

The Theatre Workshop as Educational Space: How Imagined Reality is Voiced and Conceived

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Abstract

In this article, we claim a concept of education that allows a space for dealing with sensuous impressions, examining knowledge, experiencing disconnections, re-experiencing meaningful connections and learning "how to know." This is a different form of education than where the emphasis is merely on the "flow of information." Arts education, we argue, should not be a practice that is pre-designed, and hence textually ordered and contextually controlled, in order to better serve the expectations of any societal or cultural institution. In claiming this space, we need to deconstruct both the concept of "Aesthetic" and "Education" in order to find new ways of organising an education that is both aesthetic and playful. What we argue is that Dramatic Knowing is a form within the broader concept of a "cultural aesthetic," and highlight cultural production as distinct from merely socialising young people to arts canons or using theatre as an under-developed curriculum tool. Recent studies of youth culture (as referred) show that young people make the most of the inter- textual play between fine art, popular art and everyday life, and it is in this area of "play" that we are able to uncover new models of drama education. In linguistic terms, dramatic knowing highlights a certain intentional, interactive, creative, and context-situated production of meaning. This production takes place in theatre workshops, and two forms of workshops are described that reflect arguments made about education, partnership and the potential for youth culture research.

Introduction

"Theatre has ceased to have any significance culturally at all. It has a significance for a certain kind of audience, but as part of a debate, as art informing us how to live, or how to think, or what's going on in the world, it's completely irrelevant" (Holgate, 1999)

These words from Australian playwright, now screenwriter, Stephen Sewell, echo a current crisis in the theatre industry. Faced by new technological and cultural media, such as film, TV and computers, the living theatre seems to be falling behind in both popularity and recognition. This crisis has also been made explicit and contrasted through a developing notion of drama as a significant cultural medium. This developing idea has already been expressed by Martin Esslin (1987 p.13) this way, more than 10 years ago.

"Drama, there can be no doubt about it, has become immensely important in our time. More human beings than ever before see more drama than ever before and are more directly influenced, conditioned, programmed by drama than ever before. Drama has become one of the principal vehicles of information, one of the prevailing methods of 'thinking' about life and its situations."

Although Sewell fails to see how drama and theatricality are becoming an important part of media, his critique does echo a recurring warning- that is, theatre is seen as *elitist*, a remote medium detached from any educational, political or cultural significance. How then, can we claim theatre is still a significant way of knowing for young people today? The answer, we argue, lies in a different area from some established forms of Western theatre. In this article we will recommend that educators, parents and young people acknowledge the nature and process of *dramatic knowing* as distinct from the generally accepted nature of theatre. This way of knowing, drawing on processual forms has important educational implications in the way that theatre art does not.

Why is the theatre business not the most obvious way of producing knowledge? As much as we may want professional theatre artists to provide aesthetic learning, the institutional theatre arts have not provided, or probably will not provide a significant educational space into the new century. This is simple to understand when we are clear that theatre, at least as generally seen, is recognised as entertainment, not education. Also, human cultural practice shows that dramatic playing is not restricted to arts practices or only a few artists with young people engaging in a variety of forms of dramatic playing in a variety of contexts. When we know that only a few young people might become professional actors and directors, we should look for educational spaces and objectives in places other than those related to the professional training of theatre artists.

The important theatre director, playwright and theoretician, Berthold Brecht, who was interested in youth education, did however provide indications of alternative educational spaces in his poetic writings. Brecht reminded his actors to look for meaningful cultural practice as part of everyday dramatic culture:

"Pay a visit sometime to that theatre whose setting is the street/they do not like parrot or ape imitate just for the sake of imitation/Note also his earnestness and the accuracy of his imitation/he is an artist because he is a human/We may do what he does more perfectly and be honoured for it, but what we do is something universal, human, something hourly practised in the busy street, almost as much a part of life as eating and breathing." (Note 1)

While this text was written in the context of the theatre profession, showing important links between art and life, Brecht also throws light on

imitation as a meaningful, everyday "aesthetic." This everyday cultural practice or aesthetic may be "outside" the interests of the western institution we know as theatre art, nevertheless is highly "inside" or relevant to drama education, and arts education more generally.

A certain tension between the value of art skills and the value of other cultural practices in arts education was identified by Harold Rosen in his important article "The Dramatic Mode" (1980). In observing student teachers trying to teach children the craft of theatre, Rosen complained: "I grew increasingly dismayed as I watched them putting classes of children through their paces, carefully worked out dramatic 'exercises' which were in all respect inferior to what the children would have done spontaneously" (Rosen 1980 p. 153). For Rosen, then, spontaneous dramatic behaviour is a common human resource that is as important to young people, as language and bodily movement, and importantly, this behaviour is accessible. Rosen goes on: "It [dramatic behaviour] can and does exist independent of theatres, stages, drama classes and dramatic texts" (ibid.) What this means is that drama can be valued, not solely in terms of artistic criteria, but also as a cultural language, thus greatly expanding the restricted notion of arts education, at least as commonly understood.

It is also important to understand that the process of making drama suitable for another cultural institution, the school, has two costs. First, there is in the cross- disciplinary methodological application of drama, a missing understanding about what makes drama different from everyday social practice, in other words, the issue of *aesthetic identity*- and second, there has been a lack of development of drama education practice. This second cost can largely be attributable to the constraints of schools' traditional learning paradigms, and the associated issues of lack of both physical space and time. Rosen (1980) understood these constraints, and articulated the problems caused by improvised drama practices where the aim had been to use drama in an instrumentally way to impose school curriculum on pupils. Following Bolton (1998), this instrumental use of drama has overshadowed drama's potential of creating new knowledge.

Rosen has a far more radical perspective on dramatic knowing that goes beyond socializing young people to arts "canons" (traditional craft, conventions and rules) or using drama merely as a cross-curricular pedagogy. Rosen explained it this way:

"I was more concerned, however, to explore the ways in which drama can enter into all learning by, at the one and the same time, communicating experience and giving the communicator a deeper understanding of experience. For, as Vygotsky said of play, spontaneous drama is imagination in action" (Rosen, 1980 p.164).

In the same manner, von Hentig (1997) saw a greater potential for aesthetic learning than traditionally has been offered through arts education, particularly the arts subjects in isolation. At a European children's culture conference in 1996, he provoked drama specialists by saying that drama is ideally suited to compensate for too much bookish learning, " but its greatest potential is not even realised" (von Hentig, 1997 p.25).

To Rosen and von Hentig, the "great potential" seems to be realised or released if and when, the dramatic practice we see in schools is conceptualised as a *language*, that is a *way of knowing*, and as part of a *living culture*. This perspective is in direct contrast to a dramatic practice that is pre-designed, and textually ordered, in order to better serve the expectations of any societal or cultural institution such as education or arts. What this means is that we are looking at a cultural practice, not serving institutionalized culture, but rather ideally serving itself as a medium of cultural production anywhere, even in

schools. However, as drama educators and students of "progressive education," we know all too well that a romantic view of "free" spontaneous playing is doomed to end with drama being relegated to a neglected and impoverished cultural practice, a practice stripped of all aesthetic traditional knowledge and any "great potential." This has been the case, for example, with some of the applications of Jacob Moreno's (1985) modernist drama practice. With regards to both his cultural philosophy and drama practice, we still find Moreno inspiring and his work also underscores both practices we mention in the model of theatre workshop.

Moreno, Rosen and von Hentig do remind us that aesthetic practice is a possible way of knowing for all people in most societal contexts. In order to grasp this potential, we need to deconstruct both the concepts of "Aesthetic" and "Education" to find new ways to organize what we shall label a *cultural-aesthetic* and *playful education*. We also argue that it is important to look beyond the cultural institutions of art and pedagogy, into the realm of the cultural aesthetic way of knowing. What this means is that drama as a way of knowing becomes somewhat independent of the societal constructed boundaries of life, art and education bridging across all three. Hence, this bridging implies a dramatic arts education that is less considerate of the status of representational art forms, less considerate of serving the "right" authorities of arts or education, and more concerned with *form-making*, *symbol-application* and *creation* as life practices that are part of a *cultural* production of meaning and knowledge. What this form of knowing then allows is the use of established arts canons that can be re-interpreted and changed according to the context of the creative producer.

Towards a notion of the cultural-aesthetic practice

Well-known cultural analyses by Vygotsky (1933, 1934), Bakhtin (1936) and Huizinga (1944) have described how dramatic phenomena belong to a cultural "aesthetic" field that is different from the commonly accepted definitions of the aesthetic as in fine (traditional) arts. Here, play, drama and theatre are comprehended in terms of meaning, language and human development. The cultural significance of different play-forms is also reinforced by later cultural studies from such scholars as Courtney (1968), Turner (1982) and Schechner (1990). This significance has been brought to the context of young people's aesthetic culture in late modern societies by such writers as Ziehe (1989), Willis (1990), and Fornäs & Bolin (1995). Furthermore, a concept of the cultural aesthetic has become pivotal to contemporary research on children's play-culture (Guss, 2000). What scholars share is a belief that the boundary between life and arts has blurred in relation to young people's cultural production (mental, material, artistic or not-yet artistic), and that we should be speaking of significant aesthetic practices that are not necessarily acknowledged as art practices in the traditional way. These practices may be labelled aesthetic, not only because of their affective and sensitive criteria, also because of the way that they are specifically dramatic or fictive and engage with the context in which we exist.

When this boundary is blurred, contributions from other disciplines such as sociology and linguistics can be revealing in developing a theory of aesthetic epistemologically enriched and phenomenologically expanded cultural aesthetic. For example, Habermas (1972, 1987, 1990) and Ricoeur (1991) offered a linguistic perspective on everyday meaning-making culture where role-playing actions and language fiction are part of a significant human symbol- system. These philosophers would be reluctant to accept a concept of aesthetic beyond the arts "proper." However, their perspectives are still important because young peoples' education now goes beyond the school, and so is more connected to their "everyday aesthetic" actions (Drotner, 1991; Gullestad,

1996). For example, analysis of rock-music in youth culture also shows the educational values of such practice (Sernhede, 1995). Within this context of a cultural-aesthetic practice, that is, arts and arts-like practices, we observe how young people make the most of the mutual inter-textual play of influences between traditional art, popular art (cartoons, magazines, TV soap series, and the like) and other everyday life experiences. It is in this context that we are able to uncover new models for a renewed and extensive aesthetic education.

It is important to realise that while the historically established Western traditions of re-fined arts provide ways of knowing, it is just not possible that all young people could be trained to be professional artists. However, all young people *could* be trained and experience aesthetic learning modelled on a broader aesthetic media culture. This is because most symbolic systems are accessible to young people as part of their everyday lived experience. For example, young people constantly exercise dramatic knowing, music, movement, in such areas as "live action role-playing," rap and skating. Many young people are continually immersed in the massive cultural production of motion pictures, dramas, music, design and literature. Hence, we believe that a significant aesthetic education for all people cannot be derived from an exclusive re(fine)d arts culture. The question then arises, how do we detect educational models from the nature of everyday dramatic knowing in young peoples' lives?

A consideration of the aesthetic nature of dramatic knowing

The notion of the aesthetic has, to a large extent, been conceptualized in the context of artefacts and audience reception (Cooper, 1997). For this reason, the experiential nature of dramatic knowing as seen, for example, in children's playing has not been well explicated in aesthetic terms. In spite of the important works on the philosophy of aesthetics, for example, the nature of dramatic knowing has been extensively identified and described across the disciplines of linguistics, education, sociology, psychology, anthropology and cultural studies. We should no longer accept, we contend, that different and protective discourses should prevent there being a focused attention on the social and aesthetic dramatic phenomenon itself. The Art does not "owe" all aesthetic practices, nor can theatre in all forms guarantee a "special" way of knowing. In social science studies of role and symbolic interactionism (Charon, 1998), we find that descriptions have been piecemeal and, importantly for us, removed from the aesthetic context in which drama exists. Still, from the perspective of the cultural analysis previously described, we suggest that dramatic knowing is not an exceptional and "affective" way of knowing only in theatre art, but exists, rather, as a part of the common human symbol system. Hence, we may argue that the nature of dramatic knowing is partly concealed by an imposed institutional split in modern society.

What we also understand from impoverished role-playing practices within sociology and education, is that neither the educational nor the artistic potential of dramatic knowing can be realized without a concomitant recognition of the aesthetic nature of this way of knowing. For example, we may play and reverse roles in a social context, but the sensuous and aesthetic imagination does not limit itself to social everyday structures only. Dramatic knowing is generative and breaks with social and cognitive structures; hence, drama as a way of knowing allows for more than just the mere repetition of conventional social life.

Furthermore, we would argue that there is also a need to apply theatre conventions to the area of dramatic knowing. The concept of the cultural-aesthetic that we have been arguing for does not imply the rejection of the cultural capital of fine arts, but rather takes a creative and playful approach to

this capital. Theatre arts provide a privileged space for dramatic knowing and contain "banks" of resources about how human life and imagination have been comprehended and transformed into aesthetic shapes and spaces. These resources, however, are not just a body of knowledge to be learned and reproduced. They are sources, like all other sources presented for aesthetic and dramatic processing, available for interactive deconstruction and reconstruction.

A cultural-aesthetic understanding of drama education, we contend, implies a concept of dramatic knowing, taking many forms in different human, societal or cultural contexts. The aesthetic identity of such practices implies both *experiential* and *experimental* processes where forms of cultural signs and representations are *deconstructed* and *reconstructed* within the dramatic world of space, time, figure and objects. The theatre/drama workshop provides such a space.

The theatre workshop as model

In light of this cultural-aesthetic understanding of drama education, we will argue that the theatre workshop provides an educational space for our time, a space for *playful* education. Second, we will describe the educational potential of dramatic practice, both as a way of communicating and meaning-making at one and the same time. In addition, this physical and psychological space that we describe and begin to map offers a model where an authentic partnership between schools and young people can be established.

The concept of theatre workshop covers a range of different dramatic methods or approaches. What is common in these methods is the "experiential and sensuous processing of experienced, imagined and symbolic material." (Guss, 2000) This processing aims to make sense of the material (pre-text or stimulus) through a cyclical process of selecting, mediating and expressing the chosen ideas/text in a visible form. By "mediating," we mean a medium-specific mimetic interpretation, including the subversion of given representations. What this process entails is an emotional/cognitive reflection created in the process of dramatic form making. This form-making process provides insights to participants in many ways, including issue-based insights, inter-personal and/or intra-personal understanding. A conscious re-structuring of experience through dramatic forms provides "felt" insights, and these insights can be further conceptualized by analytical distance induced by discussions and critique. This model of the theatre workshop is closely related to a tradition of late modernist theatre rehearsals, described for example in Grotowski's article "Art as Vehicle [for investigating cultural 'universals']":

"Rehearsals are not only a preparation for the opening [night], they are for the actor a terrain of discoveries, about himself, his possibilities, his chances to transcend his limits" (Grotowski in Richards 1995 p. 118)

The theatre workshop is organized as several minor experiential and improvisational presentations, moving "as if" towards a comprehensive resolution of tension within the form-making process. This means that the separate improvisations that comprise the workshop may be developed into a collage or final public performance. The important focus, however, is on the experiential workshop itself, where participants, in created dramatic forms, reflect on the process of acting and the resulting lived experience. This focus is different to a generally accepted public conception of what theatre is. This is because theatre is generally recognised as artefact, or a "performed" cultural representation. In contrast, the art-making process we have just described, is an intrinsic element of the theatre itself and normally is not culturally

recognised in the same way. This point can be made clear by briefly considering other arts disciplines, for example, literature.

It is now possible to see how procedural drafts, autobiographies, diaries and portfolios are being increasingly put to use in learning contexts. In her book on a autobiography project, Gullestad (1996 p. 243) for example, identified how literature research has become more focused on what the writing *does* to the writer, and how the writing is more than just "presenting" or "translating" life. In this way, autobiography can be seen to be a part of a meaning-making process with important educational implications. We would argue that the theatre workshop, in the same way, also adds to this notion of an educational or meaning-making cultural production through an experiential "language" mode. In this dramatic mode individuals can make sense of culture generally, and their own life particularly, by means of aesthetic practice - in this case, the theatre workshop.

Two international projects, Rasmussen (Norway) and Wright (Australia) have used the theatre workshop model as a way of developing dramatic knowing in young people in a way that is consistent with everyday cultural practice. Interestingly, both of these practices have been derived indirectly from the same practice and cultural philosophy of Austrian-American Jacob Moreno (Fox, 1994; Moreno, 1985; Rasmussen, 1989). Importantly, the work of Moreno is built on the principles of spontaneity, creative improvisation and the interactive aesthetic processing of both individual and cultural experience. What this means is that the participant playfully interacts with physical objects (props, pictures, and the like), and their own projected imaginations and others. A presented stimulus or pretext could be a story, a dream, an emotional situation, photos, paintings, fiction or even news and documentary material. A result of this interaction is that participants rebuild new comprehension or knowing in the meaning-embodied forms developed.

Role-playing

Role-playing in support of "school-tired" students has been part of a Norwegian action research project since 1996 (Rasmussen & Khachik, 2000). This project was developed as a way to support an increasing population of teenagers (16-18) who displayed such behaviours as arriving at school late, shirking, tiredness, indolence or disorder, low self-esteem and low academic achievement. This role-playing project was not part of the arts education program in the participating school per se, but rather, was designed to support these particular students and teachers generally. This program was designed as a series of improvisational workshops, based on the theatre workshop model, in four stages.

The first stage involved a warm-up period where the students were introduced to role-playing activities and trust building exercises, such as "contact" and "concentration" games. What was important about these exercises was that they were designed to help the students rediscover how to relax, express themselves playfully, and enjoy themselves within their daily school routine. The students participating in this project displayed a surprising lack of empathy for other group members and their peers in general. An implication of this lack of empathy was the need to develop extended exercises so that the students could learn to take turns, cooperate, and pay attention to others. In this introductory stage, some of the common school experiences well-known to the students, such as teaching styles and study habits, were selected by the two teachers involved, improvised (often with a comic detachment), and then reflected upon by the students. These experiences also included familiar scenarios such as "the homework situation" or "too late for class."

The second stage contained not only common, but also specific personal and group-specific experiences that were selected, scripted and presented by the students (e.g. "the German class," "my sister at home," "parents nagging"). In the third stage, the two teachers introduced certain scenarios for everyone to stage: "my support people," "my 5 different everyday roles," and "my profession in 15 years time." Those scenarios were constructed to address different social arenas and build within the students, consciousness of both role and status. The fourth stage provided closure for the workshop. In this component role-training, "rehearsal for life" situations and proposed contracts between peers, such as non-smoking, assignment work, more sleep, and less junk-food were enacted. This stage aimed at bringing the students back to their "real life" school situation with renewed engagement, motivation and some embodied experience about how to better manage their school- life.

In each of these four stages students were encouraged to *stage, share,* and *reflect* their own personal positive attributes, and reconnect such roles or attributes, across disparate social arenas. What this could mean, for example, is that a vital and playful social attribute, such as being an entertaining friend, was reconnected through the dramatic process, and juxtaposed with, the same person's passive school attitude. In another example, a working life responsibility such as being shopkeeper was reconnected to support the same person's on-going school responsibilities.

One important aim of this project was to give young people a forum for expressing their voices, with a second aim being to give shape and form to these student's learning and school experiences through the provision of dramatic fiction in a safe and tolerant environment. Overall, it became important for these students to recover both the motivations to learn, and engage with school-based learning. This recovery was partly achieved by reconnecting student's experiences from disparate social arenas thereby refocusing the student's aspiration, joy and control of their own lives.

Role-playing for educational benefits is a well-established practice in many schools. However, this position of being "between" art and education results in a lack of status, identity, training and competency. What might be informing from the Norwegian project, is the conscious reconnection to the Morean notion of cultural production, also reconnecting role-playing to a cultural-aesthetic as well as play-culture outside school (Live Action Role-Playing). Playing roles and staging scenarios are here show to be highly educational and aesthetic, without any claim of being Teaching or Art. In this way role-playing does contribute in deconstructing conceptions of aesthetic and education.

"Playback theatre"

Playback theatre is a form of non-scripted theatre developed by Jonathan Fox and the original Playback Theatre Company members in New York State during the 1970's. This form of theatre draws heavily on the nature of oral storytelling, the psychodramatic work of Moreno (1985), and is closely allied with the various branches of non-scripted theatre (Note 2) described by Fox (1994). Playback Theatre, in particular, is characterised by the emphasis on *process* where the actors and musician create a performance from the teller's own words. This is in direct contrast to traditional Western literary theatre where the emphasis is on language, and the written words of the text, through which the playwright's meaning is conveyed.

In Playback Theatre, by contrast, a performance is spontaneously devised based on the improvised enactment of a personal story. In this improvised enactment, the audience provides the material for what happens on stage. This story can be related to a person's experiences, memories, dreams or actions.

In this sense, Playback Theatre can be seen to be part of the everyday cultural aesthetic (Willis 1990). In Playback Theatre, the Playback Theatre Company usually consists of four-to-six actors, a musician and a conductor—the conductor acting as an MC and facilitator of the storytelling, while the Playback actors and musician function to shape and craft the inner experiences of the storyteller. This combination of aesthetic form making is then "played back" in an artistic way for the benefit of both the teller and the audience. What is important about this performance is that it is interactive, and, as in performance generally, both movement and interaction are involved (Maclean, 1988).

The monthly public performances of Sydney Playback Theatre have been the focus of a major research project by Wright (2000). In this project, a grounded theory methodology (Strauss & Corbin 1998), was used to understand how participants reflected on their "lived experience" of the Playback Theatre performance. While each performance was unique, and subject to variation in some way, participants report remarkably similar responses. One of the most important categories of response related to the audience's emotions. This is because the Playback Theatre form provides a safe place where emotions can be displayed, explored and contained. These responses include being emotionally engaged in the action, and feeling empathy for the person telling the story. Ian described his experience in this way:

You don't have to remember you're there, and are again. And so the actual physical context is generating the emotion. And because it is non-verbally represented, it's sending you information on so many different levels. The emotion actually hits you before the rational reason does".

This form of multi-modal aesthetic representation functions in a number of ways. First, different modalities, such as movement, sound, words and music, allow different elements of the story to emerge. Second, the act of playing back a story, both allows the story to be told, and in the telling and representation of that telling, provides a distance from it. Third, Playback Theatre, through the aesthetic process, becomes art. In this process, described by one participant as a "dance" and a "flow" between the actors, the audience, and each other, personal story is transformed in an "alchemy" of representation. This representation reflects the skill and creativity of the participants in a way that "expands" to be more than the story, and its representation.

Playback Theatre takes drama as part of the human symbol system and uses the aesthetic form-making process inherent in the theatre workshop model, to provide a space where the cultural aesthetic can be sensuously experienced, "felt", and perceived. This experience can provide participants with insights into their own, and other people's lives, and the world in which we live. In this way, Playback Theatre is a powerful way of knowing. Importantly, for young people, this is a process over which they have control -- to tell, or not tell, to accept the representation of a story, or not. Finally, Playback Theatre builds community. This process occurs through the affirmation of being seen, and heard, and the identification that occurs as our common humanity is revealed.

Young people, drama and research

The drama/theatre workshop model not only provides a way of knowing, it also provide a space for sociological research. Clive Barker's long-standing

vision of theatre being an instrument for sociological research has yet to be fulfilled (Barker 1977). However, as an arena for dissemination of young peoples' perspectives, the theatre workshop becomes an interesting alternative to questionnaires and interviews where the researcher may not have built the necessary trust to get information. How do we gain knowledge about young peoples' attitudes and perspectives on the streets, at shopping centres and behind bike sheds? How do we, in terms of research and education, approach young people with verbal or written disabilities, but who are still people with great physical and imaginative skills?

The cultural aesthetic research approach described here in the form of "workshops" offers one way forward. These workshops allow researchers to interpret "non-discursive" language by reflecting upon the interactive relations of elements in a total experience (form/content, fiction/reality) (Langer 1942). Whereas some sociology ends by analysing the cultural conditions of young people, dramatic knowing may offer a richer qualitative approach where young people can express, establish and conceive those conditions themselves that are necessary for such research.

This form of (re)search allows young people to feel safe by not presupposing that all have similar verbal and rational abilities. We know, for example, that some groups of young people refuse to take part in any conversation that is not initiated and controlled by them. In the theatre workshop, however, young people control their own forms of expression. Most importantly, the theatre workshop by its very nature provides rich contextual information about young people and their lives. This is because young peoples' expressions in the theatre workshop belong to the realm of their life-world "truths," disseminated or transformed.

Concluding remarks

In conclusion, we believe that there is a need for an aesthetic education that does more than just serve the traditional concerns of the established arts curriculum and the drama/theatre workshop offer such potential. This education would be influenced by the everyday cultural aesthetic practices of our young people. "Dramatic knowing," in particular, is an example of this form of education that should be possible in many different educational contexts, but tends to be poorly organised outside of the arts curriculum itself. Dramatic practice, in all of its forms, shows that dramatic knowing is both multi-layered and highly complex. Students, for example, not only select those thoughts and images to express in a sensuous form, but also reflect on their own expressions, thereby providing new thoughts to act on in their own lives. In this sense, dramatic knowing can be seen as hermeneutical spiral of thought and action (Courtney 1990 p.14).

Young people may show creativity through being both flexible and interactive in their interpretations of symbols, and conversely reluctant to engage with "static" comprehension of symbols and signs. Our own experiences indicate that young people *do* try to make sense of their own lives by creating contextual understanding through actively, and intentionally, connecting to signs, perceptions and experiences. Interestingly, this connection also includes an experiential and inter-active attitude to the inherited meaning structures apparent in dramaturgical structures and symbolic conventions. Young people are able to play with cultural languages in all of its forms. Finally, in order to best work with young people in these ways we need to underline both the aesthetic autonomy and aesthetic competence of the teacher/leader. This is because we believe that without these competencies, this form of education will become time-consuming, troublesome and ultimately a disappointment. Therefore, the challenge for educators is to find a balance

the social and contextual needs and knowledge of young people and the aesthetic medium itself. This interaction, we believe, is at the core of a new model for arts education.

Notes

1. Extracts from "On Everyday Theatre" (Poems of the Crisis years 1929-1933) in Willett & Manheim (1976).
2. Non-scripted theatre, including the experimental theatre of the sixties, comic-satiric theatre, community theatre, clowning and commedia forms, and importantly for us, the therapeutic and educational theatre movements, can be characterised by the removal of the "fourth wall" and the improvisational and spontaneous nature of its work.

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