\_563040\\_1%26url%3D](https://portal.utoronto.ca/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp?tab_tab_group_id=_2_1&url=%2Fwebapps%2Fblackboard%2Fexecute%2Flauncher%3Ftype%3DCourse%26id%3D_563040_1%26url%3D)
- Hammersley, M. (2006). Ethnography: problems and prospects. *Ethnography and Education*, 1(1), 3-14. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17457820500512697>
- Hebdige, D. (2006). (i) From culture to hegemony; (ii) Subculture: The unnatural break. In M.G. Durham & D.M. Kellner (Eds.), *In Media and cultural studies: Keywords* (pp. 144-162). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Hill Strategies Research, Inc. (November 2008) *Canadian performing arts organizations generate \$2.70 in revenues for every dollar received from governments*. Retrieved from [http://www.canadacouncil.ca/NR/rdonlyres/9EAF02F0-457E-4B2A-B004-82F2175DEC1B/0/Finances\\_performing\\_arts\\_summary.pdf](http://www.canadacouncil.ca/NR/rdonlyres/9EAF02F0-457E-4B2A-B004-82F2175DEC1B/0/Finances_performing_arts_summary.pdf)
- Hill Strategies Research, Inc. (May 2008) *Key stats on the arts in Canada*. Retrieved from [http://www.canadacouncil.ca/NR/rdonlyres/C1093E44-A20C-4159-BD2B-15C2BB73BCBD/0/Key\\_statsENGLISH.pdf](http://www.canadacouncil.ca/NR/rdonlyres/C1093E44-A20C-4159-BD2B-15C2BB73BCBD/0/Key_statsENGLISH.pdf)
- Hill Strategies Research, Inc. (March 2008). *Social effects of culture: Exploratory statistical evidence*. Retrieved from [http://www.canadacouncil.ca/NR/rdonlyres/BDB0714B-5CC2-48EA-B1E8-015F475EA997/0/Social\\_effects\\_culture.pdf](http://www.canadacouncil.ca/NR/rdonlyres/BDB0714B-5CC2-48EA-B1E8-015F475EA997/0/Social_effects_culture.pdf)
- Hornbrook, D. (1998). *Education and dramatic art* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Jackson, T. (2005). The dialogic and the aesthetic: Some reflections on theatre as a learning medium. *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 39(4), 104-118.
- Jackson, A. (2011). Participatory forms of educational theatre. In S. Shonmann (Ed.), *Key concepts in theatre/drama education* (pp. 235-40). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Kawash, S. (1998). The homeless body. *Public Culture* 10(1), 319-339.

- Kim, I. (2007). *Youth videomaking projects: A spoken word study*. Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations. (AAT NR39720)
- Klein, J. (2005). From children's perspectives: A model of aesthetic processing in theatre. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 39(4). Retrieved from <http://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/dspace/bitstream/1808/1479/1/Aesthetic%20Model%20klein.pdf>
- Klein, J. (2011). Criticism and appreciation in theatre for young audiences. In S. Shonmann (Ed.), *Key concepts in theatre/drama education* (pp. 289-93). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Kumashiro, K. (2000). Toward a theory of anti-oppressive education. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(1), 25-53. Retrieved from [https://portal.utoronto.ca/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp?tab\\_tab\\_group\\_id=\\_2\\_1&url=%2Fwebapps%2Fblackboard%2Fexecute%2Flauncher%3Ftype%3DCourse%26id%3D\\_563040\\_1%26url%3D](https://portal.utoronto.ca/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp?tab_tab_group_id=_2_1&url=%2Fwebapps%2Fblackboard%2Fexecute%2Flauncher%3Ftype%3DCourse%26id%3D_563040_1%26url%3D)
- Kumashiro, K. (2001). "Posts" perspectives on anti-oppressive education in social studies, English, mathematics, and science classrooms. *Educational Researcher*, 30(3), 3-12. Retrieved from <http://journals1.scholarsportal.info.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/tmp/791172136255761508.pdf>
- Lather, P. (1986). Issues of validity in openly ideological research: Between a rock and a soft place. *Interchange*, 17(4), 63-84. Retrieved from <http://web.media.mit.edu/~kbrennan/mas790/06/Lather,%20Issues%20of%20validity%20in%20openly%20ideological%20research.pdf>
- Lather, P. (2008). Getting lost: Critiquing across difference as methodological practice. In K. Gallagher (Ed.), *The methodological dilemma: creative, critical and collaborative approaches to qualitative research* (pp. 219-231). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The production of space*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Levy, J. (1998). *A theatre of the imagination: Reflections on children and the theatre*. Charlottesville, VA: New Plays.
- Lortie, P. (2005). *Keeping it real: Drama, masculinity, and performance*. Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations. (AAT MR07209)
- Luttrell, W. (2000). "Good enough" methods for ethnographic research. *Harvard Educational Review*, (70)4. 499-523. Retrieved from <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdlink?Ver=1&Exp=05-24-2016&FMT=7&DID=66258190&RQT=309&cfc=1>
- Mackey, S. & Whybrow, N. (2007). Taking place: Some reflections on site, performance and community. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 12(1). 1-14. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13569780601094785>
- Massey, D. (1994). *Space, place and gender*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Massey, D. (2003). Some times of space. In S. May (Ed.), *Olafur Eliasson: The weather project*. Retrieved from [http://www.olafureliasson.net/publications/download\\_texts/Some\\_times\\_of\\_space.pdf](http://www.olafureliasson.net/publications/download_texts/Some_times_of_space.pdf)
- Massey, D. (2005). *For space*. London: Sage Publications.
- Massey, D. (2006). *Is the world really shrinking?* Retrieved from [http://www.open2.net/freethinking/oulecture\\_2006.html](http://www.open2.net/freethinking/oulecture_2006.html)

- Massey, D. (2010). *Is the world getting larger or smaller?* Retrieved from [http://www.opendemocracy.net/globalization-vision\\_reflections/world\\_small\\_4354.jsp](http://www.opendemocracy.net/globalization-vision_reflections/world_small_4354.jsp)
- Miles, M. (2007). Interrupting the public realm: Performative excursions. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 12(1), 15-25. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13569780601094827>
- Morin, F. (2010). A study of arts education in Manitoba schools. *Manitoba Education Research Network*, 3. Retrieved from [http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/arts/study/full\\_doc.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/arts/study/full_doc.pdf)
- Neelands, J. (2004). Miracles are happening: Beyond the rhetoric of transformation in the western traditions of drama education. *Research in Drama Education*, 9(1), 47-56.
- Neelands, J. (2010). Mirror, dynamo or lens? Drama, children and social change. In P. O'Connor, (Ed.) *Creating Democratic Citizenship through Drama Education: the writings of Jonathan Neelands*. Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books. Retrieved from <http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap>
- Nwadike, C.E. (2007). 'Meet us at the other side of the river': Performance venue and community education among migrant fishermen in Nigeria. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 12(1), 65-77. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13569780601095006>
- Nicholson, H. (2005). *Applied drama: The gift of theatre*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nicholson, H. (2010). The promises of history: pedagogic principles and processes of change. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 15(2), 147-154.
- Nicholson, H. (2011). Cartographies of power. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 16(1), 1-4. Retrieved from <http://www.tandfonline.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/toc/crde20/16/1>
- O'Grady, J., & French, G. (Eds.). (2000). *Northrop Frye's writings on education*. Toronto, University of Toronto.
- O'Farrell, L. (2011). Formal expression in drama/theatre education. In S. Shonmann (Ed.), *Key concepts in theatre/drama education* (pp. 253-8). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Phelan, P. (1993). *Unmarked: The politics of performance*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Pitman, W. (1998). *Learning the arts in an age of uncertainty*. North York: Arts Education Council of Ontario.
- Reason, M. (2004). Theatre audiences and perceptions of 'liveness' in performance. *Participations*, 1(2). Retrieved from [http://www.participations.org/volume%201/issue%202/1\\_02\\_reason\\_article.htm](http://www.participations.org/volume%201/issue%202/1_02_reason_article.htm)
- Reason, M. (2010). *The young audience: Exploring and enhancing children's experiences of theatre*. Staffordshire: Trentham Books Limited.
- Robbins, C. (2008). *Expelling hope: The assault on youth and the militarization of schooling*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Saxton, J., & Miller, C. (1998). Lurching out of the familiar. In J. Saxton & C. Miller (Eds.), *The research of practice, the practice of research* (pp. 165-180). Victoria: IDEA Publications.
- Schonmann, S. (2007) *Theatre as a medium for children and young people: Images and observations*. Dordrecht: Springer.

- Schonmann, S. (2011). An identity card in the making: Key concepts in theatre/drama education. In S. Shonmann (Ed.), *Key concepts in theatre/drama education* (pp. 3-12). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Sherman, J. (2005). *Using aesthetic and experiential education to promote health in the writing classroom: Problems and possibilities*. Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations. (AAT MR02480)
- Slater, J. (2004). The erosion of public space. In D.M. Callejo Pérez, S.M. Fain, & J.J. Slater (Eds.) *Pedagogy of place: Seeing space as cultural education* (pp. 35-52). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Swartz, L. (2003). Theatre for young people: Does it matter? In Gallagher, K., & Booth, D. (Eds.). *How theatre educates: Convergences and counterpoints with artists, scholars and advocates*. (pp. 198-206). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Swortzell, L. (Ed.). (1990). *International guide to children's theatre and educational theatre: A historical and geographical source book*. New York, NY: Greenwood Press.
- TYA-UK Centre of ASSITEJ, the International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People. (September 2010). Support for professional theatre for children and young people. Retrieved from <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmcomeds/writev/464/150.htm>
- van de Water, M. (2000). Constructed narratives: Situating theatre for young audiences in the United States. *Youth Theatre Journal*, 14(1). 101 – 113. Retrieved from <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~db=all~content=g924156812>
- van de Water, M. (2011). Framing children's theatre: Historiography, material context, and cultural perception. In S. Shonmann (Ed.), *Key concepts in theatre/drama education* (pp. 277-81). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Walford, G. (2009). The practice of writing ethnographic fieldnotes. *Ethnography and Education*, 4(2). 117-130. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17457820902972713>
- Wessels, A. (2009). *Interplay and overlay: Devising and intercultural pedagogy*. Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations. (AAT MR55791)
- Wilmeth, D.B. (Ed.). (2007). *The Cambridge guide to American theatre* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Winston, J., Lo, C., & Wang, X. (2010). 'Being in the state of crossing': Drama education and transnational space. *The Journal of Drama and Theatre Education in Asia* 1(1). 7-24. Retrieved from [http://www.tefo.hk/fck\\_images/R\\_DaTEAsia%2001%20-Joe.pdf](http://www.tefo.hk/fck_images/R_DaTEAsia%2001%20-Joe.pdf)
- Young People's Theatre. (2011). *Young People's Theatre*. Retrieved from <http://youngpeoplestheatre.ca/>
- Zatzman, B. (2011). Drama education and memory. In S. Shonmann (Ed.), *Key concepts in theatre/drama education* (pp. 105-10). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.