

Thesis title

**From Revelry to Alchemy: six lenses for  
interpreting theatre for young Australian  
audiences**

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Degree

**PhD Thesis: Education**

Year

**2013**

## **CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY**

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Works of this kind are written over a number of years to be shaped explicitly by intense research and implicitly through the influences of many important role models. As such this study has been fashioned through inspiring professional engagements, academic conferences, as well as intriguing debriefs with co-workers who have challenged my assumptions and driven my desire to fully appreciate the different roles that theatre plays in building culture, communities and wellbeing. I sincerely thank the many people who have thereby informed this study either consciously or incidentally.

Of particular note is Professor Rosemary Ross Johnston, my supervisor, mentor and guide during my foray into academic contemplation; her observations and knowledge of childhood culture have been instrumental in my completing this work, her trust has been uplifting; also Dr. Lesley Ljungdhal and Dr. Rachel Perry whose practical help and encouragement has been very welcome.

Thank you to Claire Fischer, my UK manager, for her belief in my work as a theatre producer and for first bringing it to my attention that children's theatre can be more than a pantomime; along with my first production company partners Sarah Georges, Amanda Beard, Jonathon Sims and Simon Anderson who bravely joined me in our first professional ventures into creating theatre events for young people, often travelling in the early hours of the morning to art centres and schools around the UK in our little red van.

Here in Australia, I am indebted to the Sydney Opera House, the Historic Houses Trust and the many other inspiring theatre companies and cultural organisations, from Bell Shakespeare to the Shopfront Theatre for Young People, producing extraordinary live events that I have had the privilege to learn from and be part of during my sixteen years here. I thank my amazing colleagues and theatre professionals, Justine Thompson, Russell Garbutt, amongst many, for their discussions and thought-provoking ideas during that time. Also my family for their love, constancy and practical help; my Grandmother May who instilled in me the importance of universal education; my mother Angela whose anchorage and solid conviction is extraordinarily strengthening,

my daughters Matilda and Eliza who have patiently accepted all my research excursions as their own personal adventures and who have thereby undertaken this journey alongside me as part of their childhood experience, and my extended family including the Goslett and Dodd clans who have been of such amazing assistance in keeping domestic life going when my head has been stuck in books, computers and theatre performances, and particular thanks to Michelle Dodd and Mary Goslett who also provided services as proof-readers.

This work is dedicated to my beloved father Ian Sinclair Roberts (1942-2010), Pantomime dame and my first acting teacher. Writer and producer for the village amateur “players”, it was he who inspired my love for theatre and helped me understand the power of strict choreography in slapstick routines to ensure that “spectators are out of their seats with excitement”. It was he who first told me about the pleasures of being safely “frightened” and the joys of hating a rotten villain!

## PREFACE

**Theatre** 1. A building or room fitted for the presentation of dramatic performances, stage entertainments etc. 2. Any area used for dramatic presentations 3. A cinema 4. dramatic works collectively, as of a nation, period, or author. 5. A room or hall fitted with tiers of seats rising like steps, used for lectures etc. 6. A room in a hospital in which surgical operations are performed: *an operating theatre*. 7. A place of action: *theatre of war*. [ME, from L, from Gk: seeing place theatre]

**Drama** 1. A story or a short piece of dialogue, intended to be acted on stage, radio or television, and usu. 2. Plays as a branch of literature: *the drama of the Elizabethan age*. 3. The branch of art, which deals with plays from their writing to their final production: *a school of drama*. 4. Any exciting, important or fast moving series of events: *the drama surrounding his resignation*. [LL: a play, from Gk: deed, play]

**Poetics** 1. The systematic study of literature, or a unified theory of texts.

**Rhetoric** 1. The art of persuasion

Though the focus of this study is theatre for young audiences, it reflects an overall interest in the dual role of theatre as both art and communication; a tool by which humanity both reveals and dreams itself, for audiences of all ages. In essence it celebrates theatre for young audiences not as a separate genre but as works of art that belong on the spectrum of theatre in all its various forms, offering layered-aspects which might be appreciated differently by different audiences.

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses theatre for young audiences as an aesthetic artform in and of itself. Focusing specifically on the moment of live performance, it proposes six interpretive lenses as systems of signification that facilitate understandings of how performances created essentially for children offer important multi-layered experiences for their audiences. Reflecting on the dual roles of theatre as both art and communication, the study challenges the polarised notion that such work exists solely as either a teaching tool or light entertainment.

The artistic codes proposed as part of this research have been developed over twenty years of personal experience creating theatre for children and may be considered as constituting what could be called a poetics of children's theatre.

The six codes are:

1. *Revelry*, the code that aims to communicate a raucous sense of euphoric, *cathartic* energy and unity through audience participation, carnivalesque laughter and fear.
2. *Enchantment*, the code that communicates a sense of *soothing* and surrender to a sense of sublime wonder and hope.
3. *Instruction*, the code that *teaches*.
4. *Identity*, the code that aims to *connect* on a personal level, in which individuals recognise themselves or something of their own lives. .
5. *Enlightenment*, the code that shows diversity and *critical thinking* about philosophical and social issues.
6. *Alchemy*, the code of stimulation that seeks to communicate *change*; aiming to grow the imagination and inspire a sense of self-belief.

Findings show that whilst theatre for young audiences can be both educational and diversionary, it also provides in-depth works that provide complex encounters. Thus theatre for young people is an enriching medium for its audiences of all ages.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

**“I begin to doubt the whole notion of a special ghetto area called ‘Children’s theatre’, that belongs to a fast fading, stratified culture in which serious things were for grown ups and children, supposedly innocent of the world, had to be fed an anodyne substitute devoid of sex, violence, death and harsh reality.”**

**(Billington, found in England, 1990, p.7)**

Theatre for children has traditionally been sidelined by the theatre industry, dismissed as being either “pantomime” or “educational theatre” and detractors have referred to it as a ghetto or as a stepping-stone for *real* theatre (Bourke & Hunter, 2011, p.23; Wood & Grant, 1997, p.11). This thesis seeks to challenge such polarised notions and to consider new ways of analysing theatre for young audiences as an artform in and of itself. Focusing specifically on the moment of live performance or what Johnston refers to as “children’s plays-as-the-performance-of-texts” (2003, p.136), this study utilises Eco’s (1979) theory of codes as a tool to define and propose six interpretive lenses as “the systems of signification” (1979, p.8) through which to view such work and to identify some of the ways in which children’s theatre offers significant multi-layered experiences for its young spectators.

The artistic codes that have been proposed as part of this research have been developed over twenty years of personal experience in creating theatre for children, and reflect ontological observation of the phenomenon of performance as a lived experience (Van Manen, 1990, p.27). They create a prismatic model that works towards articulating theatrical purposes and indeed helps to constitute a poetics of theatre for young audience. Further, the codes represent an attempt at appreciating why experiencing ephemeral events as audience offers children the “performativity of belonging” (Bell, 1999, p.3; Johnston, 2003, p.135), that in turn expands capacities for deeper appreciation and deeper layers of thinking.

To provide a context for how the codes were conceptualised, three ideas are significant. The first refers to Sauter’s (in Cremona, Eversmann, Van Maanen, Suter & Tulloch, 2004) definition of theatre as critical “eventness” (p.13); that is, as an experience which is multi-layered, “dynamic and flexible” (p.9), encompasses a range of genres and

contexts that can be “distinguished from everyday life” (p.11) and is “understood as process as much as it is a specific occurrence” (p.7). This aspect of theatre as *artistic*, deliberately artificial and contrived rather than natural and spontaneous, could be related to complementary notions of: “playing culture”, which refers to the transient, *sensory* aspect of performance as “different from the written culture of drama” (p.4); and “theatrical playing”, which refers to the *fictional* aspect, the “actual communication between performer and spectator during the event” (p.12). This echoes Carlson’s (1989) observations that theatre is not only “performed text” but also an event embedded in society and culture (p.5).

The second significant idea relates to the aspect of theatre as *ideological communication*. Barthes’ (1972, 1973) understanding of communication as a system of both “rhetoric” and “ideology” is pertinent here. Persuasion towards a particular way of thinking about the world is reflected in the hypothesis that all media guides viewers in certain ideological directions (Althusser, 1997; Eagleton, 1997; Fiske, 1998). Further, when constructed for children, theatre mirrors the creator’s personal philosophy of childhood as well as attitudes towards politics and social ethics relating to what we want for the future of our society (Dusinberre, 1999). Consequently, theatre for young audiences reflects both conscious and unconscious intentions that are embedded within the very theatrical sign-system of each individual performance (Sinclair, 2002). *Rhetoric* according to Barthes (1972) has “a double function of keeping communication from being transformed into the sign of banality (if too direct) and into a sign of originality if too indirect” (p.xvi); both engaging and guiding.

There has been much discussion of this idea. Ryle and Soper (2002) note the Marxist ethos that it is possible to distil culture into two very clear and opposing purposes: what they call “high art” or cultural education (conveying universal ideas of the enlightenment such as self-realisation, reflection on being human, and self-evaluation) - and “popular” - works of low humour that affirm the current economic status quo, and keep people in states of functioning dissatisfaction (Lacan, 1987). Similarly, Zipes (2006) alerts the producer and artist that meaning can be changed and manipulated according to the *treatment* and the *emphasis* of the storyteller and their controlling affects.

The third significant idea is existential query on the *intrinsic purpose* and necessity of theatre as an artform. Cicero (Jameson, 1999, p.4) is useful in demonstrating the use of theatre in cognitively teaching, visually delighting or emotionally moving the audience. Weber (2004) however implies theatre's metaphorical role as a place of "seeing" (*thea*). A "show" thus masks and literally *covers*, or it allegorically *uncovers* universal truths to which we were previously blind. Brecht shared this view, distinguishing between "Dramatic Theatre" as a light-hearted, mesmerising soporific experience and "Epic Theatre" as a vehicle by which truth might be uncovered and consciousness raised (Willett, 1964, p.37).

The artistic codes developed in this thesis as a type of poetics have evolved from these three ideas and are:

1. *Revelry*, the code that aims to communicate a raucous sense of euphoric, *cathartic* energy and unity through audience participation, carnivalesque laughter and fear.
2. *Enchantment*, the code that communicates a sense of *soothing* and surrender to a sense of sublime wonder and hope.
3. *Instruction*, the code that *teaches*.
4. *Identity*, the code that aims to *connect* on a personal level, in which individuals recognise themselves or something of their own lives. .
5. *Enlightenment*, the code that shows diversity and *critical thinking* about philosophical and social issues.
6. *Alchemy*, the code of stimulation that seeks to communicate *change*; aiming to grow the imagination and inspire a sense of self-belief.

### ***1.1 Background and the development of Australian theatre for young audiences***

This thesis focuses on Australian children's theatre, although the development of Australian children's theatre cannot be considered in isolation. Since 2000, Australia has witnessed phenomenal cultural growth in theatre works produced specifically for young people (Australia Council of the Arts, 2004 & 2010) and increasing academic interest in this field (Gallagher & Booth, 2003, Nicholson 2011; Reason 2010;



Robinson, 2012). This is reflected in the number of vibrant theatre companies creating work for young audiences and the programming for children and families within a variety of contexts: for example the inaugural Sydney Children's Festival (Carriageworks, 2009); numerous live TV spectacles produced by ABC and Disney; educational partnerships and school holiday programs offered by theatre companies and heritage organisations like *Gondwana* (Erth Theatre, 2007 & Australian Museum), *The Girl who Cried Wolf* (Arena Theatre, 2008 & Justice and Police Museum), *We Built This City* (Polyglot Puppet Theatre, 2008), and of course the myriad of performances in shopping centres and even parks across Sydney.

Increased focus on child specific culture is not confined to theatre events and can be attributed to several areas: consumer interest of aspirational parents (Morton, 2001, p.1; Ball & Vincent, 2002, p.182; De Botton, 2004); corporate targeting of the child as consumer (Zipes, 2002, p.78); educational and research initiatives by cultural organisations as well as performing arts companies; the utilisation of theatre and storytellers in interpreting cultural heritage (Bedford, 2001; Maloney & Hughes et al., 1999); and finally, the work of high profile producers such as Noel Jordan, Bridgette Van Leuven (Sydney Opera House), Cate Fowler (Out of the Box Festival, Windmill Theatre) and Kim Carpenter (Theatre of Image). Such programmers showcase and carry into children's theatre eclectic international theatre styles such as storytelling that emerges out of naturalistic scenes set in remote parts of the world (*Hinepau*, Capital E National Theatre for Children, 2007), the use of prolonged silence and "absurd" dialogue (*Wolf under the Bed*, Theater Sgaramusch, 2008), understatement and surreal visual art (*What does Red do on Thursday*, Thallis Kopagnons, 2008), as well as Australian "issue based" pieces like *The Marriage Act* (Arena Theatre, 2007) set in low socio-economic or violent communities of Sydney including prisons. These all contest traditional ideas of what might be seen as "appropriate" for young audiences both in their staging and their content.

In 1978 McCaslin stated:

“What I want to see in theatre for children and young people is an art form, created with respect and a caring concern. An art form that is technically as fine as that produced for adults. An artform that touches every level of

human consciousness. An art form that stretches the mind and stirs the emotions.

I want to see a theatre that invites identification with strong protagonists both male and female. One that stimulates the imagination as it opens new doors...Good theatre must include the serious, the comic, the multi-ethnic, the everyday, and the spectacular. It should present the old and the new and appear in different styles” (Schonmann, 2007, p.9).

Despite the fact that Schonmann (2007, p.18) believed thirty years on that this dream had yet to be realised, it is asserted here that there is indeed a sophisticated body of theatrical work produced by numerous theatre companies dedicated to creating work specifically for young people. These companies endorse McCaslin’s sentiment. Further, like the phenomenon of the picture book, theatre for young audiences has stimulated rich opportunities for contemplating complex and thought-provoking issues, and, when they are presented in accessible well designed stage performances by talented “truthful” performers who take this artform and its unique audience seriously (Wood & Grant, 1997), imaginative and literary worlds as well as exquisite aesthetics.

In such productions, theatre is a continuum of the ideals developed in Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century under the influence of practitioners like Stanislavsky, who focussed on depicting emotional truth (1988), Brecht (1964), who sought to stimulate dialectic understanding by making the familiar unfamiliar through alienation or “ostranenie” (Shklovsky, 1974), Artaud, who advocated non-verbal communication (1958, 1988), and Grotowski (1968), who took a scientific approach to creating theatre that he termed “poor” theatre where each individual work strives to provide meaningful experiences that expand understanding of the human condition even in the very young. Like these European instigators, innovative theatre makers creating work for young audiences despise the practice of regurgitating plays as quickly as possible and their practices characterise desire not only to entertain but also to affect their audiences. Thus their new forms effectively play with staging as simultaneously both illumination and illusion to imitate, Weber’s (2004) ideas on the paradoxical nature of the theatrical form (pp.97-192). Like experiential practitioners before them, they unite in their idealistic

“foray into the unknown” (Roose-Evans, 1984, p.1) and in their search for truth in presenting human concerns and options for societal improvement. In the hands of these visionary companies, theatre for young people since 1970 has become less about escapism or propaganda and more about artistic and critical stimulation along with contemplation on philosophical ideas.

The influence of this intellectual approach inspires more adaptable use of theatre spaces (Aston & Savona, 1991; Bennett, 1997; Elam, 2002, p.57), as seen in the increased use of installations within an intimate salon space. These include Boal (1985, 1992) creating voice for the oppressed through invisible theatre; Case (1988; Aston, 1995) defining women’s theatre; Piscator (1980) utilising modern multimedia technologies to stimulate ideas; Craig (1958 [1911]) puzzling audiences with minimalistic design and Artaud (1958; Marowitz, 1978, pp.181-186) confronting audiences with “cruel” happenings or awakenings.

Emphasis on intellectualism and dialectics, however, jars against the didactic “positivism” which usually characterises theatre for young audiences, and marks a dramatic move away from prescriptive popular theatre works produced by the nineteenth century Australian company Williamson, Garner and Musgrove who, up until the 1970’s, represented the traditional idyll of children’s theatre as safe family fun. Their eclectic productions epitomised the British pantomime tradition which incorporated a coarse but popular mix of the risqué Old Time Music Hall (or Vaudevillian) personalities and songs of the nineteenth century ‘; the trajectory of the low social entertainment of the Greek comedies, medieval morality plays, and *commedia dell’arte* performances throughout the centuries, emulating the raucous, colloquial voices of ordinary citizens and their domestic power struggles; the romantic “happy-ever-after” fairy-tale narratives; and breathtaking musical spectacle. Vulgarity, release and a return to order evoked in character mix up, role reversal, chase and pantomime slosh scenes (Lathan, 2004), as well as audience participation, exemplifies the hilarity of this “performative engagement” (Johnston, 2003) with no “intellectual strings” (Coveny, 2006). Irreverent satire and ridicule encapsulated the “carnavalesque” (Bakhtin, 1981) with its opportunities for release and misrule, which ironically are the very tools for reinforcing order and social integration (Bristol, 1985, pp.31, 39).

Exquisite costumes, enchanting ballets and wondrous sets, exemplify escape and “magic thought” (Wilson, 1981), popular within the entire musical, pantomime, and puppet theatre mediums, epitomising the human desire for romance and belief. Perhaps this is why even the modern day jongleur seen in street performers, magician, clowns and “character skins” (Lathan, 2004) - the head-to-toe costumed character -, still has the power to temporarily seduce spectators out of their everydayness (Grantham, 2003, p.136). On the other hand, within such colourful spectacle, child audiences of the past were implicitly witness to “age inappropriate” action around marital disharmony, including the domestic violence of both Punch and Judy, dodgy ethical behaviours around servants including the trickery and theft of *commedia dell’arte* characters, as well as the more adult-centred concerns of finding true romance.

In his manifesto for creating “suitable” theatre for children, UK producer David Wood (Wood & Grant, 1997) argues, as England (1990), that writing and directing theatre for children is simply about entertainment. However, he additionally suggests the nature of the audience necessitates a completely child-centred approach to theatre making. To this effect he charts “how to” instructions for all aspects of the production process aiming to satisfy developmental and emotional appropriateness as well as *aesthetic* and *wondrous* tales. Though not specifically mentioned, his formulaic approach reflects the Piagetian philosophy also endorsed by the children theatre veterans like Way (1975 [1939]) advocating a noble theatre concerned in *Stretching the heart*, Slade (1954) postulating *child centred* work, Goldberg (1974)’s emphasis around *age appropriateness* and Bolton (1984) creating *educational* theatre to be utilised within school contexts.

Also advocating youth centred theatre practice, Australian theatre makers Bourke and Hunter (2011) call for a *democratisation* of the entire process, to include young people in the very making of their own entertainment. Individually a performance might not always be aesthetically satisfying to an adult sensibility, but consciously or otherwise it always, as discussed, communicates certain ideals and ways of being (Johnston, 2010) on to its intended youth audience (Dusinberre, 1999). These “projections” are understood and interpreted according to the particular culture and time of its viewing audience (Vygotsky, 1972; Eco, 1977), and as such reflect that communication is a dual process of creation and reception. In this light, Bourke and Hunter’s (2011) questions

are important: can theatre for young audiences go further in encouraging cultural self-enhancement, reflection, efficacy as well as active inclusion from young people? Or is it, as traditionally considered, merely *bathos* (Arnold, 1960 [1869]), entertainment for subduing or reaffirming lessons that are seen as important by certain areas of society?

### ***1.1.1 Public expectations around children and wellbeing***

The general public has very particular expectations about appropriate viewing for children. This is made clear by audience complaints such as the lack of Santa in the Sydney Opera House *Christmas Baby Proms* (2007) and the complexity of the storytelling in *Wolf under the bed*, mirroring observations made by Levy (1993) in his work *This is not for children*. The absolutes by which parents conceive “what is suitable” are further shown in the plethora of safe “personality driven” performances featuring well-known TV and Disney characters (Giroux, 1995). Lorenz (2002) offers an explanation for this resistance to new ideas in theatre for young audiences. Her study shows that while Szanto (1978) identified three modes of rhetoric in theatre (theatre of integration propaganda, theatre of Agitation Propaganda, and dialectical theatre), she posits that theatre for young audiences “with its controlled texts, structures, and aesthetics, has traditionally been a theatre of agreement, of *integration propaganda*” (p.96). Schonmann (2007) agrees, adding that in the main it is parents who choose the performances their children attend, thereby restricting the experience of theatre further.

It might additionally be argued that economic imperatives view parental expectations as far more important when marketing productions than “what children can or cannot understand”. Nadel’s (1974) truism that a child only develops if not limited to what they already know (p.19) is often restricted to the “bottom dollar” (Bourke & Hunter, 2011), despite research affirming young people are indeed capable of understanding very complex emotional themes when done so in a sensitive manner, as demonstrated in a wealth of challenging picture books such as *The Red Tree* (Tan, 2002), *The Rabbits* (Marsden & Tan, 2001), *Granpa* (Burningham, 1985), *Hansel and Gretel* (Browne, 1981). Children themselves will often work through emotional difficulties through their own art and writing which can be quite dark and confronting, endorsing Bettelheim’s (1991) controversial theory that the fairy-tale psychologically helps young people to face their fears and is therefore empowering.

Corey (1974), pre-empting the observations of Baumrind (1991), Levine (2006), Rimm (2007), Honore (2007) and Funari (2006) in discussing the mixed messages given to youth through well-intentioned but paranoid parenting styles, noted the ironic dichotomy of a societal wish to protect children from harsh life realities while simultaneously exposing them to adult media (2006, p.15). As such he advocated performance practices that help youth deal with realities of the world, pre-empting a philosophy of freedom through active engagement as described by Young (2008) and the development of resilience (Rimm, 2007). Theatre for young audiences in the new millennium, particularly those associated with the International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People (ASSITEJ) continues this philosophy, encouraging exposure to a range of styles and themes not just those traditionally deemed as “appropriate”. Indeed in questioning what is a children’s story? Babbitt (2008) concludes that the *only* defining quality is the guaranteed assurance of the “happy ending”. In 2012 with the plethora of performance that close with “open endings” the distinction around theatre for young audiences might not be its guaranteed happy ending suggested by Babbitt, but rather its positive ability to move forward in a proactive and successful manner.

The idea that a medium for young people can *also* have resonance for the adult is critical, suggesting that the work is significant, multi-layered and created “for all levels of experience” (Garner in Hunt, 1990, p.49). Further, it endorses that which Johnston (2010) refers to as “deep literacy”, a profound level of understanding and engagement, that recognises, transcends and celebrates social and cultural differences and diversity. This ideal of deep literacy as building “imagination and minds that help generate creative and civil societies” (Johnston, 2010, p.13) is accepted here and this study endorses theatre as playing a vital role in this.

### ***1.2 Identifying the interpretive codes as artistic***

Recognising that theatre events communicate “amusement and pleasure” (Cremona, 2004, p.4), educational purposes, as well as other multi-layered experiences to young spectators, this study aims to present in-depth inquiry into the nature and essence of those different experiences and to provide a qualitative observation and philosophical reflection on theatre practice for young people; in order to do so, over one hundred

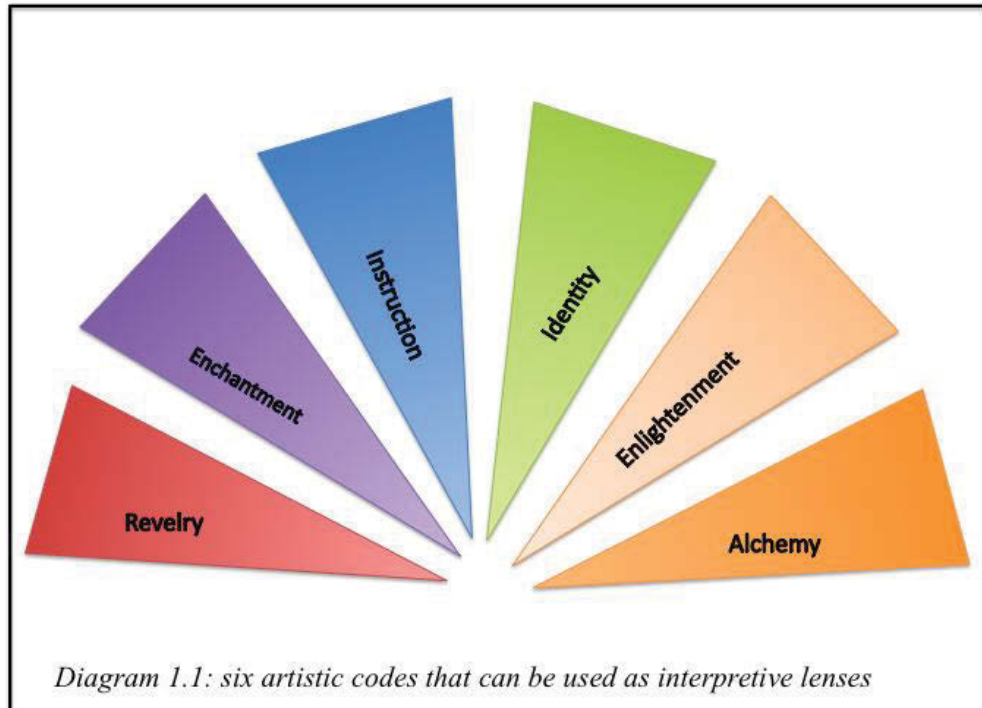
contemporary performances for young audiences, personally attended by this researcher, have been examined from different theoretical perspectives. In decoding their theatrical elements, correlating commonalities in staging, and comparing traditions, the essential qualities and reoccurring *interpretants* (Eco, 1979, p.69) of the art form were synthesised into different interpretive frameworks or *artistic* (Cremona et al., 2004) codes. Artistic, as discussed here, refers to the manufactured cultural purpose of the event as deliberate and artificial rather than natural and spontaneous.

### ***1.2.1 Interpreting performance through artistic codes***

Though the original aim was to identify particular staging patterns that endorsed a unified performance theory and one single dominant model or manifesto of theatre making, in the final analysis not one but six different ideological systems or themes emerged to become the interpretive artistic lenses utilised within this study.

Akin to the holistic “performance theory” system created by Schechner (1988, p.xviii), each artistic code hypothesises a particular thematic purpose or ideological approach to making theatre, providing a predictive interpretative tool for decoding and evaluating the overall intentions of a particular performative effect and the implied messages that ephemeral productions subsequently transmit to its young spectators. Similar to Schechner’s own system, the six codes postulated in this thesis are also “organised around a system that can be configured as both a fan and a web” (p.xvii), and sit on a connected continuum.

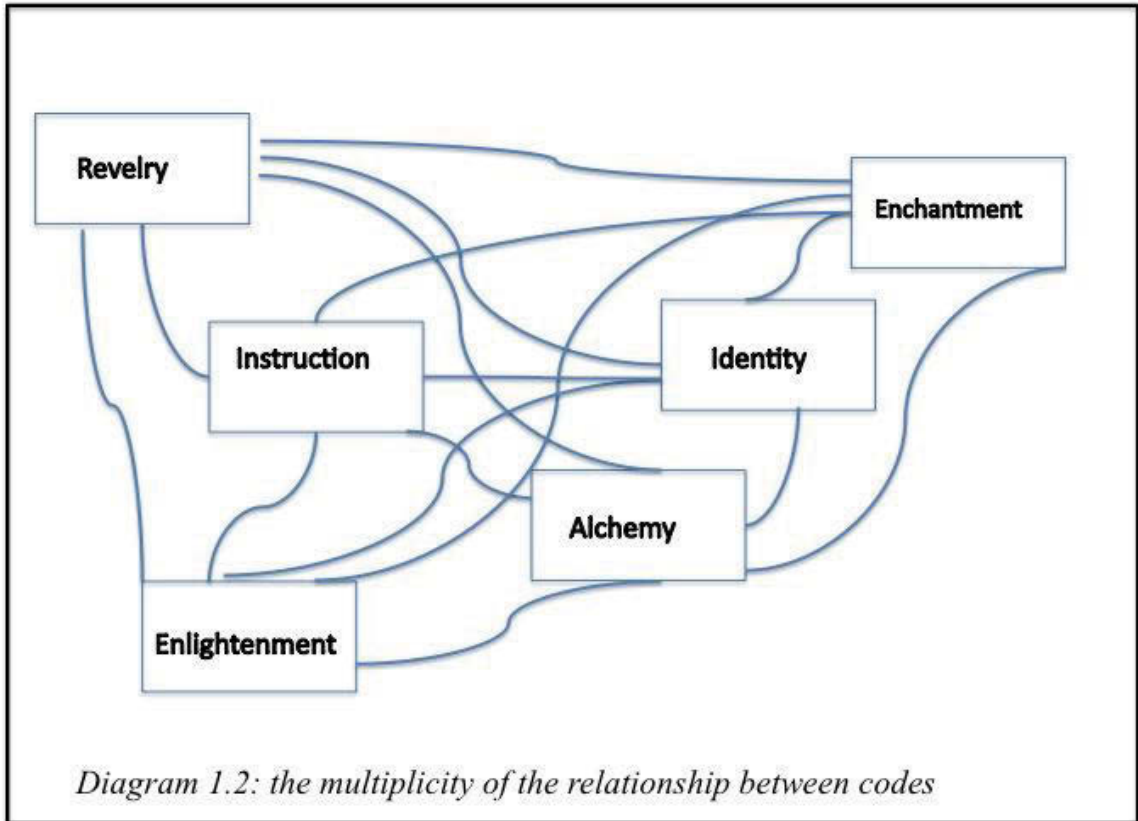
Thus within this thesis the artistic code model is a method by which to theoretically postulate a poetics of performance, to investigate symmetry between interpretation and science, and to understand particular laws and paradigms at work across a body of performance work (Todorov, 1981, p.6). Endorsing Auslander’s observation that performance studies utilise a “myriad of conceptual tools to ‘see’ performance” (2008, p.1), each code thus represents a tool for viewing commonalities in theatrical patterns across differing events, identifying particular ideological systems of engagement, and interpreting the primary purpose of performance. [Please refer to diagram 1.1 below which is inspired by Schechner’s observations (1988, p.xviii)].



### *1.2.2 Multiplicity of the artistic codes in performance*

As with any imposed system, there are overlays. The codes do not exist in isolation but in synchronicity with others. In other words a single performance may have up to six sign-systems working within it - the more frameworks, the richer the viewing experience. Just as a meal is made up of a balance of various ingredients, so performance might be seen as a compound of different sign-systems (ingredients) through which performance produced for young people might be viewed ideologically. Artistic codes at work within a performance are thus like pieces of pie; the more pieces within the performance the more intricate and layered it is as a whole (*Table 2 found in the appendix*). Also inspired by Schechner's table (1988, p.xviii), the multiplicity of the connectedness of the artistic codes is demonstrated below in the diagram 1.2.





### 1.2.3 Six individual codes

The six artistic codes discussed within this thesis are identified, as seen in the above diagrams, as *Revelry*, *Enchantment*, *Instruction*, *Identity*, *Enlightenment* and *Alchemy*. These can broadly be classified as experiences that either reinforce prevailing societal (or tribal) cultural ideas and social roles (through *Revelry*, *Enchantment* and *Instruction*), or that promote critical awareness and self-realisation (through *Identity*, *Enlightenment* and *Alchemy*). *Identity*, *Enlightenment* and *Alchemy* in particular convey a sense of separation and autonomy from the tribe and - it will be claimed - work towards a growing personal self-efficacy through self-knowledge and criticism.

#### 1.2.3.1 Revelry

Taking its name from the Macquarie dictionary definition of *rebellare* or *reveller* meaning *to make noise and rebel*, the code of *Revelry*, within this thesis, represents a tribal or community understanding of an event which is primarily concerned with survival, justice, fairness and in evoking primal emotional responses to human

concerns. This recreation of rebellion, breakout, journey, celebration and the return to the fold epitomise Bakhtinian (1984 [1965]) ideas of the carnivalesque. This relates to religious festivals, the exotic spectacle of the ancient circus, the risqué taboo of the Roman comedic troupes, the bawdy burlesque satire of Victorian musical hall, and the violent bawdy clown scenes of the Georgian pantomime. Hence the sign-systems of *Revelry* focus on turning the ordinary on its head, facing fears and anguish, and crisis followed by an emotional release of joy. Like confronting the bogeyman, *Revelry* is poignant in both festival and theatre because it represents human survival, tribal unity and strength (Warner, 1994). Techniques that create a sense of *Revelry* focus on creating a united communal experience, a sense of solidarity and unquestioning loyalty (Bristol, 1985; Durkheim, 1985). *Revelry* resonates in carnivalesque “wildness” (Johnston, 2003, p.145), the terrors of nursery game simulation (Warner, 2007) and the surprise “suddenlies” (Wood & Grant, 1997) present within children’s theatre because “carnival is one way of performing childhood” (Johnston, 2003, p.141).

### ***1.2.3.2 Enchantment***

*Enchantment* aims on creating illusions and charms that satisfy the “innocent” archetype (Pearson, 1998) within the audience, epitomising the experience of hope and escape. The innocent represents the need to have an unquestioning belief that everything is good and will turn out for the best. An *Enchantment* approach concentrates on appealing to the heart and creating a sense of individual hope, fantasy and security. Like *Revelry*, *Enchantment* relies on tribal connection and conformity to the prevailing powers of the day; and more than any other, this framework reinforces societal status quo by lulling any incipient disquiet, *Enchantment* is recognised in romantic escapism, rescue, and warm fuzzy amazement. Typical techniques are magnificent costumes, awe-inspiring sets, dreamy effects such as moving lights and glitter drops, as well as a narrative discourse that evokes a sense that we too can be heroes, and deserve better than what we have. *Enchantment* by proxy takes its audience away from feeling ordinary to feeling extraordinary, at least for that moment. The dominating ideology is that theatre can and should *soothe* anxieties and project an optimistic view that the world is a safe and secure.

### ***1.2.3.3 Instruction***

The artistic code of *Instruction* incorporates elements of behaviourist, cognitive and humanistic teaching approaches within performance to explicitly convey knowledge deemed important by the prevailing powers of school systems, cultural organisations and government authorities. Techniques used to impart didactic information are those that include skills in direct teaching, instructing, demonstration or motivation. *Instruction* may deal with teaching appreciation of the cultural canon or with providing a particular curricular knowledge. The dominating assumption of this system is that theatre is a pedagogical tool for conveying ideas that improve both the minds and prospects of young people. *Revelry* appeals to behavioural responses, encouraging the audience to whoop, cheer and boo, *Enchantment* appeals to emotional responses, encourages sob or sighs, while *Instruction* appeals to cognitive responses encouraging thoughts and cognitive connection, filling up “empty vessels” and providing facts that endorse responsible, useful behaviours in society.

### ***1.2.3.4 Identity***

The artistic code of *Identity* aims to provoke spectators to examine information as it relates to individual views of the world and to develop a sense of reliance, self-judgement and ability to think independently. *Identity* encapsulates psychological awareness and is the art of developing conscious awareness in viewers. Techniques for younger patrons might include simple methods by which children recognise themselves within their own community, whereas for older audiences techniques might include more three dimensional, “Stanislavskyan” portrayals of characters, relationships and situations that create a sense of the “uncanny” (Freud, 2003). The ideal behind *Identity* is that people build resilience by watching those they recognise as familiar and by understanding and learning to connect with those who are different. . This system utilises themes such as the search for belonging, loss and grief, and fits with Erikson’s (1994) ideas on psychological reflection. The implied child (or hero) of these performances reflects the archetypal character of the “wanderer” (Pearson, 1998), the misfit leaving “home” to find strength and then return whole. *Identity* suggests that

while the world is not always nice, fears can be overcome through self-illumination and resilience

#### ***1.2.3.5 Enlightenment***

*Enlightenment* is the paradigm of seeing, understanding and critiquing challenging issues. If *Identity* is about seeing oneself in a new way, *Enlightenment* aims to activate social and political awareness and judgement as well as empathic feelings towards “the other”. Like *Identity*, *Enlightenment* encourages autonomous thinking (Baumrind, 1991) and questions preconceived values. It expects that viewers are able to think critically, creatively and in opposition to others. Aspects of citizenship and leadership are encouraged through activation and critical thinking. The importance and value of creating critical rather than compliant citizens is emphasised in the work of de Botton (2004) and Ralston Saul (1995). Many of the theatrical devices within this code aim to deliberately draw attention to the artifice of the text, to dehabituate automated perception by presenting familiar situations in unfamiliar ways (Brecht in Willett, 1964).

#### ***1.2.3.6 Alchemy***

*Alchemy* is the art of connecting audiences to something larger than their immediate community to create a sense of wonder and to initiate change. It is recognised in the effect of “transforming us a people” (Chambers, 2008 [1985], p.9), in causing contemplation and wonder that transcends defined time and place. The sign-system within this framework aims to provoke curiosity and presence within the viewer and requires the ability to think outside the square both symbolically and metaphorically; to endorse that the spectators also might recognise their own power and invert scary, uncontrollable situations by reframing the way they see themselves in the world. If other codes concentrate on either endorsing or separating from the “normal”, *Alchemy* concentrates on finding symbolic links to the universe at large. As Jung (1980 [1968]) suggests, “[a] word or an image is symbolic when it implies something more than its obvious and immediate meaning” (1980, p.4). Symbols are employed humorously to help the audience experience life as it is and can be, through acceptance and a sense of correlation and connectedness. The code stimulates proactive thought beyond what is

known in order to understand the world in the light of difference and connectedness. It is about recognising self through that which is mysterious and creating a sense of sublime surrender to whatever is. In this way the goal of *Alchemy* code is to celebrate expansion and change.

### ***1.3 Theoretical framework and methodology***

Edward Gordon Craig (1958 [1911]) theorised that the ideal stage manager was to be a “master of the science of the stage”, that is to have experience as a performer, interpreter, creator and practitioner (1958, p.14). In aiming to define and illuminate the experience of live theatre (Merriam & Simpson, 2000, p.86), the underlying philosophical framework of this research reflects Craig’s ethos. Theatre for young audiences is thus considered in ephemeral terms as the moment of actual performance interpreting not only dialogue but the methods used to bring that performance to life. This phenomenological, “back to things” questioning of what Husserl might describe as “taken-for-granted” assumptions, enables practitioners to “free ourselves from our usual ways of preserving the world” (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p.30), and encourages creative work in new and expansive forms. Comparison of others thus illuminates one’s own practice, in this case as producer of theatrical experiences for young audiences.

In considering the impact of the live theatre experience, the study relies on personal observations collected during my time as stage manager and recorded through intentional journaling and critiquing of one hundred child-orientated performances. As such the study leans on a system of describing approaches to theatre making, “reflecting on lived experience [that] then becomes reflectively analysing the structural or thematic aspects of that experience” (van Manen, 1990, p.78). In summary, this study presents an ongoing monitoring, reflection and refining of personal theatre practice through critical investigation and philosophic enquiry (Spillane, 2007, p.6); interpreting data from what Bar Greenfield (1975) describes as a ‘subjectivist viewpoint’.

Observed production techniques from live performances have thus been reflected on and categorised against significant performance theories, from Aristotle’s *Poetics* to the eclectic ideas of experimental theatre practitioners such as Stanislavsky (1863-1938), Craig (1872-1966), Artaud (1896-1948), Brecht (1898-1956) and Boal (1931-2009),

alongside children's theatre practitioners including Schonmann (2007), Lorenz (2002) and Wood (Wood & Grant, 1997), and semioticians including Pavis (1982), Issacharoff (1988, 1989), Alter (1990), Birch (1991) and Brušák (1991). The ideas of popular cultural theorists, educators and psychologists have also been utilised to appreciate how children might "read" performances at various stages of intellectual development and within particular cultural environments. Thus the research incorporates multiple disciplines reflecting a liberal arts focus endorsed by Johnston (2000, p.4). Alongside theatre theory and pedagogy, primary concerns have been dramaturgy, articulating how the ideology of the performance influences choices around organising audience response in terms of form and style (Pavis, 1988, p.1), and semiotics as a method of decoding the interpretants of ephemeral performance as sign-systems.

This study thus emulates Todorov's (1981) premise of proposing explanation of the common structures, techniques, and functionalities that are observed across multiple performances. It also reflects a holistic approach (Ealy, 1999, p.20) to theatre practice and research, as well as an ethnographic "journey of discovery" (Denscombe, 1998, p.69). In the words of Parker (1997, p.1) "postmodernism's champion is the autonomous reflective teacher researcher who is committed to the improvement and emancipation of her work".

### ***1.3.1 Ephemeral data, trace memory and ethical considerations***

Research data within this study focuses on actual performances created specifically for young people aged between 2-18yrs, seen within the Sydney area over a fifteen-year period (1997-2012). Selection of the performances was primarily limited by target age range, concentrating on entertainment programmed for children and youth aged between two and eighteen years old, which neatly fits with the preschool and primary and secondary school years.

As discussed it has been personally collected from journal reviews, promotional materials, programs and personal observations compiled over this lengthy period about performances that I, as researcher, have either watched or worked on in the capacity of actor, director, stage manager, producer, academic researcher or parent. Emphasis is

thus on the ephemeral “playing culture of the performance text”, described by Sauter, in Cremona (p.7), rather than the static “written culture of the drama text” or the “haupttext” (Ingarden, 1973, p.317).

Relying on reflection and description, the study does not contain specific audience-targeted empirical research but rather focuses on elucidation on the performance from the angle of theatre practitioner and educator according to its intention and targeted age range (Audi, 1995, pp.349-578). The qualitative aspect concentrates on interpretation, rather than quantifiable statistics and thus may be criticised for not being empirically verifiable (p.489). Evaluating any performance is always particular, because audience members perceive and interpret performance differently (Iser, 1974; Eco, 1977; Ubersfield, 1982), and may be biased through particular allegiance to the creator, media slant or emotional significance related to a particular period of time. Additionally, it must be noted that works in this study are interpreted from an adult rather than child perspective. Other challenges and ethical deliberations in this thesis reflect the difficulties associated with archiving ephemera and the memory of experience (Davis, 2005). However, as Husserl acknowledges, though fallible, the direct experience of the past is the basis of our immediate non-inferential knowledge (Keller, 2004, pp.74-75).

Pavis (1982, pp.111-130) proposes improvements to archiving evanescent performance. His concerns emphasise why theatre academics prefer to work with concrete text rather than the actual or live performance generally. Ephemeral performance can be appraised not just by description of what was witnessed on stage as live action but through fliers, programs, photographs, costumes, props and prompt copies which accurately reveal the orchestrated cueing systems that make up the “behind the scenes” discourse of the performance. All such text indicators are utilised within this study. It is important to note, however, that none of these records can evoke the actual *mise-en-scene* of the live show as it was actually performed in front of an audience. Further, the way any performance is experienced and read is not limited to what is produced on the stage but is affected by many factors, including place, pace, scale and audience size (Carlson, 1989; Bennett, 1997) as well as what the audience personally brings to it (Eco, 1979).

From a postmodern perspective each live performance provides a unique aspect of a more total picture of what can be seen throughout Sydney, “a fragment of social history...a reflection of its time” (Rickards, founder of the Ephemera Society UK in Davis, 2005). Carlson (2006) concurs, identifying theatre as:

“ [A] simulacrum of the cultural and historical process of itself, seeking to depict the full range of human actions within their physical context, has always provide society with the most tangible records of its attempts to understand its own operations” (Carlson, 2006, p.2).

As such, in evaluating this combined data the study also serves as a record of the diversity of entertainment available for young people throughout Sydney in this period (1997-2012) and evidence of the different ideological and cultural purposes for which a performance might be produced. The study uses a number of one off performances to grasp a more holistic picture investigating not only how but also why certain techniques are used and are culturally effective. It therefore includes multifarious theatre events that might be described as “popular culture”, more widely enjoyed by many communities throughout Sydney, alongside the “high art culture” that might be critiqued as being available only to the privileged. This ensures that the data and research material portrays an inclusive cross-section of the live entertainment available to children throughout the inner and greater Sydney region. Brook (1968), Schechner (1988), Bennett (1997), and Cremona et al. (2004) all recognised that ephemeral performance can be created anywhere. This philosophy underlies this thesis which attempts to encapsulate *all* the various forms of entertaining children through some kind of live “theatrical event-ness” (Cremona et.al., 2004) including plays, storytelling, music and dance, within traditional theatre buildings, art centres, schools, galleries, museums, and the local shopping centre.

### ***1.3.2 Definitions and terms***

The following books have been particularly useful in defining the terms listed below: *Theatrical Events: Borders, Dynamics, Frames* (Cremona et al, 2004); *Beauty and the Sublime* (Bourke 2004 [1757]); *Theatre as a Medium* (Weber, 2004); *The Art of Theatre* (Hamilton 2007); *Performance Theory* (Schechner, 1988).



**Poetics:** In utilising poetics as a system of study, this research acknowledges the philosopher's contribution to interpreting the dramatic arts scientifically.

“I propose to treat of Poetry in itself and of its various kinds, noting the essential quality of each, to inquire into the structure of the plot as requisite to a good poem; into the number and nature of the parts of which a poem is composed; and similarly into whatever else falls within the same inquiry” (Aristotle & Butcher, 2008, p.1).

Though Aristotle did not consider technical aspects such as scenery to be a sufficient ingredient of poetics, he nonetheless recognised its importance as a medium and necessary instrument of storytelling (Weber, 2004, p.100). Since the crucial advancement towards expressive interpretation of script, what Hamilton might term the “art of theatre” (2004), achieved first in the nineteenth century by Duke Georg, artistic director of the Meiningen Theatre (Baun, 1983, p.7), the work of the modern director in creating a cohesive vision (purpose) between script, stage movement, actor's intention, scenery, props and costumes has been tantamount. As such, this particular study considers not just plot structure but also staging devices and aesthetics. Its main focus is to articulate the “essential qualities” of the combined discourses as a whole, inclusive of all contributory aspects that shape the theatrical experience for its audiences.

**Rhetoric:** according to Aristotle, rhetoric is concerned with the art of persuasion and was the counterpart of dialectic proposition. In this thesis a rhetorical system represents the organising tool for audience engagement and helps to articulate common purposes of performances as suggested by Barthes (1972).

**Theatre for young audience (TYA):** The terms “children's theatre” and “theatre for young people” can be confusing in that they alternate between defining theatre created for children or young people versus theatre created by children or youth performers. As Grenby (2008) points out, children's literature is not defined by who writes it but whom it is written for (p.199), its implied reader (Nodelman, 1990). Similarly in the context of this study, theatre for young audience refers to performances created for a child or youth-targeted audience, between the ages of two and eighteen years, by adult creators.

Though theatre for young audiences is the most broadly used term, others might include: theatre for the very young (two to three years); theatre for pre-schoolers (three to five theatre); theatre for children (five to twelve years); theatre for youth (twelve to eighteen years); theatre for young adults (sixteen to eighteen years).

**Theatrical event:** As defined by Cremona, a *theatrical event* incorporates the ephemeral aspects of *sensory, artistic and fictional communication*. *Sensory* refers to the relationship of performer and audience; *artistic* refers to the manufactured, cultural purpose of the event as deliberate and artificial (rather than natural and spontaneous); and *fictional* refers to the inferred meaning that is interpreted in the audiences imagination by decoding the signs they perceive to be relevant and important. Play refers to the *action* –or drama- of the performance text as physical business. Though sometimes scripted, theatre events in this study also constitute devised collaborations, live music and carnival pieces.

**Theatre technique:** within the context of this study, this term refers to the ‘signalling codes’ within performance designed to both communicate and create a particular effect in the audience; to make them laugh, cry, pull focus away or towards, surprise or challenge and so on.

The *use* of a particular technique represents a global or societal value in that it might be employed in many different performance styles. The *treatment* of the technique semantically conveys a unique ideological attitude or idea particular to the mise-en-scenes of a single performance. Observations on how treatments of techniques are used can help in analysing how audiences are manipulated (or affected) within different sign-systems by looking for example at commonalities in actor and audience relationship spacing or commonalities in costuming.

Thus, a single staging technique might be common (global) in a number of different theatre performances but understood differently when experienced within the mise-en-scene of a unique individual performance. For example, two characters walking slowly back-to-back in unison and bumping into each other will cause laughter. This *commedia dell’arte* staging technique represents a common *global* signal. The collision

evokes audience laughter but it is the precision, the rhythm, the performers' matching body language that builds the anticipation and the dramatic irony that manipulates the extent to which the audience joyously responds in the form of a chuckle. The response is physical and guttural because it satisfies the dual sense of mounting tension and expectation as well as a sense of the inevitable. Its *cultural value* is individually judged by those viewers who like slap-stick movements and those who dislike that particular "style" of theatre. An *ideological treatment* is created if the audience understands that within that particular performance both characters represent, through their costuming, characters and dramatic situation, rather stupid bullies who are scared of the dark and who are trying to avoid being caught. Then the inevitable "collision and fall" supply the audience not just with laughter but also with a sense of smug superiority and the act is seen as *justice* on the wrongdoing. The laughter thereby unites the audience as a group of moral judges. This ideological aspect to a slap-stick act recalls the philosophy of Marxist theorists like Eagleton (1976), and Levi-Struss (1968) who might describe such acts as endorsing prevailing ideals, which help serve to keep a society running, for example that bullying is wrong and will come to a bad end.

If, however, in going backwards in the same choreographic movement, the bully characters suddenly freeze and the lighting state changes, the audience is taken by surprise, in the words of Brecht it is "alienated". Now there is a moment of suspension, the usual 'script' has been changed and anything can happen (Aston and Savona, 1999). Should the bullies take it in turn to tell their story and the reason for their behaviour, the audience is provided with an opportunity to know more about these characters, to *Identify* and understand rather than judge their actions. This technique would be an example of an *Enlightenment* technique; conversely, if the freeze is caused by a wizard's spell in which the bullies are changed into frogs, the audience is then subliminally informed that this is a suitable punishment for bad behaviour reassuring them that bullies always come to bad end (*Enchantment*). Should the wizard turn around and lecture the audience that we might also be turned in frogs if we bully, the underlining signal is no longer *Enchantment* but *Instruction* in the form of a cautionary tale.

In each case described, the initial cultural value is judged on the *use* of the simple global slap-stick routine which remains the same, based on familiarity and expectation, until it is subtly changed according to the behaviours of the protagonists or staging techniques. The term *cultural value* therefore refers to the endorsement of particular behaviours or attitudes that audience expect to see, or which is immediately understood by the particular audience viewing the action. The *ideological element* is the imposed rationale for the treatment or presentation of that technique, through which the production wishes the audience to contemplate, absorb and accept a certain view. Should a subliminal message be conveyed not only in a single moment but also woven into the plot, dialogue and design the message represents the *mise-en-scene* for the whole performance, the ideological feeling which the spectator walks away with.

#### ***1.4 Design of the research***

The second chapter of this study considers theatre for young audiences within the disciplines of semiotics and theatre theory, and in consideration of varying attitudes towards children and youth. Philosophy, history and the traditional practice of theatre for a young audience is examined alongside examples of popular children's culture.

The third chapter examines current trends in theatre events for children. This section critically analyses performances within different genres according to how they are generally marketed to the consumer (parent). The second part of the chapter outlines the proposed six interpretive lenses, providing an overview of *Revelry*, *Enchantment*, *Instruction*, *Identity*, *Enlightenment* and *Alchemy*.

The following six chapters (chapters four to nine) closely examine the individual artistic codes, systematically deconstructing and analysing each according to its various philosophic ideologies and theatrical sign-systems, aiming to identify the patterns unique to each. Each chapter will consider the codes according to:

1. Artistic purpose: the overall philosophic intentions of the code;
2. Dramatic structure: the ways theatrical material is sequentially organised and presented to best effect, whether through a "running order" for individual

musical and dancing items or narrative plots revealed through chronological or episodic scenes;

3. The primary actants (or protagonists) of the drama: this might be characters within a play or actors who play themselves playing different roles;
4. Staging considerations: how the work communicates its fictional intent through particular techniques that must be decoded to be understood by its intended audience.
5. Spatial aspects, such as the architecture of the theatrical space, which also reflects the quality of the actor/audience communication.
6. The particular unique characteristics of the individual framework itself; and
7. Any observable audience reactions and extrapolation of how these may relate to the preceding points.

Through these considerations and using examples from actual performances each chapter thus examines the specific techniques used to cause a particular reaction or response in the audience.

The final chapter sums up the total data to make connections and draw conclusions about how these codes may enhance understandings of theatre for young people and how they may be useful in generating further research.

### ***1.5 Summary***

This study celebrates theatre for young audiences in all its various forms as part of the “artistic continuum” (Johnston, 2003, p.137). In offering these perceptions on the different ways that such theatre might be interpreted it is hoped to ignite new ways of thinking about theatre for young audiences; to see the art form not just as a valuable, multi-layered vehicles of communication, but also as a tool for expanding the imaginative, life and ultimately the “deep literacy” (Johnston, 2010) of Australian children.

## CHAPTER TWO: SITUATING THE RESEARCH

**“In an aesthetic experience we are engaged in play of the most enjoyable and demanding kind. By playing with the ideas provoked by a work of art, we create something of our own from it. And in that play we deal with abstract concepts logically, intuitively and imaginatively.”**

**(Doonan, 1993, p.7)**

Doonan’s (1993) investigation of the profound art practice found within the picture book highlights the ideological crux of this thesis; that theatre for a young audience can be more than simply an educational or entertaining tool but rather a complex, cultural experience that offers artful pleasure to both children and adults. This study thus examines the cultural medium as an aesthetic experience and proposes frameworks for philosophically responding to and interpreting individual performances. This chapter aims to situate theatre theory alongside critical academic research on children’s culture, with particular attention to the semiotic signals that might be provided by live performances aimed specifically for those aged two to eighteen years. Accordingly, theories regarding psychological development in children and informal learning are also examined to identify how young people might make meaning of theatre signals within live performance.

### *2.1 Rhetoric of theatre for young audiences*

Theatre for young audiences was for a long time regarded as the poor cousin of “real” theatre and traditionally discussed solely in relation to educational outcomes (Young, 2004). Bourke and Hunter (2011) also note that it was a rite of passage for young actors, an “entry level or a step up to better jobs” (2011, p.23). Most producers of theatre for young audiences were seen as “vocational” theatre in education (TIE) works. Companies such as Arena Theatre, Salamanca Theatre, Toe Truck Theatre Group, Magpie Theatre and Jigsaw Theatre all originally worked on the English-styled system, which prioritised imparting information to children in entertaining ways and keeping audiences under control over more aesthetic concerns. As such, for many years the work was viewed either in very sentimental terms or not taken seriously as an art form. Thus, with few exceptions, it did not attract academic attention in any critical way.

Mid twentieth-century practitioners like McCaslin (1978), Bolton (1984; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995) and England (1990) generally endorsed sophist views that the purpose of creating theatre for young viewers was to combine educational vocation with amusement. Slade (1954) in particular emphasised the importance of dramatic play as *learning* while Way (1975) promoted *nurturing the heart and soul* as well as the mind. All these truth-seekers contributed greatly to raising awareness of the importance of children's theatre and were particularly inspirational in promoting child-centered approaches for quality, rigor and respect. By the mid-seventies, Corey (1974) called for recognition of theatre's ability to provide opportunity to explore complex subject matter to young people in sensitive ways which might help the young audience come to terms with particular ideas. However, while most theorists endorsed the movement towards child-centered performances, the essence of theatre for young audiences as primarily a learning tool, as opposed to an art form for its own sake, remained central.

Lorenz (2002), Johnston (2003), Young (2004) and Schonmann (2007) broke the predominantly educational focus of nineteenth-century observations to present theories on theatre for young audiences as a subject for serious cultural investigation. Lorenz (2002) in particular critiques that the art has traditionally been an "enculturation" tool for reflecting the philosophy, ideas and aesthetics of society's hegemonic institutions in order to produce like-minded citizens of the future (2002, p.96), an idea further endorsed by Dusinberre (1999) and Sternheimer (2003). Lorenz, however, additionally observes that the trend is changing, with a new focus more closely paralleling the rhetoric of adult theatre; in which practitioners create from their own experience, making works that introduce children, not just societally approved norms, but also to aesthetics and ideological concepts. Her observations confirm that the rigorous discipline required in creating the picture book as a layered piece of art might be matched in creating theatre for young audiences that can be taken seriously and produced to the highest standard.

Conversely, Schonmann (2007) posits that though aesthetic concerns in such theatre for young people are seen 'sporadically', performances remain a predominantly "didactic medium" (2007, p.19). Further, she argues against simply morphing the adult theatre systems, suggesting rather that theatre for young audiences should develop a unique

rhetoric of its own. As such she searches for the unique contribution theatre can offer to youth. Johnston (2003) is also concerned with what theatre offers but her interest concentrates on the theatrical event as a communal experience of belonging, initiating ideas on the worthiness of the theatre as a carnivalesque experience and an extension of cultural play as opposed to an intellectual exercise.

Both theorists echo the concerns that children's theatre should grow from child-centred concerns. Bourke and Hunter (2011) also call for "democratisation", seeking youth not only just as audiences but as actual contributors to the work. Reflection on the extent to which adult theatre systems have been appropriated to portray children's concerns will continue to be contemplated throughout this study. Firstly, though, the main rhetorical codes of communication ordinarily used in theatre presentation require general consideration.

## ***2.2 Traditional theatre rhetoric***

As discussed in chapter one, throughout the twentieth-century, avant-garde theatre practitioners searched to portray "truth", rather than mere entertainment on stage (Roose-Evans, 1984). They were revolutionary creators, challenging and influencing the ways that performance was developed, from the way the actor spoke or moved, to costume, to set, to even the space that in which the performance happened. In every case these practitioners were looking to portray ideas, whether it was the "inner truth" of the actor portraying real emotions of a living character on stage, or the portrayal of a universal truth through mise-en-scene of the entire play. The philosophical ideas behind the various rhetorical systems are described below and will be used throughout the study to reflect on whether, as Lorenz (2002) suggests, theatre for young audiences is influenced, by adult theatre rhetoric.

### ***2.2.1 Truth and realism***

Realism in theatre aims to recreate truthful situations as they appear in the naturalistic world, presenting "fly on the wall" observation. As such, audiences watch silently from "behind the fourth wall" to judge the unfolding of events that occur in a chronological sequence that represents real time. Concern then is on how the actor can repeat this



performance without it becoming tired and mechanical (Whyman, 2008, p.1). Whyman shows that Russian theatre practitioner Stanislavsky's (1990[1963]) system was focused in helping the actor to do this while infusing his role with emotion and spirituality (Whyman, 2008, p.1) Stanislavsky (1980) thus advocated that the work of the actor be taken seriously pressing for "living" performances that emerge from recreating the internal life of the character within the performer, while being physically strong enough to endure repeated showings of this. He famously advised, "You may play well or you may play badly; the important thing is that you should play truthfully" (Roose-Evans, 1984, p.12). Influenced by his manifesto, actors that work within this tradition continue to work on their physicality and tune their bodies as instruments, to practice skills, be in tune with their bodies, to understand and know themselves as people. When approaching characterisations they include an equivalent of a psychological list of what a character might do in any given circumstances.

Traditionally, like Aristotelean theory on the "poetics of tragedy" (Butcher, 2008), it has been unusual to find this philosophical practice directly applied to theatre for young audiences. This is possibly because historically, theatre for young people sits on a more social, "carnavalesque" (Bakhtin, 1981) trajectory of satirical theatre in which audiences are encouraged to laugh at the behavior of "low" comic characters or given specific didactic lessons. However this is changing, theatre productions like *The Shape of a Girl* (see chapter seven) sit in the tradition of Stanislavsky in illustrating how naturalistic "truthful" portrayals can be authentic theatre as opposed to a "stepping stone to the serious stuff" (Bourke & Hunter, 2011, p.22).

### ***2.2.2 Stylised theatre***

Stylised theatre traditionally relies on non-verbal, deliberately artificial theatrical conventions, symbolism and ritualism as a way of expression, rather than naturalistic characterisation and language. Barthes (1972) describes this "theatricality" as "theatre-minus text... a density of signs and sensations built up on stage, ecumenical perception of sensuous artifice-gesture, tone, distance, substance, light-which submerges the text beneath the profusion of its external language" (p.26).

Advocates of stylised theatre were avant-garde practitioners such as Craig (1872-1966), Artaud (1896-1948) and Grotowski (1933-1999). Artaud (1958) posited the surreal concept of a “theatre of cruelty” or extreme action, in which the traditional barriers between actors and the audience are broken down to initiate instinctive feelings and a sense of community between them. His ideal was for performance that generated enormous tension and excitement where the “audience forgets time, caught up in an atmosphere of fun & exuberance, a mixture of fiesta, carnival, cabaret, night club, fairground, dance hall, orgy & revivalist meetings” (Roose-Evans, 1984, p.60). More than just spectacle, Artaud (1958) advocated a “shared experience” in which the audience and cast were one. Performers move in and among the audience, using non-traditional performance spaces, in which audiences might be invited to dance with performance or even challenged directly. As such the spectator becomes a co-creator and participant in the action. Artaud referred to these techniques as “cruel” in that he visualised awakening the audience through the use of shocking “unmentionable” taboos and spontaneous “happenings”. Though Artaud never realised his vision in person, his radical ideas have been practiced in performance companies that utilise dispersion, discontinuity, and dissemination, such as *Archaos* and *Cirque du Soleil*, creating theatre spectacles through thrill and fear, evoking senses of dream and “carnival” (Bakhtin, 1981). In combination with the rigorous precision and discipline of Stanislavsky, Grotowski also developed Artaud's theories of spontaneity, creating work “of facial, gestural and vocal expression” (Wolford, 1996, p. 5). His “Theatre Laboratory” investigated the nature of acting and theatre as described in his work *Towards a Poor Theatre* (Grotowski, 1975), which aimed at developing the craft of the actor within experimental performance contexts in which the performer, rather than set, costume or technical aspect, is central.

Practitioner Edward Craig (1872-1966) concentrated on minimalistic, moving sets and giant puppetry, while Appia (1862-1928) looked to create atmosphere through light and expressionistic movement in a manner close to Artaud’s dream. Dancer, Loie Fuller, too, broke the model of traditional dance and incorporated Artaud’s ideas through her *Art Nouveau* dance (Roose-Evans, 1984, p.49) and use of flowing costumes and sets of white stages, stairs and arches vibrantly lit through projection making her the “magician of light” (Current, 2012). She was also one of the first performers to seek intimate, non-

traditional spaces for performance. Director Peter Brook (1968), celebrating the capacities of the actor to transform the space, has also created work along these philosophies. Further, much of the work that will be explored in the sign-systems of *Revelry* (chapter four) and *Alchemy* (chapter nine) can be seen as encapsulating these ideas.

### ***2.2.3 Spectacle***

Spectacle aims to create impressive shows reliant on their visual impact. The Russian theatrical innovator Vsevolod Emilevich Meyerhold (1874-1939), was instigator of such grandiosity, producing works of enormous scale that utilised public spaces across whole cities and aimed at encouraging thoughtful responses in his audiences (Roose-Evans, 1984, pp. 21-29; Braun, 1995). His events relied on larger-than-life theatricality in performer's physicality as well as grandiose costumes and sets. He incorporated epic historical events with eclectic art forms such a commedia dell'arte, kathakali, Chinese circus, kabuki and even the grotesque.

Such visual "opsis" (Aristotle in Butcher, 2008) provides "emotional" potency and represents the face and *power* of all such grand-scale productions, but this aspect may be criticised as "inauthentic" and as less important than the integral *action* or intention of the plot. Baudrillard (1994) recognises that "spectacle is a simulated discourse, whose utopic dialectic is illusory at best, and at worst, mendacious" (p.27), the historical importance of the theatrical art is emphasised in its popularity and its role in selling performance throughout history (Callaway, 2000). This idea is evidenced today in the ongoing popularity of genres reliant on visual impact such as musical theatre, vaudeville, circus, pantomime and open-air spectacle. Debate on the hypnotic effects of spectacle on the audience and its role in manipulation will be discussed further in chapter five.

### ***2.2.4 Epic Theatre***

The anti-illusionary, didactic intentions of "epic" theatre as described by Brecht (Willett, 1964), aims to analyse and comment on predominantly social issues. Both Brecht and Piscator (1980) are primary examples of this type of theatre expression,

using song, documentary style video projection, episodic or loosely connected scenes and “alienation” that promote the *artificialness* of theatre and force audiences to re-examine an accepted truth or ideology from different points of view. Primary methodologies for epic theatre are explicitly listed, covering directives on staging, music and acting in Brecht’s manifesto for theatre as translated by Willett (1964). For example an actor is to perform as though they were talking about someone else, in the third person, to show the performance scientifically (in totality) so an audience can see both sides (Willett, 1964, p.138). The intent of epic theatre is to deliberately alter consciousness that nothing is determined or absolutely fixed but that everything is subject to change; further, to stimulate the audience to take a practical stand in matters concerning their own welfare.

Another way of defamiliarising is through creating a sense of the absurd which means “out of harmony”. Esslin’s (1980) work illuminates the phenomenon of the absurdist plays of Sartre (1989), Beckett (1994, 1976), Ionesco (1982) and Pinter (2005), which deliberately manipulated the audience to reflect on humanity, meaning, and communication. It is this discord in characterisation and causality which, like Brecht’s alienation techniques, forces the audience to find existential meaning and think again from a different point of view.

Epic and the absurd are not traditionally considered with theatre for young audiences however many works created for young people employ such techniques to explore particular issues further. Both of these are examined in chapter eight.

### ***2.2.5 Theatre of the oppressed***

*Theatre of the oppressed* (Boal, 1985) might be used in reference to theatre as a social medium; aiming to educate and empower members of its own society, to positively acculturate them with a sense of agency and power. Its aim is to build genuine connection with the audience that will enable an exchange of ideas between audience and actors. Thus theatre is a tool to equip and empower individuals to change their situations through “rehearsal for revolution”. In Boal’s (1985) manifesto Western theatre is condemned as an instrument of political indoctrination, intimidation and coercion, while his in project theatre is both work and a weapon, encouraging audience

not only to think but also to “act” and consequently break repression. His work *Games for Actors and Non-actors* (1992) outline practical performance tools to induce that change.

While Aristotle philosophised about initiating catharsis (Janko, 1987, p.xvi), and Brecht talked about awakening (Weber & Heinen, 2010, p.11), Boal promoted “direct actions” (1992, p.6). This is seen in both his invisible street theatre and his forum theatre through which the passive spectator is transformed into activist (Spec-actor) (1992, p. 85). In essence, Boal’s theatre is about providing both choice and opportunity to rehearse solutions that will ultimate initiate real-life change. As such, theatre is seen as a revolutionary vehicle by which to develop language and valid symbols for spect-actors to initiate improvements: to look at the “actual” situation (what is happening); to develop an “ideal” situation (what would you like to change); to simulate a situation in which the spectator practices the “process” of implementing change; and finally to “create” real change (using the lessons and gaining courage through the practice session). This philosophy is a useful tool for theatre companies creating a forum for young people’s opinions and has a comparison in Heathcote’s work on “Mantle of the Expert” (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995). It is further discussed in chapter eight.

### ***2.3 The perlocutionary act of the theatre and the sensory role of the audience***

As shown, numerous theatre theories exist to justify particular rhetorical approaches to staging. A defining feature of all live performance is the dynamic relationship or ‘sensory communication’ (Cremona et al., 2004) between actor and audience. Without this relationship, theatre performance, as an ephemeral artform, does not exist. A spectator watches as both an individual and part of a larger community. It is this participatory characteristic, or what Johnston calls the “performative act of belonging” (2003, p.135), that differentiates it from film or television. Theatre is not just about watching a story and finding meaning in it; it is a total experience (Eco, 1977; Carlson, 1989; Bennett, 1997; Johnston, 2003). The experience can be profound, touching audiences of all ages intellectually, emotionally, and even physically. However, as Barthes (1972) implies, “no text is innocent” and many theorists including Eagleton (1997), Althusser (1997), and Fiske (1998), as discussed in chapter one, have asserted

that all performance as communication guide viewers in certain ideological directions. In *Critical Essays* Barthes (1972) goes further in discussing the complexities of engaging the reader in ways that are understandable but not boring, and the subsequent role of *Rhetoric* as the “amorous dimension” of communication; “the art of varying the banal by recourse to substitutions and displacements of meaning” (1972, p. xviii). As such, *Rhetoric* has two functions within communication, to engage and guide the “critic”.

Showing knowledge about the “intended receivers” (Hanita, 1994) helps frame and interpret the work. Barthes recognised (1972) that the ease by which an audience understands a performance is determined to the extent by which theatre-signs can be simply decoded. Understanding, increases the enjoyment of the total experience and impacts on how effectively the total performance works in fulfilling its purpose or “perlocutionary act” (Elam, 1988). However audiences also actively layer the meaning of the original performance, endorsing Eco’s (1977) theory that messages are shaped by the feedback produced from their destination point. Carlson’s (1989) work also demonstrates that a social cultural perspective, referring to temporary values which come in and out of vogue, is paramount in decoding both the “syntagmatic” and “paradigmatic” systems required for meaning making - the syntagmatic system relating to specific and immediate elements, while the paradigmatic system relates to how that system might be compared against another (Carlson, 1989, p.9). Vygotsky (1972) concurs in recognising the importance of cultural relevance, noting that the specific knowledge that a child might bring as interpreter is representative of the shared knowledge of a culture.

In referring to the “perlocutionary act” of theatre, Elam (1988) explains that a performance is ideologically decoded through the “overall theoretical positioning of the production” (pp.52-53). The act of decoding or interpretation is the “performer-spectator transaction” which, as Ubersfield (1982) observes, is “the very source of the theatre pleasure” (p.129). It is this “artistic communication” (Cremona et al., 2004) through which meaning is ultimately made and which gives theatre ability to affect an audience emotionally. The idea that performance is a two-way communication process, - between the performer (signaller) and the audience (receiver), emphasises the importance of the audience as both interpreter and contributors to the theatre

experience. This is reflected by Eco's (1979) belief that theatrical signs must combine to transmit clear messages through interpretants who also act as communication codes (Eco, 1979, p.96).

Creating a theatrical experience and transmitting a clear message to a young audience thus requires:

1. knowledge of how an audience reads or makes sense of a performance;
2. artistic insight into theatrical conventions, aesthetics and the ability to create a coherent production;
3. insight into what children want to see in the entertainment; and
4. understanding of child development, what a young person can make a sense of at a particular stage.

#### **2.4 Reading theatrical conventions**

It is impossible to think about theatre without recognising that an individual performance, like literature and art, can only be understood by decoding multilayered signs. Stagecraft, like pictures, has two basic modes of referring to things: denotation and exemplification (Doonan, 1993, p.15). Denotation is that which represents itself; a chair represents a chair or a place for sitting. Exemplification is the means by which staging "show[s], by example, abstract notions, conditions and ideas that cannot be pointed to directly but may be recognised through the qualities or properties which the [images] literally or metaphorically display" (Doonan, 1993, p.15). In exemplification the empty chair might represent the absence of a significant character through their death, as in the theatre performance of *Goodbye My Muffin* (Theater Refleksion, Sydney Opera House, 2008), which is similar to Burningham's *Granpa* (1985), creates a moment of reflection by focusing on the *emptiness* of chair, as *the lack of presence*. While Burningham's chair is surrounded by white empty space, in the live performance of *Goodbye My Muffin* a similar atmosphere of loss was implied through light and gentle cello playing. Like well-produced picture books and art for children, theatre for young audiences thus offers opportunity to engage emotionally and cognitively with work that reflects the world at large; to explore complex ideas and to develop understanding of what the world is really about without relying on words alone.

Observations by leading children's literature critics such as Nodelman (1990, 1996) and Garner (1968) agree that the picture book as *art* (Doonan, 1993) can be evaluated for *musicality* (Bingham, 1988, p.92; Butler, Hignnet & Rosen, 1990, p.82), *puppetry* (Johnston, 2003, 2004), *theatricality* (Hunt, 1990, 1991), *narrative structure* (Bal, 1997), *the power of story* (Cooper, Collins & Saxby, 1994) as well as for its *implied audience* (Nodelman, 2000, pp.23-43; Iser, 1978) referring to the ideal aesthetic response that was intended in the work (Albertson, 2000). Theatre for young audiences can be similarly critiqued, with the picture book as a useful tool in demonstrating how theatrical techniques can effectively communicate complicated concepts and stimulate aesthetic sensibilities while simultaneously entertaining its young reader/audience through devices to establish time and place or "chronotope" (Bakhtin, 1935); a sense of "belongingness" (Johnston, 1998) as well as *causality* or layout, by which "fictional" (Cremona et al., 2004) *sense* of the work is made. Pace, elements of surprise "suddenlies" (Wood & Grant, 1997) as well as anticipation and prediction keep the audience actively engaged. The following techniques are also found in both the art of picture books as well as the theatrical stage.

#### **2.4.1 Prediction, agency and dramatic irony**

Choreography, like the structural layout of the picture book, helps convey theatricality most obviously. A poignant example is the melodramatic journey of Rosie in *Rosie's Walk* (Hutchinson, 1968), which imitates the stock pantomime or Victorian melodramatic chase in which Rosie the hen enacts the role of the hapless, vulnerable female victim (or is she?) and the fox the cloaked villain. This is classic "it's behind you" pantomime choreography with the villain constantly frustrated and enraged while the audience revel in knowing more than the characters on stage. Entertainment is produced on a number of levels, but importantly the child audience/reader enjoys the agency (or dramatic irony) of knowing more than the actor/character. Wood (Wood & Grant, 1997) recognises the importance of giving children this sense of power in his work *Theatre for Children* (1995). In a theatre situation children would shout to Rosie to look behind her. At the same time as "protecting" Rosie the audience/reader is also enjoying "predicting" what will happen to the fox. Prediction generates anticipation: will he/won't he? The audience/reader enjoys the comedy found in the slapstick



misadventures as well as, in the case of Rosie, the closure and justice of the villain getting what he deserves. This mixture of comedy, anticipation and suspense is pure drama.

#### **2.4.2 Inference, dramatic irony and absurdism**

The agency offered through dramatic irony, as discussed above in *Rosie's Walk*, not only entertains, but encourages critical thinking and observation. This is due to the contrast of the spoken word, against the visual impression, which creates the multi-dimensional aesthetic experience. Author/illustrator Anthony Browne is a master at using universally-recognised icons and symbols to stimulate questions and responses. The juxtaposition of the “animalistic” family looking at the noble animals in his work *Zoo* (Browne, 1992) infers that it is the humans who should be in cages, while the physical transformation of father and boys into pigs, starting with the dramatic metamorphosis of the house in *Piggybook* (1986) infers that they are in fact chauvinistic pigs. The writer/illustrator Toby Riddle in his *The Great Escape from City Zoo* (1999) reflects the tone of theatrical absurdism in its unusual mix of unexpected heroes and its uncanny visual images, such as a flamingo helping an elephant over a wall, and the comical caption “they wore disguises so that no-one would recognise them”. This is also the art of the cartoonist, film and theatre director. Perceptions can thrill, challenge and surprise whether they look at reality or the world of nonsense (Graham, 1990).

#### **2.4.3 Staging and atmosphere**

Composition, body language, comedy and even silence represent the dramatic techniques and pleasures of both the stage and the picture book. Artwork in picture books portrays mood and setting in the same way lighting and set design and staging create atmosphere in the theatre. Where *focalisation* in pictures emphasise key dramatic moments, alternating between “long shot” compositions and single close-up images to imitate the movie technique of changing focus, staging creates a “suddenly” (Wood & Grant, 1997), an arresting surprise and unforgettable image by lighting changes, shifts in staging, pace or bursts of music.

Whether a drama contains single or complex story lines, the action is heightened as the stakes rise. The “need to know what happens” element is the essence of all good theatre.

Like art, body language and composition imply character and relationship on stage. Temporal moment-by-moment changes in these forces the audience to watch closely and interpret what is happening. This is similar to the effect of the “narrative gap” on the reader as illustrated by Iser (1993).

#### ***2.4.4 The spoken word***

Variations in voice, tone, pace, song, rhyme and rhythms contribute to theatrical relish (Butler, 1980; Murphey, 1980). In particular children respond to vocal aspects because repetition sets a pattern that enables the reader/audience to foresee and practice what will happen next. This is not just another form of knowledge and agency or power as vocal joining-in, whether in a small group or theatre situation, is a rewarding experience that releases feel-good endorphins, and which creates a sense of community and connection. Books like *Fishy Things* (Campbell, 1997) along with TV favourites *Playschool* (Australian Broadcast Corporation) and *Sesame Street* (Sesame Workshop), remind us that simplicity is strength. Similar to the game *this little piggy went to market*, the word and actions create connectivity between adult/ performer and child/audience.

#### ***2.5 Multivariate sign systems***

The theatricality of picture books mirrors performance for young audiences as both a separate yet related aesthetic art form. Further numerous theatrical adaptations have been inspired by picture books including *The Arrival* (Tan, 2007), adapted by Red Leap (2010); *The Red Tree* (Barking Gecko Theatre, 2012; Jigsaw, 2004) and *Wolves in the Wall* (Gaiman, 2003), adapted by Improbable Theatre (2012). These productions have transformed entertainment for children, as practitioners work to interpret not just story but the familiar design motifs of the original work. In many adaptations the primary codes are aesthetic and architectural, concentrating not just on beautiful sets and costumes but on puppetry skills that bring spaces to life, transforming them before the audiences’ eyes like huge sensorial kaleidoscopes, “a truly universal theatre...exciting, uplifting that should be embraced by all who have good fortune to experience it” (Teiwes, 2010).

If picture books require readers to follow both word and picture, the discourse of live performance is, as recognised by Peirce (1968), the ability to decode “multivariate systems of communication”, found in the theatrical signs of words, voice inflection, facial mimicry, gesture, body movements, make-up, headdress, costume, accessory, stage design, lighting, music, and noise (Eco, 1977, p.108, Kowzan 1968) as well as spatial configurations that offer indications of identity, status, relationships and centrality to the action (Aston & Savona, 1999, p.115); narrative aspects of plot and character, architectural aspects and actor/audience relations. Further as Whitmore (1994) identified postmodern theatre performance can also include *olfactoral* and *tactile* aspects. Thus performance for young audiences can affect all of the senses by utilising methods which include projected image and film; touch and smell; sculpture; literature; sound installation and even architectural spaces. In using these categories to explain the different layers of interpretation, Whitmore acknowledges each individual signifier as being aspects of the whole experience, echoing Buyseens (1943), Carlson (1989) and Bennett (1997), Cremona et al (2004) ideas of ‘sensory’ communication in performance.

### ***2.5.1 Visual signs in performance***

In evaluating information conveyed through exemplification, recurrent motifs, colour, lines, composition and body language, Nodleman (1990) and Doonan (1993) show how certain compositions evoke an immaterial entity that stays in our collective memory and consciousness to enable dialogue with other art forms through intertextual reference (Mitchell, 2007). Thus a theatrical tableau might project similar messages, mimic or refer to a particular visual image such as that in a picture book.

In multi-media productions, receivers decipher visual signs that are never divorced from the verbal (Hanita, 1976). For instance, a detailed scene of a house projected to suggest the iconic isolation of the country is ironic when the supporting lighting bars and scaffolding are deliberately left bare to remind spectators that they are in the theatre such as in the theatre of Brecht (Willett, 1964) and Piscator (1980). Similarly, design adduces opportunities for functionalistic, decorative and narrative roles. Costume can signify character, gender, rank or social status, occupation, historical setting, and even metaphysical representations. Stage, lighting and sound design also manifest

sociometric indexes of rank and gender, create atmosphere or suggest symbolic visual metaphors. Design narratively provides spectators with more knowledge than characters while also accommodating revelation and surprise. Further, design also establishes the spatial relation between performer and spectator.

### ***2.5.2 The transformability of theatre signs***

Strength of theatrical productions is the transformability of the signs themselves. Honzi (1976, p.93) demonstrates how lighting followed by calming music, which suggests the aftermath, may denote a shipwreck. On the other hand, a single object or device may signify a myriad of different meanings. For example, a table within the same performance may represent a mountain, bridge, throne or festive table. Peirce (1931-58) similarly reminds us that while the naturalistic theatre of the west tends towards *iconistic* representation, while stylised theatre uses *symbolic* or *indexical* signs. He distinguishes between the sign itself and what the sign stimulates in the mind of the spectator/interpreter: the immediate response, the dynamic or changing response and the final response or *interpretant* (Peirce, 1968). He argues that with each different representation a sign takes on different representative function, for example the table as a throne may metonymically represent the whole country or metaphorically represent the tyranny of the king. A table dressed for a festive occasion returns to an *iconistic* representation of being what it is and at the same time may also *metaphorically symbolise* or exemplify a change in prosperity.

### ***2.5.3 Mise-en-scene***

Individual signs by themselves are always understood in relationship to others. Pavis (1982) recognised that when understanding what is seen on stage, a connection between “signs” and their “referents” must be made (p.14). Within a single performance this might be understood as the *mise en scene*. Pavis (1982, p.133) articulates that there is no overarching *a priori* concerning theory on “*mise-en-scene*”. As such it might be considered as the technical prism through which the intentions of the director are signalled. It is the coming together of multivariate textual and performance sign-systems through which the audience might decode and understand the premise of the performance. As discourse, *mise-en-scene* comes together at the actual moment of performance, like the spark of electricity, and is the thread by which meaning is found.

In this way, Aston and Savona (1991) note, *mise-en-scenes* unite the various structural elements, which themselves consist of smaller codes or signifiers. Layered, thoughtful productions create interesting *mise-en-scenes* and consequently satisfying theatre, while messy and ill-thought-out sign-systems produce unsatisfying, confusing performances.

These aspects will be explored in chapters' four to nine as a way of understanding how these individual signs as techniques can guide audiences in decoding the action of a performance in a specific direction, particularly when seen through a particular lens and in reference to other performances. When referenced across numerous performances it might be considered as what Eco (1977) terms a communication code, or what we term within this study as an artistic code.

## ***2.6 Narrative discourse***

While some theatre theorists examine the semiotics of live performance in and of itself, it may be noted that most semiotic study generally concentrates on the structural aspects of the "haupttext" (Ingarden (1974) or script, perhaps based on the "realization that if human actions or productions have meaning there must be an underlying system of distinctions and conventions which makes this meaning possible" (Culler, 1998, p.73). As Martin indicates (1996, p.94), structuralism can provide a useful and stimulating starting-point for the analysis of narrative structure, which is useful for theatre theory also. Propp (1968), Barthes (1973), Levi-Strauss (1968), Genette (1980) and Frye (1982) therefore locate single or "morphologic" themes that organise the essential events in terms of time and causality and characters within narratives.

### ***2.6.1 Time and causality***

Indicators of time are essential structures of dramatic plot, as shown by Aston and Savona (1991), who distinguished between *chronological time* (fabula) as the linear time sequence of the causal plot and *narrative time* as the restructuring and organising of causal events into the narrative discourse. *Historical time*, a purely theatrical phenomenon, indicates the difference between theatre time and real time.

Causality as the dynamic aspect of time is not always stated but implied. Bal (1997) reminds us "in order to understand a text, some sort of logical connection is needed" (1997, p.176). Tomashevsky (2002) concurs that while descriptive and didactic poems or chronicles need no causal explanations, "story requires not only indications of time but also indications of cause" (2002, p.164). Perhaps this is due to our mania for understanding that can even lead us to make up explanations where none are in fact possible (Martin, 1986). The idea that cause relates to reason and thereby motivation links into the drama theory of Stanislavsky (1988), who asked his actors to find motivation for all aspects of their characterisations, that they may firstly understand and secondly "live" their characters through emotional memory recall; what Pitches (2006) calls the 'science of acting'.

### **2.6.2 Character**

Observations on characters are useful. Ubersfield's (1978) recognition is that characters within a play generate three distinct levels of understanding: psychological, thematic symbol and/or ideological "key" as well as and mirroring the individual "implied" spectator. As such, his "character table" (Ubersfield, 1978, pp.113-114, 131, 150), reveals all personae (lexeme and ensemble) as fulfilling complex functions and significations within a discourse. Similarly Greimas' (1983) "actantial" model, "Calculus of six roles" (pp.197-221), highlights a character's binary and oppositional roles within plot. Both methods concur that a narrative requires a balanced, structured set of characters. "Functions of characters serve as stable, constant elements in a tale, independent of how and whom they are fulfilled. They constitute the fundamental components of a tale", (Propp, 1998, pp128 -132).

Veltrusky (1977) shows causal and hierarchical links between names, character and speech (1977, pp.45, 51, 71-75), suggesting that a character's name automatically conditions the response of the spectator as to their purpose in the discourse. Similarly, Carlson (1990) demonstrates the communicative device of names in suggesting social roles or character qualities, and in indicating the type of performance we are seeing. For example, personified abstractions such as *Everyman* position spectators to reflect on the external world (1990, p.43). Elam (1980) concurs that "known" names automatically infer particular expectations (pp. 105-6), or predict an obvious frame of reference. Thus

the name *Cinderella* may indicate a fairy-tale scenario or a girl dressed in rags, mistreated by her sisters. If however the entrance of Cinderella is announced during a *Disney On Ice Spectacular* the audience will expect a beautiful princess to enter with specific blonde hair dressed in the exact blue long dress shown in Walt Disney's 1950 animated film. This infers that a character will act in accordance to familiar patterns (Bal, 1998, p.121).

### ***2.6.3 Language***

Theory of language (Saussure, 1960; Bathes, 1977) is useful for recognising the different codes by which words convey meaning between characters, between a performer and spectator, or between a storyteller who paradoxically both reveals and keeps his/her secrets. Seemingly non-signifying variations, like accent, form a second order corpus of signifiers when, for example, it signals a country code and thereby "ruralness" in a performance. For instance 'stupid characters' are often caricatured with country accents, illustrating the performative ability to make sweeping generalisations as highlighted by Levi-Strauss (1980).

Meaning is also found in dialogue that further establishes character, space, action and atmosphere and includes not just spoken language and gesture but the actual style of the play text itself. Dialogue unconsciously denotes the type of play being viewed. For example, comedy reveals a social rather than philosophical discourse, while dialogue from theatre of the absurd serves to destabilize meaning entirely and undermines our expectations of dramatic form (Aston and Savona, 1991, p.18). Even silences contribute to the overall discourse (Popescu-Judetz, 1990).

### ***2.7 Architectural aspects***

Grotowski (1980) Craig (1958) and Artaud (1958) all attested to the impact of distance relation between performer and spectator and vice-versa on the theatre experience. The fourth wall of "bourgeois" theatre (Carlson, 1989), for example, places the spectator in a passive, voyeuristic position and assumes a cultural understanding of a practice in which audience are required to watch but not comment on the action, as formality which

children do not necessarily recognise; conversely, the trestle stages of “classic” theatre encourages a vital interaction between actor and audience (Veltrusky, 1977).

According to Aristotelian rules of dramatic irony, elements of surprise can be broadened via a re-writing of the traditional rules to create performance in urban spaces or overturn assumptions that the performer automatically knows more than the characters on the stage (Whitmore, 1994). In post-modern performances like *Host* (Gravity Feed, 1999), for instance, the audience was taken through the back of house spaces, ordered to move chairs, was escorted through a series of obstacles or paths into an unfamiliar space, and was surrounded by actors in an act of interrogation, so that they became the observed rather than the observer and of course actors themselves within the performance.

The audience-actor relationship is an important aspect of engagement in all performance, but particularly in the child-orientated performance. The unusual placement of the audience, parents and children, inside a pen, with the action happening around them in *Where's the Green Sheep* (Windmill, 2007) provides a good example of this. Other theorists emphasise that a connection with at least one member of the performance, can help young people to focus and interpret what is happening on the stage. Wood (Wood & Grant, 1997) thus posited that child audiences need to be addressed, listened to and responded to respectfully.

In considering ideal responses to the action and how audience participate in different theatrical events, O'Toole's criteria (1976) for recognising the three ways in which children or young people contribute are useful:

- **Extrinsic:** where participation is separate from theatricality.
- **Peripheral:** where contribution is invited to add to the theatricality but which does not change the structure of the outcome of the discourse.
- **Integral:** a child centred response where the audience reaction becomes the perspective of the characters or the storytellers and therefore the dynamic of the discourse changes and reflects the responses of each audience.

Another post-modern approach to creating theatre for young audiences might be seen in performances like *Erth's Amazing Room* (Erth, 2009). In this child only experience, -



parents where “banned” from entering, the audience members treated like members of a club house working their way through a physical jungle maze negotiating play apparatus and interacted with other audience members and puppet dinosaur characters. Intrinsic to the experience were the child’s own playful sense of adventure plus touch, smells, noise, and a terrifying dinosaur at the end that the children had to run past. This heralds a new form of theatre, which relies on atmosphere, physical interaction and participation as opposed to a chronological, casual narrative and specific character development. Like the *Titanic – The Experience* (Technifex, 1999), *Prison Escape Live* (Sudden Impact Entertainment, 2006), and *The London Dungeon* (Merlin Entertainment Group, 2000), theatre performers in the *Amazing Room* (Erth, 2008) were agents that provoked reaction and performative play in the spectators. The drama, “it’s really happening to you” experience, is created as much by the child’s imagination as the professional performance itself!

Venue equally plays a role within the total theatre experience. Factors such as whether the space is intimate or large scale, whether the audience is seated or roaming, whether parents are included as part of the experience and even whether the audience has to walk past numerous merchandise stalls before they get to the performance all contribute to the event. Perry and Kearny’s (2012) work in performing live plays through connected classroom spaces on the internet further manipulates the traditional conventions of theatre spaces and ways of connecting with audiences, and shows how interactive live performance can be created even when the audiences is placed at a distance and in a separate room. All of these elements are signals that together contribute to the overall discourse of both performance and occasion, reminding us of Carlson’s (1990) observations that not only do the venues shape expectation but so too does perception, publicity and reviews.

### ***2.7.1 Performance style***

Performative information such as *how* a play is presented includes stylised traditions like commedia dell’arte, masked kabuki, mime or more naturalistic performance in which actors recreate a layer of reality as though the performance is happening spontaneously. Stylised performance relies on the ability of the audience to respond to pictographic and ideographic information while naturalistic performance largely

depends on understanding of speech and accents. Developmentally and socially it is possible to understand words but not the implied meanings of a dialogue, which may require particular cultural, political, and emotional maturity. For these reasons, complex emotions are often evoked through music, particularly in theatre for young audiences. Though decoding music has its own complexities including, rhythms, tonality, pitch, young people often respond instinctively to music. This might be exemplified in Yezerski's classically composed music of the *Red Tree* (Australian Chamber Orchestra and Gondwana Choir, 2008) dealing with depression and loneliness.

### **2.7.2 Puppets**

Puppets, long popular in theatre for young audiences, have a similar capacity for comfort. They are universal tools for conveying stories and individual characters, requiring the audience to perceive them as both an object and as life (Tillis, 1992). As such, the paradoxical nature of puppets is described as the “double vision”; a substantial figure of theatre and a metaphor for humanity (Tillis, 1992). However, cultural aesthetics further inform perception of puppetry. The use of a particular tradition like Vietnamese water, Thai shadow, European string or British hand puppetry indicates particular assumptions. For example within a commedia dell'arte performance the puppet Harlequin will look and behave in predictable ways; he will wear a mask, is immediately recognisable through his costume of colourful diamonds and he will deliberately trick others for his own amusement. This will vary however if the style is “appropriated” within a hybrid performance to create a particular effect such as a philosophical observation, an aspect of personality or metaphorical “hard to explain” psychological feelings such as being lost, wooden, restricted, small and so on. This symbolic portrayal of a character's essence might well stand for the iconic image of the mask as well. Thus a solely puppet performance in which each puppet indicates a separate individual character will be understood differently to a performance which utilises puppetry as a technique within the performance (to indicate one character). In the second example, a single character might be portrayed by a number of performers including a number of puppets of different sizes as in *The Lost Thing* (Jigsaw Theatre, 2004), exemplifying the fluctuation between *character pawns* in order to signify a change of distance, or proportion. In these cases the puppet no longer represents *character* but a particular viewing and way of iconic staging. This is akin to the sea

being represented by a lightweight blue material easily manipulated to create a rippling effect, to convey the idea of water.

## ***2.8 The implied audience***

The implied audience represents the “ideal” aesthetic response to the work (Albertson, 2000). Just as the “intended reader” is constructed through the idea of the “implied child” found within the text (Iser, 1978), certain characteristics project the “implied audience” within performance. This “implied audience” is recognised within the discourse through signals - such as particular characteristics or cultural signs - that might mirror particular life circumstances or appeal to the watching audience. For example smaller children can be afraid of larger-than-life loud characters, thus Wood (Wood & Grant, 1997) advocates inclusion of a “silent character”, representing the child with little or no agency (the implied child). This character often has the freedom to be shy or naughty and younger audience members often identify with and find these characters comforting. The implied audience for each artistic code will be looked at in each chapter as a way of understand the intention of the theatre creators.

### ***2.8.1 The magic of illusion: what children want in culture***

When a magician places a coin in his hand and makes it disappear, it is a reminder that there’s something about coins that we have failed to appreciate. Unlike a mere deception or a simple secret, which gives the impression that something’s been taken away, a great magician makes you feel like something has been given to you (Steinmeyer, 2005, p.22).

Steinmeyer’s (2005) observations remind us that the art of magic is the pleasure of marvelling, that adults and children alike enjoy being led on a journey that mystifies and surprises like an assuring fairy-tale or a magical thought (Wilson, 1981). That like the language of *Mother Goose*, theatrical power lies in its ability to make the ordinary magically absurd and wonderful in and for itself (Nodleman, 2008); in short, to lead the audience to deceive themselves (Steinmeyer, 2005, p.17).

This recognition that magic performance relies on two-way communication endorses the notion that great performers, like magicians, need to anticipate the way an audience thinks (Steinmeyer, 2005, p.117). As with magicians, theatre practitioners stage-manage audience expectations. Hence the importance of examining the experience of the child as spectator to understand how a child might “read” a performance (Patrice, 1982; Elam, 1980). Since the mid-twentieth century, theatre practitioners like Way (1975), Bolton (1984) and Slade (1995) have endorsed a practice of using developmental models as part of their philosophy of theatre, and emphasised child psychology over theatrical skills.

### ***2.8.2 The dynamics of a child audience***

Wood and Grant (1997) usefully observed some predictable dynamics of an early childhood audience, in particular, that the composition of an audience for a children’s play is variable because children often attend with older and younger siblings who don’t always choose to come to the performance. Other divergences from the adult experience are that children enjoy being active participants rather than passive spectators and eagerly respond to audience participation; however not all children answer in the same way. Far more than adults, children generate a sense of electricity in the theatre; they can become over-excited and willingly enter into the spirit of the entertainment. Unlike adults, children can be uncompromisingly direct, letting you know when they are bored.

Wood (Wood & Grant, 1997) recognised that common characteristics of the very young audience include their eager response to justice, within limits (like being frightened); are healthily subversive: are logical; will respond differently and unpredictably; make noise during a performance; respond to action rather than lots of words; don’t like being patronised; love animals and toys but don’t like lovey-dovey stuff; and, love stories. In thinking about this audience Wood creates a check-list of good children’s theatre practice including: surprises or “suddenlies”; colourful characters; humour and taboo; life and death situations; a plot which is not too wordy but full of climaxes and cliff hangers; justice and fairness; lots of audience participation; different scale within the performance (large and small elements); puppetry; magic; colour; mime and movement; interesting lighting; and, sound changes.

Wood made his observations based on practical experiences playing to British children. In terms of a cultural context, however, is there a national characteristic, which can define the Sydney child audience? Mosler (2002) warns that describing a particular national character is notoriously difficult. No single individual in any given culture will have all of the traits or values, or indeed any of them, and it is quite probable that individuals from different cultures, especially in this age of globalisation, will have more in common across cultures (especially when adjusted for social class and occupational status) than with individuals in their own societies (2002, p.2). Nonetheless, we can make certain academic deductions based on research that focuses on the cognitive and emotional development of children as well as the popular and youth cultures, which surround them.

### ***2.9 Cultural contexts and developmental stages of children and youth***

Certain theorists like Aries (1962), Nodleman (1996) and Muller (1969, pp.7-21) philosophise that the modern concept of childhood emerged from a linear historical development, while Adams presents evidence for the existence of children's literature throughout the ages, suggesting attitudes to child-rearing are much more circular and economic than previously emphasised (Wyile and Rosenberg, 2008). Four concepts are of interest. The first suggests that historically children were tolerated, but essentially seen as "animals" and made fit by education (Hobbes cited in Audi, 1995). This might be justified through literature that maps moral improvement such as *Pilgrims Progress* (Bunyan, 1839) and *Robinson Crusoe* (Defoe, 1719). The second concept is the romantic notion of childhood as an idyllic time, which should be honoured (Day 1998; Steiner, 1998; Archard, 2004), shown in the *child as hero* stories of Lewis (1970 [1865]) and Milne, (1988 [1928]). The third concept focuses on the individual child as little prince (Muller, 1969), meaning all powerful. This is seen in modern works, which reveal parental figures beholden to them. In contrast, the final concept seen in *The Real Matilda* (Dixson, 1999), maps "Motherhood" and thereby childhood as essentially social construct, a theory disputed by Adams (1998).

Freud (1954) was among the first to recognise that child responses were caused not by untamed adult behaviours but by basic drives, which could be defined by developmental

stages. Other developmental theorists like Piaget's (1953) locating and mapping of intelligence, Vygotsky (1986) looking at the importance of community, and Erikson (1994) focusing on identity and roles in society also stand as respected pillars. Although the parameters of this study preclude a full deconstruction of the enormous contribution that these particular theories have provided in the field of child psychology and education, an overview is useful in providing an understanding how youth audiences of varying ages and backgrounds might possibly respond and interpret performances that are created specifically for them.

Piaget's (1953) research focused on cognitive skill development in young people, which he believed is attained in distinct stages: "sensor motor", "preconceptual thinking", "intuitive thought", "concrete operations", and "formal operations". This conjuncture is mirrored within the formality of the western education system which favours chronological or linear stages of learning to more organic, ephemeral approaches to individual cultural development and learning (Clements, Gilliland & Holke, 1992). Not just schools; book editors, toy makers, children television producers and theatre makers, to name a few, categorise and develop their products in terms of age appropriateness. ABC *Playschool* child advisors ensure that performances reinforce pre-schooler's language development through rhyme, repetition, songs and stories told in the program aim to layer the viewer's experience by expanding knowledge of the everyday environmental world in which the general Australian child lives. An adherence to Piaget's sensitivity to limitations of understanding is further reinforced by ensuring that narratives fall within the conceptual range of the child's literal understanding of the world. Hence stories which include volcanoes or climbing trees, for instance, might be rejected in case they either frighten or endorse dangerous activity.

### ***2.9.1 Age appropriate performance***

Traditionally, theatre created for audiences aged five and above is robust and energetic and evokes strong reactions to goodies and baddies. This reflects a child's growing sense of independence, decision-making and strong sense of justice, which Wood (Wood & Grant, 1997) discusses in his system for creating "appropriate" theatre for young people. It also reflects the thrill and game playing of being frightened (and in

control!) as described by Warner (2000) in her work on fear, and Bakhtin's (1981) and Johnston's (2003) evaluation of carnivalesque in performance for children.

Alongside companies producing works for theatre, exist a plethora of companies performing directly within the school environment. These performers, found on the Certified Performers in School List (2012), are dedicated to teaching skills specific to state curriculum and key stage guidelines. However, theatre for young audiences offers more than frivolity or direct transference of concrete educational outcomes, evidenced by the body of theatre works creating work performing literature and classic works designed to expand critical thinking in young viewers. *Hitler's Daughter* (Monkey Baa, 2006), for example, presented informal learning opportunities across a number of different curriculum areas including history, literature and drama which was reinforced by literature created specifically to help educators interpret the actual experience and then layer it with learning activities for the classroom.

Nevertheless, professional performances will usually be ruder, bawdier, sexier, darker and scarier than anything that can be experienced in the classroom, - even on film, and thus offer occasions to experience the world in a different way; an introduction to big ideas and a way of "growing the imagination" (Johnston, 2001). A mediated theatre experience, such as involving students in the process of deconstructing their experiences of performances or challenging the ideas within the drama, offers insight into the thinking behind the performative work and valuable lessons not just in terms of curriculum achievement but also in terms of personal development (Woodson, 2004) lifelong learning and investigation. For progressive educators, theatre excursions, like museum trips, communicate positive associations that provide multi-layered prospects. These include promotion of autonomous thought, which is essentially why cultural experiences are so invigorating and worthy and why they provide 'scaffolding for understanding'; for learning with emotion rather than just the head (Cooper, 2004).

If theatre for children is characterised by the "goody/baddy" plot, theatre for adolescents is characterised by controversial issue-based works which contemplate confronting aspects of Australian society such as *Hood* (Real TV, 2008) dealing with domestic violence and *The Marriage Act* (Arena Theatre, 2007) discussing youth sexuality and

law. Performance usually incorporates music that reflects popular music tastes and youth focused activities like skate boarding. The work of *Dance Tank* (The Sydney Opera House, 2007) and *Angels in the Architecture* (Shopfront Theatre, 2006) example collaboration pieces with young people aged 16-25 years using abstract sound collage and dance movement to convey metaphorical contemplation of identity and place within apocalyptic and brave new worlds as symbolic representations of society. The ability to interpret abstract staging and process moral, ethical, social and political realities reflects maturing intellectual growth described by Basseches (1984) as “dialectical thinking”. Dialectical thinking creates meaning and order by resolving conflict with awareness that there are always other possibilities and that no solution is necessarily absolute or final. This follows Labouvie-Vief’s (1980) recognition that adult thinking is more sensitive and tolerant of ambiguity and contradictions and more likely to bring into play a variety of factors (morality, social and political implications, economic considerations) besides simple logic. More importantly, it reflects the positive and supportive process of watching either oneself or others as part of identity development or “moratorium” described essential by Erickson (1959) in the development of adolescents.

### ***2.9.2 Cultural approaches to creating theatre for the very young***

Yet do all young people move neatly through these prescribed developments? Danish theatre company, Gruppe 38, market their work as “family performance from 6-99 years, school performance from 7-12 years”. A performance for family and school might be identical, but those attending family (or weekend performance) are more likely to include mothers, fathers, grandparents, and siblings of all ages. A feature of young people’s performance therefore is that two- year-olds can attend a play designed for eight-year-olds.

While it might be debated whether the toddler will get anything from the performance which, according to a Piagetian (Sigel, Hooper & Piaget, 1968; Sugarman & Piaget, 1987) diagnosis might be incomprehensible to them, Sternheimer (2003) theorised that age segregation is a constraint that is purely economical and put in place during the industrial revolution. It is not a natural requirement of children but of parents who now



aim for and project a prolonged and false period of idealised innocence onto their children. Such views are endorsed by Füredi (2006), in his theories on the paranoid parent, and Vygotsky (1978, 1986) would evaluate not the specifics of what was understood but the quality of the cultural experience itself.

Young (2004), in her research on “play” theatre for under two’s, studied how children under two years responded to a performance. She found that performance should ideally bridge watching and experiencing, and that performers needed much more than acting techniques in order to engage a very young audience. Her case study recommended young spectators require social interaction, which includes adult carers becoming participatory players in order to fully interpret what was happening. Using a Vygotsky “Zone of Proximity” (1978) perspective, however, what the two year old retains from attending a performance with an eight year old encompasses a fertile social environment for cognitive development, language learning, and cultural role modelling as well as self-esteem and belongingness (Maslow, 2000). In this case the opportunity to attend performance, even though it might not be fully understood, offers holistic cultural learning in which children participate from immersion rather than straight age appropriateness. The fact that parents believe their children to possess self-awareness might also serve as the very mechanism by which children acquire self-awareness and a sense of self (Lewis, 1992).

Vygotsky’s (1978) work thus highlights the importance of cultural interaction and opportunities to participate through trial and error. From a theatrical viewpoint we might conclude that performance plays an important role in developing self-concept and cultural values by assuming that children possess the skills to understand the performance when adults role model and help them do so. This is echoed in Heathcote’s (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995) educational theory on the “Mantle of the Expert”, by which children assume responsibility first (or practice), and then grow into the role. Further, this aspect of cultural learning is instilled through a stream of impressions and child social interaction that provide an important catalyst towards individuation and self-expression (Cooley, 1992; Mead, 1992). Emphasis on respectful interpersonal communications with child audiences are reflected in the amount of

audience participation purposefully created in the performance and the way that actor's talk to their younger audiences (Wood & Grant, 1997).

Techniques in talking to audiences, as Young (2004) usefully demonstrates, requires some theoretical educational principals that might be re-contextualised for performances created for the very young to ensure performance is not only well structured but that it makes intrinsic sense: that children hear language and speech which is meaningful to them and which is built on some cultural prior knowledge; that it takes place within supportive and comfortable environments; that it is effectively communicated through a variety of methods including verbalisations, eye contact and body language which keeps a young person's interest; that it has appropriate levels of challenge and difficulty to encourage curiosity or suspense, including game-like activities that encourage opportunities for fantasy interaction, reinforcement and feedback (Bruner, 1983; MacWhinney, 1999; Maslow, 1999).

### ***2.9.3 Theatre and identity***

Efforts to stimulate response require consideration and knowledge of the audience. Erickson's (1959) theory on the formation of identity and his emphasis on creating opportunity for self-efficacy and responsibility are reflected in collaborative works with young performers themselves, signaling their own power and autonomy under the instruction of the more mature director. Further, embedded themes examine genuine concerns youth have about their future including interest in technology and quests for a sense of place in the world. Many works are open-ended, leaving space for consideration by the audience, and some even demand interaction and discussion at the time of performance or further engagement on-line.

Watching theatre is not just observation; it is participation. The experience of watching theatre evokes a whole new set of interpretive decoding skills and relationship rules. According to Bennett (1997), in the same way that "reader response" starts with looking at the book cover, so "audience reception" starts with the journey to the theatre and includes the location and architecture of the building or site where the performance takes place. Bennett, like Carlson (1990) also reveals how pre-publicity, location of the

venue, knowledge of the text, critical reviews and judgments of friends who have seen it also impact on the memorability and enjoyment of the experience.

Another reason to experience being an audience member includes learning to recognise when a script text becomes a performance text. Ingarden (1974) identified two systems of meaning making within the dramatic text: The *Haupttext* referring to the main body of the dramatic text and the *Nebentext*, which contains the stage directions (1974, p.208). For most, however, the play script serves as a tool for the actual performance: it is the “potential” not the final product. So how vital it is then that young people have access to performances as well as their own dramatic practice if they are going to have the skills to fully decode a play text. If we involve our students in the process of deconstructing their theatre experiences, debriefing, and challenging the ideas within them, we offer experiences that can help young people discover about their own lives (Woodson, 2004).

The dual ability of theatre to endorse the child’s world while expanding it is strength. Some theatre performances cement and structure ideas around the familiar everyday world, while challenging it from an alternative perspective (Duval and Wickland, 1972), helping children to develop alternative points of view which Mead views as the child’s primary developmental task (1972, 1992). Warner (2000), in her work on facing fears, also reminds us that being frightened help children face their own psychological fears and reinvigorates the collective will to survive. Thus performances like *The Girl Who Cried Wolf* (Arena Theatre, 2008) and *The Shape of a Girl* (Sydney Opera House, 2008), reflect ideals that healthy adolescents are discerning autonomous individuals completing the difficult but vital task of developing a strong identity from which they can then participate as responsible free thinking citizens, an aim of healthy authoritative parenting (Baumrind, 1991; Rimm, 2005). Further, they emit a philosophy, endorsed by John Stuart Mill that the purpose of such theatre is to make “capable and cultivated human beings” (cited in Ryan, 2011).

As Corey (1974) indicated, there exists dichotomy in societal attitudes to youth between parental over-protection and fear on one hand, and high pressure for academic achievement on the other. Children of the twenty-first century have a lot of power

within their own domain but not necessarily much responsibility; though young people grow up fast, they are also kept as children for a long time. Healthy theatre for young audiences therefore offers exposure to alternative views to those represented at home, in the classroom and indeed in popular culture, generating alternative ideas and expanding cultural contexts from which children can see and imagine.

### ***2.10 Summary***

This chapter has examined theatre theory from a multilayered perspective, from the role of semiotics through to the social, cultural and developmental considerations of audience understanding and expectations. Exemplifying the complementary art form of the picture book, the chapter also highlights how children's culture can provide deep and layered observations of life for its audience through complex signals in both text and images providing aesthetic pleasure to both adult and child.

A study of the traditional role of theatre for young people as a primarily educational tool indicates that theatre for young audience is a vibrant and emerging art form. This is particularly reflected through observation of its growing use of rhetoric imported from adult theatre practices, which are being used to sculpt entirely new approaches to performances seen in the non-linear performance experiences being devised for the very young. This will be expanded on in chapters four through to nine.

Though knowledge of developmental theory is important, it is recognised in this chapter as having limited potential in explaining how performances can be appreciated and enjoyed even when they are not fully understood by the entire audience. Vgotovsky's (1986) cultural theory and Erikson's (1994) theory of identity are therefore presented as a way of emphasising how theatre signs are read holistically from the combined contexts of individual development, cultural heritage and the pre-conceived expectations of each audience member. The next chapter examines how theatre for young audience is generally categorised and marketed to audiences of young people aged two to eighteen.

## CHAPTER 3: MORE THAN JUST A PANTOMIME

### Cultural theatre:

*La Cenerentola*, Opera Australia, 2008, dir: Michael Hampe; *The Magic Flute*, Opera Australia, 2012, dir: Julie Taymor; *The Tempest*, Bell Shakespeare, 2006, dir: Peter Evans; *Swan lake*, Paris Opera Ballet, 2009, chor: Nureyev

### Devised theatre:

*A World of Paper*, Theatre Kazenoko Kansai, 2003, dir: Peter Wilson; *Aborio*, Jigsaw Theatre, 2005, Greg Lissaman; *Afternoon of the Elves*, Windmill Performing Arts, 2006, dir: Linda Hartzell; *Dr Egg and the man with no ear*, Sydney Opera House and Performing Lines, 2007 dir: Jessica Wilson and Catherine Fargher; *Emergence*; Synarcade Audio-Visuals, 2007, dir: Mark Bolotin; *Fluff*, Cre8ion, 2004, dir: Christine Johnston & Lisa O' Neill; *Grimm Tales*, Bristol Old Vic Theatre, 1998, dir: Frances Hopwood; *Hidden Dragons*, Barking Gecko Theatre, 2004, dir: Grahame Gavin; *Lulie and the Iceberg*, Theatre of Image & Kageboushi Theatre, 2007, dir: Kim Carpenter; *Shockheaded Peter: a junk opera*, Improbable Theatre, 2005 dir: Phelim Macdermott, Julian Crouch & Graeme Gilmour; *The Little Match Girl*, Gruppe 38, 2007, dir: Catherine Poher; *The Lost Thing*, Jigsaw theatre, 2004, dir: Peter Wilson; *The Red Tree*, Queensland Performing Art Centre's Out of the Box festival for children, 2004, dir: Peter Wilson; *Twinkle Twinkle Little Fish*, Windmill Performing Arts Production, 2003, Simon Phillips;

### Popular entertainment:

Disney on Ice, Disney, 2006; The Wiggles, 2003; *Thomas the Tank Engine*, 2006; *Walking with Dinosaurs*, 2010; The Fairies; Barney and Friends

### Educational theatre:

*Actor's at Work*, Bell Shakespeare; *Cogs and the Dragon*, Erth Visual and Physcial Inc's, *Gallery Characters*, NSW Art Gallery; *The foot of the storytellers Chair & The camel and other stories from overseas*, Bronwyn Vaughan; *Think in Thongs*, The Etcetera Duo; *The Green Sheep*, Windmill Performing Arts, 2007, Cate Fowler; *Time Travellers*, The Historic Houses Trust; *The Babies Proms*, Sydney Opera House; *Angela and Penny's Holiday & I love to Sing*, Justine Clarke, ABC Kids Entertainment; Murphy's Puppets; Jerral's Puppetry

### Jongleur performance:

Stalker Theatre; Legs on the Wall, Aeralise; *Celestial Bells*, Trans Express, 2003; *Sticky*, Improbable Theatre, 2004; The Sharks; The Fondue Set; The Hooley Dooleys, ABC Kids Entertainment; Dora the Explorer, Nick Jr; Barnaby, Vee Corporation and Hit Entertainment

### Young talent theatre:

*Encore*, NSW Arts Unit; MacDonald Eisteddford; *The Birds*, 2000, Australian Theatre for Young People; *Angels in the Architecture*, Shopfront Theatre for Young People, 2005, Dir: T.J. Ekleberg; *Stories in the Dark*, Australian Theatre for Young People, 2007, dir: T. Jones; *Freedom to Launch*, Dance Tank, 2007, dir: Anton; *Kamuyot*, Batsheva Ensemble, 2007, Dir: O. Nahirin

## CHAPTER THREE: MORE THAN JUST A PANTOMIME

**“To the question on “How should one act for children?” Stanislavsky had said “the same as for adults, only better.” But Braintev made a greater distinction: Not just better but with more transparency, more clearly and candidly. Any actor would want to act ‘better’ but to act more illuminously requires some special thought.”**

**Makariev (Morton, 1979, p.63).**

This chapter is in two parts. The first part seeks to understand how consumers generally perceive theatre for young audiences from a commercial perspective, particularly teachers and parents who are the predominantly targeted purchasers (Bourke & Hunter, 2011). The second part presents an alternative way of categorising the experience of theatre for young audiences according to philosophical ideals or purpose of the theatre makers, which are described in the poetics of six theoretical frameworks.

Even in this age of digital entertainment, there continues to be an eclectic range of live theatrical events available for young people. This is shown in the diverse experiences available not just in the traditional theatres, but in schools, museums, galleries, and even the fairground. *Appendix 1* tables the range of different places and contexts through which live performances for children might be viewed. As Bourke and Hunter (2011) explain, any smart marketer/presenter/venue manager is going to think about wooing the customer before thinking about the actual or resulting experience that happens for its audience. Giroux (1997) provides some insight into why consumers purchase particular experiences, by positing that they are often purchasing for others rather than themselves

### ***3.1 Categorising theatre for young people***

Typically, performance for young people falls into one of six cultural categories that can be understood in terms of marketing. The following is a brief outline of each of the six, which is followed by a more comprehensive examination of each category and sub-categories: traditional theatre, devised theatre, popular entertainment, educational theatre, jongleur amusement and showcasing talent.

### 3.2 Cultural theatre

“The love of ballet comes from those first wonderful experiences in the world of theatre, make-believe, beauty and mystery, and we love it when young people come to The Australian Ballet’s performances. Please remember however, that some younger ballet fans can have difficulty concentrating for long periods” (The Australian Ballet, 2012).

Cultural theatre refers to the idea of children attending theatre as a cultural experience. Such performances tend to be created by major performing companies such as Bell Shakespeare, Sydney Theatre Company, Opera Australia and Australian Ballet.

The works are often works in repertoire made *accessible* for young people either by attendance with a parent/carer or through *school-only* performances, which enable students to ask questions at the end of the performance.

Productions tend to be of a classical nature endorsing the ideal of high art and a “cultural cannon” that recognises that particular genres or plays have particular values for the community. Focus is therefore on quality, accessible performances as products through which young people can become familiar with particular artforms and the protocol of theatre and secondly, become acculturated to the process and habit of going to the theatre. For this reason major producers have education departments dedicated to informing teachers about specific performances appropriate to their curriculums and learning outcomes, as well as small teams that travel to the schools themselves. Some are even looking into video conferencing (Opera Australia, 2012).

This category hints at what Brecht and Benjamin term a bourgeois or illusionary theatre (Eagleton, 1976, in Gale and Deeney, 2010, p.489) in that the works tend to be seen within a traditional theatre space and are not automatically available to all. The Australian Ballet (2012) information for “children at the theatre“(2012) endorses this. For while children are encouraged, parents are also reminded that children should be prepared, that children sometimes find it hard to sit through, that they must be considerate of other patrons and that they may be asked to go to the foyer if the child is too talkative.

### **3.2.1 Family-orientated opera**

Attendance to appropriate performances educates the audience of tomorrow. An example might be *La Cenerentola* (Opera Australia, 2009), in which unfamiliar music or ways of staging are contextualised within the familiar story of Cinderella. Young attendees would be pre-prepared to know the differences in the story and the language, which may be confusing for some. *The Magic Flute* (Opera Australia, 2012), directed by Julie Taymor, offered a libretto sung in English and punctuated by spoken dialogue to speed the action and make it more appealing to younger viewers. Here an unfamiliar story becomes accessible through its simplified storytelling, larger-than-life pantomimic characters and spectacular staging produced through a prism of Chinese Noh theatre, utilising magnificent puppetry, set design and costuming.

### **3.2.2 Shakespeare and the canon**

Bell Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (2006), seen at the Sydney Opera Playhouse, represents classical performances of the cultural canon. Students privileged to see this performance would have had the opportunity not just to familiarise themselves with the plot as revision but also to understand how theatre can articulate a particular interpretation of a play. The strengths of Evans' production were the academic interpretation of the text, which explored truth and illusion within the bard's text, and the intellectual approach to design in particular set and costuming. The value of such performances is that they enable young people to experience the work as it was intended, as a way of nurturing appreciation of the classics and their ongoing relevance to humanity. In certain performances students would have the opportunity to ask questions afterwards.

### **3.2.3 Ballet**

Other opportunities to enjoy purest classical art form performances are in ballet repertoire favourites such as *The Nutcracker*, *Coppelia* and *Sleeping Beauty*. *Swan Lake* performed by the Paris Opera Ballet (2006), though performed for a general audience, also appeals to children aged six and up. These traditional dance productions recreate the fairy tales within the style and genre of the courtly ballet productions of two



centuries ago, thus carrying on a French heritage. Elements still seen in most performances include spectacular sets, costumes in the nineteenth century style box set, choral performances, pas de deux, the courtly competition, and pomposity which still resounds from French court trajectory.

In summary, cultural theatre represents the experience of art for art's sake, and the desire to acculturate young people into understanding and appreciating these works and theatre spaces as part of their heritage. From an educational point of view, such performance can introduce students to certain playwrights, historical performance styles or design aspects, which can be studied further in the national curriculum within an educational context. The aesthetical elements, which characteristically delight and enchant the audience, will be further explored in chapter five. The next category concentrates not so much the experience as art but on the socio-cultural development of the child spectator.

### ***3.3 Devised theatre***

“This theatre expects an audience to be intelligent, curious, savvy and demanding and wanting to engage” (Jigsaw, 2012).

“In a culture pre-occupied with the material world the theatre we make offers a powerful connection to the inner lives of children” (Patch, 2012).

“Innovation in our work is to discover new theatrical forms” (Polyglot, 2012).

Devised theatre refers to works created by companies specifically interested in the young audience from toddlers to eighteen years. It is characterised by embracing the chaos of young families and creating work that directly interests young people at their different developmental stages. Its aim is to develop young people's imagination, analytical thinking and acceptance or openness to new ideas or stories being differently presented. Like picture books, they have layers of meaning for the adult audience that attends performances with their young children. As the artistic director of Patch Theatre, Dave Brown (2010) “we seek to provoke, tickle, prod and beguile children with performance that celebrate the experience of childhood, the joys of play, the whim

of the imagination, the struggle to make meaning and the challenge of growing and developing through the most complex and telling phase of their lives”.

Devised theatre is identified by its aims to produce exemplary theatre for young audiences through “rigorous development processes to produce innovative, exciting works” (Jigsaw Theatre, 2012). These companies explore experimental theatre styles, crossing forms “of physical theatre/dance, image/puppetry, storytelling and song, ensemble work” (Red Leap, 2012). Ideas are inspired by books, issues, poems, art or a piece of music which are then workshopped to develop them into creative art pieces. Many companies are inspired by the artistry of the children “as experts in creative thinking” (Polyglot, 2012). Polyglot makes interactive theatre where audiences play an active part in the creation of imagined worlds. These are gallery and theatre experiences to create physical environments which invite active involvement such as in the repertoire works *Tangled* (Polyglot, 2012) and *We Built This City* (Polyglot, 2008). Windmill creates a unique installation work *The Story Thieves for 2013* as part of the Adelaide Festival.

Devised theatre falls into the experimental theatre category detailed in *Table 1* found in the appendix. Unlike the literary work of Traditional theatre, this type of work embraces symbolic theatre in which language “is still important but it is what happens [*staging-wise*] that transcends” (Esslin, 1968, p.26 [*italics my own*]).

### ***3.3.1 Hybrid cultures***

Kim Carpenter’s *Lulie and the Iceberg* (Theatre of Image, 2007), a dramatisation of the Japanese picture book by HIIH Princess Hisako of Takamado, utilised the dance style particular to the Bangarra Dance Company. The production showcased four dancer-performers, four Japanese shadow puppeteers, and an audio-visual animated package that ran alongside the live performance for the duration of the whole performance. There were also live musicians and a number of stage crew and childhood advisors. Audiences attending this performance were treated to a cultural hybrid of dance, animation and shadow puppetry. Themes explored in this performance included the search for belonging and the hero’s quest. Within the journey children were also

exposed to the reality of the different environments and the personalities that live within them including less-affable characters like the Chilean dictator!

### **3.3.2 Naturalism**

*Afternoon of the Elves* (Windmill Performing Arts, 2006), created for an 8-13yr audience, exemplified a more naturalistic approach from Janet Taylor Lisle's (1989) book to theatre performance. This adaptation detailed a relationship between a "popular" girl and the "outsider" who is discovered looking after her very sick mother. The dramatisation incorporated an elaborate naturalistic set on a revolving stage that could alternate between the fences of the back of two adjoining villa houses and their garden. Costumes, props and lighting were also naturalistic and utilised as though happening in real time. The acting and performance styles were realistic and intended to recreate the real emotions of the situation moment by moment according to character, as theorised by Stanislavsky (1990[1963]). To all intents and purposes, this performance mirrored an adult performance, but it explored and reflected themes universally significant to the concerns of school-aged child viewers.

### **3.3.3 Big ideas**

What characterises devised theatre is not the cast or production size but the attempt to portray big ideas, which expand upon the narrative in an imaginative way. *Arborio* (Jigsaw Theatre, 2005) focused on the human dilemmas of whether to eat now or sow the seeds for future prosperity. The use of Brechtian (Willett, 1963) staging, live music accompaniment, simplicity of set and a solid giant grain of rice that could be repositioned to indicate different *chronotopes* (Bakhtin, 1981) was mesmerising and engaging. Similarly, *Hidden Dragon* (Barking Gecko Theatre, 2004), using simple symbolic staging in which flags represented dragons, created a thought-provoking performance through which themes of cultural identity were explored.

As shown, devised theatre is often inspired by the artwork of picture books. Tan's *The Red Tree* (Queensland Art Centre, 2004), dramatised for the *Out of the Box* Children's Festival, illustrates brave attempts at exposing younger audiences to themes that include depression, loss and the search for self; works that exemplify the growing interest in

theatre for adolescents who additionally search for identity and place (Erikson, 1994). Another Tan book, *The Lost Thing* (Jigsaw Theatre, 2004), was also targeted towards adolescents. The standout aspect of this production was the staging, which placed the audience almost in the middle of the performance area surrounded by the detailed design reflecting faithful adherence to both the art and themes of the book. The character of the boy, however, was shared between a number of performers and puppets of varying sizes. This aspect of production was challenging but incredibly fascinating for those elder members who knew the book but who were surprised and intrigued by the way in which it was told.

### ***3.3.4 Vaudeville and absurdity***

*Fluff* (Cre8ion, 2004) offered a vaudevillian, surreal engagement, which evoked a *Blytonesque* world of living toys. The production challenged assumptions that children need to have chronologically driven narrative, and created a performance in which the sisters looked after the toys in real time. Only the circumstance by which the sisters got the toys was shown audio/visually on the screen as a way of putting the performance in context. This rather absurd, fascinating and quirky performance was never the less very simple and easy to follow. It relied on visual body language, gestures and dance (which children could easily understand) as a way of creating communication between the three live characters and their attitudes to the inanimate toys they had rescued. While the production value was somewhat “kitsch”, it still successfully portrayed the powerful message that even the smallest being is important; the recording of their voices and its playback to the audiences endorsed this ideal.

### ***3.3.5 Storytelling***

The *Little Match Stick Girl* (Gruppe 38, 2007) was an extraordinary theatrical experience for young and old alike, narrated word-for-word as written by Hans Christian Andersen (1993 [1845]). What made the performance effective was the simplicity of the theatrical techniques and Brechtian-style banter around the story in which the audience is told exactly what is going to happen. The storyteller spoke softly and gently, introducing the sound-maker and light-maker who were to create the effects.

These slowly paced techniques broke many of the rules about performing for young audiences, and yet a packed house of young people aged 8-13yrs was mesmerised.

### **3.3.6 Visual illusion**

*Twinkle Twinkle Little Fish* (Windmill, 2003) examples a more spectacular form of devised theatre in a physical theatre piece, relying on puppetry and physicality. This work was a holistic interpretation of the body of work created by picture book artist Eric Carle rather than a direct retelling of a particular story, and as such was an aesthetic appreciation of his artwork. Child audiences enjoyed recognising iconic representations from the stories they knew. Alongside exemplary short puppet vignettes, audiences were also treated to the visual pleasures of the artwork, which recreated the unique style of Carle's portfolio.

*A World of Paper* (Windmill, 2003) was a beautifully staged performance piece in which the set folded up like origami to evolve new images as part of the story. Like the giant rice in *Aborio* (Jigsaw Theatre, 2004), it was both prop and set. Children as young as three sat fascinated as the set folded and changed.

### **3.3.8 Challenging work**

“Forsaking the romantic niceties, Cornwall's Kneehigh Theatre is starkly uncompromising in its confrontation with the fairytale's dark underbelly, its message of desire as the destroyer” (Blain, 2011)

English theatre works, *Grim Tales* (Bristol Old Vic, 1998), *Shockheaded Peter* (Improbable Theatre, 2005), *The Red Shoes* (Knee High Theatre, 2011). epitomise devised theatre in their use of robust, daring techniques of performance: eerie carnival music, dark humour, gothic sets, and grotesque portrayals. Performances are stylised, hence forcing the audience to “leap the gap” in terms of meaning. In all cases irreverent burlesque humour, that included blood spurting out of characters represented by red ribbons and sudden unsentimental appearances of ghoulish characters, further pushed the boundaries of what is nice, polite and safe despite being based on books for children. Unlike traditional children's theatre where it is usual to adhere to one theatre style, devised theatre is by interspersed story-telling qualities which include surprises or

‘suddenlies’ (Wood & Grant, 1997). Moments of realism are intermixed with puppetry, mime and stylised action. This aspect of story-telling requires that an audience suspends disbelief in order to swing across time and space, not by camera tricks but changes of performance style and body language, voice, looks and gestures.

What characterises devised theatre is the attempt to “think outside the square”, and aspects such as venue architecture, where the audience might sit, how they might be moved and so forth; portrayal of characters including the possibility that representations can be shared by both actor and puppets as in *The Lost Thing*; symbolic representations such as the movement of the snake in *Dr Egg and The Man With No Ear* (The Sydney Opera House & Performing Lines, 2007); challenging ideas and ethics; audience participation in meaningful debate, such as in *Emergence* (Synarcade Audio-Visuals, 2006); and finally, alternation between realistic acting and caricatured or stylised performance techniques. This emphasis on work that encourages critical thinking on human conditions will be explored in chapter eight.

As discussed, creating theatre that deliberately evokes and expands the imagination falls on the continuum of experimental theatre, which revolutionised European theatre in the late nineteenth and early twenty centuries and which served as an instrument for philosophical enquiry. As such, all the devised performances for young audiences recognise the incredible opportunities that theatre presents for creating exciting, thought-provoking performances even for the youngest viewer. These works provide meaningful theatre experiences that foster thinking about and understanding of the human condition. They are motivated by social and cultural concerns. The next category looks to works created predominately for commercial interests.

### ***3.4 Popular entertainment***

“Disney Theatrical Group (DTG) is among the world’s most successful commercial theatre enterprises, producing or licencing live entertainment events that reach a global annual audience of more than 20 million people in more than 40 countries” (Disney Theatrical Group, 2012)

“HIT Entertainment is one of the world’s leading children’s entertainment producers and rights owners. HIT Entertainment is a division of Fisher-Price, and its portfolio includes Thomas & Friends®, Barney® , Bob the Builder®, Fireman Sam®, Angelina Ballerina® ...Through the delivery of engaging and inspiring content, HIT Entertainment has earned the trust of millions of parents and caregivers around the world” (HIT Entertainment, 2012)

Like cultural theatre and devised theatre, the term popular entertainment encapsulates a wide range of styles; however a defining feature is to let oneself go, to enjoy aspects of performance which will be discussed at length in chapters four and five. As implied in the descriptions exemplified above by the companies creating popular entertainment, the rationale behind the work is broad exposure financial incentive.

#### ***3.4.1 For all the family***

*Disney on Ice* (Disney, 2006), in its various manifestations, is a good example of popular entertainment where audience members go, not because they particularly like dancing on ice, but primarily because they enjoy the familiarity and comfort of the Disney films and their associated characters. It is precisely this sense of familiarity and the perceived lack of risk that encourages the audiences to pay huge ticket prices (Brecht [Willett, 1964, p.36]).

Together with the experience of the actual performance, families also parade past the numerous merchandise stalls that flank entrances into the arena. The fair or carnival setting through which the audience must walk and spend money is, as suggested by Bennett (1997), an intrinsic part of the whole performance experience built through aspects such as treat foods, a trophy toy, the hustle and bustle which endorse the excitement and sense that it is an “out of the ordinary” experience. Once the performance begins the audience is treated to bite-size montages of the children’s favourite films all packed in to maximise the excitement of seeing favourite characters emerge.

Disney performances have extremely high production values, created to endorse the perfect ideal of the brand, representing the extreme face of illusion (Giroux & Pollack,

2010). They are performances in which to forget the everyday world, join in and chant and scream and then return to the everyday world satisfied. A Disney performance is not likely to change one's life in any deep way, but it does constitute a break or a holiday. The enormity of such spectacle productions is breathtaking, choreographed with huge casts, glittering costumes, lights and music. For many families going to the theatre is a financial gamble, so akin to the annual UK pantomime, the Disney spectacle incorporates the all-in-one, theatrical, guaranteed fun experience: romance, transformation, magic, illusion, comedy, skilled performers, dance, spectacle, clowning and celebrity appearances by favourite Disney characters. The importance of this special treat for many families is highlighted in both the ephemeral excitement of experience and in the souvenir trinkets and memorabilia attached to it.

### ***3.4.2 Accessible entertainment***

Popular entertainment is accessible. It does not require the audience to think deeply about the work, but it does require the audience to participate or respond to it. As such all performances based on and developed from popular children's television characters represent a form of popular entertainment and opportunities for "upselling". Performances will be well produced in terms of their show value but the selling of merchandise is of equal importance. As such these performances are travelling markets with the spectacle, or the musical remixes (Disney Live, 2012) as the main attraction.

The Wiggles (2012), though a successful commercial brand, started their careers as educationalists who with the help of Jeff Fat released an album in 1991. Their appeal is in easy-to-remember songs and cute, non-threatening characters such as Dorothy the Dinosaur and Captain Feathersword. The Wiggles themselves have developed loveable characteristics that give them the appeal of old family members, like Jeff who falls asleep all the time. In this sense they represent the familiarity of uncles. Their childlike approach is the very quality that makes them so accessible and knowable for children. Their silliness also empowers children to know more than they do (Wood & Grant, 1997).



Popular Entertainment such as the Disney on Broadway (2012) repertoire and Thomas the Tank Engine (Milestone Productions & Hit Entertainment, 2006) is seen in the large arena venues, and also in local community RSL spaces in the guise of The Fairies (The Fairies Pty Ltd, ABC Events), Barney and Friends (Pertie & Hit Entertainment, 2007) and other television personalities performing the live circuits. Sydney councils program ABC characters to appear at parks as part of particular festivals like Christmas, The Sydney Harbour Bridge birthday celebrations and so on. The appeal of all these performances is in the opportunity for children to meet their favourite celebrity and as such endorses the appeal of star watching. A bonus is the opportunity to actively participate through song and dance in the performance activities or passively sit and watch from a distance (essentially to take in the atmosphere).

### ***3.4.3 Costumed Character; “the Skins”***

A unique aspect of children’s entertainment is that the television celebrities children wish to see are often in the form of animated or puppet-operated characters of cartoon, animal and even inanimate forms; for example, the cuddly monster characters of *Sesame Street* (Sesame Workshop), *Dorothy the Dinosaur* (The Wiggles), Tickle the koala and Kangaroo of the Hooley Dooley’s (ABC Events), *Dora the Explorer* (Nick Jr, 2010), and so on. Such characters are brought to life by whole-body costumes or “skins” form. Children respond to the costume only and the “puppet” performers are interchangeable within it. Performers thus use the costume in a similar way to a mask. This aspect of popular theatre is close to the jongleur performances of the street entertainer.

### ***3.4.4 Safe and wholesome***

In the main, popular theatre based on children’s television shows is wholesome. Endorsed values imply children are creative, resourceful individuals who should be accepted as equal, listened to and respected. As discussed in chapter two, this reflects the anxieties currently abounding in the cohort of older Sydney mothers around their child’s development and the desire to cushion children with safe, loving, warm, nurturing, softened environments. The salubrious pastiches of the performances imply

and reflect an idealised childhood. The combination of singing, comedy, spectacle, and familiar celebrity characters recreates an experience resembling a holiday.

Levy (1993) articulates that the wide appeal of popular theatre is that parents themselves feel safe taking their children to these performances because, like going to fast food restaurants, the audience has a sense that they “know what they are getting”. This sense of safety is endorsed by the re-creation of either stories or characters that are familiar. Further, it generally presents a homogenised and idealised view of the world that reflects the audience’s own sentimental preferences; the action is contained, predictable and the endings are always happy (Giroux, 1997).

Popular theatre is categorised as festival theatre because it represents the ideal of a special “one off” occasion. As discussed above, many families will attend not because it is culturally rewarding but because it is special holiday occasion. Production values within popular festival entertainment therefore unconsciously endorse the values of consumerism. This is not necessarily reflected in the performances but within the merchandise selling that frames the performance itself, which further explored in chapter three. The next category looks at performance as a tool for learning.

### ***3.5 Educational theatre***

“Young Australia Workshop is a Sydney based company producing in-school programs and theatre productions for schools throughout Australia. Established thirty years ago, it is the largest privately owned management of its kind in Australasia” (Young Australia Workshop, Arts in Education, 2012)

Like the works discussed in devised theatre, this category also endorses a desire to expand young people’s thinking, develop cultural experience and knowledge of the world, and provide a platform for personal development. Many of the works do so in a low-key manner, touring with little financial funding or technical resources.

#### ***3.5.1 Salon theatre and intimate performance***

Educational theatre often takes place in intimate non-theatre spaces that might be referred to as salon spaces. Salon theatre traditionally meant works created for showing

in the private salons of upper-class houses. In these domestic spaces, there were little technical resources like lighting and sound effects, and the performance was much more akin to creating an atmosphere of friendship through which individuals might share and develop ideas (Case, 1988). This atmosphere is today re-created in performances not in the halls of private houses but in the public spaces of local libraries, town hall, museums, galleries and Historic House Trust properties such as Government House, Vaucluse House and even the tiny terraces of Susannah Place.

The theatrical storyteller Bronwyn Vaughan easily fits into intimate places. Her show, *The camel and other tales from overseas (Carnivale Festival, 2004)*, was shown at the Seymour Centre on the level I of the entrance, which provided a safe place for even the youngest child to run around if they could not sit still through a formal performance. Though Vaughan does not use theatre lights, she creates beautiful props and sets for her storytelling performances which double as puppets within the performance, making her show extremely transportable and adaptable to any space. For instance, her talking armchair (*The foot of the storyteller's chair, 2005*), doubles as a character within the performance as well as a “function” or prop to hide surprises. With only herself as story maker, she relies on techniques of vocal dexterity, changing characters, puppetry, music and personal interaction with the audience. Her narratives tell of respect and cautions, thrills and excitement endorsing Warner's (1996) ideas of mother goose as the wandering traveller returning with marvellous tales of other people and cultures.

Another example of a salon theatre performance includes *Think in Thongs (The Etcetera Duo, 2004)*, shown at the Art Gallery of NSW, 2005. The performance was devised as a way of showcasing or drawing attention to some of the artworks on display in the “Modern Art” section of the gallery. Staged in a traditional English Punch and Judy puppet tent with a video installed next to it and slowly changing from one art image to another, the live performance itself mirrored the a slow transformation of one image to another through illusion, magic and puppetry skills. The performance had a surreal quality laced with subtle humour. At the end of the performance the audience was encouraged to go and find the real artworks.

### ***3.5.2 Installation theatre***

*The Green Sheep* produced and toured by Windmill illustrates a desire to research and include performance for the very youngest. This production visited the Utzon Room, Sydney Opera House in 2007, and also examples installation theatre, another form of salon theatre. There were no lighting effects for the piece and all music was created live for the performance. The cast of four actors/workshop leaders told the story as though reading it directly from the book. The set was a pen that held all the children, and the action took place in and around them. This inclusive sensory approach encouraged participation within the storytelling and demonstrated an experimental approach to developing theatre as an aesthetic architectural experience.

### ***3.5.3 Visiting theatre groups***

Performances presented in school halls also represent the salon theatre experience. Glen Leitch Management (2012), Young Australia Workshop has a catalogue of performances, suitable to be played in spaces with little or no lighting and sound back-up required, which complement the national school curriculum in various ways. Performances vary from teaching young people about water conservation, to mime techniques, to historical facts, to literature adaptations. What links these diverse groups is the easily transportable nature of the performances and small companies in which actors are usually stage/production crew as well. Often the required set and costumes are minimal and easily transformable to different places and into numerous characters. An excellent example of this is Bell Shakespeare's *Actors at work* program for schools. The four actors, two males and two females, perform a repertoire of two performances, each presenting a theoretical approach to Shakespeare such as love or jealousy. The only set is two "Bell Shakespeare" banners. The basic costumes are black with colourful tee-shirts and character skirts by which modern girls can slip into more romantic characters. The 2006 season focused on providing young people with experience of the rather alienating and strange language as fast, fun and extremely understandable. The bite-size performances are framed within the context of young people talking and commenting on the text itself rather like the audience might do in the schoolyard. As such, the implied young person of the very audience watching is then morphed into the Shakespearean characters themselves. The pieces are fast paced, energetic, sexy, and

passionate. The ideal is that the audience will come out of the performance a little more open to Shakespeare in the classroom. This focus of young people watching themselves is further supported by the Question and Answer (Q & A) session afterwards.

#### ***3.5.4 Promenade performance***

A completely different style of education theatre is the *Time Traveller* program produced by the Historic Houses Trust between 2005 and 2009 over different properties. *Time travellers* at Elizabeth Farm was a promenade performance in which a small audience was taken back in time through magic words to meet real people who lived and worked in the house. Likewise in 2006, the time travelling audience went in and out of time to help return a cryptic message for the Susannah Place shop in its current day. Both performances provided a dual experience. The first part was that of being given a mission and taken back in time by a guide. This aspect of the performance was the framework and required the audience to suspend their disbelief and “play the game”. The second aspect was a fly on the wall experience of “witnessing” a real conversation, taking place in real time. The showings provided historical facts for the plays but the real value of the experience was not so much the history lesson but in the audience’s opportunity to think and empathise with different people in different situations. The magic was generated in the real historical spaces in which both actors and audience walked. Susannah Place was particularly interesting because children had to imagine themselves space jumping into different time zones, enforcing the idea that history encapsulates many eras and involves changing people and environments. In all, the *Time Traveller* experiences of the real-life setting and authentic historical artefacts, costume and props assisted in creating an aspect of wonder for the children.

Other promenade performances that might be likened to the salon theatre experience were the NSW Gallery Guides program, character tours by extravagant personalities such as *Queen of Sheba* (2005) or *Ngununy* (2006), who are the living embodiments of the displayed art. Their role is to escort and engage young people with specific activities and stories around the exhibited work. These performances are interesting from an acting point of view because they combine flamboyant characterisation within the presentation of a real, breathing, living person performing a professional museum guide

role in order to inform children about the gallery using stories. These performances are a combination of Stanislavsky character development, guiding skills (for accurate information), street performer (audience engagement) and storyteller.

### **3.5.5 Teacher guides**

Performances that emulate the melding of teacher, guide and performer include the Dinosaur Hunt at the Powerhouse Museum (Erth Visual and Physical Inc., 2006). In this performance, children could glimpse the video footage of a real dinosaur growing in an egg, experience a professor explaining the egg and then a hunt for and meeting with the baby dinosaur. Here again, children are asked to suspend their disbelief, particularly as the magnificently detailed dinosaur does not hide the puppeteer beneath.

This “live” dinosaur experience, like that of the NSW Galley Guides described above, represents work designed to accompany and enhance a particular purpose or message. Each performance articulates particular educational and curatorial aims of the cultural institution or exhibition in which it sits. Thus, children are privy to cultural dances and performance from all around the world depending on the work that is on display or being highlighted at the institution at that time. Educational and cultural programs like these provide exposure to new ideas in shortened, digestible forms that can easily be remembered by young people and applied to formal school learning. As such these programs are popular with many aspirational Sydney parents seeking to provide a constant stream and variety of educational activities popularly termed as “edutainment” meaning *learning through play*, a term that originally came from the computer industry as a way of describing programs designed for teaching but that had an entertainment component to increase their appeal (White, 2011).

### **3.5.6 Shared experiences**

At its best, educational theatre is a shared experience, engrossing young people into the arts. The *Babies Proms* (Sydney Opera House), *Playschool* (ABC Events), Justine Clarke’s *I like to Sing*, (ABC Events, 2007), *Angela and Penny’s Holiday* (ABC Events, 2006), Murphy’s Puppets (2005) and Jerral’s Puppetry (2007) all represent performances that desire to include, respect and encourage children of all ages to enjoy

the arts in the same way their parents would appreciate a book. As such, educational theatre exemplifies the cosy, intimate theatre experience. Performers remind us of the extensive storytelling, musical, and physical skills of the travelling troubadour (poetry) masters of the past who wove their magic in the private homes of the upper-class and who represented some of the finest artisans, thinkers and problem-solvers of their day.

Theatre for learning thus represents shared, interactive story and musical experiences; and ultimately, whether the details of the actual performance are remembered or not, it is the experience that constitutes the most important part of the event. In this way theatre for learning also represents community, fairness and openness due to its accessibility and equitable low costs.

The next category looks at entertainment created for a variety of performance in a variety of context and is important because many young people who will not see live performance in a theatre context may see performance at a local event.

### ***3.6 Jongleur performance***

“Yabadoo Kids parties services the entire metropolitan area and provides entertainment for birthday parties, christenings, councils, corporate events, Christmas parties, product launches, preschools, promotional events, shopping centres, fairs and just about every other event under the sun” (Yabadoo Entertainment, 2012)

“Our passion for being innovative, fresh, and creative ensures that we deliver the ideal entertainment and event solutions for you in an easy, stress-free manner” (Music Theatre Australia, 2012)

“Experience Dinosaurs close up in this interactive theatre performance of gigantic proportions” (Erth Petting Show described in Carriageworks, 2012)

If some performers of educational theatre remind us of the travelling troubadour, the modern equivalent of the jongleur might be found in the form of the public art performer and the street entertainer. Embodying the skills of the circus acrobat, fire-eater and tightrope walker combined, jongleurs would sometimes accompany tale-

telling troubadours in medieval Europe (McKechnie, 1969). The joy of such performance is in the unpredictable feats, the brash banter and cheekiness.

### ***3.6.1 Large-scale performances***

Today, public space performances emit these same elements in the skins, on stilts, in the giant interactive puppets and strange magnetic and even absurd characters. Erth (2012) exemplify such performances, creating spectacles for cultural festivals as well as corporate events in a variety of open and enclosed public spaces such as museums, large-scale theatre foyers and streets. The hypnotic effect of the daredevil stunt also continues in companies like Stalker, specialising in tumbling and stilt walking; Legs on the Wall walking up the side of public buildings; and Aeralize (2012) in acrobatic and trapeze display.

The fascination with large-scale creatures and fearless performance can be paralleled with the curious fascination of the original circuses that enabled ordinary citizens to see exotic (unbelievable) creatures, beings folk could never hope to see in their native countries. This aspect of the unbelievable truth exists in the wonder of installations that define the space for public performance. *Celestial Bells* (Trans Express, 2003) and *Sticky* (Improbable Theatre, 2004), performing with splendid costumes, stunts, cranes and fireworks to audiences of over twelve thousand, were reminiscent of the visual wonders of the medieval pageant plays. These companies specialise in street theatre performance which incorporate narrative through line, sound-scapes and musical scores that link industrial elements like machinery and buildings into a united whole. Such public performances not only redefine a space but also make it more conscious for the audience. In this way, public performance makes the familiar unfamiliar and engenders a new appreciation for the space itself.

### ***3.6.2 Roving minstrels***

Roving minstrels are the epitome of a sensory distraction and tend to work as ‘incidental’ experiences that accompany a main event. There are exceptions to this with certain street performances creating surreal mini texts around particular themes or ideas. The Sharks (2012) a “wry and witty performance investigating Australia’s obsession



with sun, surf and sand environment” as they swim, dive and parade through public spaces with their synchronised and syncopated dance movements and harmonies, are examples of such street “happenings” (Marowitz, 1978). All three characters perform in identical dress with uniquely choreographed movement and speech. The performance consists of a cycle of up to ten minutes which includes moving out together, branching out to target and interact with the public and then finding a way to come back together, to create a surreal piece of choreography or mini performance. The performance can have single or numerous cycles. Such performances are reminiscent of the happenings in the 1960s in which audience members were suddenly presented with an alienating concept of some kind.

### ***3.6.3 Distraction***

Performances in public spaces create moments of strangeness and curiosity for the audience; carnivalesque (Bakhtin, 1981) moments that take us from the ordinary to the extraordinary. The enjoyment of the moments of interactivity with both the familiar and the unfamiliar, and the ways in which they create an atmosphere and sense of occasion, are evident in the plethora of characters available for hire in the *Sydney's Child* (2012) each month. This suggests that the tradition of the travelling jongleur continues in clowns like Poncho and Bubbles (2012) who entertained passengers on the Sitmar and P&O Cruise liners between 1976-1995, whose original props now make up part of the National Maritime Museum Collection. They continue in a modern form in the superhero, magician, and fairies performing in private homes, public cultural institutions, and council funded fair days or corporate events.

Street and public art performance is on the continuum of all carnival performances, including medieval pageants and fairs. It represents entertainment as a moment's respite and distraction from the everyday and links to the ideal of festival as “turning the world upside down”. These themes will be explored further in chapter four.

### ***3.6.4 Marketing tools***

Commonly, festival or carnivalesque moments are utilised by marketing organisations as opportunities to sell, endorse and campaign their products. Shopping centres which

advertise visits and shows by popular television characters such as Barney® (HIT Entertainment, 2012) are in-effect attracting parents to the place where their children will be entertained while they purchase products. Such performances frame corporation give-a-ways and sale opportunities. This attitude of selling goods through performers was cited as the primary purpose of the forerunners of the original commedia dell'arte groups or jongleurs and continues well into the twenty-first century (Grantham, 2000).

The final category looks at ways theatre creates compelling performances while at the same time developing emerging creative artists from its youth.

### ***3.7 Young talent theatre***

“The Schools Spectacular is a world-class arena production and one of the largest annual events of its calibre anywhere in Australia – and arguably the world, From its ability to produce national and international stars, to its role in promoting inclusiveness and reconciliation, the Schools Spectacular has no peer” (Schools Spectacular, 2012).

“Shopfront is an inclusive artistic environment, and is committed to providing accessibility to our local and wider communities” (Shopfront, 2012).

“For almost eight decades Sydney Eisteddfod has been contributing to the evolving culture of the Australian nation by nurturing performance arts at a grass roots level. (Sydney Eisteddfod, 2012).

The Young talent category of entertainment represents performance by young people for young people produced by adults. Examples include *Encore*, *The Schools Spectacular* (2012) annually produced by The NSW Arts Unit (2012) at the Entertainment Centre numerous regional school spectaculars produced at the Sydney Opera House and Seymour Centre, and challenges such as the Macdonald's Sydney Eisteddfod (2012). Alongside showcases and competition-driven performances, The Australian Theatre for Young People (2012), PACT Centre for Emerging Artists (2012), and Shopfront Contemporary Arts for under-25s (2012) represent those organisations endorsing and developing the creative ideas of young people in order to produce narratives that reflect youth-driven ideas and passions.

### 3.7.1 Youth Theatre

*Angels in the Architecture* (Shopfront, Carlton Theatre, 2005) exemplified a creative performance developed in collaboration with a mixture of young people with and without special needs. The action happened within a surreal cityscape in which the audience was placed. In order to disorientate and disempower them, audience members were led to their seats through difficult routes, reinforcing the sense of entering a strange place. With the audience placed in the middle action happened in the round, causing people to look around them in ways which they would not normally do in theatre experiences, further emphasising the strange and alienating nature of the work. The soundscape was produced and created by the performers and reflected disaffecting, metallic jarring that enforced futuristic ideas of a wasted city. Similarly at the riverside theatre, ATYP produced *Stories in the Dark* (ATYP, Riverside Studio, 2007) evoking a futurist view of the world as the framework for the folktale, told as a way of coping and surviving in the real world. Such plays endorse young people's views of themselves as members of society and represent their dream and fears.

*Freedom to Launch* (Dance Tank, The Studio, 2007) also created a futuristic city in the Sydney Opera House Studio. In this work young people were facilitated to grasp the conceptual idea that youth have ideological freedom but are constrained by the world around them. In this performance the audience entered through a number of checkpoint installations in which individual performers, embodying control personnel of a brave new world, would stop and interrogate audience members. Once the audience was seated performers came together as an ensemble raging against a restrictive world. The work was characterised by strong emphasis on ensemble work and break-dance style performance. The group itself created the work based on moods over an intense workshop rehearsal period. Similarly, in *Bird* (ATYP, The Studio, 2000) the young company recreated a strange alienating city within the studio in which the audience's "space" was invaded. The Israeli performance, *Kamuyot* (Carriageworks, 2007) was another example of young people performing complex work in a stylised dance form. In this instance the audience configuration, which completely framed the performance space, also informed the overall effect as performers communicated directly with the audience who sat at extremely close proximity and were invited to contribute to the

performance by entering the stage, exploring boundaries of space. All these examples in youth theatre show a deliberate attempt to create unease in theatre, as proposed by Artaud (1958) in his theatre of cruelty. They also represent ways of reflecting the reality of the audience back to themselves an idea of that will be explored further in chapter eight

Opportunities to both participate in and watch performances such as these provide significant learning and self-development experiences. They offer communal events for young people that evoke growth both as an individual and in teams. The majority of the performers will not necessarily become theatre professionals, but they can nonetheless gain efficacy and insight through the exposure. Young talent theatre thus promotes both artistic and personal experiences. For the child audience it provides affirmation and a sense of capability in producing performance of artistic merit regardless of age. The genre provides inspiration, “I can/want to be like that”; helps understanding of the protocol and discipline of being a performer, crew and audience member; and, most significantly, it reinforces the message that youth are important.

### ***3.8 Towards a new way of categorising***

By identifying six categories by which theatre for young people might be commonly marketed according to commercial values, this chapter challenges the concept that theatre for young audiences has value only as a tool for education or diversion. However, as noted earlier, in most instances theatre performances do not neatly sit into one specific cultural framework or ideological function. The following six chapters thereby propose six alternative codes by which to examine ways theatre producers attempt to engage and guide audiences in their performances. Though as discussed there are inevitable cross-overs, in general a presentation will lean towards one or two main rhetorical values, which reflect the ideological purpose or “perlocutionary” function for the performance. As noted in the introduction chapter, the six codes are:

1. *Revelry*, the system that aims to communicate a raucous sense of euphoric, *cathartic* energy and unity through audience participation, carnivalesque laughter and fear.

2. *Enchantment*, the system that communicates a sense of *soothing* and surrender to a sense of sublime wonder and hope.
3. *Instruction*, the system that *teaches*.
4. *Identity*, the system that aims to *connect* on a personal level, in which individuals recognise themselves or something of their own lives. .
5. *Enlightenment*, the system that shows diversity and *critical thinking* about philosophical and social issues.

The following chapters will systematically focus on each artistic code as a way of beginning with the code of *Revelry*.

## CHAPTER 4: THE ENGAGEMENT OF REVELRY

**revelry** v. **1.** To take pleasure or delight **2.** To make merry, indulge in boisterous festivities **3.** An occasion of merrymaking or noisy festivity with dancing, etc. from of reveller, orig., to make noise rebel, from rebellare - reveller.

**Associated theatre system:** Commedia dell'arte and vaudeville

**Driving Purpose:** Cathartic emotional release

**Audience:** Peripheral, shouting and contributing to the action, with their calls and their emotions which get them out of their seats.

**Theatre events, that example using these engagement styles are:**

*The Paper Bag Princess* (2007) based on the book by Robert Munsch & Michael Martchenko, performed by Zeal Theatre at Powerhouse Museum, Sydney

*Little Red Riding Hood* (2009) performed by The Acting Factory at Norman Lindsay Gallery, Faulconbridge

*Three little pigs and the big bad wolf* (2008) performed by The Acting Factory at Lewes Art Galley, Penrith

*Just Macbeth* (2009) based on book by Andy Griffith, performed by Bell Shakespeare at Sydney Theatre, Sydney

*Monkeyshines: Kaberet 4 Kids* (2008) performed by Loose Cannon at The Studio, Sydney Opera House, Sydney

*Murphy's puppets* performed regularly at places such the Art Gallery, NSW

## CHAPTER 4: THE ENGAGEMENT OF REVELRY

**“The mind contends with changing levels of biologically based drive tension, seeking discharge in action or fantasy...through discharge, psychic equilibrium is restored” (Freud in Erwin, 2002, p. 422)**

This chapter examines the rhetoric of *Revelry* as the first system of engagement and as the artistic code for creating a sense of mayhem and joyful revolution within performance for young audiences. In particular this chapter examines the pleasures of *Revelry* as the philosophical paradigm of carnival and through associated frameworks of *Survival* (the will to survive), the *Grotesque* (protecting oneself from contamination), *Anarchy and Defiance* (eating and consuming), *Revelation* (seeing behind the mask), *Unity* (a sense of being one of the tribe) and *Presence* (staying with the action). This chapter also determines *Revelry* as an invitation for the audience to connect verbally and physically with the performance, and to express allegiance with certain characters. Within this context *Revelry* is the celebration of freedom, and as such manifests itself as the act of rebellion and disclosure meaning to defy, resist and rise up against authority or to control, manifest, utter repugnance, or to wage war (as conquered people). It may also be seen in terms of a discharge of tension as surmised in Freud’s pleasure principle (Drufresne & Ritcher, 2011).

Many performances for young people have at least some element of *Revelry* within their presentation, possibly because *Revelry* is the embodiment of cathartic release, the emotional explosion that keeps the viewer glued to the action and firmly anchored in the present as a moment of what Csíkszentmihályi and Robinson (1990) termed “flow”. It associates with Dionysian ideals of both tragedy and comedy as the essence of the theatre; the comedy response of life over death (Campbell, 1988); and reflects the “spontaneous rite of passage” (Turner, 1995); the drama of the battlefield and the sports field; as well as the outrageous Rabelaisian atmosphere of the “carnavalesque” (Bakhtin 1981).

#### ***4.1 Artistic purpose***

The artistic code of *Revelry* aims to engage an audience by deliberately provoking and exciting them through a combination of different theatrical events designed to create unease, tension and mayhem. Like that of gothic horror, these techniques are the essence of thrill. Entertainment Park experiences like *Titanic – The Experience* (Technifex, Fox Studios, 1999) and *Prison Break* (Sudden Impact Entertainment, Luna Park, 2006), as well as works like the *Amazing Room (Erth, Carriageworks, 2008)* described in chapter two, thus employ actors to dramatically build up the anticipation as part of the total experience. Their role is to recruit the audience into playing their part as recipients emotionally, to take them through a dramatic experience as though it is actually happening. In these “rides” up to two thirds of the actual event is in the build-up of the “real life” scenario simulated through set, costumes, sound and light effects as well as human contacts. Once atmosphere is established the audience is alerted by a sudden alarm, a physical jolt of the set, which along with the acted fear response of the actor/guides responding to emergency commands including closing all doors combine to theatrically enhance the thrill experience and therefore the engagement which has been expanded from merely physical to psychological and participatory as well. Such experiences, like all cathartic responses demand a sense of immediacy, of being present. It is a “thisness” (Johnston, 1998) or flow that enables the spectator to focus only on matters being dealt with right now.

These experiences mirror the uncomfortable fascination of seeing a dangerous act in the circus or the excitement of participating in a wild carnival.

##### ***4.1.1 Revelry and its emergence from the carnivalesque***

Recognised by colourful procession or wild social dramas that engulf the community, and epitomised by demon masks, flamboyant characters and dangerous acts including death defying circus acts, as well as participation in scary ride experiences enjoyed by performers and audience alike, *Carnival*, as popular theatre, is the performative language of a tribal response to overcoming common fears within a particular group or society (White, 1988). As such it represents ways of either neutralising threats or appearing to have power over fears. Bristol (1985) identifies carnival as an effective



method of keeping in control, and this is a dual truth for both the “oppressed” and “the oppressor”. In carnival, bogeymen reflect social structures and social fears, “who eats” and “who gets eaten”? Within the drama the oppressor is mocked, ridiculed and vanquished, advancing the freedom of the oppressed.

As the theatricalised enactment of social expression and freedom, carnival philosophically evokes Rabelaisian revolution by kicking against authority in the form of lewd jokes, taboo topics, guttural belly laughs, and physicality. Further its apparent spontaneity and momentum of carnage mirrors the feasting jollity inspired by Bacchus the wine god with its raucous energy, good versus evil values and domination, us (as right) against the other (as wrong). In this sense, carnival enacts anarchic rebellion rising up against repression, and appeals to *dividuation* unity (mass response): furiously vanquishing enemies; surviving against the odds; battling against the foe, all exciting the primal part of the brain that enjoys the chase and wants to abandon or “blow itself” (Greenfield, 2001, p.77). Hence carnivalesque evokes the joyous battle song, the sense of righteousness against the oppressor, the safety of numbers (individuation versus dividuation) and through such performativity encompasses both performer and spectator as a united team.

Identifying the things we love to hate and either rising up against, or alternatively lifting up and cheering those people who we feel to be like us, is the very heart of *Revelry*. However, as Bakhtin (1981) notes, the drama itself is only temporary allowing, as Bristol (1985) observes, the majority to rejoice, to expel energy and then return meekly to the status quo. Thus carnival, as a way of letting off steam, is a societal power play, designed to keep citizens, including children, in their place, while under the illusion that they are in control. In catholic religious terms it reflects the *Sacred Paradia Sacra* or the feast of fools (Botton, 2012, p.65).

To what extent do these philosophies play out in the common spectacles of our performances for young audiences today?

#### 4.2 *The dramatic structure of the Revelry*

Structural academics like Campbell (1988 [1949]) and Fry (1973), charting commonalities of plot and character functionalities within formulaic narratives, observe that intrinsic to all folklore myths and stories are episodes in which a hero is “reborn” from a dark repressive situation to ultimate enlightenment through the conquering of dangerous foes, in the form of foils, monsters, sirens and other dark forces. Accordingly among the seven archetypal plots, Booker (2005) identifies those most common to the nursery are what he refers to as *the rags to riches*; *the voyage and return*; and *overcoming the monster* angles in which a child is introduced to the idea that at some point s/he will leave the comfort of the home, explore a place unknown and then return to the comfort of the parent. Essential to these plot lines is the suggestion that not only will the protagonist, and by suggestion the reader/receiver (Iser, 1972, 1978), be successful but also that in doing so they will mature to find inner strength and become enlightened. This is the Hero’s journey.

No hero can become enlightened, or find the strength of their true inner self without test. This conquering or *overcoming the struggle* is concentrated on in *Revelry*, anticipation and the inevitable rejoicing that follows a fight or challenge. Thus *Revelry* incorporates triumph, the joyous call, and the “nationalistic pride’ that an audience feels on behalf of the hero. For this reason *Revelry* represents tribal solidarity found in the battle cry, on the football pitch and in the frenzied support that help the protagonist on stage.

In its simplest terms *Revelry* is the energy and sheer determination to succeed. Thus the *Revelry* narrative might be painted like this:

- Orphan child is lost without an adult figure of protection, thus is self-reliant and constantly looking out for the self. As hero, this figure may also be responsible for others (sometimes a whole country is reliant on them).
- A danger presents itself in which the orphan hero has to face a great fear; a monster who will damage not only the orphan but also the rest of the community. The orphan hero journeys to face this threat who is much stronger than the orphan and who represents a dark egotistical character out purely for his

own selfish gains. The orphan in stark contrast is a representative of the whole community and is therefore seen as “pure” in comparison.

- The orphan hero is nervous because the “monster” is so much bigger, and a struggle begins with things looking bleak for the orphan figure.
- Fatefully the monster has a blind spot, which represents his egotistical weakness. The orphan hero who sees much more than his/her nemesis utilises a particularly unique skill to effectively overcome the rival.
- The orphan hero is revealed as the true hero that s/he is, thus saving not just himself but the whole community.

#### ***4.2.1 Narrative discourse***

The narrative discourse of *Revelry* usually unfolds in strict chronological causality in which A follows B. Typically drama is heightened though the enhanced physicality of the characters themselves such as:

- costume, mask, make up which signify a character trait usually in an obvious way,
- a gesture, movement, gait which physically represents a character through the body or face,
- the staging of characters in particular stage business, particularly choreographed fights/ chases and comic skits (commedia scenarios).

#### ***4.2.2 Temporal changes, ellipses and changes of scene***

Theatrical discourse balances the staging of the imaginary plot with the practical logistics of temporal changes, ellipses that require scene changes, clearing of a stage and so on. *Revelry* aesthetics uses techniques such as changing pace (slow motion) or speeding up of action, stylised dance or action that is underscored by music or sound effects which comically break the action in a significant way before resuming the next scene which may be spatially and temporally set in a completely new place.

### 4.3 Primary actants of *Revelry*

The primary actants of *Revelry* are those narrative characters that sit on the axis of good and evil. They typically represent either the monster or hero.

#### 4.3.1 *The monster threat*

In simple terms the “monsters” in *Revelry* represent figures to be feared; the enemy that needs to be vanquished at all costs. Metaphorically, they are the embodiment of terror, violence, or any other power that symbolizes death. They are seen in a variety of forms that include:

- **Trolls/giants/ogres** that Warner (1998) refers to as representing numbskull perpetrators of domestic abuse and fear in the house through their incessant eating and consuming.
- **Roaming cannibal witches/bogey spirits** who instil fear through kidnapping, gobbling, and snatching particularly when children are out wandering and exploring.
- **Vampires** representing dark avengers who suck the life from their enemies through envy and revenge.
- **The wolf** that represents the wild, untamed (sexual) beast as well as those villains who do not show themselves as they really are. As Carter (1995) warns “beware the wolf in the man not the man in the wolf”.
- **Bogeymen** as clown or bugs whom Warner (1998, p.39) refers to as “those mad, unpredictable demons pushing the boundaries and inspiring trouble”. For example Puck who is an instigator of mischief a trickster and a shape changer. Though these characters can present as attractive, instigating beautiful mayhem and magic as in the *Grand Circus* (2008) they are never to be completely trusted.
- **The Pied Piper** as representative of the unpredictable deviant tyrant, an untrustworthy despot who brings dystopian rule to utopia. This figure might also be seen in the machine that goes out of control, turning the predictable universe upside down.

- **Gryllus** the ugly animal character that inspires an understanding of the truth but who often presents as a figure of the savage.
- **The siren or temptress** who seduces the hero from their path.
- **Others** who represent the fallen human who has blindly given into their dark obsessions, and who can therefore no longer empathise with the world at large.

Controlling these wayward figures is the key to being saved. The theatrical situation simulates what Warner (1998) might refer to as a *Fear Game*, reflecting the joy of participation in surviving a frightening situation within a safe environment. Endorphins are released in the simulated reality but it is a theatrical experience that involves no conscious effort to address one's own issues.

Control, in terms of dramatic reconciliation or overcoming the monster results in jubilation of vanquishment; a celebratory "high" symbolised by the dance or the feast; along with confirmation that the community (particularly the vulnerable as represented in the non-speaking characters) has been protected and is relieved. Domination takes the following dramatic forms:

**Ridiculing** as a way of "poking fun" or exerting intellectual supremacy or one-up man ship over characters implying intellectual wit and supremacy against their "stupidity".

**Intimidation** through aggressive body language including gnashing teeth, grimace, rubbing stomach as if to eat, making oneself look bigger and stronger.

**Assimilation** into the community, which means effectively bringing light into dark figures, effectively showing pity and good will as they are nurtured, healed and converted to the good.

**Banishment** in which, characters are effectively got rid of permanently.

The struggle against the monster might even be represented in the servant surviving - or "putting one over"- the master within a commedia dell'arte context, but the "monster" represents not only a fear of the domestic and outside world but an acknowledgement of all human potential for darkness. Jung (1981[1969]), Von Franz (1980), Campbell (1988 (1949) and Booker (2005) all demonstrate the range of symbolic representations that the archetypal monster figure revealed in all plots might represent. These include societal fears of the other (when they reflects a particular cultural, gender, age specific

identity); individual fear of physical demise outside the home (being snatched, captured); fear of consumption (to be had, captured, possessed, violated); representations of abuse (social, institutional, family); and even Freudian representations of the individual ego including psychological fears of death or individuation (growing up).

#### ***4.3.2 Anarchy and defiance***

That the restraints, pressures, stresses of the everyday should once in a while be exchanged for wild unpredictable behaviour is emphasised in Bakhtin (1981)'s work on the carnivalesque. Endorsed by religious orders, it is the human practice of momentarily escaping the grind of everyday life and returning as better citizens. In Bakhtin's theory, carnival is the symbol of acting out this deep rooted (primeval) need that exists within the human psyche; exemplifying the need to breakout, to turn on its head, and in essence celebrates our very survival.

This desire was epitomised in the Pagan festival of "twelfth night" celebrating the last night of yuletide. According to this old English custom everything was turned on its head so that the servant became a master, the master became a servant; students dressed up as professors and ran amuck in the universities and so on. Indeed, we might see a modern equivalent in the muck up days allowed for Australian school leavers. Like all such days the madness was contained to a specific period before everything returned to order. The disheveled, insane appearance of the usually somber and ordered character Malvolio in his yellow stockings and garters is the epitome of this festival. In his play *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare explores the concept of disorder with the fools Sir Toby and Andrew outwitting their superior. By the end of the play of course sanity is found and all restored.

Pleasure in the form of the "stupid" servant getting one over on the master as in the classic commedia plot or even Wild & James (2001) babies making their midnight breakout, is reminiscent of Greek satire and the corresponding dance of the fools, complete with wine gods Bacchus and Dionysus. Whether activated by fools, spirits, evil or forces beyond our control this archetypal pattern of the ordered universe becoming disordered, of equilibrium or the natural order of things being disturbed and

then restored is repeated in numerous narratives from *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Tempest* (Shakespeare, 1966) to its modern day equivalents in stories like *Where the wild things are* (1988) and its stage equivalents (Fisher and Donoghue, 2009). As such carnivalesque encompasses the polar psychological needs of freedom and safety. While the joy of freedom incorporate elements of release, rebellion, challenge and being outrageous; letting off steam, turning things upside down to go against the normal, exploration and growth through play; safety provides shelter, security, anchorage and a sense of belonging.

Campbell (1988, pp.25-29), articulates that all art performance paves the way from tragedy as the “shattering of the forms and of our attachment to forms”, through to comedy as the “wild and careless, inexhaustible joy of life invincible” (p.3). As such these modes represent a single mythological theme symbolic of the totality of life, *Kathodos* and *anodos*: psychological purging and death followed by rebirth, the essence of survival through change. If tragedy marks the heroic moment of facing fears and surrender, comedy emulates an anarchic laughing defiance. This therapeutic aspect is suggested in what Lev-Aladgem (2000) refers to the “clear expression to play” that emphasises the healing potential of “carnavalesque enactment” through role reversal. Role-reversal may celebrate not just a break out revolution but inner change as the very process of psychological becoming. This is indicated in the symbolic use of masks, which reveal an outside face but house an inner soul.

#### **4.3.3 The trickster hero**

The act of escape is exemplified in the archetypal narrative structure of the hero's tale: safety, escape, freedom, and then safe return.

1. child hero (with little or no agency) is called to an adventure;
2. meets with certain dangerous situations which are overcome through the hero's own powers and ability to look fears in the eye (surrender);
3. feels a sense of alienation and a longing for family (death); and
4. returns home where s/he is welcomed with a feast and celebration as survival mechanism (rebirth).

Intrinsic to the mode of *Revelry* are these actants who project a sense of anarchy and heroic defiance in the face of tragedy. The hero of *Revelry* is thus what Jung might identify as the *Trickster* hero, who childlike, manages to escape death through mischief and confidence.

#### **4.3.4 Buffoonery**

Another common role in *Revelry* is that of the clown or buffoon. Energetically, buffoonery emulates the characteristics of “wild... careless... inexhaustible... joy ...invincible” (Campbell, 1988, p.28). This particularly resonates in the exaggerated physicality of the performances, which quickly establish characters and mood, particularly when performers wear masks or make up that restrict facial expression. Traditionally these performers also incorporate acrobatic moves as a part of their stylised interaction that might be philosophically interpreted as representing psychological acts of avoidance and defiance, connecting with the audience through a universal language of allegory.

Such stylised clowning enables entities like the Simpsons, modern equivalents of the commedia dell’art characters, to adapt to any scenario; though plots change, the power struggle dynamics stay the same. Thus those characters with little agency continue to resist those with more power in the universal struggles of servant/master, hero/monster, and parent/child. As such, clown characters are both a known quantity and at the same time a blank canvass.

Typically clown characters perform set routines that become fixed anticipated parts of any performance. In Pantomime this might be the slosh scene and chase scenes or the predictable behaviours of set characters like the principle boy or dame (Frow, 1985). These assured patterns help the child spectator take control of the action. Similar to nursery games, the audience understands the rules and follows the action with learned behaviors and prescribed reactions at appropriate and predicted times in the show. Theatrically, anarchic moments of overturn and misrule resemble moments on the edge of distress because like the fairground ride the situation may tip and change at any time, represented in “life in time” (Campbell, 1988, p.25) and moments of flow and “heightened consciousness” (Csíkszentmihályi & Robinson, 1990).



The characters of the *Zanni*, like that of the European commedia delle'arte and the secondary characters in Greek mime, are clowns renowned for low humour. Far from being bumbling fools however these socially down trodden 'underdog' figures traditionally represent strong survival skills, frequently rising up against their "masters" to get their needs met through clever trickery. The *Zanni* deliberately usurps and laughs at authority, not as resigned but as rebellious tricksters, symbolically denoting the triumph of the ego and pleasure principle. Occasionally a *Zanni* character might associate with pathos due to the popularisation of the lovesick Pierrot, but more conventionally the clown function is an overtly mischievous troublemaker, like the servant Arlechinno (Harlequin) or the spirited bugbear, famous played by Grimaldi the popular nineteenth century acrobat (Duckworth, 1994 [1952]). *Zanni* behaviour is recognised in:

- out of control, wild behaviour as seen in the dance of the red shoes (Knee high theatre, 2011);
- mischief, mayhem and confusion in which cunning and clever tricksters turns things upside down in Puck like mischief;
- deliberate stupidity to get one over a more "sensible" grown up character. This is seen when one clown tries to assert him/herself as more clever or responsible, while asserts power in being deliberately foolish and infantile. This dynamic is very often reflective of the classroom relationship between the teacher and pupil, Bell Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (2008) was a good example of this. Perhaps school-aged kids appreciate laughing at mulish, obstreperous behaviour, because it reflects their own reality; and
- role-reversal in which characters or performer pretend to be another while being recognised by the audience as when a man plays the Dame.

Loose Canon Arts exemplify all these aspects of buffoonery as well as the grotesque in their larger than life outrageous caricatures. For instance *Monkeyshine* (Loose Cannon, 2008), in which Dr Sweetpea McGee puts together animals from different species, rather like a side show alley "game of difference". Curious and slightly distasteful, performed in a vaudevillian style with rhyming couplets and over the top melodramatic costume and irreverent act style, Leisel Badorrek and Johnny Nasser with Leonie Cohen as Side Show Pony making the musical commentary, played all the characters in which

chaotic joyful laughter represented surviving the odds and using resourceful problem solving to combat death.

#### ***4.4 Staging considerations***

What might the treatment of a monster in *Revelry* look like?

##### ***4.4.1 The pleasures of “terror-play”***

Though certain childhood theorists like Medved & Medved (1999) argue that childhood should be a carefree time of innocence, others like Warner (2007), Bettelheim (1991) contest that acknowledging stress, cruelty and the “monster” are critical aspects of growing up and in fact help build resilience. Indeed most childhood games, as Warner usefully shows, are based on the idea of the goody versus baddy. Even from the cradle the first game or bonding exercise that a parent plays is that of pretending to “consume” the baby. This gobbling game represents what Warner calls “Terror-play”; games that both thrills and comforts when there is deep and familiar trust between players, and mirrors the powerful parents wanting to “consume, have, or possess” baby, but gracefully letting go at the last minute, as though the baby hero (the orphan hero with less agency) has escaped against the odds! Within this safe environment, the baby is already being acculturated with a sense of fear followed by relief.

##### ***4.4.2 Signalling “terror-play” on the stage***

*Revelry* in a theatrical setting restages the pleasures of the nursery “terror-play” game, projecting the hero into the jaws of the consuming monster only to be gracefully released. What makes the journey bearable is the “sparkle behind the eye” which allows the child to know that throughout the experience the hero is completely in control of the situation.

Three indicators in particular signal theatre performance as being a nursery game; the monster/bully is ridiculous, mockery and the use of subversion.

**(a) *The monster/bully is ridiculous***

Particularly in theatre for the very young, the villain is further diminished by looking and acting in outrageously nonsensical and rather naive ways. For instance the stripy robber who is accompanied by two stupid henchmen (*Stop, Look, Listen*, UTS, 1999), or Witchy Poo, in her stripy tights who is foiled in her plan to eat the children and then throws a tantrum so that the children laugh at her as a silly adult behaving like a child (*Bad Jelly*, Newtown Theatre, 2007).

Monsters that wear silly ungainly costumes provide the child audience with a sense of being superior to the stupidity of the anti-hero straight away. Here the actor takes on the role of the nursery “parent” dressing up for the fun of the game. Other indicators of the monster villain’s simplicity are:

- Enjoyment of teatime food like cakes, sweets and lemonade mirroring the party foods that the child likes.
- Physical tantrums giving the child viewer opportunity to laugh at themselves as well as the monster. Tone of voice, especially high pitched whinging is another aspect of this.
- Arrogant or obviously grandiose behaviour in which the villain, who believes himself impeccably above the law, is brought down because he foolishly believes that s/he is smarter than others. However they will always have missed a vitally important, rather obvious thing which proves their undoing. Watching the monster fall due to their haughty overconfidence is a huge pleasure for the audience, and is an aspect of loving having someone to hate!

**(b) *Mockery***

Aside from the monster being ridiculous, the audience is provided with tools to fight the monster in the form of superiority through communal unity and the support of onstage heroes, thus giving child spectators a feeling of safety as together (in a team) they mock the bully verbally to makes him look foolish (us against you). Being outnumbered the monster is disempowered through the magic of words and clever trickery which mocks his mental prowess.

This sense of club power is further endorsed through punning, or secret euphemisms, which generate thrill through word play. Clever fooling of a foe gives a sense of “getting away with it” and the closer to being discovered the better for the fun of the audience. Aristotle theorised such behaviour and its laughter as both humour and mockery, based on enjoying superiority to others, in particular ugly, deformed, stupid people. Hobbs, renamed this as the superiority “theory of humour” (Morreall 1982; King, 2003; Holt, 2009). It also represents a form of “survival over” with mockery representing the discharge of tension, of angst over a situation and the exhilaration of connection and camaraderie with others.

### *(c) Subversion*

In some cases the role of the monster is subverted and the child is parricide. For instance the giant as an oversized baby, a suckling child who will eat the mother! This relates to the unruly passions of the child and anthropomorphic fantasy. From a theatrical point this resembles the child spectator identifying with the monster protagonist. The Wiggles relationship with Captain Featherstone is an example of this. The four-person band represent “the adults” while Featherstone represents the “Silly Billy” child character that is cheeky and playful, the “naughty one” up to mischief. This scenario, in which older actors infer younger roles are common and of course extremely comical. Much of the anticipation occurs in the patterning of the stage business, which mimics childhood games and childhood desires such as waking up parents. Pleasure for the child audience is in seeing themselves in the action.

#### *4.4.3 Nursery games as drama*

The nursery games commonly seen in many theatrical productions are:

- 1. Grandmother’s footsteps:** seen in the numerous times characters need to creep in and get something without disturbing the villain. A good example of this might be Jack trying to get the giant’s treasures. When the villain awakes the characters freeze like statues or appear to hide (*Three Little Pigs*, Acting Factory, 2008; *Paper Bag Princess*, Zeal Theatre, 2007).
- 2. What’s the time Mister Wolf?:** this game is mimicked when characters ask questions or appear to be getting closer and closer, provoking the villain until

they eventually turn around and start to chase. The fun mirrors that of antagonising a tolerant parent figure as a way of disturbing the peace and thereby breaking the taboo.

3. From a different perspective the game **Boo** is seen in “**it’s behind you**” in which the hero is almost caught. Here the audience can see what is going to happen, the slow movement maximises the anticipation as the antihero looks in the wrong place. This piece of choreography is most effective when time is given to build up the drama in the action.
4. **A variation on Boo** is seen in the back-to-back choreography where the audience knows more than everyone on stage. Here performers slowly move towards each other and eventually collide while frightening themselves.
5. **The chase**: this staging is guaranteed to get children going particularly when the roles are changed half way through so that chaser is chased and vice versa to add a huge element of fun, or when the chase is brought into the auditorium.
6. **Chronos**: in games where performers act as though they are “coming to get” or “trying to eat” they echo the action of the affectionate parental games of pretending to eat the baby. This action Warner (2007) describes as “performative intimacy”. Like Chronos, the perpetrator is vanquished by “the more powerful” child.
7. **Trickery**: children love seeing and being part of mischievous behaviour, particularly when it is endorsed by an adult figure. In the *Three Little Pigs* children helped trick the wolf by keeping him awake all night long so that by morning he is in a deep sleep at the very time he is meant to be following the pig to market. This fooling or foiling of a dastardly plot follows the tradition of heroes being reliant on mental agility and quick wits rather than physical prowess and potency.
8. **Waking up (or alerting the hero)**: when the hero leaves the stage and asks the children to keep an eye on what is happening they are respecting the sensibility of the audience and the fact that children want to see justice done (Wood & Grant, 1997). Children accept this responsibility and watch attentively. The action helps focus the attention of the audience and further it inclusively empowers them as integral to the outcome.

9. **Grossing out:** there is a wonderful pleasure in being disgusted, and yelling out Yuk! It is the trophy of defiance and the symbol of a good time. Gross out images, slime and mess as seen in the pantomime slosh scenes, in which an attempt to make a cake ends in complete decimation of the kitchen, examples the sensual pleasure in letting oneself go and escaping from the confines of polite behaviour.
10. **The game of opposites:** children love to say “NO”. In doing so to the adult character, the audience engages in an energetic act of mock rebellion. This includes shouting down or getting one over the villain who deliberately incites the audience with pretend threats, like the wolf (Acting Factory, 2008) shouting “I might break my rule of eating children and start with you” to rapturous response and threats back! Encouraging an audience to rail against the villain is reminiscent of the joy Peter Pan gets from shunning Hook. There is a sense of grandiosity and mirth at the expense of the villain that children love to hate. This was particularly demonstrated at the end of the *Three Little Pigs* when the wolf was captured (not killed or eaten) and the children were allowed to come up to him after the show and poke fun at him.
11. **One-up-man-ship, bickering and copying:** watching performers pretend to argue like children is always fun particularly the copying game in which one character pesters another by mirroring actions and words or a petty argument that gets louder and more physical.

#### ***4.4.4 Experiencing the grotesque***

The grotesque imitates that which is against nature and evolves from the human fascination with the strange. A villainous character who displays vile characteristics that are against common decency or acts that defy the natural order of things like swallowing razor blades, walking the wall of death blind folded, displacing hips in order to fit through a hoop (Circus Oz, 2006), weird objects, disgusting bodily fluids including excretions exemplify this.

Throughout history humans have enjoyed being shocked as indicated in the prevalence of grotesque displays from the Roman circus that paraded exotic animals; the weird exhibitions at the medieval Bartholomew fair; the Victorian freak show and even reality

television shows based on revealing bizarre diseases, disgusting bodies or odd behaviours demonstrate a seemingly human fascination with the obscure and cringe worthy. Certainly there is a pleasure in feeling disgusted; a particular action that “grosses us out”. We might explain this phenomenon as another form of surviving the “monster”, an alternative way of defining ourselves as against the other, thus giving us a feeling of normality and perhaps even a sense of being really alive. In this sense watching the weird strengthens a sense of tribal connection.

The grotesque might also be seen as an extension of the monster that is by its presence against nature. However grotesque generally refers more strongly to scatological horrors rather than to monsters, such as fears of being infected, changed, or becoming someone other.

Food, physicality, as well as material excess abound in carnival, representing the desire for the unbridled pleasures of the physical flesh rather than cognitive thought. Lust for the outrageous and even the depraved is explicit. An outlet for this is represented in the very act of consciously being rude, swearing, kicking up against authority, farting, burping and other improper manners at the dinner table or lapses into animal like behaviour. Rabelais’ Gargantuan the Giant with his enormous appetite is a good example of this, as is the outrageous character of Ubu Rex (Jarry 1994) the inappropriate king. In both cases the pleasure is in watching their excessively shocking behavior. These literary figures mirror the Christian festival the Feast of Fools, through which the medieval Catholic Church acknowledge the human weakness for folly and allowed shocking behavior for a day as a way of blowing off steam (Ghose, 1994; de Botton, 2012).

This behaviour is theatricalised in the slosh scenes of pantomime when a misdirected cream pie instigates a full food fight, or when the trousers of a character falls down to reveal spotty underwear, or bends over to show the outrageously big outline of their bottom. Other grotesque theatrical moments are seen through:

- impressive tricks which could not be done at home;
- pushing boundaries through disrespectful jokes;
- breaking taboos;

- being naughty and rude like the characters who blows raspberries, shakes bottoms, burbs and farts; and
- representations, talk and all visual reminders of bodily fluids.

#### ***4.5 Spatial aspects***

The spatial aspects of *Revelry* are that of the stage and auditorium, aiming to keep the traditional distinction between actor and audience. Paradoxically, though the performance is concerned to emotionally connect with the audience it also manipulates them by coaxing and generating expected responses and particular outcomes. This happens by understanding how a particular audience characteristically behaves and what they will respond to. For instance knowing that the audience will shout “hello” if an actor asks for it, and will shout louder still if requested. Though it is true that in this sense the audience indirectly contributes to the action, the contribution occurs in a premeditated and predictable way, which is built into the rehearsals. As such the audience is invited to be part of the performance, and when a response is asked for it is always within the capacity of either furthering the action in some direct way or building atmosphere. For this reason the audience contribution to the performance itself is peripheral or incidental.

##### ***4.5.1 Monster in the salon: a performance***

*The Paperbag Princess*, an adaptation of the picture book by (Munsch, Martchenko, & Dunn, 1980) performed at the Powerhouse Museum by Zeal, exemplified a successful theatrical performance within a museum setting that enjoyed a strong *Revelry* paradigm. Even before the performance fully began, chaos was signalled through a projection of carnivalesque breakout and an explosive bang that heralded exotic travellers from around the world bursting in with music and mayhem.

The show was formatted as a story within a story framework, presented by a travelling group of gypsies. The colourful parade, the noise and arguing amongst the family about which story they should actually tell and how it should be cast, was not only comical but also reflected a familiar world for many of the child and parent watchers!



The idea of the family openly preparing and then presenting the story is reminiscent of the Brechtian ideal of alienation in which the audience is constantly reminded that the play is not real life but an illusion. Quickly the context of playfulness was cemented, travelling boxes opened and costumes adorned. The overt sacking of the daughter as the princess and the rehiring of a girl child from the audience furthered the fun as the deviant gypsy mother behaves the very opposite of how a real mother behaves!

The main fun of the drama is the casting of the role of the dragon that plunders and ravages all the villages and the people in the original picture book! First the eldest brother is forced to audition for the role reinforcing the idea of pretend play. He enacts the dragon as a football hooligan in a mock “postmodern” portrayal of the role, while the middle brother wears a Loch Ness monster swimming-ring to portray a friendly dragon that won’t scare the young audience. The mother ridicules both versions. As neither brother can play the monster “as it is meant to be played”, the task falls to the littlest member of the family “baby”. In bequeathing of the desired scary dragon role to baby, the idea of play is further reinforced as a lovely theatrical irony. The dummy sucking, nappy wearing baby is in fact a huge giant adult male who pretends to be the gobbling demanding monster. Comedy is thus found in the ridiculousness of a huge grown man pretending to be a baby pretending to be monster.

Within this performance *Revelry* can be seen in:

- dramatic irony as the littlest child a baby, is played by the biggest male, playing the dragon;
- providing the child with agency and real power particularly in the casting of the audience member in the role of the princess, so that she and not the adults saves the day (just like the book!);
- encouraging the child audience to scream, shout and rampage against the injustice of the dragon and then help him be captured;
- an outrageous exotic family raucous and colourful with their music and eccentricity present a break from normal everyday routines;
- adult performers who play mama’s children but who are themselves silly, revealing a refreshing ideology that adults are not always right;

- the dragon's threat of "eating the children", echoing the action of the affectionate parental games, a form of performative intimacy. Like Chronos, the perpetrator is vanquished by a child (implied in the book but also in reality within this adaptation); and
- ideas of the duality of the child as monster and monster as child (in adult perception), relating to the unruly passions of the child and anthropomorphic fantasy. From a theatrical point this represents the child spectator identifying with the child protagonist.

In all these aspects the usual constricting, tightly organised world is turned on its head. This breakout and rage against the normal parallels Bakhtin's (1981) theory in which taboos are broken and for a short time the world breaks loose and wild.

#### ***4.6 Defining characteristics of Revelry***

As shown in the verbal banter of nursery rhymes and in the taboos and recoils of the grotesque *Revelry* can be communicated through codes, which indicate primarily an explicit and joyful use of language as a weapon for both the hero and audience.

##### ***4.6.1 The power of words: rhymes, word games and verbal banter***

In *Revelry*, language often resembles the mock banter and jousting of the adult and child in play. In this dialogue taken from the Acting Factory (2008) script of *The Three Little Pigs*, the wolf is seen pretending to be nice and respectful to get what he wants. It is funny because the children can see through his pretend behaviour and scheming.

*Wolf: Little pigs little pigs let me come in*

*Pig 1: Indignant snort*

*Wolf: Ok, "oh little and big pig, little and big pig let me come in "*

*Pig 2: Indignant snort*

*Wolf: OK, OK (with a sigh!) "little and big pig and lady pig..."*

Mixing words and traditional sayings are all appreciated in the fun of *Revelry*. Warner (2007) reminds us that pronunciation is a core attribute of tribal identity. Further

performative language is powerful magic for the speaker. It combines ideas of secret tribal knowledge and a sense of belonging, for instance naming can undo evil forces in phrases such as “break a leg”. In getting the audience to chant, characters thus validate themselves and the audience as part of the same gang; the “us” against the “other” (enemy).

Powerful ways of unifying an audience through spoken language is found in:

1. **Chants**, which reflect tribal calls when the united audience shout in unison. The audience practice the chant and are the called to use it at certain points in the drama as a way of assisting the action, by arresting the villain or calling for help. For example. “Lofty long there’s something wrong so come and help us lofty long” (*Mother Goose*, Witley Pantomime, 1979) or the Fairy Wattle song for calling her back quickly in a hour of need (*Not In My Backyard*, Surf ‘n’ Theatre, 2008).
2. **Creating word magic** is the abracadabra equivalent that sorts things out. It halts danger and puts things to rights while at the same time causing chaos to the villains. It can stop someone in their tracks like a form of hypnosis or alternatively give them strength such as the “power up cogs” songs for making him work (*Cogs*, Powerhouse, 2008).
3. **Calls that help the characters** act as a form of agency, in that they give children direct control of helping a character to solve a problem and bring the story to its rightful close. Examples are screaming words of disapproval directly at the villain such as booing or “wee, wee, wee” such as when the wolf got to near to the resting pig (*Three Little Pigs*, Acting Factory, 2008).
4. **Lullabies and songs** speak not only the fears and concerns of the characters but of the audience themselves. They are reflections of what it is to be human. As such they can be used to soothe situations that have become very tense, or to replace the need for a heartfelt monologue or duologue. In theatre for the very young, complications between characters particularly if there is a love interest will be sung rather than spoken because this is much easier to follow for the young watcher.
5. **Swearing**: activates the aggressive primitive part of our brains. Though theatre for the very young does not use offensive swear words per se, they do encourage

verbal slander or petitions against the “enemy”, which philosophically enables the audience to vent their frustrations as a battle cry and pleasurable release of pent up energy, paralleling Greenfield’s (2001) theory on brain development. Swearing in this sense can be seen as an act of energy, an avoidance of pain as well as tribal display of unity.

#### ***4.6.2 Not swallowing***

The primary reactions of grotesque are initial fascination followed by disgust. The root word of gustation meaning to swallow implies that the reaction of disgust is to *not swallow* or digest. Shocked repulsion and individual expletives, like "yuk" and "eergh" is in essence vocal stance, usually in unison with the rest of the audience and signifies a “vomit” or a refusal to accept the situation.

In creating situations in which the audience vocally resists what is happening or refuses to comply with the villain, a production simultaneously empowers its audience and humanises them. It gives young people the voice and the power to say no. In this way overcoming fears is therapeutic, Porter (2001) exemplified this when the audience is encouraged to scream against or boo and hiss the evil sorcerer; or when they animatedly argue against protagonists such as “oh no it isn’t” against the equally childish “oh yes it is”.

#### ***4.6.3 Jokes and laughter***

Another form of “not swallowing” or resistance is laughter. Creating scenarios that make the villain look and act like a fool. By combating and surviving fear, even though one lacks of agency, *Revelry* bypasses what is impossible and feeds on the “what if’s” such as giant babies, machines going out of control, farts that blow up the world and so on, further belittling obstacles of fears as they are turned into something ridiculous.

The social importance of jokes is emphasised in understanding its function in light of Freud (1963)’s interpretation of “relief theory”, that humour is an expression of our essential decency. Grotesque jokes thereby represent a holiday release from our “repression” echoed within Bakhtin’s theory of carnival, which states that in order to

enjoy a dirty joke you have to be monitoring these impulses most of the time. As such when impulses are liberated and we laugh, the laughter is a sort of innocent, harmless enjoyment of the physical expelling of stress. Laughter is enjoyable because we don't really carry out the actions except in our imagination. Jokes therefore carry out the important role of letting out the taboo and keeping people sane. This idea endorses Bristol's (1985) theory that carnival is a method of controlling societal behaviour (p.29). It is perhaps to this end that ventriloquist Nina Conti called her rude Monkey dummy a "gatekeeper of the mind" (2009).

Humour can also be used as a form of incongruent defence such as a reaction to fear, to being defeated, suddenly dispelled or rescued as demonstrated in Pascal and Kant (cited in Moreall, 1983)'s evolutionary theory of laughter in reaction to survival from socially threatening situations. Cixous (1975) further endorses humour as the chief and most successful way of combating fear, claiming, "all laughter is aligned with the monstrous". "Nothing produces laughter more than the surprising disproportion between that which one expects and that when one sees" or the "affection arising from the sudden transforming of strong expectation into nothing", this is the essence of all rites of passage.

#### ***4.7 The ideal aesthetic response to Revelry***

An important element of *Revelry* is the spirit of unity, or what Hurssel (1950) calls a "collaborative mode", that is reflected by the audience participating as a whole in order to aid the action on the stage. Johnston's (2003) description of carnival as "the performative event of belonging" (p.135) fits with this essence of community and emotional connection. This aspect of participation is a vital one as *Revelry* here endorses the influence of the tribe, binding individuals together in a single community to identify, reflect and laugh at us as a single group.

##### ***4.7.1 Community***

A typical indication of *Revelry* includes stimulated audience responses of wild noises, a sense of rampaging or a moment when everything seems out of control, cheering, boos, loud singing or rhymes. In unity, the audience acts as one hypnotised body rather than

individuals consciously connecting to what is happening on the stage. This display of excitement, of being out of control and completely in the moment, is the ultimate illusion of freedom and is an example of what Csíkszentmihályi and Robinson (1990) referred to the involuntary physical reaction to the beat, romantically reminiscent of humans connecting to their wild side.

Like the performance of *The Three Little Pigs* (Acting Factory, 2008), this aspect of community is accentuated in other productions like *Little Red Riding Hood* (Acting Factory, 2009) in which the main focus is on the children's contribution to defeating the monster, represented by the wolf. *Stop Look Listen* (CREA, 1999) examples a performance in which the audience were encouraged to assist stop the villains. This sense of both watching and contributing to drama created a sense of high drama and catharsis in the theatre space recognised by the high energy screaming by audiences leaning out of their chairs to get closer in to the action. This also illustrates how audiences are positively affected and how they physically respond to performances through active engagement rather than cognitive explanation of the event afterwards.

A sense of communal belonging is created in a number of ways:

- **Tribal responses** in which performers ask the audience to perform a task such as shout a rhyme, which will either detract the villain or act as a calling to come for magical help. It is important that the rhyme contains actions or claps, or song that is easy to recall and repeat for all of the audience. The performer then counts to three and the children repeat the task. However it is not loud enough so the exercise is repeated. This time it is better but not good enough! In a final repetition (the magic number three is always needed) the children practice again so successfully that they nearly “blow the roof off the theatre”. This incredible burst of energy acts like a tribal war cry and amalgamates the group.
- **Dramatic irony** that enables the audience to know more than the performers.
- **Letting the audience deliberately into the joke** or the secret so they feel like they are part of a gang.
- **Anticipation around the action and the setting** in order that everyone in the audience understands what is happening within the context of the action.

- **Music**, which focuses attention through strong tribal beats, or wild jungle sounds that evoke single repetitive movements, so everyone moves in unison.
- **Flashing lights and audio-visual projection** in which the audience are shown *how* to respond or see themselves on the stage through I-mag technology (projection of the audience on the screen in real time). This technique provides the illusion that it is the audience itself is in control (*Yo Gabba Gabba Live: there's a party in my city*, Chugg Entertainment, Sydney Opera House, 2011).

Like the paradigm of *Alchemy* explored in chapter nine, the sense of play that is projected through *Revelry* evokes huge responses from the audience. The main difference is that in *Revelry* audiences are encouraged to react en masse to what they are seeing on stage and is exhibited as wild, rampaging, cheering, songs, noise, boos.

#### ***4.7.2 Presence and survival***

The intended contribution of the audience in *Revelry* is vital to the atmosphere and the theatricality of the experience but falls into the category of Peripheral in that it does not change the outcome of the discourse but rather responds to the emotional needs of humans to express themselves through pleasure (Hobbes, 1937) restoring us to the other side refreshed. In theatre for young audience, such events endorsed by Wood (Wood & Grant, 1997) and Warner (2000), offer opportunities for children to express their emotions. This is best evoked through “larger than life” Rabelaisian performance experiences that almost swallow the audiences up. Exaggeration reminds the audience that it is pretend. As such vaudevillian and commedia performances in which exaggerated, contorted movements, masks, giant puppets, ridiculous costumes, exotic outrageous characters remind us that like the carnival parade, we are witnessing play, a façade.

*Revelry* is an anomaly because it represents and reflects both the comfort and security of the everyday alongside the “uncanny” (Freud, 2003) fears of the psychopathically unknowable. But always, *Revelry* ends in a predictable way with light overcoming dark.

The implied audience archetypal in *Revelry* is the lost “orphan” (Pearson, 1998), disassociated from their home or community in some way and often with little agency. However when faced with the monster, they rise to the challenge through cunning, resolve and a sense of urgency. This ability to face up to the challenge is the revealing of the warrior behind the orphan and is a measure of all that the orphan is truly capable of and infers a promise to the child audience, that they too are warrior/heroes. Once the hero has proved themselves to themselves they can freely return to community. This orphan hero represents the audience, who see themselves as being the same champion. They too enjoy the live action, the screaming out the will to survive against the odds! As such *Revelry* is focused on the action and sheer energy that keeps the audience transfixed. At the end the audience feels a cathartic outpouring or release of tension and satisfaction battling and surviving misfortune (Carlson, 1990, p.69).

#### **4.8 Summary**

*Revelry* is a form of tribal entertainment that celebrates survival as a victory response to communal fears. Villains or bogeymen, represent the enemy, the other, the figure of terror that needs to be vanquished in order to survive. Such monsters instigate fears of death and hence the importance of their being quelled. Overcoming the demon, results in joyous celebration. Automated, unconscious responses enact ways of controlling these metaphorical fear figures through assimilation, getting rid of, ridicule and so on. Where the enemy cannot be controlled, metamorphoses and change within the hero is the key to being saved. In this sense *Revelry* epitomises fear and survival over others who are different, including difficult circumstances (starving to death, of being snatched, captured), psychological fears (growing up, discipline) and social realities (institutions, family, and poverty).

A key element in *Revelry* performance is the contract to play, involving both performers and the audience. Participation builds anticipation, releases energy, and enables contribution. As such, it is both performer and audience that make a live show. For this reason, Wood (Wood & Grant, 1997) talks about the importance of listening to children; their participation emerges from noise and vocal involvement while their resilience springs from their laughter (p.166). Thus the monster provokes children to both rail and



poke fun against him. In doing so, in recognising the monster's antics as ridiculous, in guiding the mockery and the cathartic experience of the spectator, performance promotes the resilience and efficacy of its audience.

It has been shown that the objective of the villain in *Revelry* is to frighten the hero and to ignite screams, excitement and laughter in the audience. The role of the hero and the child audience is to unite together in order to overcome the villain's threat. Within a usual plot line a hero might be on his or her own but within a theatre for young audience setting the hero is always supported by others.

The overall framework aims to evoke spontaneity, survival and relief, tragedy and comedy (*Kathodos & anodos*), fear followed by positivity for all involved. At its best, *Revelry* not only turns things upside down but also presents situations in a fresh light, offering opportunities to create a community experience. Creating a crisis, a cathartic moment that causes a reaction and response in the audience, is the very essence of *Revelry*. The energy emerges from:

- fear of the monster as representative of death or of being eaten;
- repulsion by the grotesque which symbolises fear of contamination or eating something toxic;
- anarchy as a break out defiance against fear of being trapped (here child portrays characteristics of both hero and monster);
- revelation and relief once order is restored; and finally
- community and the sense of belonging, which comes from the human fear of alienation.

*Revelry* is conveyed through an approach to staging that simulates escape; break out, celebration, excess, outrageousness, misrule or disorder but which ultimately ends in with a sense of safety and belonging. *Revelry* thus is about connection between the audience and the performers and the audience feeling a sense of being part of the whole experience.

*Revelry* is the first system of engagement. The next chapter considers the second artistic code of *Enchantment*.

## CHAPTER 5: THE ENGAGEMENT OF ENCHANTMENT

**enchant** v. To subject to magical influence; to cast a spell over; bewitch. 2. To impart a magic quality or effect to 3. To delight in a high degree; charm.

**Associated theatre system:** Musical spectaculars and pantomime

**Driving Purpose:** Escapism, presenting a peaceful idyllic charming view of the world.

**Audience:** Extrinsic separated from the action but spellbound, projecting themselves into an alternate reality

### Theatre events, that example using these engagement styles are:

*Cinderella on Ice* (2008) performed by Imperial Ice Stars at Theatre Royal, Sydney, originally performed in Russia

*The Lion King* (2008) performed by Disney at Lyceum Theatre, London, originally performed in United Kingdom.

*Gondwana* (2006) performed by Erth at Sydney Grammar School Theatre for the Australian Museum

*Snugglepote and Cuddlepote*, adapted from a series of books by May Gibbs (2006), performed by Belvoir Theatre at Theatre Royal, Sydney as part of the Sydney Festival

*Angela and Penny's Holiday* (2006), part of ABC Events, performed at Government House, Sydney as a Historic House Trust Program

## CHAPTER 5: THE ENGAGEMENT OF ENCHANTMENT

**Whatever critics may think of pantomime, it is to popular entertainment what Shakespeare is to today's literary theatre. It brings to the theatre a more inclusive audience than any other artform of theatre today...for the overwhelming majority of children it is the first and perhaps only experience of live theatre and for the majority of people it will be their only annual visit to the theatre.**  
**(McConachie, Zarilli, Williams, & Sorgenfrei, 2009, p.349)**

This chapter looks at the second system for interpreting performance, the artistic of code of *Enchantment*, the ideological paradigm for promoting desire and hope.

The concept of *Enchantment* is examined within a philosophic framework of arcadia, romanticism, security and its associated sign-systems of *holy and the sublime* (hope and wonder); *romanticism; security and assurance* (parentification and surrender) and *distraction* (the absence of responsibility and social acculturation). Further, *Enchantment* is seen as representing the sign-system for creating illusion through magic and charm; transforming audiences away from their everyday experiences to enjoy idyllic holiday atmospheres (Bakhtin, 1981) that evoke “wishful thinking” (Freud in Erwin, 2002) and the promise of a future day when all will be well.

Chapter four examined the energy created by the will to survive, identity with a particular group and through playful competitiveness. This chapter develops the idea that alongside theatre that evokes pure emotion, another function of theatre is to inspire hope, satisfy desire and evoke feelings of security. The epitome of *Enchantment* is thereby serenity and the belief that dreams do come true. To this end *Enchantment* summarises the journey towards meaningful purpose, restoration of order and the moment in which a constricting or tense feeling comes to a close and produces a sense of relief, not as a temporary measure but forever; paradise. Booker (2006) describes it as the light overcoming the dark or the idealisation of the whole. This restoration of what he calls the perfect balance provides theatrically what Turner (1995) termed the “idealized” rite of passage.

At its best *Enchantment* personifies complete experience of the now; the wish to give ones complete and full attention to what is happening. From another perspective however this dream represents the relinquishing of our personal responsibility, our power, and even our creativity. In this aspect *Enchantment* encourages not just surrender but regression, even if only briefly, to infancy, to a state of being looked after, to being lulled to sleep, of not having to think. Through such experiences the spectator is provided with the emotional high associated with the pleasures of *Revelry*, but like the armchair traveller, enjoys the journey in complete safety; without the pain of actually going through the physical or psychological dangers associated with actual self-development (Warner, 2007).

### *5.1 Artistic purpose*

It has been suggested that life is dominated by the search for happiness (De Botton, 2002, p.9) and distraction (Young, 2008). *Enchantment* represents the epitome of this hedonistic pleasure, and the epicurean principle of life being easier when we are surrounded by beautiful things, by friends, and away from the everyday stresses of our lives (Audi, 1995, p.311). Through *Enchantment* we experience a sense of wellbeing, of being looked after, of hardship and dreariness being elevated. It embodies the idyllic and powerful archetypal notion that anything is possible: an eternal paradise in which we never have to worry again (Jung, 1980, p.74). Indeed there is strong empirical evidence to show that this idea of paradise or a golden era that will exist plays an important part in giving meaning to society, helping humans stand the most incredible hardships (1980, p.76).

As will be shown, *Enchantment* also encompasses the *totality* of the performance event as an integrated experience of escape, as well as its ability to embrace presentations that both excite and soothe the audience. In simple terms one *Enchantment* form makes us think, deal and face our real world, the other seemingly contradictory *Enchantment* form makes us forget our self and our real world. The first produces wondrous uplifting experiences in which an audience finds their possibilities illuminated. The second presents performance as a form of what Brook (1968) termed deadly theatre or what Weber (2004) described as “Trauerspiel”, work representing clever, clean ordered,

wholesome fun which project messages of comfort but which provide no further symbolic significance or expansion (2004, p.176).

Theatre practitioners Brecht (Willett, 1964), Piscator (1980), and Boal (1985) produced entertaining theatre, but the principle aim of their art was to confer current culture while contemplating a vision for the future, effectively using art as a tool for change. Sentimentality, on the other hand presents art as literal and emotional, representing what the soul would like to have but which it doesn't want to deal with. As such it evokes, through pastiche, a soporific sense of escapism for its audience, or playful distraction.

### ***5.1.1 Arcadia, romance and the traditions of Enchantment***

Many of the narratives that are enjoyed by young people are fictional discourses that emphasise emotion, imagination and even rebellion (as shown in *Revelry* in chapter four) but which ultimately are resolved by luck or good fortune; a happy outcome, a fortunate omen, a lucky guess or a providential recovery. Such narratives exemplify the optimistic message that everything will eventually be OK, and endorse wishful thinking and human need to have control over our circumstances. This philosophical ideal that at some time in the future we will be happy and secure is the very bedrock for our willingness to engage in *Enchantment*; it soothes! Further, this perceived sense of security is a vital part of human ability to face adversity (Bachelard, 1971).

The search for security is epitomised in the idea of Arcadia as the walled security of the perfect garden in which wild nature is tamed and compliant. This is juxtaposed against gothic drama, in which the passions of unpredictable nature metaphorically accentuate the struggle and sacrifice required for true romance. The paradoxical synchronicity between the majesty of the sublime referring to elements of design, staging and orchestral are contrasted against the eloquence and quality of aesthetic detail and beauty, as articulated in Burke's seventeenth century enquiry (2004). This fluctuation between danger and repose, activity and stillness, splendour and rustic simplicity is the very essence of *Enchantment*.

*Wind in the Willow*, (The Australian Shakespeare Company, 2012) a charming family performance, also philosophically emits *Enchantment* by producing a “traditional” text, within a beautiful space like the Royal Botanical Garden, Sydney, romantically evoking its original English setting. In participating in the promenade performance, children physically move places to follow the action and are exposed both to the story, as a significant children’s classic, as well as the beauty of the park environment itself. Exploration of spaces adds a special appeal to the performance as a whole and becomes part of its lasting memory.

### **5.1.2 Theatre as essential**

That theatre, storytelling and entertainment is both essential and soothing to humanity is underlined in Jordan’s study of convict theatre (2002) which surmises that the first theatre building in newly colonised Sydney was probably in existence before the first church building, and that though the first official play *The Recruitment Officer* was presented on the king’s birthday at the site of First Government House in June 1788, impromptu performances were documented as early as 5<sup>th</sup> January 1788 onboard the ship even before it landed. Jordan’s work emphasises that performers were in demand and there was money to be made in putting on shows in the new colony. Though we do not have much documented evidence for many of the plays performed, we know that by 1805, *Little Lord Fauntleroy* had already been shown as the first recorded theatre event that might have been created for children (McGuire, 1948). After that we wait for the JC Williamson pantomimes that followed the traditions of the English pantomimes and which toured Australia throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Though few records exist of other performances specific to young audiences, documented evidence suggests that in many homes of the respectable class, such as families like the Rouse family at Rouse Hill (Historic House Trust), amateur plays were produced for the entertainment of family and friends and it is probable that these represent many such salon performances in private homes around Sydney. In thinking about performance, whether in the rudimentary environment of the convict hulk and or in the more salubrious, privileged surroundings of the private drawing room, we recognise that live entertainment provides a vital and refreshing break from the ordinary. Jordan’s research reminds us that even in extreme circumstances humanity reaches to stories, songs and

dance to remember, forget, teach and even survive. As such then the masquerade of theatre with its glitz and glamour serves as a moment of hope.

Theatre as a vehicle of ceremonial respite is evident on numerous levels and incorporates all aspects of the experience including the anticipation, the journey, the bustle, smells and purchases available in the foyer, the excitement of entering the auditorium and the thrill as the lights fade to darkness and then come up on the curtain heralding with the music the beginning of the show. These pleasures, like the drive to the airport (De Botton, 2003), the smell of a new book or the prospect of using new stationary, highlights the pleasure theatre offers as a way of being transported to a new dimension. Though essentially ephemeral in nature the experiential aspects last in the psyche. Dramatic narrative, exploration of a theme, excitement about seeing particular famous performers or characters, hearing a known script freshly interpreted; experiencing spectacle or unique audio visual technology, provide further pleasure.

In classical or bourgeois theatre we might delight in the magic of the sugar plum fairy, the toy that comes to life and the chorus of beautiful ballet dancers doing impossible things with their elegant bodies. Within this traditional theatre pleasures include exquisite performance, thrilling staging, and luxurious costumes and sets that frame a familiar narrative format. In epic theatre experiences like *The World of Paper* (Windmill, 2003), audiences were delighted by the extraordinary origami inspired unfolding of the set, or in *Pixel* (Theatre of Image, 2008) characters taking a journey of colour through a visual and audio odyssey expressed in dance. Within the educational theatre context of the NSW Art Gallery, *Enchantment* was evoked in the performance *Think in Thongs* (The Etcetera Duo, 2004), as gentle magic tricks and illusion imitated one iconic Australian painting after another, each emerging in tableaux form through playful representation. Here the young audience delighted in making connections between the representation and the actual image. While in jongleur performance, *Enchantment* is felt in moments of interaction as the eager child anticipates the next trick and communicates with the performer. Theatre show-casing young people's talent, evokes *Enchantment* through a sense of community participation within a new strange world such as sitting in and amongst the action in performances such as in *Angels in the Architecture* (Shopfront Theatre for Young People, 2006) and *Birds* (Australian Theatre

for Young People, 2000) or the moment of celebration when the glitter drops at the end of the performance and the serious display turns into a party.

### ***5.1.3 Cohesiveness and inclusivity***

The cacophonous nature of *Enchantment* might be termed as the ephemeral pleasure of the *total experience* which includes the before and after rituals such as the adventure of going somewhere new (Aston & Savona, 1991) as well as the experience of the performance itself coming together in a unified way. As discussed in chapter two, the more a theatre event creates a sense of cohesiveness through its theatrical discourse the more enjoyment the production provides as a whole. Aspects of design, choreography, staging, music and text, have more resonance when created through a single vision or a theme that resonates throughout the action. This prism, through which the audience interprets the performance as a whole, known as the *mise-en-scene*, is the vehicle by which theatre as art might be appreciated, not just in the sets of big budget musicals but in the work through which metaphorical motifs and symbols are carried through the set and costumes to create a layered intellectual experience. As such the adaptation of *The Tragical Life of Cheese boy* (Slingsby, 2009) creating an entire experience through a set that covered the whole audience is of interest here, alongside its detailing of the recreated Victorian tent with props that were closely reminiscent of the original picture book.

These dual aspects of anticipation and attention endorse that all performance potentially provide a sense of *Enchantment*, even if only in small part. Pantomime is a good example of the importance of both elements. Though often generalised, as specifically for children, this was not how it started. Indeed the story of pantomime examples how popular art forms are often appropriated by producers in order to create exciting theatre for young audience. Further it is also an example of a genre that grew in popularity because of its direct appeal to *all* ages. In this sense it exemplifies the characteristics of *Enchantment*, which still resonate in many of most popular theatrical and musical extravagances today.

In its Greek form, pantomime meant “all mime”, alluding to its use in one-man shows within the Greek amphitheatre to express both comedy and tragedy (Frow, 1985).



Today it implies a fairy or “wondrous” (Warner, 1996) tale performed in a predominantly comic style but along its original, heterogeneous trajectory of incorporating all arts. Though quintessentially English in its modern form, it has undergone a number of incarnations since its popularity in the Eighteenth century London theatre where it emerged, after a break of some 1000 years after a revived performance as a rather serious but sentimental ballet style created by Mr. Weaver in 1717 (Frow, 1985, p.15). By 1800, however, the term was used for a silent ribbing or “cod” version of a sentimental performance of a myth that was undertaken in the “French nights” mime style, which before its domestication within indoor theatres had emerged from Europe as *commedia dell’ arte*. In its popular raucous street theatre form, stock characters improvised primarily bawdy domestic scenarios in which the social and political news of the time and location were incorporated into performance. Rick Miller playing a one man version of the Simpsons playing *Macbeth* (MacHomer, 2012), thus emanates pantomime according to its original Greek traditions; the art of playing numerous parts (Lucian [in Frow, 1985, p.16]) and it also represents the art in its later comedic form, that of *spoofing*. In the typical Georgian theatre of England, a serious performance usually of a myth or exotic tale was restaged by the comic genius of the Italian characters (who were themselves known personalities). The effect was extremely funny and quickly became more popular than the original versions. Gradually throughout the nineteenth century, the first half (serious) and the second half (comic parody) mixed to integrate comic and serious (emotional/sentimental) aspects throughout the entire show.

Once started, the popularity of the pantomime was sustained by the genius of theatre manager John Rich, a mechanist and performer who developed the aspect most evident today in all of our most Enchanting performances: the spectacle. The Harlequin performer, as a driver of the dramatic action, required clowning prowess and athleticism. Through John Burgess’s vision, Harlequin also became a magician. A slam of Harlequin’s baton miraculously created an instantaneous and extraordinary setting, emergence of a new character and much, much more. This aspect of visual theatrics would have matched the growing interest and enjoyment of visual ephemera emphasised by Callaway in the crowd pleasing pulling power of the 360 spectacles of the eighteenth century (2000). Later the art-form evolved again under the influence of

the popular vaudevillian artists and singers who introduced the verbal banter, audience participation, the burlesque musical acts and of course the cross gender fun of the “panto dame” and “principal boy” (Lathan, 2004).

As shown the story of English pantomime emerges as the development of low satirical comedy into a thriving art form incorporating as its key players scenic artists and mechanists specialising in mesmerising magical stage effects and illusion; talented acrobats and circus performance; the development of the script under the influence of the old time music hall comedians and singers. One other rather surprising social development assured its place as a fond childhood memory, and that was the morality of the Victorian era and Prince Albert’s cultural influence in revamping Christmas as an idyllic family festival. Pantomime that had previously been produced all the year round, as a guaranteed money-spinner suddenly became a strictly seasonal activity, and in the process romanticised the activity of attending. With a five weeks run each year guaranteeing solvency for most venues, the popularity and importance of pantomime in the UK theatre scene, even in the second decade of the twenty-first century, cannot be stressed enough (Lathan, 2004). Further the influence of pantomime can be felt in the American and Australian scenes in the guise of the musical spectacular.

## ***5.2 The dramatic discourse of Enchantment***

Pantomime’s popularity was in no small part due to the amazing spectacles produced under Rich in the eighteenth century, who succeeded through his art in visually transforming audiences, at a time when Britain was beginning to colonise the world and there was enormous interest in other places (Dimpleby, 2010), to remote parts of the world through visual sets that would have competed with the panorama (Calloway, 2000) and the many other mechanical and scientific effects that were being created. Further as Dimpleby points out it was an age of money for Britain, when certain people would have had both the leisure time and resources to indulge in these interests. Through these ephemeral art experiences audiences could imagine that they were elsewhere, experiencing the ferocious effects of nature while in safety, much like the Internet can visually transport people today. This dramatic art evoked the gothic ideal of touching an audience emotionally through imagery and characterisation. This

combination of place (setting), action (plot) and personalities (characters) with which the audience feels some “connection to”, is still a popular discourse today, reflecting the ideals of romance and danger.

The fascination of wild adventure is recognised by Jungian theorists as archetypally the psychic journey that the hero undertakes to ultimately find him or herself (Campbell, 1988 [1949]; Jung, 1980), but what Greenberg described as a “mapping of the male development” (in Siverman Van Buren, 1989, p189). These experiences not only touch on the drama of *Revelry*, which here might be contextualised as the fight against nature, but they also reassure as the definition of Enchantment.

The dramatic discourse of *Enchantment*, as seen in the pantomime and musical theatre traditions, is defined by optimism and happy endings, which reiterate assurance. Romance plays a role in *Enchantment* not so much in its focus on partnering, although this can happen, but in this aspect of comfort.

### **5.2.1 Romanticism**

Popularised in the late eighteenth century, romantic thinking emerged from ideals of eighteenth century enlightenment to focus on aspects of sublime nature and the individual (Grayling, 2010). The movement emerged at a time of colonial expansion, which accounts for its interest in exotic places and its “natives” which inspired the term “noble savages” (Rousseau, 1947). During this time the image of the Scottish Highlander cuts a popular heroic figure on the wild moors, as does the Outsider hero/explorer struggling against the odds of untamed continents. From such ideals of people bound by a common location, language and course, emerges the notion of nationalism (Grayling, 2010). The conviction and absolutism of romanticism, its exploration of man meets nature and man against the machine, all fit with our very human longing for knowledge, guidance, and belief that we are doing the right thing.

The adventure story is still reminiscent of a gothic age, reinforced in its dramatic landscapes and costuming. Gothicism, as an offshoot of romanticism, conveys ideals of freedom, against the imposing obstacles of turbulent weather, barren wastelands, oppressive cathedrals and castles against which backdrop a sense of mystery and

medievalism was expressed in sweeping costumes, as well as wild loathsome characters and fragile feminine beauties lost. Within these desolate scenarios, the coupling of a perfect male and female within a courtly love paradigm, as exemplified in the medieval court, continues to be popularly expressed, along with attributes of chivalry shown in the codes of both lovers, in which qualities of gentleness, kindness, consideration and toughness are endorsed within the male lover as knight, while the virtuous virgin heroine, pure, chaste, and loyal is placed on a pedestal by her bewitched lover (Dimbleby, 2010).

This dynamic is reinforced in many Disney animations even when the characters start by actively going against this. Anti-hero Flynn (Disney Animation Studios, 2010) is introduced as offensive, rude, and vain, Tangles as independent and feisty. Nonetheless, as the film unravels, “order” prevails and the unscrupulous villain is humbled, that he might become noble. By the end of the film, bewitched Tangles still refuses to marry him, yet remains as loyal to him as in all other traditional tales. This pattern of the tamed lover is also portrayed in the characteristics of Simba, who as king (*The Lion King*, Disney, 2010) needs to learn to take responsibilities for his action, and also Troy, main protagonist of the *High School Musical* (Disney, 2005) who learns these virtues as he compromises his role as school football hero to embrace the apparently soft option of inclusion in the school drama. In each case it is the male who takes the more complex adjustment to meet the needs of his love. Rarely does the female antagonist dramatically adjust for her lover, inferring that she already meets his needs, or that she is in fact the goal to be reached, as opposed to a three dimensional character on her own journey. In other words a male can be flawed and changed but his woman needs to be already perfect (Zipes, 2006, p.27). Things of course happen to the female antagonist, but it is her fate to react and survive them using the skills and virtues she already has. By contrast, males are required to adjust their behavior as they fall in love with the heroine.

Traditionally chivalry endorses the ideals of stoicism, inferred through gifts of intelligence, courage, justice and self-control. Further, chivalry implies the duty of service to ones fellow human beings irrespective of nation, class, race or creed. To what extent do these philosophies actually play out in the common spectacles of our performances today?

### 5.2.2 Chivalry

Romantic love narratives within live theatre tend to be concentrated in musical performance, particularly staged musical performances, or fairytale narratives, as discourse for young people focuses on child centered issues of a domestic or social nature. Nonetheless the romantic ideal of a permanent happy solution and the values of chivalry are often paramount and implicitly conveyed through the following heterogeneous discourses:

- **Setting** which reinforces that the story takes place elsewhere, not in the humdrum of the everyday, philosophically reinforcing wishful thinking. This could be in the context of the past or future utopian worlds that are revealed as flawed. In overcoming such places chivalry is conveyed in the fortitude and determination required to restore the equilibrium of such places.
- **The battle against the odds** recognised as the wild, rough, exotic adventure through which the hero prevails and returns more mature, worldly and sensitive than before. The romantic hero prevails and endures against those who are seemingly stronger.
- **Domestic comedy**, as the untangling and sorting out of circumstances that have somehow gone against nature, and which is left to the young to return to order.
- **Courtly love**, in which two people are predestined to be united at some time. This union of two people who fall in love is perhaps the most obvious scenario culminating in marriage once each has been tested for their purity and dedication to each other (High School Musical, Disney, 2007; Lion King, Disney, 2009; Edward Scissorhands, Martin McCullum & Marc Platt, 2008).
- **Purity and faithfulness**, in which each young hero is tested in some way and found pure.
- **Effort**, endorsing that the path is not straightforward there are dangerous tests to go through, before reward can be gained. This fits with Burke's (2004 [1757]) idea that the sublime involves effort that is rewarded as the travellers, like the knights of old, return not just unscathed but enlightened and rich.

Implicit within all these elements are the romantic notions of a reestablished order and nationalistic pride nurtured within beautiful aesthetics that convey hope and security.

### *5.2.3 Aesthetic imagery*

Romance often alludes to castles and other places of grandeur, such as exotic cultures, or familiar places of home that somehow open into a new experience in surprising ways.

Traditionally romance is evoked through costuming, particularly long dresses that refer to medieval styles such as the “Princess” or even the swash buckling adventures of the “Pirate”. These costumes, generally bright and colourful, are symbols of royalty, prosperity or adventure. If not indicating history as a pinnacle of past perfected, costumes alternatively inspire the thrall of the exotic, fairy, or the best of current trends (cool, funky, glitz and glamour) that still imply a cut away from the normal every day.

Similarly such ideals are found in “an expensive and controllable version of nature where wild is made lovely” or “a private place where the fever and the anguish of being is soothed away” (Nicholson, 2009, p.54). These Arcadian values are also found in the motifs of:

- a pastoral golden world, contained and familiar, safe from the failings of the everyday world, providing a place of peace and calm away from anxiety;
- the bliss of love and purity that are projected onto the land through controlled, ordered and perfect landscapes manipulated for the benefit of humans;
- man, as artist gardener, in control and taming the wilds while creating spaces that are looked after and safe; and
- allusions to simple, rustic but satisfied, harmonious living surrounded by the peaceful aspects of nature such as the gentle waterfall and stream, the friendly rabbits, robins, deer, alongside flourishing flowers.

Underpinning all these images is the ideal of nature under authoritarian control; a park or “paradise” designed to bring safety from the failings of the world. This ideal of the natural world tamed is fundamental to the aesthetic of romance as the antithesis of the wild. As such paradise portrays animals as cute, harmless, small, even funny things to be owned. These animals are often anthropomorphised as sweet babies and referred to as, young and innocent in their depictions of infant tones and baby babblings and physical features such huge rounded eyes, which automatically endear them to the

audience. As such Arcadian animals metaphorically symbolise the injured and the innocent child as the special individual, proven and somehow noble.

Steinheimer (2003) suggests the difference between children and adult is that children are the keepers and guardians of humanity and are innocent, romantically connected to the notion of purity. In *Six myths of our time*, Warner (1995) agrees suggesting that the injured child is the icon of humanity while (Giroux, 2000, p.14) insists that innocence is merely a construct for adults. This oxymoron infers a societal wish to protect our children without them becoming worldly. The delusion that love and job must have a higher purpose and be endlessly satisfying, or else that it proves it corrupt, is the complaint of Levy (1993) who appeals for shows that help its young audience face the world as it is rather than as an empty dream. The inconsistency is described by de Botton as societal perfectionism (2004), who explains there is nothing intrinsically wrong with this idea unless it sets up people for a sense of failure in the real world.

### ***5.3 Primary actants of Enchantment***

The primary actants of *Enchantment* narrative are hero figures that, through their ability to emerge triumphant, represent figures of security and assurance for the audience.

#### ***5.3.1 Figures of security and assurance***

Society lives in a perpetual state of wishful thinking (de Botton, 2002), searching for security and assurance that certain commercial brands are happy to provide. Role models in the *Enchantment* system appeal because, it represents characters who work within the confines of an ordered social structure but who somehow rise above it; what Spillane might call living heroically, “employing an action language stripped of dubious abstraction” (Spillane, 2007, p.30). Such discourse reflects the hierarchical lineage of traditional acting companies that of the young attractive leading man and/or lady in the principal roles, followed by character minor roles, and then the general company; a structure which encourages the audience to connect primarily with the main characters and the performers who play them.

Accordingly, Hourian (1997) identifies two heroes; the modern “underdog” who can be male or female and with whom young audiences identify with in some way, and the traditional hero who tends to make his mark in romantic discourses by being elite. Though it is recognised that the traditional hero is no longer the only protagonist paradigm, it is worth mapping out this prototype as the metaphorical purpose of *Enchantment* offers both security and assurance.

The traditional Western hero embodies three kinds of rhetoric: utopian ideals; the honour of the gods; and an ordered soul in harmony with itself. As such the ideal hero balances strength, beauty, intelligence and loyalty. Classically these personalities are admired for their invincible, superhuman qualities that separate the hero from the everyday world. They epitomise single-minded calculated principles, which prove useful in challenges against foes (Spillane, 2007, p.23)

Protection, though, is not the hero's only characteristic demonstrating overwhelming self-importance, confidence and sometimes, even impertinence towards others. This underlying sense of superiority is exemplified in roguish behaviour of Robin Hood and Peter Pan who enjoy the merciless belittling, scorning, taunting, neglect and trickery of friends as well as enemies. Such attributes of the traditional hero can thus be criticised for endorsing the values of old world imperialism and male dominance implying he is little different from that of his enemy. A hero's negativity towards another justifies destructive behaviour and even the triviality can endorse treating some people as lesser. An early example of this is Robinson Crusoe who “tames” a savage for his own benefit, in the belief that he is “saving him”.

Hourian (1997) demonstrates how two-dimensional insights of characters sketched only in broad strokes, alongside persuasive driving narrative structure, place the reader solely behind the hero to focus only on his fate. A classically evil character like Captain Hook is made more alarming when we learn that he wears a hook instead of a hand showing how a visual imaging can act as the main signifier for the reader/spectator. Such motifs encourage preconceived assumptions as to the nature and intentions of the character often leaving little empathy or understanding of them. When juxtaposed with the complexities, prowess, strength and courage of the hero, we see as unquestioningly



“good” in contrast. This theory endorses a structural understanding of the function of characters; particularly Greimas (1983) “actantial” model as discussed in chapter two.

#### *5.4 Staging considerations*

Other characters that might be seen to exist only in relation to framing and reflecting back the heroic aspects of the protagonist are exotic characters from another place, conquerors and helpmates, opposition characters, and the female object of his courtly love. Further the staging of this character in performances in which audience sit passively spaced as the silent observers, watching the action through the frame of the fourth wall of the bourgeois theatre, further romanticises the action. It is this soporific aspect of theatre, in which spectators are placed to follow but not criticise the action, that Brecht found most offensive and patronizing (Martin & Bial, 2000, p.40).

The primary element in the artistic code of *Enchantment* is in its cohesive whole, which brings together all aspects of the performance for the audience. The importance of the pantomime as a pre-runner of the American and Australian musical theatre scenes has been discussed, but so crucial is pantomime in the history of how theatre has been traditionally produced for young people that the phenomena, as popularised in Australia by JC Williamson, requires close investigation in terms of the staging elements that continue to be enjoyed by audiences today.

##### *5.4.1 The cacophonous pleasures of spectacle*

###### *(a) Elements of pantomime*

The British pantomime popularised a number of formulaic elements, which are evident in many mass culture performances performed today. These include:

- **Familiarity and predictability** combining a well-known fairy tale or popular story with topical and local (story within a story) jokes, settings & scenarios to connecting with a specific parochial or insular audience.
- **Static dramatic structure and routines** in which the audience anticipate/predict what it is going to happen even down to the familiar cheesy

moments, moments of horror with the “baddy”, chase scenes, sing-alongs and wedding finale.

- **Topicality**, which refers to the utilisation of popular current music and topical news items within the performance, as a way of the performance appearing specific to the audience.
- **Audience participation**; urging the audience to join in is part of the performance drive to develop a sense of inclusion and community as shown in chapter four. Techniques include inviting the kids on stage, sing along competitions, as well as throwing lollies out into the audience as a kind of blessing.
- **Magic, wonder and illusion** portrayed in the lavish sets and costumes, snow, bubbles and importantly the *transformation scene* such as the pumpkin into the coach, flying through the air, driven by the horses over the heads of the audience.
- **Modern technology** incorporating new visual and audio effects such as the Google Earth drop through space, inferring that Buttons, aka British TV personality Christopher Biggins, had arrived from a long way away (*Cinderella*, South Hampton, 2008/9), are all part of the on-going improvements to the staging effects and its mission to continually impress its audiences.
- **Novelty and surprise**, termed “suddenlies” (Wood & Grant, 1997), ensure on-going recapturing of attention and the imagination as the unexpected happens in new and curious ways from cascades of snow, bubbles or beach balls, to a character emerging from nowhere or an unusual request for the audience to do something strange.
- **Dance troupes** or the “villagers”, remain important and gives opportunity to offer “crowd scenes” as well as contextualise new scenes such as the hunting dance which introduces Prince Charming and Dandy (*Cinderella*), the ballroom creating the romantic setting for Prince Charming and Cinderella to meet, while the underwater scenes shown in ultra violet (UV) light announce a dreamlike escape for Dick Whittington. In each show the dancing chorus perform different dance styles that usually include a classical dance, and at least one special effect or (UV) dance.

- **Vaudeville artists** represent familiar mainstream performers, comedians or magicians who perform some special tricks that have been adapted specifically for the pantomime.
- **Trickery and fun** is the aspect of *Revelry* described in chapter four and incorporates the “goody versus baddy” scenes, the slosh scenes (Lathan, 2004), the ghost scene all designed to get the audience really excited and involved.
- **Cheeky taboo** is the inclusion of naughty but inoffensive behaviour, which helps bond the audiences together.
- **Popular TV or sport personalities**, though not theatre performers, dress up as guest appearances in the shape of strangely dressed character related to the show. They are enjoyed as recognisable personalities in silly costumes and possibly resemble the original pleasure of seeing Harlequin, as a known character/personality pretending to someone else, and it endorses good will.
- **Familiar stock characters**, the multitude of characters including the Panto boy who traditionally is female (though sometimes played straight), the Dame who is usually a man, the Panto girl (always played by a girl) who marries the Panto boy, the Silly character (usually played by an older man), and the villagers and boys and girls (played by the dancers and sometimes children).
- **The happy ending**, the “unknotting” or rounding things off so everyone lives happily ever after.

What makes the pantomime in the UK so popular is its cacophonous mix of detail that works in synergy with each other to emphasise “beauty” (Burke, 1757, part III) mixed with homespun fun irreverently poking of fun at self and others. A secondary aspect though is the art form’s phenomenal “chameleon like” ability to change to communicate and suit the needs of a modern audience (McConachie, Zarilli, Williams, & Sorgenfrei, 2009, p.350).

*(b) Elements of musical*

Though here in Australia the traditions of pantomime are not as strong as in Britain, its trajectory is still present in much of its popular entertainment in particular the modern

musical spectacular. Though it takes itself much more seriously it incorporates the more glamorous elements popularised in pantomime such as:

- **Lavish sets and costumes changes** which transform seamlessly, one into another, including sets like *Mary Poppins* (Disney, 2011) in which audiences were “transported” from being in front to being above the action. This particular set further extended the experiences by creating the quaint romance of the paper Georgian Dolls House close to the original publication, while also sympathetically resembling the iconic aesthetic of the Disney movie and the songs.
- **Popular songs** written specifically for the production, capturing current styles and emulating a mixture of sentimental humour in a variety of styles. A commercial musical will aim to have at least one anthem song that can be sung independently of its original context, to become successful earners for the composer and lyricist.
- **Dance troupes** of between twenty and thirty dancers, who like the Greek prototype create a big impact of “succession and uniformity” (Burke, 2004, Part II, Section IX) on stage as well as magnitude. Modern chorus dancers do not generally comment on the action as in the past, but their role continues to set the scene and create atmosphere and awe.
- **Predictability**, comfortable familiarity and assurance, is emulated through elaborate design and casting to evoke a sensibility that it is a known product, accessible and connected to storylines and characters larger than the ephemeral event itself. In restaged musicals or Disney films, audiences often fall into the sentimentality of fondly reliving a happy memory.
- **Novelty and spectacle** through illusion and special effects are designed to keep the experience fresh, within their anticipated forms. Gladiatorial effects and animal parades (*Walking with Dinosaurs*, Global Creatures, 2010); *How to train a dinosaur* (Global Creatures, 2012); *War Horse* (National Theatre of Great Britain & South Africa's Handspring Puppet Company, 2013), helicopters and other extraordinary ways of characters arriving from nowhere, mammoth puppets, numerous acrobats (*Jungle story*, Disney, 2004), snow falls (*Edward Scissorhands*, Martin McCullum & Marc Platt, 2008) or an actor suddenly flying

in the air and tap dancing on the “ceiling” directly above the audience (*Mary Poppins*, Disney, 2011).

- **Sentimentality** through moments of vulnerability in which the audience is urged to empathise or compelled to feel sorry for particular character. This often occurs through music or dance. Sentimentality was shown in *Edward Scissorhands*, Martin McCullum and Marc Platt, 2008) when Edward was unfairly ostracised from his community symbolised by his aloneness on the stage at the end of the dance.
- **The happy ending narrative** representing the unknotting of the situation and the restoration of order leading to everyone living happily ever after.

### *(c) Elements of ballet*

Similarly, traditional ballet emerging from the French court and opera emits as its main source of pleasure, grace and feminine beauty. In congress with Burke’s (2004) work we may also see in the physicality of this art form, classical aspects of delicacy, nuance of colour and detail in both design aesthetics and the physicality of the choreography along with proportion, health and implied virtues of the dancers themselves. *Enchantment* is found in the profound pleasures of:

- **Corp de ballets** create grandeur and “magnitude” (Burke, 2004, Part II, Section X) through synchronised choreography that is amplified by numerous people doing the same repetitive action as a united single body.
- **Lavish sets and costumes** creating the illusion of splendor and wealth.
- **Prima ballerinas**, the star quality and the beauty of the principal dancer (princess) is also the ideal of many young girls.
- **Competition**, when the groups of exotic dancers do their “party piece” in the presence of the court, followed by long individual bows to the audience we are appreciating showman spectacle.
- **Orchestral** music, creating the massively dramatic sounds of the strings, which provide rich soundscapes and rousing audio extravaganza.

*(d) Elements of the music concert*

Alongside the described traditional theatre events, other popular Enchantment experiences commonly enjoyed are performances such as *The Wiggles* (Wiggles Inc., 2003), *The Dandy Lionz* (Seymour Centre, 2007), and *Yo Gabba Gabba* (Chugg entertainment, 2011) that essentially present a family pop concert. Pleasures here include:

- **Comfortable characters** representing individual characters that imply familial relationships such as silly uncles (The Wiggles., 2003), cool older brother brothers and sisters (Hi5, 2008), and silent characters, in the skin and clown characters of Dorothy the Dinosaur (The Wiggles Inc, 2012) or Dora the explorer (Nick JR, 2010).
- **Famous personalities** the excitement of seeing well known performers can be overwhelming and their anticipated entrance is greeted with loud rapturous cheers which can create an electric atmosphere in the auditorium. This was seen at the entrance of Alex Kingston and Mark Williams, MC for the *Dr. Who Symphonium* (BBC, 2012).
- **Pop music** and other catchy cool tunes to get up and dance to, often these are already familiar through media and presale merchandising.
- **Audience interaction**, talking directly to the audience, about things that the spectators themselves care or think about to create a sense of bonding and friendship.
- **Dance and movement** that along with the music encourages children to also get out of their seats and join in. This also develops a sense of ownership of the space for the audience.
- **Glamour** including lots of bright gorgeous costumes and pretty sets that present objects of wishful thinking for the audience.
- **Novelty and surprise** in particular glitter drops, balloons, changing lights and funny noises that delight the audiences with party style effects.

*(e) Elements of circus*

Modern circus, such as Cirque de Soleil (2012), continues to amaze audiences with their extraordinary expertise and glamour, represents a new approach to traditional vaudevillian acts without the use of animals. Particular features of the modern circus enjoyed by young audiences and families are:

- **Cohesiveness** in which the performance is contextualised within a leitmotif *mise-en-scene* that unifies all the vaudevillian pieces and which links the costumes so that all acts fit within a thematic framework;
- **MC roles** either through hosts who like to build a rapport with the audience, or metaphysical puck-like figures causing mischief and then restoring order through mime, gesture and silence, that hints at a dark mysterious side in which an audience is not completely sure of their intention;
- **Exotic acts** such as acrobats, flying trapeze, strong men that all fit in to the category of disturbing and mesmerizing the audience through their dexterity. These are not about familiarity but about unsettling and challenging the ordinary. Though included within *Enchantment* these acts can also fit in the grotesque pleasure of *Revelry*.

*(f) Elements of black light theatre*

Black light theatre highlights artisan attention to detail in the creation of complex nuanced works of art such as puppets, costuming and sets, and the magic of technical craftsmanship in terms of focused lights, black boxed sets, tightly cued audio visual effects. Further techniques include:

- whimsical choreography rather than hectic action within the performance
- use of gentle music and non-verbal communications rather than dialogue.
- crafted puppets manipulated by puppeteers that are seen but not focused on so that objects seemingly fly or do things that they could not do within a realistic setting.
- opportunity for artistic effects such as the comic book stylisation seen in *Glow* (Lior Kalfo, 2010).

***(g) Elements of site specific performance***

Site-specific theatre offers *Enchantment* in its ability to enhance the architectural space in which it exists, creating a contained, safe place of Arcadian relaxation for the audience. Performance created to draw attention to the beauty of its surrounds whether indoors or outdoors therefore contains both performance and the pleasure of the space.

***5.4.2 Holy and the sublime***

In part II of his treatise *on Beauty and the Sublime*, Burke (2004 [1757]) described the qualities of the sublime as including: grandeur, magnitude, and splendor. Whereas beauty (Burke, 2004, part 111 Section XXVII) emits the contained nuance of delicacy, form and proportion often symbolically small and controlled, the sublime discharges awe, horror, wonder, danger and “hard work”. Works that capture this grand scale terror inspire amazement and reverence in its viewers, and is only truly possible within large architectural spaces against which the experience is framed. This was exemplified in the open-air spectacle of *Sticky* (Improbable Theatre, 2003) and *Celestial Bells* (Trans-express, 2002) which like the Bread and Puppet theatres, played in open air spaces utilising industrial machinery. Other companies inside arena spaces and large-scale theatres also specialise in giant machine or puppets operated with up to six puppeteers contriving a sense of magnitude and wonder seen in the productions of *Erth* (2012) and *Global Creatures* (2012). Their huge puppet feats exemplify the skill of the puppet engineer as designer and the mechanist’s art in operating them. Craig (1958 [1911]) inspiring practitioners such as Appia recognised the power of these uber-marionette figures (1958) and the impact on the audience. Whether in the street or theatre setting, the atmosphere of amazement is developed not just by the effect itself but in the solemnity that surrounds the work itself; the buildup, the drawing attention, the announcement and timing which goes to creating a sense of ceremony that might be considered holy not in a religious but in a ritualised way (Grotowski), what Bataille termed set apart or *agiology* (Boldt-Irons, 1995, p.162). In these events spectators are totally present or awake in the action, which allows them to respond to the ephemeral impact.



Though moments of Bataille's "holy" (1985; Taylor 1987, p.136) are shown in open-air festival works, most spectators tend to see theatrical wonders in the sets and costumes of traditional theatres and within the context of musical spectaculars or the pantomime. As Burke (2004) recognised, the harshness of the sublime experience as well as projections of grandeur and wonder, ultimately serves to quiet and soothe us. Like a moment of holiness, it brings presence and stillness like a wakeful moment of peace in which the watcher experiences but the brain does not chatter. If pleasure and beauty pleases the eye with harmony of shape, form colour and serenity, the sublime reminds us "we are alive". Sublime in this context is not the self-congratulatory experience of the self-realization culture (Ryle and Soper, 2002). It refers instead to the sense of being lost and small within. As such a sublime experience serves to make the spectator insignificant. In this sense, rather than "empowering" or soothing, the sublime requires its audience to submit and surrender to the experience.

Examples of the sublime experience include:

**Grandscale sets and puppetry:** The size of the venue reinforces the enormity of the puppetry against which our smallness is measured. Erth showed this in the huge pageantry and spectacle of their *Gondwana* (Erth, 2006) in which the development of the earth was evoked through the age of the dinosaurs. The dinosaur that appeared to break through the frame of the fourth wall was a good example of this, as was The Lion King's father emerging in three-dimensional form out of the stars (*The Lion King*, Disney, 2010), or the naturalistic movement of the animal through coordination of three puppeteers operating one life-size puppet (*War Horse* (National Theatre of Great Britain & South Africa's Handspring Puppet Company, 2013))

**Pageantry and open-air spectacle:** As with grand scale sets, pageantry heightens reality and an illusion of majesty. This was endorsed in the work of both Meyerhold and Reinhardt who heralded the modern theatre, and whose extravaganza equivalents might be seen in *Sticky* (Improbable Theatre, 2004), *Celestial Bells* (Trans Express, 2003) and *The Walking with Dinosaurs: Arena Spectacular* (Global Creatures, 2010) was reminiscent of the theatricality of seeing the exotically terrifying animals of the ancient circus, full of splendour and danger. Though the drama of the actual fighting is *Revelry*,

the majesty of the gladiatorial march and impact of the live-size creatures compel respect and awe consistent with *Enchantment*. This effect was also mirrored in the parade of the animals in the *Lion King* (Disney, 2010) and the The Disney Land, *Princess Parade*.

**Chorus:** The thrill of watching a huge chorus harks back to the drama of original Greek theatre. Large numbers of people doing the same thing at the same time has an extraordinary impact of the audience (Burke, 2004). Mesmerising, kaleidoscopic, the chorus is reminiscent of huge armies and harks back to the feeling of the grandeur and unity of the masses in a unified coherent form.

**Transformation:** The element of surprise and the delight of the change are described above. This aspect reminds us that it is not just the spectacle itself but also the way in which the spectacle is contextualised, so that the audience willingly suspends disbelief that has the ability to create awe.

**Death-defying:** This aspect refers to elements of drama that infer danger such as swallowing swords, climbing through tennis rackets, falling from great heights of going at great speeds. This might be understood from Burke's reference to the pleasure of pain (2004, Section II pain and pleasure).

**Full-scale Orchestra:** The wonder of a large orchestra incorporating disparate instruments that together create harmony, drama, discord and emotion is a metaphor of the power of the universe. It creates a non-narrative journey or meditation within the listener, who transforms as they surrender to an emotional rather than intellectual journey, whether the feelings that emerge are concern, fear or joy. That an audience appreciates this is heard in the pleasure, which causes sighs and even tears, just through listening. Choral work can add to this experience and in theatre for young audience it was seen in the concert version of *The Red Tree & The Arrival* (Australian Chamber Orchestra, 2008) in which the emotions were dramatised through score as the artwork from the book was projected onto the large screen.

Many performances for young people are set in front of the large screen with montages of particular films shown (Dr Who, 2012; Pixar, 2012). This is effective in highlighting how emotive an orchestral score is and its roles in generating emotion (Kalinak, 1992).

### ***5.5 Spatial Aspects***

Though an audience might be involved in the action they essentially observe *Enchantment* at a distance from behind the fourth wall position. Participation is “extrinsic”, meaning that the audience is affected rather than affecting the discourse and tends to watch the spectacle from the position of the fourth wall. To some degree all theatre performance contains at least some aspect of *Enchantment* as enjoyment of the experience as a whole is the very reason why theatre companies sell tickets; people must want to see the show for it to exist! If theatre wishes to be commercially successful it must appeal to the masses and for this reason most production companies’ aim for safe, performances, which charm the audience and make them feel good about themselves and the world. This is shown by the ongoing appeal of the spectacle productions created by the likes of Disney and Global Creatures, which sit on trajectories that have existed for many hundreds of years. As described above, the formula for pantomime utilising a mixture of pleasurable experiences such as music, dance, comedy, and a controlled amount of emotion to ensure that audiences feel they have value for money.

### ***5.6 Defining characteristics of Enchantment***

The root of comedy is to unknot or to unravel (Booker, 2005). In *Enchantment*, just as in carnival, the unmasking signifies the return to order as the epitome of survival. But closure in *Enchantment* is not just a moment in time win, but a long-term promise of complete security or “happily ever after”.

#### ***5.6.1 Homogenised certainty***

Closure brings ongoing certainty, comfort and safety and is the epitome of reassurance and reliability. For example the character Mary Poppins (Disney, 2012) as outrageously fun as she is, ensures a clean up after every game and this is soothing and reassuring because with closure comes the celebration. A party, wedding or community gathering

that also serves as the finale of the show itself. As such the feasting signifies restoration of equilibrium and therefore the end of the performance, so the audience can leave reluctant but gratified.

Zipes (2002, p.130) points out however that storytelling which contrives to bring certainty to the viewer tends to do two things: firstly it homogenises cultural origins into a single narrative and secondly the predictable outcome supersedes understanding as to why characters behave in certain ways. Conversely, the boots that ultimately destroy the ballerina, *The Red Shoes* (Knee High Theatre, 2011), leave her fate open ended and unsure; representing the tragedy of things not being remedied; a form of hell.

### **5.6.2 Familiarity**

That parents as well as children favour shows with predictable comfortable endings reveals, according to Zipes (2006), that they actively buy into a particular culture (2006, p.7). Though more research is needed in this area, it would be suspected that parents tend to choose performances based if not on familiar television or film characters then on familiar or popular themes such as fairies or pirates; recognised story lines such as an adapted picture book (*Hairy McCleary*, The Nonsense Room 2011); or a particular known producing company like Disney or advertising which indicate a familiar view of childhood, for instance cartoon characters or animals anthropomorphised with big baby eyes (*Not in my Backyard*, Surf 'n' Theatre, 2008).

Disney is globally popular (Giroux, 1997) and some of their classic fairytale characters have become so homogenised into popular culture that it may be supposed that certain characters like Snow White and Cinderella are only recognisable to many children in their Disney persona. In attending the *Little Mermaid* (Sydney Opera House, 2009), many of the children voluntarily dressed up as Disney's Ariel to see the show which was a translation of Andersen's original work, exemplifying how a program appealing to the very young may have better served an older age group, for the performance itself was reminiscent of the music experience of *Peter and the Wolf* (composition written by Sergei Prokofiev, 1936), and like that classic, was primarily a piano recital (Silver-Gabrburg Piano Duo playing the complex musical score of Dr. Lio Navok with storyteller, Deborah Mailman). Though there was a lighting design with pretty gobos

creating beautiful patterns on the stage and dramatic moments such as the transformation into the witch, this experience would have been a unique one for many of the audience members who may not have fully understood or appreciated the language of original telling of Andersen's story let alone been prepared for the death of the mermaid at the end. Indeed they may have been surprised and some even bored by the experience. Though Trainor (1992) and Terwogtt & Van Grinsven's (1988) research would have reminded us that the language of music transcends previous knowledge of it.

In producing a "live version" of Disney inspired films like *Mary Poppins* and *Beauty and Beast* (Disney, 1992), directors' aim for both a faithful aesthetic reconstruction of the original animated work while also creating a work that is specific to the stage. The *Lion King* (Disney, 2010) was a unique example of this in that the performance resembled the original film while also utilising African storytelling styles particularly evident in its use of masks, costuming and choreography. Many ephemeral variations of the Disney brand though are more levelled at creating a beautiful but rather empty emotional experience; for example the "Disney on Ice" productions in essence showcase a montage of the popular "princess and princes" parade, in choreography that "lip synchs" to well-loved songs. As such, though full of glamorous and sensational moments such as characters like Mickey arriving by helicopter (Disney on Ice, 2006), these shows are essentially about selling the brand and merchandise.

The popularity of relatively costly musical spectacles like *Mary Poppins* (Disney, 2011) over less known cheaper tickets is another indicator that people prefer what they know to the unknown. This is easy to understand when looked at from the perspective of the purse strings; customers like to know what they are getting, wanting value for money, a familiar product guaranteed to please the children so that the whole experience feels like a treat, and a special day out. Jameson (2007) reminds us that we consume less the thing itself than its abstract idea (p.16); in other words an audience can be seduced by consumer and mass cultural ideals only *if we wish to*. The power of mass culture is that it reflects back to us utopian polarised ideals of what we already value (p.19) or want, either endorsing them as the norm, or creating a sense of pride and even devoutness around them. As such then beneath the glitz and glamour of theatre,

subliminal messages actively operate as *state apparatuses* (Althusser, 1971) to acculturate audiences with the particular values of the day in extremely subtle ways. Zipes (2006) demonstrates this by showing how fairy-tale discourse has an underlining cautionary ideology embedded within it, which in turn has an ordering or controlling quality to it as endorsed in the observations of Marx and Eagleton (2002). These messages are transient and evolving in that values reflect particulars of the time; as the values of society change so do the cautionary messages.

*Enchantment* in its musical theatre form ideologically conforms to assert the status quo of bourgeois society and gestures towards the predominately female fantasy that one day the man of her dreams, with all his failings, will love her enough to change for her. This romantic dialogue, looked at in the discourse of *Tangles* (Disney, 2010), is repeated in many romantic (so called “chick flick”) narratives which perpetuate the myth that allows women as adults to believe that even though their men may say and act in abusive ways, one day if they are patient and continue to show love, he will change for them and they will “live happily after”.

Within this particular structure, other implicit messages also convey ideas of

- **Reward (and punishment) versus entitlement;** in which meritocracy is absolute implicitly idealising that goodness will be rewarded and badness will be punished. As such, light overcomes the dark through virtue and good behaviour. If a woman is good and virtuous she will find a man, (Zipes, 2002). Concert performances in particular imply this ideal, that everything is ok, because children deserve the best (Giroux, 1997).
- **Outer beauty as the reflection inner beauty;** beauty is synonymous with virtue.
- **Parentification;** by appealing to and being obedient to the gods or a ruling force, we will be looked after.

*Enchantment* endorses the basic proposition that at the heart of fantasy is our life “as we want it be, rather than as it is” (Jameson, 2006, p.46; Burgin, Donald and Kaplan, 1986); that the princess will get the prince because “she is worth it”. As such these works project the idea that the audience also will get / convert their man into a prince because they are “worth it”. This theory suggests theatre is *performative* work of luck

and changes of fortune. Even the specifically ephemeral works of mass culture such as Disney cannot be ideological without being utopian, because as Jameson (2006) suggests discourse cannot manipulate unless it offers some fundamentally genuinely shared belief system (Jameson, 2006, p.39).

French theorist Jean Baudrillard (1994) provides an interesting theoretical twist on the scope and power of Disney's influence by arguing that Disneyland is more "real" than fantasy because it now provides the very image on which America constructs itself. Curiously, though Disney may stimulate wonder and fantasy experiences through its films, shows and parkland rides, order is what prevails. Philosophically the corporation does not encourage progressive values in its audience; indeed, Disney tends to emphasise conservative and sanitised values. Further, Disney's trademarked innocence renders, according to Eric Smoodin (1994), the corporation seemingly unaccountable for the diverse ways in which it shapes the sense of reality it provides for children as they take up specific and often sanitised notions of identity, difference and history in the apolitical, cultural universe of "the Magic Kingdom." The significance of animated films, he argues, operates on many registers, but one of the most persuasive is the role they play as the new "teaching machines." Disney films thus paradoxically narrate stories that "help" children understand who they are and what societies are about, while at the same time sheltering them from reality. The commanding legitimacy and cultural authority of such films, stems from their unique forms of representation and is secured within the predominance of media apparatus equipped with dazzling technology, sound effects, imagery packaged as entertainment, spin off commercial products, and "huggable" stories that are both "right and righteous" (Zipes, 1994, p.74). For Baudrillard (1994), Disneyland functions as a "simulations of the third order" (1994, p.12) designed to hide what is real and undesired, while Eric Smoodin (1994) reminds, "Disney constructs childhood so as to make it entirely compatible with consumerism" (Smoodin, 1994, pp.4-5). Given the influence of Disney's ideology of innocence and purity, parents are often willing to suspend critical judgement about such children's films, - however it is imperative for influencing adults to understand how such films attract the attention and shape the values of the children who view and buy them.

### 5.6.3 Merchandise

Neil Postman (1983, p.44) stated that childhood is disappearing under consumerism and media saturation. As seen, Disney and Hit Entertainment like all commercial theatre producers are extremely concerned with a performance's selling power in terms of tickets and merchandise.

Though companies such as Zeal, the Theatre of Image and others relying on grants and government funding do not produce merchandise at all, selling remains an important part of most theatre experiences shown in the entertainment centers as evident in the enormous attention to creating look alike dolls, wands, hats, t-shirt, coloured brochures and musical memorabilia. The pleasures of such tokens are seen in the success of "give away" promotions (such as fans, hats, glasses) produced by the sponsors of the show. When corporations sponsor particular shows, they buy into a philosophical idea that mirrors their brand in some way. Some companies like Disney are both the theatre producer and Merchandising Corporation. Merchandise is a big money generator and for some promoters it is the prime rationale for the show.

Children as consumers are the focus but they are not the buyers. Dual marketing thereby appeals to both adult and child, gently conferring the idea that "this is what childhood should be". Enchanting performances offer opportunities for children to experience pleasure and to locate themselves in a world that resonates with their desires and interests, while the desired merchandise appears to successfully address the pedagogical needs and interests of children. Winning marketing formulas targets different types of parents, the aspirational wanting to skill their children up and the guilty parent using presents as buy offs. This is seen in many of the musical spectacles and the live concerts of television shows such as *The Wiggles* (The Wiggles Inc., 2003) and *Yo Gabba Gabba* (Chugg Entertainment, 2011). Branding is all-important shown in the importance of costumed characters (like Dorothy Dinosaur, The Wiggles Inc) only being seen by children when the actor inside is completely dressed. A complete taboo is for the public to see a skin or puppet character half dressed; this partly to ensure that children are not scared or confused by the real character "dehumanised" but mostly



because of branding. The skins represent living teddy bears that can be purchased and owned.

In speaking directly to economically disadvantaged families who always purchased merchandise at the theatre, this was seen to be an important and fundamental part of their theatre experience; philosophically changing it from a predominately ephemeral to a more concrete experience. More research on the extent to which waving lights and other merchandise within the performance enhances the experience of the audience and their ultimate enjoyment would be illuminating. It is suspected that it might be considered as strongly participatory.

### ***5.7 The ideal aesthetic response to Enchantment***

As shown many theatrical devices are employed through staging techniques and narrative discourse to vary presentations to both excite and soothe the audience. In simple terms one form makes the audience think, deal and face the real world, the other ideal makes them forget themselves and the real world for a while. Enchantment does the latter through sentimentality and distraction.

#### ***5.7.1 Sentimentality and distraction***

Sentimentality, presents art as literal and emotional, representing what the soul would like to have but which it doesn't want to deal with. As such it evokes through pastiche a soporific sense of escapism in its audience. Disney for instance represents sentimentality by taking us in to the fake world of the princesses, no more a real or obtainable goal than the pastoral scenes of the eighteenth century French court. These experiences represent distraction.

At best such productions produces sublime wondrous uplifting experiences in which an audience finds their possibilities illuminated. At worst they represents deadly theatre (Brook, 1962) or what Weber (2004) described as Trauerspiel (theatre of mourning), referring to work that is obvious and one dimensional; there is no further insight; symbolic significance or expansion (2004, p.176). Perfectly clever, good wholesome pastiche soothes anxieties by projecting messages of comfort through ideas of rescue by

powers greater than ourselves,-“at the end of a performance if it has been a good one, the audience leaves purged of their personal anxieties, and reassured, revitalised, tranquillised by what seemed a dispensing of justice” (Hodgeson & Hodgeson, 1972, p.25). As Zipes (2006) warns however, the problem with such apparent utopia is that it forms a vehicle for the creator’s talents, a way of showing off rather than a tool for the development of the audience.

Through *Enchantment* an audience can be swept away by the divertissement of the action; the glamour and romance of the handsome leading couple - the exquisite detail of the sets and costume - and are encouraged to leave their critical voices behind, to feel totally present in the drama as it unfolds in its many forms. This audience response, observed Brecht, is the soporific effect of Bourgeoisie Theatre that leaves the audience vulnerable to the possibility of indoctrination and enculturation (Zipes, 2006). Zipes also notes that societal desires are packed for us and induced; inferring children’s culture represents the significant ways adults can socialise and acculturate children. Hidden within performance, rules and expectations can be deliberately scattered and subliminally absorbed by the viewer. It is for this reason Boudinot (2005) suggests, “the commercialization of folk and fairy tales is something to fear more than frightening children with culturally rich stories”. Daubert (2004) describes, “[O]ften behind a well-intentioned thematic book...hides a moralizing cautionary tale attempting to manipulate the reader in a deliberate and transparent way for a good cause”. Messages can be overt, stated and shown, or inadvertently implied, suggested or disguised. Theatre performance can subliminally affect an audience because:

- they are mostly placed in a passive position behind the fourth wall, which presents a very particular and singular view that generally implies that everything will fall into place as its natural order;
- they are deliberately manipulated by the charm and opulence of spectacle rather than encouraged to be critical observers. An emphasis on aesthetics absolutely appeals to the pleasures of fulfilment (Ryle and Soper); and
- the sentimentalised pastiche presents a romantised, unnatural ideal that reduces rather than builds resilience in the individual spectator.

### 5.7.2 *Mesmerised*

Ideally the audience engages with spectacle and *Enchantment* by surrendering to the art of hypnosis and allowing themselves to be mesmerised. As such audiences willingly and consciously switch off criticism to whole-heartedly accept what is produced in front of them. Mesmerising is the art of deception through illusion and psychology. It is not just the *how* but the *way* in which it is done, that makes it an art form. As Steinmeyer (2003, p.17) observes "the success of a magician lies in making a human connection to the magic... The audience is taken by the hand and led to deceive themselves". As such theatre makers create moments that evoke the pleasure of innocence, so that audiences submit to the sensory experience and let the magic wash over them.

Philosophically even epic theatre, which deliberately aims to shatter the façade of the theatre to reveal truthful illumination on the human condition produces an aspect of *Enchantment*, in the cohesive aesthetics of design aspects found in recurring motives and contextual themes, proportions and colouring as well as the impact and transformation of space itself. This is particularly apparent in works like *The Forest* (Fevered Sleep, 2012), which resembled an art installation and the *World of Paper* (Windmill Theatre, 2003) in which the set unfolded as though it was made of origami; particularly the effect of fire that was suggested through the very movement of paper and lighting. These visual techniques though simple are never-the-less exquisitely pleasurable for the audience. Along with intelligent choreography, intriguing smells and possibilities for tactile participation, these aesthetics add another layer of consideration for the audience while underwriting its overall chromatic atmosphere.

Helpful to all these theatre experiences, alongside vivid picturesque or symbolic sets and exquisite costume, is the importance of technical aspects:

- **Lighting** contributes to the pleasures when creatively using the light “against darkness” (Burke, *Ibid*, Part II, Sect XIII) to assist in marking space and time as the chronotope of the action, building atmosphere and tension and in focusing attention to infer particular messages;
- **Sound effects** help create ominous and harmonious atmospheres, as well as a sense of time and place;

- **Music** infers geographical setting and historical period, as well as tone and ambience. Sometimes songs are used to replace soliloquy and intense dialogue while at others and sometimes they are used inadvertently as a diversion i.e. of clearing or setting the stage (*The Great Park Misadventure*, The Little People Theatre Company, 1992), changing scene, mood, a passing of time, or a journey. As such music can be structured to convey a mundane activity on stage without the tedium, or filling gaps with chords that have no particular meaning but the freewheeling joy of utterance. Sentimental lulling songs, Warner notes (2000, p.192), are often used to speak of parental concerns rather than those of the children. In these songs such musing allows fears to be expressed without requiring that either performer or spectator get emotional, or if they do then it is for a specific controlled time, offering a “safe” way of including the sentiment. Anthems on the other hand are used to build a sense of pride in the individual and a dignified coming together.

Through the cohesiveness of combined aesthetics and staging devices, spectators voluntarily move out of the everyday to be taken on journeys of illusion and splendour. Whether brave or ordinary, male or female, child or adult, these theatre experiences offer another world of possibilities, and are enjoyed from a director’s single vision realised through the combined perspectives of the choreographer, designer, musical director and performer’s talents, and from which return refreshed and renewed to live the life left just a few hours before.

All these examples demonstrate *Enchantment* as pleasure moments, a break from ordinary life and a moment of engagement with the present. It is perhaps for this reason so much debate has been given on distinction between the high theatre of the classics and the lowbrow theatre of mass entertainment (Jameson, 2008; Soper, 2006). Total submersion into a performance whether high or low, might be thought philosophically of in terms of romanticism, and fantasy wish fulfillment (Goodchild, 1996, p.5) when a spectator abandons or surrenders oneself completely to experience the sublime.

### 5.7.3 *Illusion, satisfaction and innocence*

If the principles of *Revelry* are ideally recognised by noisy children on their feet wildly cheering or jeering at the enemy, the engagement principles of *Enchantment* are successfully reflected in the moment of quiet when the audience sits open mouthed; mesmerised and engaged. The framework of *Enchantment* thus emphasises satisfaction in the total theatre experience and complete surrender to its illusions and heterogeneous action packed narrative discourse.

If *Revelry* emphasises the emotional idea that we are all part of the same team and that we need to face fears as one, *Enchantment* glorifies the individual and the consequences of particular behaviours. Implicit in this framework is the suggestion that the good are rewarded and the naughty punished. In Jungian terms, *Enchantment* encourages the archetypal response of the “innocent” responding with trust and joy at a world in which we are all protected by universal rescuers and benefactors. The implied child within this paradigm is that of the innocent placing belief in others, implying everything will be all right; “I will be rescued by my prince who will recognize me immediately as his worthy princess”; “I will have all I need the right job, the clothes, the right home”.

Dora the Explorer (Nick JR, 2010), the epitome of the innocent implied child, represents an ideal of “early childhood” as a time of curiosity and exploration. She signifies the “clever” child of the aspirational parent, projecting child-centred learning through free-range adventure, which ironically few parents actually allow. Further in a metaphysical twist of irony she is actually manipulated by an adult puppeteer within her skin costume. In a commercial live performance setting, she embodies the child audience and denotes the young child as imaginative, healthy, considerate, deserving the best. *Hi-5 (Playtime, 2012)*, as performance for the very young, also offers positive messages for youth, presenting children with good self-esteem, capable and talented as inferred by the young role models presenting themselves as caring older siblings. That so many shows encourage children with opinions imply the viewer’s themselves as having agency.

### 5.8 Summary

*Enchantment* only ever resembles a temporary state through which we momentarily release ourselves from the mundane, and dream of an alternative existence in which we might live more contently and peacefully. From this view *Enchantment* utilises that aspect of carnivalesque pleasure that presents the possibility of escape even if it is only temporary; “The laughing truth” (Bakhtin, 1984 [1965]) from which we are “liberated from our fear (p.94) and returned to normality. But even as we return it is possible to do so with a renewed awareness of our tribe and our role within it. It is this very consciousness that houses the healing quality.

*Enchantment* represents fantasy and individual wishful thinking as well a heterogeneous ability to seduce and orientate its audience through mesmerising technical and aesthetic devices that serve to illuminate or mesmerise; either to promote thinking on particular aspects of humanity or to transport its audience to a place of wishful thinking.

In generating idyllic situations, *Enchantment* represents escape from everyday life, as well as hope and desire for the future, endeavouring to make an audience feel good as they sit in the theatre and to forget their troubles. Ideally, spectators respond with pleasure and acceptance, succumbing to the performance that sentimentally washes over them. Such performances use techniques to persuade or endorse a particular idea, even products, which may resemble propaganda. As such *Enchantment* offers some contradictory ideals implied within the drama that wields a soporific double-edged sword, encouraging the audience to both dream and to buy.

The aspect of cognitive consideration in theatre experience will be examined in the next chapter focusing on the third system of engagement at work within theatre for young audiences, the principle of *Instruction*.

## CHAPTER 6: THE ENGAGEMENT OF INSTRUCTION

**Instruction** v. **1.** The act of practice of instructing or teaching; education. **2.** Knowledge or information imparted. **3.** An item of such knowledge or information. **4.** The act of furnishing with authoritative directions

**Associated theatre system:** Theatre-in-Education (T.I.E), mantle of expert (Heathcote)

**Driving Purpose:** Education and information

**Audience:** Peripheral to the work by asking questions, absorbing ideas and facts.

### **Theatre events, that example using these engagement styles are:**

*Gallery Character guides* performed individuals at art galleries and museums.

*Passing Wind* (2010) performed by Linsey Pollak at the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney

*Time Travellers Meet Banjo Paterson and Rouse Hill Family* (2008) performed by The Surf 'n' Theatre Company at Rouse Hill House and Farm, Rouse Hill

*Not In My Backyard* (2008) performed by Surf 'n' Theatre at Seymour Centre.

*Pecorino's First Concert, Babies Proms*, performed by The Sydney Opera House Babies Proms Orchestra at The Utzon Room, Sydney Opera House

## CHAPTER 6: THE ENGAGEMENT OF INSTRUCTION

**“The first step, as you know, is always what matters most, particularly when we are dealing with those who are young and tender. That is the time when they are easily moulded and when any impression we choose to make leaves a permanent mark.”**

**(Plato, *The Republic* [Jowett, 2009])**

All plays in their own way contribute to promoting thinking in a certain area. This aspect of informal teaching appears to be a consideration within all theatre of young audiences. In this chapter we look at the principle of *Instruction*, as the artistic code for transferring learning and knowledge through live performance for specific outcome based learning. While techniques for initiating dialectical contemplation and critical thinking is investigated in chapter eight, this particular chapter concentrates on methods of engaging young people into learning through a rhetoric which includes classroom strategies, “edutainment”, live demonstrations, character guides, and role play.

Whilst the last chapter focused on the *overall* pleasures of theatre, - looking at how performance can implicitly convey certain ideological messages, this chapter is concerned with explicitly imparting particular knowledge. That is teaching, instructing, showing, demonstrating, and motivating learning in ways that parallel the work of the classroom teacher or museum curator/guide. This element of performance philosophically encourages knowledge within its young audience based on national curriculum guidelines as set by the board of studies. As an approach it therefore particularly suits theatre events seen within cultural institutions such as museums, art galleries and historic houses as well as in more formal teaching institutions such as schools and child care facilities. Of particular interest in this chapter are ways of articulating:

- **appreciation** for a particular culture as a whole such as history, art, why a building exists, the purpose of an exhibition, how to do something, knowing about history, geography, dance science.
- **social awareness and responsibility** including respecting ourselves, others, politics and environment awareness; and



- **specific factual and cultural knowledge** based on the literature and dramatic canon.

### *6.1 Artistic purpose*

Bruner (1996) recognised that education is aimed at equipping individuals to participate in culture on which life and livelihood depend and, that children most benefit from education when it reinforces their own culture. Likewise Eliot (1948) saw that the culture of the individual couldn't be separated from that of the group. In Western society, though we no longer "send our children down the mines" our expectations are no less intense; where in the past children contributed directly to the household income, now they are long-term investments. Primarily parents inject money, resources and time in return for educational achievement. This aspirational drive is behind the demand for achievement. Leisure time experiences that offer tangible advantages in the areas of educational or personal goals are therefore attractive to many aspirational parents (Morton, 2001; Vincent, Ball & Braun, 2010).

Theatrical sign-systems within *Instruction* enforce but do not mirror the classroom experience. Within this philosophical framework, learning is transferred through "normative" rites of passage (Turner, 1995) by which particular social attitudes and knowledge such as respect for war heroes, certain cultural, historical mathematical and literary facts are remembered, concreted and transferred into the behaviour of lawful citizens.

Ryle and Soper (2002, pp.8-9) remind us that pedagogy depends on positive ideals. Similarly Plato (Plato & Tredennick, 1963) asserted that a love of learning is crucial for imparting the essential information and skills required for living harmoniously in the community. Further this learning, as set out in his work *Republic* (Plato & Jowett, 2009), provides authoritarian rigorous intellectual training by experts prior to a further period of dialectic study (Honderich, 1999, p.20), implying that young members of a society cannot philosophically debate or contemplate alternative ways until they have learnt what we might term "the basics". This chapter reflects on providing young

spectators with intellectual training in specific areas authorised by experts and conveyed through a dramatic discourse.

### ***6.1.1 Pedagogical concerns***

“No single teaching strategy is effective all of the time for all learners”. Killen’s statement (2003, p.1) reminds us that the role of performance in education is not to teach everything as an all-inclusive unit or moment of learning, but to work alongside other lessons to layer, facilitate or make sense of a bigger picture. In other words like any other educational experience, formal or informal, theatre events are only a small part of the whole learning; valuable in assisting students to construct their own knowledge around the topic or issue or simply to help them understand the context of an issue in a deeper more personally meaningful way as in the an explanation of learning known as social constructivism (Killen, 2003, p.29; Power-Collins, 1994, p.5, Snowman & Biehler, 2000, p.295).

Performance as a tool for teaching is an ancient practice. Anthropologists such as Hughes (1965) have surmised how primitive dance developed not just as an aesthetic art form but as a rhetorical function for conveying and celebrating important tribal information or what Tuner (1995) called spontaneous ritual; remembering and reiterating a significant event in the collective memory of a group of people as a way of defining them. Other examples of theatre being utilised to promote knowledge includes sophists working to educate students in the first and second century BC; ancient temple dramas recording the acts of the gods; the miracle plays of the European middle ages presenting biblical stories for the ordinary citizen through community engagement; and fifteenth century records of certain schools in England using drama to teach stories to their male pupils.

That all artworks project the particular concerns of its creator emphasises that every production, to some extent, conveys a particular philosophic view on life (Eagleton, 2002). As such *every* theatre event will create a unique opportunity to experience a new place (such as a traditional theatre or a museum venue never visited before); a new cultural experience; or an individual view on a topic of interest to each young viewer.

Live performance by its very nature therefore offers different educational experiences in areas of cognitive, psychomotor and affective application.

An *Instruction* approach in theatrical terms concentrates on providing explicit information that contributes to a particular body of educational ideas. Though a theatre of information implies knowledge as power, endorsing the Socratic ideal that “the unquestioned life is a life not worth living”, the approach also reflects philosophies that mirror Plato’s ideas articulating:

- the importance of harmonious society;
- learning from the expert or someone who knows more;
- that questioning with paternalistic advancement and contribution to the tribe requires learning the basics (or the curriculum);
- glimpses into other worlds and cultures as a way of understanding our own society; and
- a defined right and wrong way of doing things (deontology).

As such it might be tempting to create theatre around a policy of filling empty heads and ticking boxes on the school curriculum, however arguments may be had on the value of stressing mental facts, rather than simply experiencing a unique lasting wonder that is discovered and felt physically within a positive learning environment that creates a lasting impression and perhaps a desire to discover more (Killen, 2003, pp.6-7). Though facts may be forgotten, an enjoyed outing is always remembered and as such a constructive humanitarian approach might be more effective than dogmatic or rhetorical theatrical approaches. For this reason some museums create their educational policy aimed at balancing the ideals of art for art sake, audience experience and factual information, as a holistic or total experience (Van Tiel, 2009).

In creating outcomes-based performance, which teaches important ideas or facts within an informal cultural context, careful thought needs to be made on how young audiences are engaged in learning. This requires pedagogical consideration in three main areas. Firstly theatre practitioners need to understand **the principles of effective teaching**, which Killen (2003, pp.37-38) identifies as located in three main knowledge areas that converge to create pedagogical content. These areas are knowledge about content (the

fundamentals of the topic being taught), knowledge about learning (understanding the principles of educational psychology) and knowledge about teaching (the ability to guide student learning in appropriate ways).

Secondly practitioners need to understand **the principles of outcomes-based performance** in which the clear purposes of the performances are identified and then translated in to clear systems of outcomes for the learner.

1. What do we want students to learn?
2. Why do we want the learn this?
3. How will we convey this knowledge effectively, what engagement strategies will we use?
4. How will we know that they have learnt it?

What are the themes, characters or performance attributes by which learning can connect to a young audience? Like a well-planned lesson committed to education children with diverse interests and abilities (Ashman & Elkins, 2005), theatre-in-education needs to consider:

- subject matter;
- audience age group;
- target audience (school groups or individual families);
- what is to be actually taught in the performance i.e. the particular messages that the audience will take home with them;
- the specifics of how topics fit within the school curriculum or the curatorial ideas of the institution they are working in;
- how the program can promote interaction and feelings of inclusivity;
- where the performance will happen, whether it is venue specific or travelling; and finally
- what equipment, budget, crew is available.

Only when decisions have been made on both the “rationale” and “contextual aspect” of the performance will the creative process of story building begin. This is a move away from the more spontaneous beginnings imagined in many theatre performance, and more of a challenge. Once the parameters have been laid the mission is to develop a

work that engages young minds through a memorable experience and which stimulates interest in the topic explored. The idea of igniting interest, rather than simply just providing information, fits the outcome based model of the teacher/performer as “facilitator of learning rather than giver of information” (Dart, 1994, p.1).

In practical terms as much as the peripatetic teacher/performer might inspire, their role is not to replace the formal classroom teacher. Ephemeral performance is about working alongside teachers to inspire or motivate interest in pupils. Theatre organisations can extend this relationship by creating a series of visits from performers and by providing education packs that classroom teachers can use in their own teaching practice. Although some companies develop ongoing mentorship projects with schools, the majority remain as one off experiences performed as incursions or connected classroom experiences (Perry & Kearney, 2012) in the school hall or as excursions to a particular cultural institution. These experiences are not easily quantifiable as assessment tasks, though they might be measured in engagement and through knowledge that is imparted through direct teaching strategies on some task-orientated engagement.

As such, theatre practitioners communicating the code of *Instruction* are clear thirdly about the **principles of engagement through specific teaching strategies**.

### ***6.1.2 Layered experiences and memory recall***

Integral to any performance intended to teach are devices that aid memory recall. Like a well-ordered lesson plan, the educational performance requires engaging audiences through:

- teacher centered approaches and direct teaching strategies;
- positive learning environments which invite participation and which encourage young people to engage in the action;
- mentorship that develops understanding around the issues rather than requiring memorisation.

Actor-teachers experience the same issues as all educators in keeping control of the timings around this and keeping questions relevant and on track.

Performances utilise a number of techniques, which might be defined as cognitive, practical and affective to encourage students to construct their meaning from the performance. Popular ways of helping this and memory recall are to encourage:

- a sense of social community around the event as a way of helping the audience feel included within the action;
- direct identification with the characters, either suggesting that it could be them in the situation or alternatively a sense of wishing it was them;
- active participation and inclusion through;
  - direct questioning;
  - prompting pretend argument: oh no its not, in order to prompt strong audience reaction as a way of being remembered;
  - debate and discussion, “what do you think happened”, “what could be different”?
  - deliberate misuse of words in order to be corrected;
  - requesting physical help and action from the audience in the forms of drumming, holding, performing, shouting, changing things on stage, tasks, problem solving and role playing; and
  - vocal repeats (endorsement) through chants and songs.

If *Enchantment* embodies a spectator’s wishful thinking and *Revelry* embodies all that the audience loves to hate, playfully reject, or push against, the dynamic of *Instruction* is to build learning. As *Instruction* is aimed at informing, engagement of even the most reluctant learner is an important. Methods are therefore focused on encouraging message retention without the audience being necessarily conscious that they are in the act of learning. To do so the inclusive approaches of *Enchantment* and *Revelry*, discussed in chapters four and five, can be utilised to framed particular learning outcomes alongside the more direct teaching techniques of declamatory rhetoric, repetition, connection, demonstration and direct examples that will reinforce those outcomes.

## ***6.2 The dramatic discourse of Instruction***

Dramatic discourse of *Instruction* can be seen in the distinct styles of edutainment, cultural experiences, demonstrations, historicism, reconstruction, rhetoric and character guides.

### ***6.2.1 Edutainment***

Edutainment merges educational outcomes with the ideals of *Enchantment* and *Revelry* to create performances that teach specific ideas within the guise of having pure fun. Performers within this category include the mass popular culture ventures such as The Wiggles (Wiggles Inc., 2003), Hi-5 (*Playtime*, 2008), and Justine Clarke (*Little Day Out*, 2011) along with the more classic salon performances of the *Babies Proms* (Sydney Opera House Presents). Topics vary but most reflect early learning outcomes based on familiar cultural aspects such as identifying foods, names of colours, recognising significant people in their world, and exploring the home environment.

A strong feature of edutainment is the musical concert, in which learning takes places via “sing-a-long” and dance. A successful part of this approach is combining message with fun; such as the enjoyment of jumping up and down to music. Music generally emulates a popular style that is catchy for both parent and child, encouraging participation of both. Further many of the shows that the child will see live are really an extension of an already familiar television and word web media experience, such as *Play School* (ABC Events, 2003) *Hi-5* (*Playtime*, 2008) and so on. Characters and music will be familiar and children will experience the event as a “special occasion” and dress to emulate certain characters of the show or carry soft toy characters and other merchandise. It might be argued such audiences go *not to learn* per se but *to take part* in something that they already like and feel comfortable with, and which is associated with home and family.

The dynamics of the edutainment performance is in effect a concert. This sense of privilege, of attending a party, heightens the sense of excitement. Further the larger than life characters on the stage build a feeling of respect that reinforces their role-

modeling or teaching function. Within this function characters imitate relationship characteristics familiar to the implied audience such as the cool young singers and dancers of Hi-5 (2008) who act like older siblings or the funny older uncles of the Wiggles (2003). The dog characters of the *Dandylionz* (Seymour Centre 2007), for example, were a cool rock group, with each dog having a different personality and role in the group. The dynamic of the group could be read as though they were a group of primary aged friends, mirroring the implied child audience as they enact the fantasy of being “Famous” rock stars. In other words, they live the idealised dream of the audience. Song choices stressed implied values such as the importance of friends, eating well, being kind and so on. In this sense though the context appeals to the child audience the actual material content and learning voices the ideals and wishes of the parents. In copying the perceived styles of its audience, edutainment deliberately aims to identify with the wishful thinking of the audience. This feature of identification will be looked at in detail in the next chapter seven. Along with *Enchantment*, this type of popular event, also appeals to the parent consumer who takes their children to places and events they know about (and can control) rather than ones, which represent a new or unknown experience.

Learning in these contexts happens through *social constructivism* in that the collective audience is motivated to create its own learning through immersion into songs and other interests connected to revered role models. Secondly it happens through *direct teaching* methods such as themed songs or rhetorical questions.

Venues might range from large-scale entertainment centres to local RSL clubs or community halls that provide a more intimate salon theatre setting but the performance is usually performed as a concert on a “black box set”, and features brightly coloured aspects of set and props for use during particular items.

Costumes tend to feature fashionable brightly coloured clothes for characters who represent the more savvy, cool, sophisticated characters who implicitly represent the big sister/brother role models for the audience; funny ill matching, fitting clothes indicate a silly, non-threatening character often akin to the funny or misbehaving uncle or the “skins” that represent non-human or known pop culture personalities like Dorothy



Dinosaur (The Wiggles Inc). These costumed characters, represent the implied audience, mirroring the personalities of the curious child, eager to understand the world.

At an early childhood level, children identify with themselves as proactive learners, when they see role models who are also proactive learners. As shown in chapter five, Dora the explorer (Nick JR) is a popular example of this, role-modeling a curiosity in the world which matches a humanitarian approach to learning, in which children learn what they are interested in or which reflect their own lives and values (implied audience). Further these values are those deemed appropriate according to the reigning popular child philosophy of the day.

### **6.2.2 Cultural concerts**

With numerous groups such as *The Wiggles* (2012), edutainment remains a popular approach to inspiring early childhood learning. However not all edutainment experiences require mass culture appeal. The *Babies Proms*, a feature of the *Kids at the House* program (Sydney Opera House) for over 30 years, is an example of a program originally designed around cultivating children into audiences as well as helping them to appreciate music and the classical concert as its logical progression.

In these informal concerts children as young as two years old are encouraged to listen, dance, clap and sing to the music. Orchestral musicians and a conductor represent both the “heroes” and the ensemble. Young children hear the specialised sounds of different instruments as well parts of the whole, and at the end of the performance they are encouraged to meet the musicians and perhaps touch the instruments. Each show focuses on a different style or genre of music such as Spanish or jazz, and includes in its selection a mixture of both classical and more well-known sing-a-long examples. As such the experience is predominately a music demonstration, show casing what a particular instrument can do and what it sounds like when played in unison with others while creating a fun free-range party experience that allows children to take ownership of the space and galvanise them to want to return to other such events.

Aspirational parents enjoy this popular event as an advanced music class for budding musicians. It also endorses the ideal of getting children used to certain performance

styles and theatre experiences as cultural heritage and as an ideal of encouraging “future audiences” generally. Companies like Opera Australia, The Australian Ballet, Musica Viva, ensure that students have access to their cultural offerings by visiting schools and institutions in an “outreach” context to showcase a “small portion” version of their program as a taster. These events combine the most interesting sections of the music or dance alongside a guided explanation of the story behind the work and an opportunity to see the costumes, instruments and to “meet the performer”.

Bell Shakespeare’s annual *Actors at work* series, which travels throughout Australia to introduce Shakespeare to high school students, varies this format slightly by rewriting sections of the Shakespeare text into a new play format specifically to appeal to teenagers. Actors are young; wearing casual clothes that appeal to the young audience’s taste, to ensure that they are seen as cool for the target audience. Focus is on the juicy parts of the text, which is contextualised in teenage terms, as a way of creating a sense of relevance for them. The value of this approach is in providing opportunity to hear the original language of the text in bit-sized pieces and within contexts that explain the meaning in overt, clear and memorable ways.

An alternative to the travelling road show is a school excursions to an actual theatre building for a show followed by a meet and greet with the cast. This method enables some young people to access professional theatre productions sometimes for the first time in their lives. Usually shows will be deliberately chosen for their tangible connection to a particular curriculum being studied, but the excursion itself offers opportunity for engagement in many areas of wellbeing for the individual student (Johnston, 2010). Often visits will be followed up with tailored classroom exercises as an extension of the experience and include activities such as drama, writing or discussions. Further teacher packages will assist educators in explaining and deconstructing certain aspects of the performance, which can be useful for educators who may not be specialists in this field.

When George Ellision, known as Big G, became the main conductor in 2002, the emphasis of the *Babies Proms* event changed to become more personality based. Still “educational” and “cultural”, children enjoyed the familiarity of his personality and the

special guests who became the main feature of the experience. Sometimes a clown, sometimes a singer, themes ranged from “the conductor and the clown” in which the clown attempted to be conductor and “mucked it all up”, to topics on outer space, colours, Christmas and food. Though still featuring music, the performances focused on more dramatic narratives and sequencing that climaxed with events such as a rocket being launched (*Outtaspace*, 2005), a teddy being rescued (*Dougal the Garbage Dump Bear*, 2007) or an object being built (*The Colour of Fun*, 2007). In the *Babies Proms*’ stories like *Drum* (2008), *Pecorino’s First concert* (2008) or *Mozart Boy Genius* (2008), the audience were taken on more serious narrative journeys in which the creation of music featured heavily, with instruments playing key parts, both as real and in cartoon form.

Many *Babies Proms* shows feature a guest representative of a teacher/actor, to create not only a bond with the implied audience, but who as an implied older sister/brother is full of clever ideas and agency. In concentrating on building a relationship with the audience as an equal friend, the teaching occurs unconsciously. This technique parallels that of *Sesame Street* (Sesame Workshop), in which children are seen to solve problems and come up with solutions that help drive the action. In other words children are seen to be proactive and effective, as in Heathcote’s (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995) “Mantle of the Expert”. Philosophically this thematic change refocused the event from music to a narrative driven performance in which music is featured. Within this cosy salon performance the *Enchantment* code is communicated through beautiful costumes, glitter balls and surprise illusions, while further pleasure is produced through that of the *Revelry* code, evoked through characters such as the misbehaving uncle or eccentric aunt who complicate the action with their “silly” behaviour. In excitedly shouting and correcting their behaviour, children actually affirm more appropriate ways of behaving!

These subtle changes in the *Babies Proms* discourse are further demonstrated in the development of theatrically driven performances like *Jack* (2009) and *The Royal Seed* (2009) in which the entire focus of the event is the discourse of the drama. On these occasions the orchestra was no longer the main feature or the intended rationale of the event. Though visible, the orchestra was covered in props and set effectively denoting it as the tool for telling a story rather than the main feature. As such, individual

instruments were no longer automatically heard and children did not have the opportunity to meet the musician at the end of the performance. This change effectively signalled a moving away from a mini orchestral concert, to a highly produced “enchanted” show in which children participated by following the evolution of a character (like them!) rather than the music itself. It also marked a philosophical move away from its original intended *Instructional* purpose.

### **6.2.3 Direct teaching: demonstrations**

The *Babies Proms* was originally a mini Symphony concert, featuring particular instruments. Showcasing is an effective method of direct teaching, and is useful for explaining explicit concepts and skills as a broad overview. In some cases the approach can be theatricalised into a performance or magic show. The Questacon Museum, Canberra exemplifies this in utilising clowning, mood lighting, music and drama to focus attention on demonstrations that are in essence science experiments. Often an audience member is asked to help as a foil, to infer a sense of audience participation.

Though demonstration matches a classroom expert or direct teaching style with audience as passive learners, most such performances incorporate techniques for active discovery as well as cognitive understanding, exemplified by Linsey Pollock in his performance *Passing Wind* (Pollack, 2010) which centered on making and playing unusual instruments. Here teaching was complemented by amazing the audience with his sheer artistry, transforming ordinary household objects like carrots and a plastic funnel into musical instruments like a clarinet or oboe and then playing them with expertise that showed how effectively these strange instruments played. The audience was on the edge of their seats in anticipation. Drama was enhanced by the use of a beat box and sound equipment, which allowed basic, sounds to be recorded and played back. When played back in a loop with the music of Pollack over the top the “basic” sounds or simple sentences magically transformed into a piece of music. In asking an audience member to start the first sound the performance was a process of art making, science and history rolled into one. Throughout Pollack’s technical ability as an instrument maker and musician was paramount.

Other family performances within a museum setting provide tasters of a particular cultural practice. An Indian dance group programed as an extra attraction during an exhibition of Indian art or Aboriginal dance groups like Descendance, demonstrating traditional indigenous performance and music while explaining the stories behind the work, are good examples of this. These performances “value adds” by offering a neatly packaged short cultural learning experience for families.

#### **6.2.4 Distance and historicism**

Another effective way of focusing the audience is to portray stories about people who are of the same age as the implied audience but who are from another era or place. “Historicism” refers to the philosophy that a universal idea is sometimes better understood when viewed at the emotional distance (Brecht in Willett, 1964). By setting the action outside the viewer’s period a message is more easily conveyed as the audience experience a sense of distance, which enables them to watch events critically without getting caught in identification which can prevent them from reviewing the events rationally; “A representation that alienates is one that allows us to recognise its subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar” (Brecht in Willett, 1964, P.192).

An example of historicism is demonstrated in *The Seven Marbles* (Surf ‘n’ Theatre, 2007) in which scenes alternated between the past and present events paralleled around the same object/artifacts. The performance concentrated on activating imagination on how the audience might feel if they found such treasure; who might have owned it? Where did it come from? Seen at the Seymour Centre in 2007, the script was originally commissioned by the Museum of Sydney and, like *Playing Beatie Bow* (Park, 2010), endorses the idea that everything, even what appears as rubbish has a purpose and a past life. In its original form the performance alludes to artifacts, found under the streets of Sydney, and encased in the Museum of Sydney, encouraging ongoing curiosity and actual exploration after the event has finished.

In following and enjoying the fantastical journey of the legendary Marco Polo, ethics were utilised to expand a young audiences understanding in *Arborio* (Jigsaw, 2006) as young spectators were prompted to contemplate the question of world hunger and “what would you do with the last grain of rice?”

### *6.2.5 Spontaneity and reconstruction*

Realism presented as a form of “fly on the wall” events are another way of capturing the imagination, essentially offering a naturalistic off-the-cuff performance which appears as though it is actually occurring in the here and now. Commissioned works are often site-specific designed to entertain visitors while simultaneously enlivening the space; energetically recreating what Brecht called the street scene (1964, p.121) in which a spectator unwittingly finds himself or herself watching and judging an incident that they weren’t expecting. This element of invasion into the audience’s space serves a principle close to Boal’s (1985) invisible theatre, in that spectators respond without preconceived ideas to what appears to be a spontaneous incident happening in the here and now. This is particularly emphasised in public events that do not require tickets, but which occur as impromptu “happenings” (Marowitz, 1974).

The performative and illusionary aspects of reconstruction are sign posted through historical references in dress code, language or even in famous names, denoting its artificiality. Both Alana Valentine and Nadine Helmi have specialised in writing these simulation vignettes, which focus on illuminating audiences with specific facts. Examples are the short performances at the Powerhouse Observatory, to celebrate its two hundred anniversary (2009) in which the character of Newton emerged at the window (as though in his native town in Italy) and communicated with “the public” below about dropping an apple down, highlighting of course his theories on gravity as though it has literally occurred to him just there and then. Characters conveyed a sense that the event is happening in real time with audiences in effect playing the role of the incidental town people. Atmosphere was further enhanced by the gothic architecture of the Observatory building and surrounds. Paradoxically however though language was on the surface naturalistic, it was in effect rhetorical, ensuring that within just a few sentences Newtown’s “Principles of Relativity” are conveyed to the audience in the most basic way.

Such reconstructions of what may have actually happened in the past, emulate so called “realistic” theatre in that they exist specifically to convey particular didactic information, which is presented in deliberate declamatory reporting and rhetorical

acting styles. Further the historical inaccuracy concerning “time and place” requires that certain members of audience “in the know!” suspend disbelief. Pearson and Shanks (2001) discuss this aspect further in their investigation into how narrative crafts and mediates knowledge and experience of the past. The power of this type of “reconstruction” is a “para-social” aesthetic (Pearson & Shanks, 2001, p.11) in that though the audience does not come away with encyclopedic knowledge they get an intriguing experience that creates curiosity around a particular theme or an incident. Such events resemble an exchange rather than action packed drama, with information inferred through “langue” (Barthes, 1968) as a value laden social action and the simulated casual structure of the interchange. In the short banter the audience typically walks away with one or two explicit but simple facts such as “things fall to the ground because of gravity”, but they leave lightened by the rather unusual *eventness* (artificialness) of the exchange. Typically other subliminal ideas are conveyed within such scenes including in this case the suggestion that someone made a discovery about the laws of nature (this is not automatic knowledge); that things happened long ago in a different country; that people spoke in strange ways or languages long ago; that people in the past wore different clothes; people across the ages have discovered things; that the observatory is a place of history and of scientific facts. Further within the short exchange is also planted the idea that there is more information to be discovered for those interested. Similar to other spatial considerations, these sensory aspects of learning are about stimulating interest and creating a context where more academic learning might be placed.

Another example of reconstruction theatre experiences is the *Time Traveller* series, delivered by the Surf ‘n’ Theatre Company and Geoff Marsh as part of the Historic Houses Trust public programming for children and families. In total, four separate plays were commissioned to tell the history of four different properties: Rouse Hill, Vacluse House, Susannah Place and Elizabeth Farm. The premise of these particular performances were that the child audience “travels” back in time with a ghost guide through the vehicle of a magic rhyme which takes them to a significant period in the property’s histories. The audience then experienced the property as it might have been when inhabited by different people and families. For the most part the performances happened as though the audience can’t be seen (effectively as though they were ghosts

themselves) conferring the dramatic irony of the audience knowing more of what was happening than the historical characters themselves. Such shows provided opportunity to explore:

- factual incidents based on empirical evidence;
- opportunities to see how people actually lived, how they used the “artifacts” on display as real everyday objects during their day, including different foods;
- opportunities to engage and touch real artifacts;
- the houses in a three dimensional way, with the audience effectively “spying” on the occupants;
- the political history of the day, including specific events that might have influenced what happened in the house; and
- opportunities to consider people with different cultural ideas, different perspectives.

Though, amongst other anomalies, actors doubled up or spoke in declamatory rather than natural styles, the audience suspended disbelief for the total experience. That the characters never interacted directly with the audience actually helped create a sense of authenticity around the idea that the audience were witnessing a real life moment in time but could not be seen by the people involved in the action. The audience was returned back to their current time and left to ponder on the “miracle that just happened”. The ghost character was an obvious mediator for helping the children to follow the action and to interpret events where required. Further, she was also a useful device for holding or delaying the audience to ensure that surprises or backstage secrets - such as actors playing numerous characters- weren't given away.

#### **6.2.6 Emotional appeal: idyll and sentiment**

*Not in My Back Yard* (Surf 'n' theatre, 2007) offered a pantomime styled performance in which a regular Sydney boy and girl litter the park after a picnic and are brought back by the animals themselves to see the consequences of their action. As such the purpose of the performance was to teach children not to throw rubbish. Sentimental gentle scenes were mixed with musical songs and cute friendly characters such as the wombat and fairy. This mixture of naturalism and fantasy, worked by emotionally appealing to



its implied audience to ask, via the animal protagonists, how they would feel if their own homes were destroyed.

The boy and girl child characters signified the implied audience, mimicking enjoyment of the same games, the same troubled brother/sister interactions, and the same child/grandparent relationship. In leaving litter around the park, and thereby the homes of the animals that live in the park, they behaved not maliciously but in characteristically thoughtless ways.

The wombat and fairy offered Arcadian characters of *Enchantment* representing a wishful idyll of real magic, knowing and experiencing the fairy world of the bush (enchanted forest), putting to rights distressing issues such as the loss of the environment through the unnecessary thoughtless behaviour of others - the implied spectator. The outrage of attractive, clever and endearing characters was treated as justifiable, serving as a confronting lesson for both the protagonists and audience. This is an example of a classic theatre-in-education scenario, in which an audience is engaged primarily through empathy. By caring for the victim and being outraged at the situation they are compelled to help. Thus dramatic discourse is found in emotionally connecting the audience with the situation in order that they will want to take responsibility for their own actions.

Teaching techniques within this performance style include:

- emotionally appealing to the audience by focusing on attractive, sympathetic or vulnerable characters who are the unintended victims of certain negative behaviour;
- encouraging audience repetition as a way of rallying; it is a battle cry and a way of unifying the audience into the cause, and one that lasts long after the performance has finished;
- use of song as a way of reinforcing particular messages;
- direct talking as a way of connecting and appealing to the audience and getting them on side;
- direct teaching to *explain why* certain behaviour (like littering) is bad;

- demonstrations that show the specific concrete effects and consequences of the behaviour on others (usually appealing characters who might need protection);
- comedy as a way of reinforcing the message for the audience while at the same time encouraging people to watch;
- use of volunteers to help, individuals and groups who represent the audience as a whole and who know more than the characters on stage reinforcing the sense of community and group action in the plight;
- providing significant messages through the agent of the *fool* (the one who appears idiotic but who in fact understands the world in a way others do not); and
- showing “other” worlds as symbolic of other ways of being and other cultures as a way of generating understanding in the audience.

Most relevant in these charming stories whether they emerge alongside *Enchantment*, *Revelry* or “historicism” (Brecht in Willett, 1964) modes are the opportunities they offer as accelerated learning or “liberationist/humanist models”, in which students are provided with an environment that encourages thought and emotional feelings through the posing of real problems to characters that signify real humans. Emotional involvement and pondering on “what would I do” emphasises a personal meaning and connection for the students, particularly when they are manipulated to show allegiance to a certain cause.

#### ***6.2.7 Shock tactics: outrage and taboo***

*Just Macbeth* (Bell Shakespeare, 2009) offered an opportunity to understand the original Shakespeare text through a parallel story contextualised in an environment immediately recognised by the audience. It appealed by emotionally connecting to them through familiar characters and circumstances, offering what might be seen in teaching terms as a base from which to develop the subject. The drama was made further attractive by surprise shock tactics including subversion, taboo and scatology. The outrageous performance worked to combine cognitive and affective taxonomies of learning by:

- featuring characters who mirrored the implied audience members as chief protagonists;
- using irreverence and subversion of the original text, to create a “cod” version, while matching the emotional journey of the original;
- building on a familiar known context that goes out of control, as a way of helping young audiences understand the intention of the original;
- presenting yucky imagery, taboo, revelry and cross dressing;
- design which incorporated graffiti, tagging, and the program which folds into a chatterbox, as a memento of the event;
- hilarious fart sound effects designed to “upset” adults;
- funky cool music; and
- fast paced action to ensure it was never dull.

#### ***6.2.8 Cooperative learning: character guides***

The philosophical idea behind the character guide style of performance is to get the young audience motivated enough to follow a pied piper character. Unlike the personalities of edutainment they do not reflect the characteristics of the implied audience - nor do they present themselves as authentic cultural or naturalistic performers - instead they consist of highly intriguing characters that attract attention and curiosity. Their role is to combine the skills of the jongleur with that of the actor, teacher and museum guide to tell stories that inform young visitors about what they are seeing. It is therefore a popular performance style within a cultural institution context.

The strength of this type of performance is the ability to tailor and present information to a number of people that can be quickly adapted to a specific group’s needs as well as take children into secret places in order to inspire hands-on interaction with art or items of cultural interest. Examples are *The Queen of Sheba*, *Ngunngy* and *Gert by Sea* repertoires of NSW Art Gallery between 2000 and 2010. Representationally, these gallery characters are “works of art” that have come to life, whose function is to escort families round parts of the gallery particular to them and to highlight special items and tell their significance. For example the Japanese tomb warrior explores the Japanese

section of the NSW Art Gallery to explain certain works there while Nygunny reveals the stories of his cousins in the Aboriginal art section.

Even more than the edutainment concert described above, these theatre events enact the experience of the secret club or hide out, as “members” follow their leader to places restricted to other visitors. Pleasure is found in the idea that they are superior beings allowed into exclusive places, with special privileges, thus in actively participating, the audience shows allegiance to the guide and gives full concentration.

Character guides need to be intriguing and therefore often reflect eccentric attributes that inspire curiosity. Though quirky, they fit within the context of the space in which they are found. For example the dinosaur professor (Erth, 2009) searching for the lost baby Chinese dinosaur within the Powerhouse Museum developed curiosity around the lost dinosaur which in effect highlighted the Chinese Exhibition that was showing at that time. Though personifying a living “real” person, character guides usually portray larger than life two-dimensional caricatures that represent historical figures, works of art or even fictional beings. Exploiting jongleur techniques of drawing attention such as music, dancing, or circus skills (like stilts) that give the characters a carnivalesque quality they display jester habits such as being deliberately forgetful or constantly getting it wrong, surreptitiously coercing the audience to nag and correct them! Like edutainment the purpose behind this promenade performance style is to quietly plant information into the minds of the audience. Cartoonish appealing behaviour helps engage young audiences and initiates their sense of efficacy as they themselves teach and actively aide the guide, thus further strengthening information messages through their own efforts and self-motivated learning.

The skill of the character guide is not just as orator, conveying facts in artful ways, but also as storyteller. Qualitative research emphasises the acceptance of story through the teller “a presenting of knowing” through personal narrative, oral tradition, life history, oral history, and personal accounts (Poston-Anderson, 2000, p.84). Character guide behaviour as discussed is site specific and traditionally used to bring what might be considered as a “boring” exhibition to life, by making it relevant or of interest to the young audience. Like the reconstruction scenes the character guide performance

emerges as a spontaneous happening, occurring in real time. Discourse is based on the challenge of solving an immediate problem that has just emerged rather than relaying a linear narrative with a beginning, middle and end. An example of an affective character guide performance Johnny Nasser (National Maritime Museum, 2005) playing a New York detective trying to solve the problem of Ortsey, a man who had died over fifteenth thousand years ago in the ice age. The detective, a larger than life character, engaged the audience into helping him solve the mystery while at the same time engaging them in the exhibition that was showing. A number of techniques were used:

- **Ribbing:** pretending to accuse the audience, where were you on the night in question? This question, which was, evidently nonsense encouraged the children to talk freely with him.

Detective: “Where were you on the night in question 3000BC”

Child: “I wasn’t born”

Detective: “a likely story!”

This aspect of audience participation activated a sense of power in the audience, of being listened to and respected, while also activating their curiosity, how would the character react.

- **“Swearing in”** the entire audience as assistant detectives, to contractually bind the children to follow the action and as a behavioural management tool. In doing so he made the children responsible and engaged for the investigation or learning..
- **Irreverence:** Setting himself, rather than members of the audience, up as the fall guy. This apparent “stupidity” meant the audience felt they could relate to him because “they knew as much as him”, he was a non-teacher and the audience were the experts (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995).
- **Use of nonsense** as a way of aiding memory through the use of the strange and through repetition. “...remember Ortsey, rhymes with curtsey and “shirtsey”, and if I fell off the balcony it would “hurtsey”.
- **Possibilities:** dramatising all the possible and alternative scenarios of Ortsey’s fate. Their very ridiculousness cemented them in the minds of the audience because some were so out of the ordinary and plainly wrong, such as the fish slapping dance in which Ortsey is slapped across the face with a wet fish which throws him to the ground and kills him. The theatrical demonstration of this

proposal, while audience singing um papa, reiterated the silliness of the idea and paradoxically reinforced a more likely reality in the minds of the young audience.

- **The flexibility of the script** as a tool but not requiring absolute adherence. Meaning that the performance is tailored to the dynamic and the needs of each individual group.
- **Enthusiasm** is used to motivate and create a productive, safe and exciting learning space (Kileen, 2002, p.77). The ability to shout “No silly...” and laugh at an adult is very empowering for children.

For this type of experience to work, the guide performance is reliant on:

- space being available for the group to move and gather easily from one place to the next;
- intimate numbers to balance encouraging helpers to speak up while at the same time control and organise their activity;
- a strong relationship with the audience. Opposite to that of learning from the expert, this technique reflects a human approach, in which the mantle of the expert is actually given to the child audience rather than the adult performer;
- audience management, that like classroom management, is an important part of the overall performance; the ability to give clear instructions to the group as to where to go and what to do next;
- melodramatic expression (vocally and physically) in order that salient pieces are clarified and repeated in entertaining ways that are seemingly caused as an expression of the characters personality rather than the transference of information. Melodrama allows the same information to be repeated in enhanced ways through tone, musicality, questioning and body expression (the actor says nothing but the audience repeats it at the actor’s cue); and finally
- creating a magical experience in which young people desire to go back for another visit! Philosophically the overall the lasting impression for the visitor is more important than the factual information.

Within the character guide experience there is opportunity for creating task orientated activities related to the space as well as assessing what students know through probing questions.

As a whole the character guide theatrical experience links to an explanation of learning known as constructivism, which endorses a Vygotskian theory of cognitive development. In this context “meaningful learning occurs when people are taught how to use the psychological tools of their culture” (Snowman & Biechler, 2000, p.295).

### ***6.3 Primary actants of Instruction***

The primary actants of all performance intended for *Instruction* are teachers or role models for inspiring young audience to learn.

#### ***6.3.1 Teachers: tasks and role play***

It was recognised by Piaget (1972) that “effective learning takes place when teachers challenge students with problems that are beyond their existing level of experience and facilitate the process of finding the solution to such problems (Vincent & Shepherd, 1998, p.2). In other words strategies such as role play help challenge students’ existing beliefs and practice alternative behaviour (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995).

During the *Time traveller* performance at Susannah Place, children were given specific tasks by characters in the form of giving messages to other characters across time and space. This meant children not only felt worthy and important within the telling of the story but that they were motivated to listen hard to the long soliloquies in which characters talked about themselves and their lives in the terraces. Concentration was helped by the promenade style of the performance which led children from room to room, terrace-to-terrace to physically explore different spaces, artefacts and ultimately different characters who represented the real people who actually lived in the properties in its different eras. A few years down the track it is unlikely that many children will remember the specific detail of the individual lives that were shown in the performance. None-the-less the pleasure of the experience itself and the overall idea that lots of real people did once live in the terraces was well conveyed, supported by the bonus bag of traditional humbugs given to every child at the end.

Pearson and Shanks (2001) makes the point that such re-enactment contextualises a space that is only a mediation or crafted idea on what the past might have been. As such

events activate a process of interpretation, in which the space is given a tangible intelligible though ultimately imagined, sanitised and unauthentic life (2001, p.113). Other experiences, which evoke a sense of yesteryear, are more overtly artificial based on *Revelry*. The London Dungeons, the Melbourne Gaol or the Sovereign Hill example “living museum” experiences in which audience embark on a real life adventure which often includes fairground style rides and mock horror experiences such as being taken in front of the judge to be sentenced and punished. In such events each audience member signs up contractually as pretend “spect-actor” participants (Boal, 1992). Only here participants are not able to change their fate in the same way as Boal intended. *Red coats and convicts* (Historic Houses Trust, Hyde Park Barracks, 2010) exemplified this same technique by “forcing” the “prison” audience/participants to make bricks. This funny but engaging re-enactment of “what might have happened in reality” was an excellent way of providing cognitive information through the psychomotor taxonomy of learning. Prisoners (child participant/audiences) were then given a leave of pass, exactly as would have happened in days of old.

An obvious advantage of this type of sensory action based experience is that the audience has opportunity to be tactile with objects in a way which engages and layers the memory recall, with academic, practical and effective teaching strategies (Mandell & Wolf, 2003)

### ***6.3.2 Persuaders: playing the advocate***

As demonstrated in the sentimental performances above, young audiences can learn by attachment to a certain character or cause. In a sense they become advocates of the cause by being gently persuaded or enraged and galvanised in to action by protagonists deliberately playing the devil’s advocate.

As shown in the chapter four, opposition to and playful rebellion against the devil’s advocate character, whom the audience “loves to hate”, deepens advocacy. Theatre-in-education performances such as *Stop, Look Listen, Santa in the City* (UTS, 1999) and *The Great Park Misadventure* (The Little People’s Theatre Company, 1992) demonstrated this when the “Baddies” antagonised the audiences on to their feet. At this point in the drama, the action appears to take a stand still while children literally shout



the house down, taking enormous pleasure in the agency of yelling at the protagonists in a display of allegiance to the “correct” cause. Once the audience has made the point and the protagonist is “foiled” the audiences’ work is done and order and calm is regained. From a *carnavalesque* perspective this moment of outrage offers, as Bristol (1985) suggests, a manipulation of the audience. On the one hand the incensed audience is allowed to demonstrate their power, but they are incensed only because they are mercilessly provoked with characters deliberately raising the stakes by pretending not to “hear” them. Further the very sentiment of outrage over their behaviour is the very lesson that the creators wish the audience to walk away with. From a theatre maker’s point of view the children endorse the correct message.

Similarly the silly, ridiculous behaviour of the clown or character guide invites the young audience to feel superior and demonstrate their own knowledge. Like the “mantle of expert” ideal, Heathcote (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995), this is a powerful tool that actively encourages participation and affirms particular messages. This was shown in the *Aquaman* show (National Maritime Museum, 2003) highlighting the importance of saving water. The one-man show featured two characters that alternated between the “goody baddy” dichotomies of the *Revelry* performance, and clumsy tricks that incorporated spraying water over the audience emphasised the message of not wasting water. However the resonating image was of him dressed up in his diving suit and mask ready to step into an inch of water, resulting in children being on their feet shouting at the actor. This technique of deliberately railing the audiences is another example of playing “devil’s advocate”. In both examples, the performance and thereby the message, becomes associated with positive feelings and attitudes, which encourage a child to talk about it after the event, thereby extending the learning.

*Radar and Ratticus* (2009), commissioned by the Historic Houses Trust for the Hyde Park Barracks, presenting facts on how prisoners lived in the Barracks, during the early years of the colony demonstrated a different purpose of persuasion for the main actants, the art of thinking and connecting to others. During the performance the audience listened to “gruesome” stories by rats “that were there at the time!” The rats, Radar and Ratticus, represented fantasy “down and out” clowns that identified with historical convicts. The performance emulated quick fire banter between the two comedians,

which played on the idea of yucky histories, the key communication tool being to gross out the audience (as in *Revelry* and the dramatic discourse of shock above). Ironically, interaction with the audience in this particular show remained on a superficial, rhetorical level. The purpose of the show was to reiterate the notion that the everyday items left under the floorboards by the convicts were now “primary artifacts” within the museum. Other messages included cursory information that convicts worked on buildings outside in the town and returned at the end of the day, that many were released after a few years to fulfill their own goals and dreams. This idea of the human need to dream led to a questioning of what dreams the audience had as a way of emotionally connecting them to the reality of past convicts (and their aspirations). This aspect of emotionally connecting to the audience is the technique of finding ways of identifying with others.

#### ***6.4 Staging considerations***

As discussed the element of *Instruction* can be found in many performances from traditional theatre spaces to the street. Attention might be paid to works specifically commissioned to engage visitors in a particular venue or space or to teach a curriculum-endorsed lesson within an educational context and how actors and audiences might connect in those nontraditional theatre environments. The aesthetics of *Instruction* might therefore be recognised as an art form that purposefully intends to explain or investigate a specific area of interest whether art, culture, history or science based and which is essentially monologist or microscopic in nature, to ensure an overarching authoritative voice which endorse the learning as fact.

Clarity is effectively obtained by articulating a linear drive in the mediatory vehicles that theatrically frame each problem. This helps focus the audience on the specifics of what is being said. Thus aspects such as set and costume when used are explicitly intended to frame the contextual aspects of the learning by:

- iconically reinforcing a mise-en-scene of recreation by which an audience experiences a “taste” of a bygone era. For this aesthetics rely on realistic or naturalistic props and where possible actual primary sources or original costumes;

- attracting attention by dressing to intrigue an audience by their obscurity. This has the advantage of elevating a character in status, and pulling rank; or
- creating a sense of familiarity and *identification* in dressing like the audience might wish to be like.

Csíkszentmihályi and Robinson (1990) remind that ultimately “the aesthetic experience occurs when information coming from the artwork...fuses with information in the viewer’s memory – followed by an expansion of the viewer’s consciousness, and the attendant emotional consequences” (1990, p.18).

Four dimensions help to ensure that a learner understands the message, present in any performance. These are:

- **A perceptual aspect**, which is articulated in the *structure* of the program and the event, or dramatic narrative, which is built around the issues or lesson that the creators wish the audience to remember.
- **An emotional aspect**, which reminds us that the interpretation and evaluation of the experience is tied up in the *human connection* to it, for example whether it was enjoyed or seen as relevant or important, as well as the extent to which the audience identified not just with the issues but the characters and devices that framed the lessons.
- **A cognitive aspect**, how it *intellectually communicated* to the audience, age, gender, to be culturally significant.
- **A participatory aspect**, how it provided opportunities for *mental and physical inclusion* in the event as shown by Boal (1992) in his theatre for development, and Heathcote and Bolton (1995) in the classroom.

### 6.5 Spatial aspects

An important experience for *Instruction* is the feeling of freedom or space, experienced as the audience follows not just the specific teaching idea but also a new physical place and space. This aspect of constructive learning is “a social process whereby students acquire knowledge through interaction with their environment instead of merely relying on the teacher’s lectures” (Powers-Collins, 1945, p.5). Performances that endorse the

poetics of space are exemplified in the salon performances of shows like *Green Sheep* (Windmill, 2007) which, as shown in chapter three, theatricalised the picture book in an installation form that literally embraced the audience so that the usual separation between teacher/performer and audience disappeared. This performance combined tactile aspects of art, teaching through the mechanics of the fence which like an advent calendar was opened to reveal the pictures along it one by one.

Similarly the *Babies Proms* program allows its audience to roam the auditorium allowing them to take control of the environment. In this context the Utzon or Studio spaces within the Sydney Opera House becomes like a second home, endorsed by the reoccurring face of a familiar theatre manager, such as Trevor Hodges, who evokes the sensibility of a friendly elderly uncle. These intimate theatre experiences within small spaces and in small groups offer preschoolers in particular a developmental opportunity to participate and contribute. In these safe places it is accepted to talk to the performers and to make mistakes. Children are asked to sit on the mats in front of their parents, so they sit close but not on top of their parents, spatially giving them a sense of adventure and play. This feeling of self-reliance within safety help builds self-esteem and efficacy, which refers to the sense of potency or effectiveness, a belief in their ability to make a difference and to contribute (Porter, 2001, p.5).

## ***6.6 Defining characteristics of Instruction***

The defining characteristic of *Instruction* is the transferring of factual information to its intended young audience.

### ***6.6.1 The transfer of information***

A performance created specifically to instruct ideally engrosses and positively affects its audience. Moments of rapture through shouting, jeering and applauding, as well as intrigue and curiosity stimulates connectivity and engagement into conceptual understanding and transfer of information. Potential long-term memory retention is its primary benefit. In this framework, theatre treats the audience as scholars.

### ***6.7 The ideal aesthetic response to Instruction***

Participation in the communication code of *Instruction* is encouraged as “peripheral” in that even though a warm connection can be made with the audience the overall message of the event remains that of transferring specific information. From a psychoanalytical perspective *Instruction* mentors and enthuses, inquisitive minds to develop values and allegiance towards particular cultural ideals and learning.

Its short-term aim goal is to immerse young people in the process of learning through connection, active involvement, participation, and classroom strategies of questioning and debate. Long-term goals ensure that the information is retained or that the experience of learning was so enjoyable that even if specific facts are lost, the motivation for ongoing learning or the desire to experience culture is concreted. This is why so many museums utilise storytellers to bring exhibitions to life (Maloney & Hughes, 1999).

### ***6.8 Summary***

The poetics of *Instruction* sits in many performances for young audience, whether it is the referencing of a particular historical event or a dialogical discussion between two characters or a demonstration of how heat rises. The artistic code of *Instruction* thus enhances classroom teaching techniques alongside intriguing narrative plots and settings designed to stimulate curiosity within its viewers.

The exciting aspect of performances designed to teach is that performances do so in enthralling unique ways that incorporate aspects of *Revelry*, *Identity* and *Enlightenment* and *Alchemy* to layer the experience as a long-term memory so that though specific facts may be forgotten, the particular good feelings around the learning are retained and transferred to other such projects.

In the next system of engagement the artistic code of *Identity* is explored as another way of connecting with the individual members of the audience.

## CHAPTER 7: THE ENGAGEMENT OF IDENTITY

**Identity** n **1.** the condition or fact of being or remaining the same one. **2.** The condition of being oneself and not another. **3.** An odd or interesting person; a character. **4.** Sameness, likeness or association **5.** Maths. An equation which is true for all values of its variables. **6.** Serving to identify: identity card.

**Associated theatre system:** Stanislavsky

**Driving Purpose:** To present characters and positive role models for the audience

**Audience:** Extrinsically recognising and associated with characters to emotionally take the journey with them but not changing outcome of the drama.

**Theatre events, that example using these engagement styles are:**

*The Queen of Colours* (2009) performed by Erfreuliches Theater Erfurt at Playhouse, Sydney opera House, originally performed in Germany.

*Once and for all we're gonna tell you who we are so shut up and listen* (2010) performed by Ontroer Goed Kopergietery & Richard Jordan Productions Ltd at Sydney Theatre, originally performed in Finland.

*Hinepau*, (2006) performed by Capital E National Theatre for Children at The Studio, Sydney Opera house, originally performed in New Zealand.

*Dora The Explorer in concert* (2010) performed at the Theatre Royal, originally performed in America

*Emily Eyefinger* (2011) performed by Monkey Baa at Seymour Centre, Chippendale

## CHAPTER 7: THE ENGAGEMENT OF IDENTITY

**Aesthetic pleasure, even for the very young might derive not so much from the exclusive indulgence in agreeable emotions but from the excitement of discovery or reassurance of having their intuitions articulated and endorsed.**

**(England, 1990, p 9)**

In this chapter we look at the fourth artistic code of *Identity* as a tool for decoding how a performance signals direct connection and relevance to the observer; implying that the audience is in fact watching themselves.

The chapter focuses on two forms of identity within performance. The first is ideological, in which the audience see projected images of “themselves” in an idealised or glamourised way that appeals to wishful thinking and which mirrors the pleasurable experience of *Enchantment* (chapter five). The second is an exploration of the real autonomised self, “free from baggage”, projecting images of the child as clever, independent and effective entities or the archetypal “wanderer” (Pearson, 1998) searching, creating, and manipulating the world as required. In recognising the self as an agent of change this paradigm also endorses aspects of *Enlightenment* (examined in chapter eight) as theatre by which an audience sees things as they are rather than a romantic means of escapism. As such this chapter also explores aspects of psychology and understanding self and others, as well as promoting a sense of self-efficacy and resilience.

More than any other sign system, this paradigm aims to reflect the implied audience itself within the action of the show; portraying them directly in the action and examining aspects of their real life challenges. Thus this sign system is predominately about the presentation of characters within the performance. Cremona et al. (2004, p.154) ascertains that emotional attachment significant to the role of reception is the pleasure associated with recognising the self. Understanding a complex situation, in which one can imagine oneself in a different light, is the very essence of *Identity*.

Many performances specifically designed for young people have a vehicle through which young people recognise themselves. Although Erickson recognised this as "a process 'located' in the core of the individual and yet also in the core of his communal culture...a collective sense of being" (Dixson, 1976, p 14), recognising oneself within the action can also mark a movement away from tribal to individual thinking and directly corresponds to the specific interests important to the audience members, as well as including opportunity for positive self-development.

### ***7.1 Artistic purpose***

For Ricoeur (Seikkula, 2008, p.23) the function of language is to articulate our experience of the world. Likewise the purpose of communicating *Identity* is to promote self-knowledge, self-respect and in this sense the code evokes the possibility of personal empowerment. Its benefits are in helping audience to connect emotionally with characters. Themes particular to this framework include everydayness, belonging, and facing and conquering fears. If *Revelry* can be seen as representing aspects of celebration of survival over adversity, within a tribal of mass dividualisation context, *Identity* is the survival of the individual within a private context and represents an opportunity to explore his or her place, responsibility and contribution to the world; a transformative *Bildungsroman* denoting a discourse of all-around self-development.

Goldberg suggests that when we see someone who reminds us of ourselves, even unconsciously, we form an attachment, which causes us to see more or less through his or her eyes (1974, p.22). As such performance like literature created specifically for young children will reflect characters of the "implied reader" (Iser, 1978) on to the "implied child" (Nodleman, 2000) that lives within the textual work.

#### ***7.1.1 Reflecting the audience***

*Identity* is about mirroring the audience back to itself. In this sense like the picture book, theatre offers a repetition of the moment that Lacan defines as the mirror stage "the moment in infancy in which a child identifies its image in the mirror" (Nodleman, 2000, p 40). As Lacan acknowledges this stage is an important stage of *identification* in



recognising oneself as a separate unit of consciousness (2005) and further what Vanier (2000) describes as an “exemplary moment, a paradigm of establishment of the relation of (individual) to his image and to similar other” (Vanier, 2000, p.19). Johnston (1998) makes this point in her research on *everydayness* and *thisness* in picture books.

A performance can project a sense of association and, by implication, connection through a number of different theatrical strategies:

- **Characterisation**, concentrating on hero characters that are of the approximate age of the implied audience generally in categories of under 2yrs, pre-schoolers, 5-8yrs, 8 to 12yrs, 12 to 15yrs, 15to 18yrs and other characters that represent family or teachers or friends as associates of the implied child hero.
- **Setting**, action that takes place in a familiar setting such as home or school (preschool) grounds.
- **Body language**, mirroring the particular universal body language, gestures, and behaviours that are immediately recognised by young people as things they do themselves such as stamping feet and clenching fists, throwing self on the ground, to display annoyance and a tantrum.
- **Language and speech**, mimicking the specific sayings, rhythms and tones that are recognised by young people as things they say themselves such as plea bargains like “it’s not fair”, “are we nearly there yet”, “it’s only a little bit”.
- **Spatial language**, projecting the universal child /adult dynamic such as child constantly questioning, wanting reassurance, waking parent up or them not going to sleep, calling a parent back.
- **Music**, utilising the popular music of the day recognised and enjoyed by young people in their home or else its antithesis such as the “old people” music that Mum and Dad might like.
- **Popular culture**, utilising sayings and/or images from popular culture from television shows, you tube, face book and so on.
- **Costuming**, utilising the specific clothing style of the particular audience mostly seen in play clothes, school uniforms, dress ups or party frocks.

- **Routines and jokes** that references familiar aspects of the everyday routines of the implied audiences such as school or home including universal jokes about dreaded teachers, loser parents, and homework.
- **Play**, re-enactment or allusion to universal games played by children around the world, chase, hide and seek, making camps, scary stories, walking on lines, not treading on the cracks, turning an object into something else, climbing on each other, hanging off each other, jumping out of things.
- **Toys**, references to typical amusements, as objects of affection like teddy bears or material gain, the modern desired object like the latest iPod, Barbie and so on.
- **Buddies**, reference to pets or a best friend, often as sources of affection, trust, companionship.
- **Family**, reference to family, often as the source of all problems in performances for 12yrs and older; and
- **Existential concerns**, contemplation and questions on life itself, what is going to happen to me? Will I ever be popular? What should I do? And so on.

## ***7.2 The dramatic discourse of Identity***

A distinct characteristic of the discourse of *Identity* is the dynamic of playfulness in which the child audience accepts the adult performer as a child character, ensuring a sympathetic connection and cultural rapport between both.

### ***7.2.1 The dynamic of trans-age play***

Many theatre performances for young people carry a trans-age dynamic, which is similar to the period in which men traditionally played women's parts, adults represent the child. This is in part due to laws and times and contexts in which performances are given. In Broadway musicals, children are contracted to play child roles such as *Annie* (Michael McCormick, 2011) and *Mary Poppins* (Disney, 2011). In such cases three different child actors support each role over the week to ensure rest and schooling.

Within much theatre for young audiences, the characterisation of children is generally portrayed, or represented by adults. A secondary benefit of this dynamic is a

carnavalesque “contract” to play that emerges between the audience and actor. This concept of playfulness, which is also discussed in *Alchemy*, is an important one. Within the paradigm of *Identity*, playfulness refers to the idea of children practicing to be adults what Piaget terms “symbolic imitation” (Gallagher & Reid, 2002, p.76). This process of imagining of self as other requires overt enactment of familiarity as the foundation of this divergent hypothetical thinking (Caslin, 1975, pp.80-81).

Watching adults pretend endorses physical activity as a fun, positive and natural way of expressing oneself, as well as psychically freeing oneself from the invading adult world, with their rules and constraints. This idea lies on the romantic continuum of play as the dominion of childhood and child in the adult, an idyll that emerges from A.A Milne (1988 [1926]), Robert Louis Stevenson (2010 [1884]), J.M Barrie (1904) and others as a possibility of escape, expansion and travel across many worlds for children; an opportunity of carnivalesque, and revelation firstly as the immediacy and “flow” (Csíkszentmihályi & Robinson, 1990) of the actual adventure and secondly as implied encouragement and role modelling for the audience to recreate their own story after the performance has finished as another form of audience response.

Performances that endorse this particular “play within a play” or even “*playtime* within play” dramatic structure, thereby give opportunities to expand the thinking of the child spectator, providing ideas and stimulation for other kinds of play. As such these works endorse the truth of the state of childhood. Many theatre practitioners, who like Stanislavsky (1981) and Grotowski (1976) are interested in portraying the essence of “truth” on the stage, are interested in psychoanalytic observation of the human personality as a way of understanding how humans might react in any given situation. The aim of these practitioners is find ways for actors to literally “become” a character through study and psychological understanding of the character in the script.

Theatrical, like literary, interest in psychoanalysis lies in the perception that psychic development contributes to the causal development of both character and plot. Bal (1997) philosophies that characters are “paper people”, without flesh and blood, and as such they have no psyche, personality, ideology or competence outside of what the story enables (1997, p.115), however Nodleman (1996) argues that the behaviour of specific

individual characters evoke questions on why people act in general because there is an assumption that literature and theatre mirror life, that it is realistic (1996, p.51). Characters by association resemble human beings and as we watch we guess and transfer ideas about them and their motivations including their life not mentioned (Saxby, 1997, part 1). In performances where the reality of the performers own personality is an evident aspect of the show, - such as *The Forest* (Fevered Sleep, 2010), *Jason and the Argonauts* (Visible Fictions, 2008) or *Play School* (ABC events)-, actors essentially play themselves in a childlike state. The quandary lies in signaling behaviour that must be first recognised and then interpreted by the audience. To this end the psychoanalytical work of Freud (2010 [1920]), Vygotsky (1968 [1916]; 1978 [1962]), and Skinner (1954; 1974) is of relevance in understanding and portraying behaviours that truly connect to how an individual audience member might also act. For an audience watching, play behaving “as if”, is the bedrock of symbolic behaviour and fundamental to learning in any intellectual discipline.

In such performances, adult actors symbolically represent children, through body language, costuming, relationships, voice and language, fears and pleasures all projecting the sense of childhood that is recognised and identified by the child observer as “me”. Children enjoy seeing adults play, “be childlike” to “break out” and respond to the world as they would. This is an extension of their wishful thinking and a particular pleasure of theatre for young people. An example of this was *Special Delivery* (Patch Theatre, 2008), in which adult performers played themselves, expressing themselves from children’s perspective. The performance started formally with adult characters in brown work overalls, reminiscent of factory workers (and perhaps Eric Sykes in *The Plank*, 1967, BBC Comedy). The fun emerged as the “adult” characters began to act like children. This sense of exculpating out of control emulated, like Charlie and Lola, the situation of children sent to clean up their room but in the process of trying to help, making more mess than before.

*Parachutists or the art of falling* (Theatre Mala Selena, 2008) was also constructed around recreating children’s games. Each event utilised sets with walls, holes, hooks, bars that could be climbed on, leaned against, hidden behind as though the space itself was a climbing frame or a secret den. Each started with a stillness that was interrupted

by things being posted through the holes so that they dropped with a thud on the floor. Here the young audience immediately recognised the obsession with posting, but they were seeing it from another perspective. Who was posting? This question built the intrigue but also emulated the fun of the nursery games. The salient aspect of this choreography was that though it referred to a *Revelry* paradigm with the sense of anticipation around the taboo of breaking the “house rules”, it was also imitating actions that the audience immediately understood as denoting themselves. This they saw in the grumpy huffs and puffs, the moody moment of not wanting to play, the lounging up and on things, hanging down and swinging, reclining in childlike modes, arguing in brotherly or sisterly ways. In relying on dance or comedic choreography, both *Special Delivery* and *Parachutists* pointed to universal child through body language that was understood by the child audience who laughed at those moments when essentially they were watching themselves. Both performances emphasised the playfulness of being a child rather than presenting a linear narrative, with particular consequence, and focused on simple observation and poetic mimicry rather than commentary or judgement on the action.

There are four themes common in the dramatic discourse of *Identity* by which children recognise themselves. These are fantasy play, the journey of discovery, mythmaking and the concert.

### ***7.2.2 Fantasy play***

The discourse of fantasy play, as discussed above in trans-age play, emphasises the seemingly naturalistic observation of real children at play though symbolised through dance or stylised movement on stage. The child audience watches themselves as instigators and agents of play. The dynamic is on collaboration and equality. This type of performance affords emphasis on physical rather than language or dramatic action, and often involves actors playing themselves, as symbolic of *every child* as opposed to character driven roles. This was seen in *The Forest* (Fevered Sleep, 2012). However the child iconic is more often represented through the artifice of puppetry as in *Charlie and Lola's Best Bestest Play Live* (The Polka Theatre, 2010).

The live Charlie and Lola performance presents puppetry of two-dimensional drawings that moves along to a pre-recorded backing track to achieve an aesthetic that reflects both the original artwork and its television offshoot. Lola represents the implied viewer, the feisty four-year-old pre-schooler who broadly speaking reflects the “everyday” experience of the world of many middle class children in Britain and Australia. This was seen in a scene in which a clean-up exercise became a wondrous adventure taking her and Charlie not just away from their chores but into the depths of the ocean through textures materials and animals that resembles her own environment but which are changed by her play. As such, the child viewer watched children being playful agents of control in their own imaginations.

In creating stories that allude to what happens when mum is out of the room, such performances evoke the childhood experience understood by many of the audiences own realities which include homes with bedrooms that become messy, parents who wish their children to keep rooms tidy, homes that imply prosperity. Further these stories written by adults for children sit on the whimsical trajectory of the early twentieth century children’s poems of Robert L. Stevenson and A.A. Milne.

### ***7.2.3 Journey of discovery***

The journey of discovery discourse theatricalises the rite of passage through which the child protagonist emerges from an experience matured and changed, so that life is better in some way. This is often revealed to the audience in a more traditional dialogue based drama in which actor’s play character roles based on psychological interpretation of a particular personality that is conveyed through a mixture of body and vocal emphasis. Iconic design, through bright cartoonish props authorise this naturalistic approach to examining these characters. *Snow on Mars* (Theatre of Image, 2011) and *Hinepau* (Capital E National Theatre for Children, 2007) are examples of this narrative discourse in which the primary hero undertakes an emotional journey as a *Bildungsroman*, finally understanding both self and other and accepting both.

*Snow on Mars* focused on the recovery and individual growth of a family after a period of bereavement. It exemplified aspects of *Instruction* in regards to portraying the solar

system implied in the set design itself and in the acting out of the system by the main characters including the Grandma who had to run through the audience in order to get the correct distance. This delightful surprise reflects an *Enchantment* moment that will be remembered by the audience for its aerial effects and the memory of the solar system recreated on the stage and out into the audience, as a moment of *Instruction*. Its relevance however lay in the emotional bonding between father and son as they cope and move through their loss and grief, communicating the human development inherent in *Identity*.

*Hinepau* told the story of a girl ready to make decisions to help her community and yet held back by cultural chains. This parallels the observer who though capable is held back by concerned parental restraints. This narrative psychologically dramatises the maturing of the child as a leader in the society and the eventual parental acceptance of the child in a new role as developing adult.

#### **7.2.4 Myth making**

In the discourse of myth making, child characters, played by adult actors, take on adult roles within classic stories. This is a way of introducing the complexities of the adult canon of literature to young people in ways that the child audience can understand. Discourse takes place as both naturalistic, representational or as an extension of *fantasy play* with action contextualised in the garden, home or school. This play within a play structural format was seen in *Jacqui and the Beanstalk* (Jigsaw Theatre, 2003), *Jason and the Argonauts* (Visible Fictions, 2008) and *Just Macbeth* (Bell Shakespeare, 2009).

As shown in chapters four and six, *Just Macbeth* recontextualised Shakespeare's original play within the schoolyard and can be interpreted within the numerous communication frameworks including *Alchemy*, *Instruction* and *Revelry*. In refocusing the story from the perspective of the school kids, the somewhat irrational actions of Macbeth are more easily understood from the audience's point of view. Enjoyment clearly comes from the shock tactics of *Revelry* which includes subversion, gender play (referencing the English pantomime), melodramatic presentation of the gory and disgusting talk of body parts along with other scatological rudeness, while the aspects of

*Identity* provides a familiar context and scaffolding which enables the young audience to better appreciate the characters themselves, along with their motivations and rationale for their actions. The school setting, the taboo playground talk, wild show off stories and “classroom clowns”, are all recognised by the audience. Further in its play within a play context, all the characters were Australian teenage school kids, magically transported (through a chemistry experiment mishap) to Scotland. With the kid characters on stage being performed by adults there is a further dramatic irony of adults playing children playing the adult characters of the Macbeth Play.

### **7.2.5 Concert**

In the music-focused discourse of concert, all action is centred on the child instigator, who is already perfected. In a flip from the reality of the child with limited agency, here the child rather than the adult is in control, a prodigy, wise beyond years, teacher, discoverer, mentor to others. It is an exemplar of a youth orientated culture, in which youth rather than the old carry wisdom and authority. Here discourse tends to take the form of youth theatre *Once and for all we're gonna tell you who we are so shut up and listen* (Ontroer Goed Kopergietery, 2010) or in a concert form, *Dora the Explorer Live* (Nick JR, 2010) and *The Dandylionz* (Seymour Centre, 2007).

## **7.3 Primary actants of Identity**

As suggested the actants of *Identity* represent the implied audience members for which the performance is intended. Audiences are usually being categorised in age groups of toddlers, pre-schoolers (3-5yrs), Kinders (4-8yrs), primary (8-12yrs) and teenagers (12-14yrs and 14-18yrs).

### **7.3.1 Child characters**

An example of a preschool character that reflects the pre-school audience was the protagonist in the *Queen of Colours* (Erfreuliches Theater Erfurt, 2009). Here children both recognised and laughed at themselves through this character, presented as a child's drawing. As a two-dimensional paper puppet she moved against a projected background



that was hand painted live and changed throughout the performance. Within this aesthetic was a child figure that deftly and articulately used language and emotion to negotiate what she wants and child audiences positively responded to the identification of the voice, the whinging, the tears, and the language within the drama. They enjoyed seeing her bounce on the bed with excitement, scribbling out of control, finding ways to delay bed time, or seeing that the table was so high that she can't reach the mug, asking for the mug to be brought down, pretend crying and words like "carry me I'm only little". At the end of the adventure she apologises for being out of control, demonstrating a very normal domestic situation in which tantrums are positively sorted out! The device of the screen that projected the painting philosophically implied that after the adventure the world is more colourful, endorsing an ideal that though the child (as hero) might temporarily get in trouble, all can be resolved, forgiven and made peaceful again.

***(a) Actants of fantasy play and myth***

Within *fantasy play* and *myth making* dramatic structures, adult actors play themselves as children representing them visually through costume and behaviourally through gesture and manner. Names when used are the actual names of the actor/performer rather than a character per se, mimicking performance as an observation of the natural state of child play. These performances infer the every child (as both actual child and the adults inner child) access to freedom through play and playfulness.

***(b) Characters of the journey narrative***

Within *journey of discovery* dramatic structures child characters are portrayed as heroes and identified as *individuals with agency*. These are the outsiders who initially feel lost and insecure but who ultimately understand that they are loved, surrounded by at least one adult who actively, functionally listens and cares. Their personal challenge is to actively recognise their worth and return "home" with a new sense of belonging and an appreciation for the love that is there. Often in performances for the very young allegiance might be found in a magical relationship between things endorsing Piaget's (1987) belief that magical relationships, justice and punishment, and causality are very important to the child between six to eight years old.

*Emily Eyefinger* (Monkey Baa, 2011) encapsulated the attempt of children to consciously recognise or think about themselves, and their place in the world; the underdog hero who overcomes oppression or doubt not just to survive but to live a better life. If *Enchantment* relies on conveying the paradoxical nature of the conquering yet chivalrous hero, handsome and full of prowess, the individuation quality of *Identity* looks towards a more flawed protagonist that evokes understanding and empathy rather than blind worship. These awkward, slightly ridiculous, everyday characters are more likely to parallel the spectators' own lack of self-efficacy. They generally start their journey with little agency or power and reluctantly undergo a series of tests, often domestic in nature, before they blossom into buds that herald the beginning of their self-realisation as humans.

The heroes of *Identity* are consequently interesting because they reflect both male and female characteristics and more three dimensional personalities than the more male dominated aspects seen in more traditional hero journeys in chapter five, whose narrative usually ends in conquering the baddie followed by union with a wholesome partner (Hourian, 1997). Traditionally the protagonist/hero returned home from adventures with "strange people". In modern narrative it is the hero who is "the strange one", the outsider, isolated and misunderstood representative of the awkwardness that characterises many of the young spectators. Within this trajectory, philosophical goals are not union or acquisition but courage. As such it affirms the idea that true feminist works offer opportunity for the female protagonists to give up romantic ideas when in opposition to her best interests of self-development. In other words the true prize for heroes is changes not just in fortunes, but how one views oneself, and as a member of the audience we are identifying with that.

*The Lost Thing* (Jigsaw, 2004) examples the underdog hero, who like the "orphan" of the Grimm, Dahl and Handler's *Snicket* tales, has no choice but to overcome adversity through their own resourcefulness; observing, analysing and dealing with the situation (Bettelheim, 1991). In this way the modern hero emerges from a different stock to that of the traditional hero, reflecting the reluctant heroes that emerge from extreme circumstances and are forced into a quest against their will. Where the traditional hero is an optimist, laughing in the face of danger and expecting to emerge triumphant, the

modern hero is a pessimist and expects to fail. S/he may be disadvantaged or weaker than others and lacks the confidence and expertise that secure the status of the traditional hero.

The modern hero is nearly always alone at the start of his or her quest and generally finds it difficult to trust. Learning to trust and the development of strong equal partnerships or friendships are part of the richness and the success of the journey. This is a sharp contrast to the traditional hero who though surrounded by many admirers (or merry men) travels alone secure in his own abilities and belief of quest (Hourian, 1997). Where the traditional hero highlights the weakness of those around him, saving them from disaster or teaching them a lesson or two, it is those very weak characters that give strength to the modern hero. Thus while the traditional hero has many adventures but remains spiritually stagnant, the modern hero grows strong mentally, physically and spiritually. As such the modern hero's qualities are presented subtly. Independence and resourcefulness emerge through necessity and fear. Though lowly in social standing the modern hero takes a fierce pride in honourable actions and his/her character engages us with humility, sense of justice and valour as s/he struggles to achieve goals. The spectator is empowered by the journey of this role model who is initially weak but who comes through against the odds, because they identify and see the hero as representative of himself or herself.

The quest of the modern hero is still the search for the seemingly unattainable but the goals are more universal. The traditional hero away from home covers space and distance in the search for the material and exotic. The modern quest is for a home or a place to belong, for self-understanding and acceptance. Still thrilling the focus of these stories is not just on action and plot but also on questions and analysis of self and others. In these positive ways the modern quest stories map the psychological rather than the spiritual journey that Campbell (1988) theorises. The modern protagonist is appealing in that no longer does the hero attempt to trample and tame but accepts and learns from differences; enacting our own fears, longings and showing us that in order to succeed we need to act, not hide; that we mustn't rely on others to rescue us but be self-reliant and strong in ourselves.

Other characters typically found in such journey narratives are:

- **Individuals with little agency**, representing very naive characters, sometimes portrayed as silent, representing those with no power or those who need to be looked after. They can be fantasy characters such as a little toy duck or a lost toy (*Fluff*, Cre8ion, 2004). They tend not to be the main protagonist characters but they are none-the-less important as the friend of the protagonist or the impetus of the action.
- **Controlled** characters that are not necessarily naive, but they are at the mercy of an overbearing agent/obstacle, such as an actively dangerous or incompetent overly controlling parent. Here the drama revolves around the young people finding ways of becoming autonomous and self-regulating.
- **Abandoned characters** real or metaphorically neglected. As in many folk tales or Dahl tales, or naturalistic work such as *An Afternoon of Elves* (Windmill Performing Arts, 2006), it is the young people who are seen to be bigger, more responsible and more adult than their so-called adult counterparts.
- **The nemesis**, in the guise of the annoying bossy sibling, nasty bully, the unfair teacher or the ridiculous parent, who represents the tyrannical role that the protagonist psychologically sharpens themselves against.

### *(c) Concert personalities*

Within *concert* structures the roles or characters of children portrayed are shown as personalities that are in control. Theatre events, which present or imply children as masters of their own destiny, tend to be in the category of entertainment as in the *The Dandylionz* (Seymour Centre, 2007), in which the juvenile characters are superstars. This is effectively an example of wishful projection, in which kids rule the world. This type of performance tends to project the child into an adult role of independent luminary.

From a Marxist point of view this last narrative structure, in which characters portray the child in control, is a projection of the idealised self as an image assigned and endorsed by the tribe or wider community as way of steering, individuals into a particular mind set or way of thinking. Unlike the children in the other dramatic

structures, the child in control is not portrayed as enjoying a brief moment of carnivalesque freedom from which they will return to their usual oppressed state, but rather as permanent personalities in an implied utopian world in which children rule.

### ***7.3.2 Kids playing themselves***

Though young audiences especially enjoy the playfulness of adults pretending to be them, in the same way young children like to pretend to be adults, they also like seeing other children on stage as both character but also so as ambassadors of young people.

*The Paper Bag Princess* (Zeal Theatre, 2007) discussed in chapter four exemplified how children recognised and positively responded to a family dynamic even when it was strange and outlandish. As described in chapter four, here was no ordinary family with a “proper mother” tied down by mundane routines and misbehaving children. This bizarre, loud, rambunctious family was headed by the energetic Mama completely in control of fabulously eclectic children full of energy, confidence and vitality with peculiar names that can never be pronounced. No traditional Mother Goose, Mama was more reminiscent of Brecht’s *Mother Courage* (1950) with all her children’s heritages from different parts of the world and the big baby whose father she can’t remember. As flamboyant as Edith Piaf or a gypsy princess, she emanated sharpness uncannily reminiscent and yet different to usual mothers. She, witch like in her ability to create a story (and children!) from nothing, exuded her charisma like an exotic queen conquering our world as we struggled to keep up with her pace.

Here adult children in their tempestuous relationships with each other, their sulks, arguments, their attempts at one upmanship and the pleasure of the giant baby playing the dragon are familiar and comforting in its familial projection. Of particular fun was the surprise at the big sister being “sacked” as the star role by her own mother and replaced with a more suitable, “I wish she was my real daughter...” child from the audience. This introduction of the audience member brings the performance a new dimension. Seeing the audience members (as representative of them) is powerful and tremendously uplifting for the young spectators. As Woodruff (2008) summarises, this happens because audience identify through characters’ “emotion-engaging” properties,

which the audience then takes home with them. De Gay and Goodman (2003) echo this idea in recognising audience members are guided in a journey by the performer who presents, “uncanny illuminations of their (audiences) own thoughts”.

#### ***7.4 Staging considerations***

Staging considerations within this particular code are not as important as the quality of the performance itself, in portraying truthfully those characteristics that young people recognise.

#### ***7.5 Spatial aspects***

The actor/audience relations are created with the audience extrinsically recognising and associating with the characters in order to take an emotional journey with them.

#### ***7.6 Defining characteristics of Identity***

The code of *Identity* communicated three particular aspects for the audience:

- recognising oneself in the action;
- recognising our ability to grow as individuals; and
- articulating what we are not or do not wish to be.

Within these attributes, *Identity* has an emancipatory effect, helping the audience to become aware of their true possibilities. As Zipes (2006) reminds us, performance and culture for children is political because it inevitably helps form particular values and acceptance of our society and our role within it. In theatre children recognise themselves as oppressed beings but also conversely as agents of power and change. In *Identity*, mechanics such as verse and songs speak our fears and concerns capturing the harsh realities of mixed families rather than sentimental ideology of blissful unions, the exhaustion of dependency and funny expressions (Warner, 2000). Theatre is thereby a powerful agent (Zipes, 2006, pp.178 -179).

Of particular interest are narratives in which children take destiny into their own hands returning *home* with great courage, confidence and consciousness. In this scenario we might see an “uncanny” (Freud, 2003 [1919]) distorted world, familiar yet strange, from which the protagonist child has moved away in order to become who they really are. When they return home they return matured, to a place that reflects that in inner change and which reveals a more potent sense of place. In this way home can mirror the psyche of the children and returning to it is more welcoming than ever.

### **7.6.1 Existentialism**

Particularly important for teenagers is the power of seeing themselves not just represented but actually being on stage with agency. The performance *Once and for all we're gonna tell you who we are so shut up and listen* (Ontroer Goed Kopergiety, 2010) at the Sydney Theatre was an example of a performance in which young people expressed opinions and angst in a non-naturalistic hyper-realistic showing that verged on anarchy. Scenes were played and replayed with different paces but throughout it was a theatre of venting, of speaking out, almost confessional. To this extent it was a revealing of how it feels to be a teenager as opposed to a narrative action or character examination. This played out in the program itself in which each of the performers had a biography and commentary on their own particular views of life. Collaborative and cohesive in its conception, the development of the performance projected a philosophical aim of equality more aligned with phenomenological consideration of the lived experience (Van Manen, 1990) than creating a traditional company of performing stars.

### **7.6.2 Self-confession**

Interesting to note is that this type of emotive outpouring from teenagers in particular parallels an age of self-confession or what Illouz (2003) terms the Glamour of Misery and the “relentless public telling and marketing of ...personal biographies” (2003, p.17) seen in the open slather of the Facebook. Like the anti-literary theatre of Absurdism, youth theatre philosophically questions roles through poetic presentation meaning it does not (justify) but rather provides concrete suggestions of what already is

(Esslin, 1980, p.25). Such performances do not tell a story but explore a situation (1980, p.45) endorsing freedom and the right to personal choice (1980, p.35). The desire to tell one's story, to be emotionally understood and uncriticised is apparent across the ages. However the raw realism of the work reflected in much theatre for teenagers is conveyed in more fantastical terms. Bloch (1978, 1979) stressed the importance of cultivating and defending fantasy because it represents our revolutionary urge to restructure our society so we can finally achieve a sense of home unencumbered by baggage and repression. Real home as shown above thus reflects our agency and is emancipatory and journeying is a way of coming back to a more satisfied self (Zipes, 2006, p.177).

*Identity* thereby, role models personal growth and resilience. Resilience is the ability to go on, to bounce back or to *fly* in the face of atrocity. In their manifesto for raising courageous kids, Brokenleg and Van Bockern (2003) demonstrate that belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity are core principles in a "circle of courage" that nurtures children to become resilient. These qualities are often evident in fairy, folk and journey tales in which protagonists, battle against the odds and come up trumps. Stories like Hansel and Gretel, which start with children surviving in poor circumstances with incompetent or absent parents who, through intelligent thinking, courage and resilience, overcome adversity to create a new order for themselves, exemplify children surviving against the odds and are the mainstay of hero tales that role model above all the need for courage and resilience. In the words of Tilly (a fellow observer, aged 5yrs) "they show you not to be afraid".

Bettelheim affirmed the therapeutic value of struggle and horror for the growing child, particularly in the dark fairy tales that equals survival, for "monsters" in this category are not outsiders but the appalling potential of all human beings (Warner, 2007). These tales are the activating tales of resilience, and they find their modern equivalents in the works of Dahl and Daniel Handler writing as Lemony Snicket.



### 7.6.3 *Understanding our world*

Certain theatrical presentations offer opportunity to see and understand real life circumstances and to embark on ethical considerations, for example tragic circumstances like the sinking of a boat (*Lifeboat*, Catherine Wheel, 2008), life for young people in a different cultures (*Hinepau*, Capital E National Theatre for Children, 2007), fatal sickness (*Velveteen Rabbit*, Spare Part Theatre, 2004) and mental health and depression (*The Red Tree*, Jigsaw, 2004). Contemplation on fair and unfair situations is more easily understood when young people empathise or see “themselves” in the circumstances, identifying protagonists as similar or equal to them. As such, even though life circumstances are different, the child hero/protagonist is representative of the children observer. Because *Identity* enables connections, this implied similarity enables the watcher to ask, “What would I do” as they watch the action.

These situations represent scenarios of strangeness or of the uncanny. The uncanny, as explained by Freud (2003) was used to explain how the familiar, something recognised and comforting, can be seen or presented as unfamiliar, shifted, strange. These sometimes frightening moments give opportunity to see things afresh or in a different light. Seeing an “other” as representations of oneself in performance helps develop an understanding of the world and individual places within it. *The Red Tree* (Australian Chamber Orchestra & Gondwana Choir, 2008) was performed as a choral concert in which the images of the book were projected. The main character is a girl whom, like the child watcher, may also suffer from days of sadness, or uncertainty. In revealing this image the observer recognises the feelings of confusion and smallness that are projected through the images of being lost, at sea or overwhelmed by scenarios that do not make complete sense and feeling of hopes that floats through the images. It can be very confronting to some adults to think about children as having these dark thoughts and doubts. In fact it goes against our societal ideal for children. However performances that validate children as having real emotions are in fact humanising and provide child-centred approaches to adult themes.

### ***7.7 The ideal aesthetic response to Identity***

The ideal salient effect intended in *Identity* by creators for the audience is a sense of self-knowledge and efficacy.

#### ***7.7.1 Self-knowledge, self-respect and efficacy***

If *Revelry* is theatre of the gut (instinct) and *Enlightenment* is theatre of the intellect, *Identity* represents the self and the heart of the wandering artistic spirit, examining instinct, values, what we feel is important, how we feel about ourselves and where we belong. As such this aspect reflects the joys and fears of its young audiences as humans searching for their place of belonging in the world. The archetypal images of the reluctant hero or “wanderer” (Pearson, 1998) denote both engagement in the world and also the ongoing search for assurance and security.

This artistic system psychologically evokes the exuberance of the archetype of the “wanderer” (Pearson, 1998; Levinas, in Goodchild, 1996, p.22), desiring both madness and challenge. This will, to live consciously as an individual even if it means leaving the tribal group or family, endorses efficacy and resilience within the young audience, encouraging all to approach life confidently and uniquely while at the same time recognising ones responsibilities and obligations to self and others, and one’s counterpoint in others. In other words a developed sense of individuality and a healthy respect helps one see difference in others while tolerating those differences. In this way the framework of *Identity* provides through symbolic representation a positive culture of psychological empowerment, focused around home, a place of belonging and coming to terms with complex situations. Stories of everyday heroes or the wanderer exploring ideas, going through a crisis and emerging strengthened through to the other side, expand the idea of self, and possibilities. This type of performance represents a humanist philosophy, which theorises that we cannot learn before we recognise and understand ourselves. Further, *Identity* actively helps young audience to emotionally bond and connect with the protagonists and characters they are watching on stage. This aspect of theatre denotes inner connection to specific characters that they recognise or identify as themselves.

Finally, like *Enchantment*, *Identity* also reflects attributes of wishful thinking (how we would like ourselves to be) and attributes that portray not only how things are, but also possible solutions, alternative approaches and messages of comfort to certain circumstances.

### **7.8 Summary**

This chapter has looked at aspects of performance that communicate aspects of childhood in all its different and complex stages back to the child viewer to see how the framework of *Identity* reflects and articulates the feelings and experiences of its audience by projecting characteristics that are instantly recognisable to them. Identification is about linking oneself to one's community and endorses resilience, self-efficacy, facing fears, and self-development. These aspects are seen primarily in the quality of performance and through a sense of trans-age play.

The next framework continues the process of creating conscious thinking in its audience, deliberately evoking critical analysis on other ways of being and doing. It is the artistic code of *Enlightenment*, which will be examined, in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: THE ENGAGEMENT OF ENLIGHTENMENT

**Enlightenment** 1. the act of enlightening, 2. the state of being enlightened (informed), 3. an eighteenth century philosophical movement characterised by rationalism and 4. (in Hinduism and Buddhism) the condition that revelation brings to the believer who has striven for attainment, making him henceforth separated from the rest of mankind.

**Associated theatre system:** Boal, Grotowski, Piscator, Brecht, Stanislavsky

**Driving Purpose:** to disturb and then empower through debate and re-evaluation

**Audience:** varies between extrinsic and integral participation; puzzled, challenged, and motivated.

### Theatre events, that example using these engagement styles are:

*The Shape of a Girl* (2008) performed by the Sydney Opera House at The Studio, Sydney

*Helena and the Journey of the Hello* (2010) performed by Terrapin Puppet Theatre at The Studio, Sydney Opera House

*The Little Match Girl* (2007) performed by Gruppe 38 at The Studio, Sydney Opera House, originally performed in Denmark.

*Children of the Black Skirts* (2006) performed by Real TV at The Playhouse, Sydney Opera House

*Afternoon of the Elves* (2006) performed by Windmill Performing Arts at Walsh Theatre, Sydney

## CHAPTER EIGHT: THE ENGAGEMENT OF ENLIGHTENMENT

**to wake up the audience to deepen their awareness of the human condition**

(Ionesco in Esslin, 1968, p.189)

**“When something seems ‘the most obvious thing in the world’ it means any attempt to understand the world has been given up”**

(Brecht in Willet, 1964, p.71)

This chapter looks at the fifth of the six artistic codes, *Enlightenment*, which can be understood as the system for promoting the critical thinking of young people. In this framework *Enlightenment* encompasses the eighteenth century ideal of striving to rationalise situations philosophically in order that citizens may understand and critically assess them. Theatre is recognised as *a place of seeing and doing* (Fortier, 2002) and the art of ethical investigation, alienation, and critical thinking through a poetical discourse (Kaufman, 1980, p 271) examining in particular the sign-systems of dramatic themes, narrative discourse, set, costumes and acting styles.

*Enlightenment* attempts to convey the complexities of an issue and alternative sides of an argument, representing the ideal of judiciously assessing the world around us, not as we would like it to be, as we feel it in our bones (Jameson, 2007, p.50), but as it actually is. Philosophically it therefore represents the aesthetics of initiating conscious thinking and awareness in young people to communicate dialectical argument and individualistic opinions by which the accepted behaviours of the majority “tribe” are challenged. Within this framework, performances communicating *Enlightenment* speak to an archetypal audience of sophisticated, cognitive, rational minds (Greenfield, 2001), the “philosopher/altruists” (Pearson, 1998) interested in difference, choice, societal responsibility and enquiry on “what is the good life?” and “how to live it?” “what are my values?” and “what do I believe?”. To this end Levinas (1999) ideas on ethics are important, particularly his ideas on individual obligations to “the other” (alterity).

## ***8.1 Artistic purpose***

Husserl understood that “[e]very successful understanding of what occurs in others has the effect of opening up new associations and new possibilities of understanding” (1950, p.120). From an academic view, enlightened thinking concerns the consolations of philosophy (de Botton, 1999), freedom of thought (Spinoza), self-realisation or a personal philosophy of life (Honderich, 1999, p.74) to ultimately become the best we can possibly be. Kant (1914), Hobbes (1937), Hegel (2009), Mills (1956) all endorsed that the best societies are comprised of motivated, questioning and functioning individuals as opposed to “unthinking sheep”. Though it may be acknowledged that such ideals, through certain Romantic thinkers, fertilised the seeds of socialism and nationalism, our concerns here concentrate on individual responsibilities and rational critical thinking rather than the nationalistic ideals that distorted the philosophical aims of its early advocates where *Reason* as acquisition (effort) rather than heritage (Ryle and Soper, 2002, p.33) was advocated, affirming the wisdom of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle through to Nietzsche, that contemplation and enquiry, rather than the physical comforts of materialism, is the path to a life well lived (Grayling, 2007).

Aesthetically through *Enlightenment*, theatre for young audiences purposefully presents dialectical argument that aims to awaken young minds to the reality of the world (their own society and beyond), inspiring friendships with people outside a usual social circle and endorsing Socratic ideals that “the unexamined life is a life not worth living”. Further, that true knowledge is individual judgement and contemplation rather than blind agreement (Soper & Ryle, 2002). Locke stated that without reason all we have is belief, not knowledge. In asserting Kantian courage to make use of your own understanding (Kant, 1996, p.17), *Enlightenment* uses both scepticism and investigation techniques to deconstruct the status quo and to encourage moral and ethical accountability.

### ***8.1.1 Theatre as a place for seeing***

Weber (2004) shows how the character Oedipus denotes, through his very name and causality, the verb “to see”, implying both revelation and understanding, and

symbolically personifies the conception and definition of theatre, later to be schematised by Aristotelian “poetics”, as an enactment capable of bringing transformation.

In offering opportunities to see, understand and transform, theatre fulfills its original meaning “to view” (Weber, 2004). This embodies Plato’s dichotomy of the cave, concerning the prisoners who see their own shadows reflected in the walls (2004, pp.3-8). Do they recognise the images as themselves or are they seen as mirages of another? If their situation is revealed will this motivate an attempt at freedom or is the hypnotic illusion enough to keep the prisoners static and content. Such dilemma appreciates this hypothetical event in the cavern as both illumination and delusion, and its paradox can be translated to the theatre as a place that both “shows” with the intention to *Enlighten* that is illuminate and reveal (Weber, 2004), and “shows” with intention to Enchant, mesmerise and create illusion. Woodruff articulates further “good theatre carries wisdom but it does so in disguise” (2004, p.217). It is thereby the job of the “wise” audience to *unmask* the play

The purpose of *Enlightenment* is to observe, question and “unmask”. In doing so the code aims to reveal humanity back to itself. Thus *Enlightenment* uses techniques that force the audience to examine or think about *why* something happened rather than simply what happened. Such devices include recurring motives or jarring devices such as suddenly stopping the production, or explaining what is going to happen next by a master of ceremonies. Turning on all the house lights reminds the audience that they are in a theatre and, like other such methods, the desired impact is to cause the audience to look again, to lose its comfortable complacency and to stimulate individual responsibility within the collective. Like those inspiring visionary practitioners of the nineteenth and twentieth century including Duke Georg, Stanislavsky and Brecht, *Enlightenment* creates, from different theoretical approaches, meaningful artistic experiences rather than just being commercially successful. Thus idealising universal access (low pricing), intelligent, and most importantly, ethical questioning of the status quo.

Even though Artaud and Boal among others might have been ideologically opposed to Aristotelian philosophy on one level there was an ideological desire to actively show

how events can be changed. Thus whether by unity in plot, epic theatre or spontaneous cruelty, all such practitioners aim praxis towards exposing human nature through a cohesive Enlightening experience of *entwicklungsroman* (a story of general growth and formality rather than self-culture) rather than *zerstung* (entertainment and diversion).

Plato recognised and feared poetry because of its power, an expression of the love of language; which in theatre terms means not just spoken words but also visual aspects (Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001), spatial and architectural aspects (Leeper, 1948; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996), and sensual aspects of taste, smell and sounds (Whitman, 1994; Van Leeuwen 1999). Through the emergence of a new *art* of theatre the experimental approach of such radicals, from Craig to Grotowski and Brook to Pina, gained momentum and continues in the creative (Hamilton, 2004, p.12) approaches of collaborative theatre laboratories of environments such as Windmill Theatre (2012) and Real TV (2012), with their intention to devise new performance scripts, new approaches to creating work and new research opportunities. Though complex, presentation of this allegorical theatre assigns the audience with a role of interpreting and transformation, enhancing individual thought and contemplation. The quality of this essentially emancipatory, academic culture is the unique ways in which such companies bring social relations into focus and encourage audiences to question while simultaneously helping them deal with conflict and fear and, importantly, recognise how events might be changed.

In describing the difference between storytelling versus theatrical styled productions, Jameson (1999) highlights that access to ideas in theatre, is determined by those who can afford to go. As such, access to quality performance is a class ideal and an economic issue. Boal (1985) fighting to help classes help themselves argued therefore that theatre should not be about information or enlightenment but about consciousness and action in preparation for real action and liberation. His solution was to take theatre to the streets in what he called *Invisible theatre*. *Enlightenment* as described here is also about consciously creating opportunities for young people to experience theatre in all situations in life as well as provoking critical thinking and choices by young people.



Like Plato's cave, what is essentially exposed in *Enlightenment* is humanity presenting itself, in the guise of the autonomous person. The predicament remains however what the audience will do with this information; will knowledge cause its audience to act or hide?

### ***8.1.2 Real issues and ethical questions***

Philosopher William Godwin (1798), the eighteenth century pioneer for child enlightenment, with his written works of deconstruction that wandered away from the accepted norm, and his condemnation of work that lacked curiosity (Warner, 2000, pp.322-23), characterises an *Enlightenment* approach. Godwin believed children to naturally know and advocated for their right to have access to challenging ideas. This is why his and his daughter Mary Shelley's, own works were so focused on humanity taking responsibility for its actions. Godwin's strategy was to use fiction and fantasy to introduce children to ideas and thinking about their own society.

A major aspect of the *Enlightenment* framework is the narrative themes upon which ethical questions and investigations are built. These narratives use plots by which complex ethical issues for which there are not always right and wrong answers might be explored. Such themes concern ideas on critical participation in one's own society, even if it simply means understanding or being aware that others live in different ways. Typical issues might include:

- **behaviour ethics**, what type of human would you create if you have the chance?;
- **social ethics**, who is cool who is weird in your society and why? How does one respond to difference?;
- **respecting others**, seeing that people live in difficult circumstances such as living with parents who are infirm or who have a mental illness; children who live in dysfunctional families;
- **global issues**, discussing issues such climate change, world hunger or ethical questions like what would you do with last bit of rice, eat or plant?
- **Ethics and consequences**, reflecting on issues of science like cloning;

- **Social issues**, domestic violence, drug use, gay marriage, child disappearance, school bullying and even murder.

In each case, real and confronting issues are brought to light for audiences through theatrical experiences that scaffold deep understanding. The experiences enable contemplation on confronting issues that are actually happening in society and provide opportunities to debate them afterwards through teacher or parent initiated discussion. Theatre companies will often supply information packages to assist this process. In presenting issues for deliberation theatre producers are faced with similar decisions to that of Godwin; how to stimulate thought not only about the subject itself, its effects and what might be done about it, but the context of the issue itself, how it might emerge and most importantly be presented in a way that can be understood by young audiences.

In *Jacqui and the beanstalk* (Jigsaw, 2003), a modern telling of the traditional fairy-tale, presented in the context of children playing a game in the garden two aspects of *Enlightenment* was evident. Firstly the changing of the male to a female protagonist; and secondly the changing of the traditional ending to a postcolonial sensibility in which peace is made by returning the stolen goods. The “happy ending” or “Jack” (or Jacqueline) becoming rich occurs not by becoming a plunderer but by becoming an entrepreneur, turning the beanstalk into a tourist attraction. Subverting the conventional narrative discourse changed the emphasis into responsibility and citizenship.

In issue based drama the primary concern is to present all sides of the debate equally rather than emotionally. In performances created for younger children, there can be a tendency for cultural events to be a “tick a box” category, following one line of enquiry. Such work, Zipes claims, shows “disregard of the theatre for young children due to puerile unimaginative and regressive quality of the plays which have been socially trimmed”, (Zipes, 2000, p.1). His statement recognises that, contrary to popular belief, younger people are in fact capable of understanding and responding to all sorts of issues. Popular culture so prevalent in *Revelry* and *Enchantment* appeals because it presents situations emotionally in black and white terms that do not challenge spectators but rather affirms the current status quo. Young people, however, can engage in artwork

that presents uncomfortable examinations of life and further such opportunities are invaluable for cognitive and personal development.

As shown, picture books that present challenging themes such as the death of a grandparent, depression, or colonisation endorse the fact that it is not what is discussed but *how* the matter is discussed that is most important. As long as young people are not left with a sense of overwhelming powerlessness around such events, knowledge of terrible things brings understanding rather than a sense of fear and defeat and can actually develop resilience. In opening up challenging themes for investigation, theatre, like these picture books, honestly looks at the best and worst of society to investigate ethical questions around what we want our society to be like. This question sits in direct contrast to the *Enchantment* presentation that assures everything in the world is “ok”. Instead audiences must respond to confronting realities such as terminal sickness and death, which, are explored in performances like *The Velveteen Rabbit* (Spare Part Theatre, 2004) and *Goodbye Mr Muffin* (Theater Refleksion, 2008) produced for audiences as young as eight years old, as well as the atrocities of Nazism portrayed in *Hitler’s Daughter* (Monkey Baa, 2006) and *Children of the Black Skirts* (Real TV, 2006) for young teenagers.

## ***8.2 The dramatic discourse of Enlightenment***

The dramatic discourses of *Enlightenment* are staged around presenting theatre honestly and often roughly. That is, finding creative ways of illuminating certain ideas while at the same time acknowledging the falsity of the theatrical situation and the cables and equipment required for making the event happen. As such the performance is literally created from nothing in front of the audiences eyes.

### ***8.2.1 Epic theatre***

Aside from forums and direct meaningful participation, issue based theatre often presents its narrative discourse through a didactic style described by Brecht as “epic theatre” (Willett, 1964). Contrary to the Aristotelian dramatic theatre that has become synonymous with bourgeois theatre, epic works oppose traditional ideals of

chronological time and places to present short disconnected vignettes by which an audience actively and consciously pieces together information presented to create an overview of the issue. As Jameson states, this Marxist structure is more “complete” than a bourgeois alternative (2008, p.64); the first (proletariat) one attempts to examine and provoke understanding on an issue while the other essentially follows an emotional dramatic line, in which an audience is positioned to feel emotional attachment to a particular character, endorsing or reacting to their actions rather than simply understanding why. This holistic overview, by which issues are examined from different perspectives at different points in history, is achieved through an aesthetic of “heteroglossia” (Bakhtin, 1981) in which numerous mediatory theatrical devices, including puppets and audiovisual technologies, are used to examine single issues under the microscope and to observe it from different viewpoints.

Where the *Enchantment* codes drive a need to find out “what happens”, epic theatre discourse serves a particular idea and is the tool for illuminating circumstances and relationships rather than the driving force of the production. *Helena and the Journey of Hello* (Terrapin Puppet Theatre, 2010) is a case in point, presenting disjointed scenes in which the audience is taken into a distant or near past to understand Helena’s frozen feeling of abandonment created by the unhappiness of her mother and her emotionally absent father. We watch the performance to understand the circumstances and the effort required to come to terms with and bring closure to these issues. This pattern of presenting scenes out of chronological sync is similar to the camera revealing different shots (birds eye and close ups) and has the effect of enabling the audience to look at the story from different points of view and at different chronological times. Further by alternating the character of Helena between human actor and puppet, the audience is given a feeling of knowing but not directly identifying with her, facilitating a more distant analysis of the situation. This resembles alienation techniques of watching rather than feeling emotionally attached to the character, utilised in *Dr Egg and the man with no ear* (Sydney Opera House with Performing Lines, 2007).

Aside from visual perspective, the dual presentation of a sharing a character between both actor and puppet highlights the reality that the audience is in a theatrical and therefore false situation and that though characters portray a real story, the action itself

is a “re-enactment” or a retelling of a particular situation. This alienation ensures that audiences watch and judge the situation while not getting seduced into identifying or “feeling sorry” for characters. Brecht in his search for a theatre which stimulated thinking on social issues was driven by the goal to make audience look and think afresh by making the familiar, unfamiliar or “strange”, a goal matched by what Shklovsky (1974) terms “ostranenie”. This defamiliarisation is a device that draws attention to the artifice of the text and dehabituates automated perception. It is way of causing the processes of re-evaluation. "If the whole complex lives of many people go on unconsciously, then such lives are as if they have never lived."..."Art exists that one may recover the sensation of life" (Shklovsky, 1974, pp18-23). Brecht's development of “alienating” theatre techniques is a supreme example of this. Didactic theatre with its emphasis on controlled investigation, emerging from Marxist ideals, is the notion of presenting a “thinking” theatre to a thinking audience and is the antidote to the homogenising power of soporific capitalist theatre.

*Helena* further endorsed aims of critical watching by using Brechtian techniques, which consistently reminded the audience that they are in the theatre, for example overtly explaining to the audience what was going to happen in the next scene, through song and banners. This distancing from the emotional is further achieved through the use of the musicians singing not only about how Helena is feeling but also her father. Songs reflected the atmosphere and the mood without the need for long dialogue on explanations and justification of cause. Instead we are shown the impact of events, an overview and poetic explanation of the causality that led to the loss of the mother and the distancing of the father, and a final moving on and closure from that event.

Loss of Helena’s song metaphorically reminded us of her loss of voice as an inability to communicate her loss. This portrayal of the female child is reminiscent of feminist criticism concerned with women's right to be heard after centuries of silence that has come through exploitation and oppression. Showalter describes the ongoing effects of silence, “Women are estranged from their own experience” (Rivkin & Ryan, 1999, p. 567). As Aston (1995) asserts "feminism is a vital and energizing challenge to the male bias of teaching and research". This response to children, in particular girls, to write themselves in their own speech (Irigaray, 1985) and time (Kristeva, 1991), to celebrate

their bodies, voices and experiences, is celebrated here. This realisation might be termed women's theatre, driven not by commercial gain but by the need for women (for girls) to speak their own experiences, to communicate, share and discuss ideas that centre on the personal and every day. Such work is often developed from real life experiences. While theatre is traditionally outward looking, linear and objectively bases its plots and themes on the “other”, female morphology hails a principle of thematic links which look inwardly and subjectively, tumbling and returning through a circular stream of consciousness to challenge the self. In this sense *Helena* examples a story of a child who in the telling of herself recants the story of many and “all” children, producing as Case (1988) expresses it, “Reality Theatre”.

In *Helena*, the main character is played by a puppet, philosophically signaling the idea of the child as puppet, manipulated and therefore without agency. This dichotomy of a puppet producing a reality situation is in itself a theatrical irony, yet it parallels techniques in *The Lost Thing* (Jigsaw Theatre, 2004), and *Dr Egg and The Man With No Ear* (The Sydney Opera House & Performing Lines, 2007), in which protagonist characters are swapped between actors through costume and numerous sized puppets. Changing characters serve to ensure that actors are not identified as being the character. The character becomes a stand-alone entity. Further in watching characters as though through a camera which sees characters from a bird’s eye or low level perspective we become focused not so much on what happens but why it happened. This changing of perspective, playing around with place and time requires that the audience cognitively leap with the action,- and it is therefore seen in theatre created for children ten years up but not for the very young, who require a much more stable chronotope (Bakhtin, 1981).

*Lifeboat* (Catherine Wheels Theatre, 2008), as shown in chapter seven, portrayed a true story about survivors of shipwreck, appealing to both adults and children. The historical narrative reflected the realities of refugees between 5 and 12yrs leaving England to avoid the war and focused on the friendship of two young girls who met on the boat and lost contact afterwards. The play utilised their words and reflected their home situations, creating a record of survival and resilience. The set used on *Lifeboat* utilised realistic artefacts from the nineteen thirties that symbolised the two different households of the principle characters and their families. The set was manipulated and

changes to show different aspects of the story. Of particular interest were the two girls taking on a number of different roles at the same time and playing Bess and Beth's story simultaneously. This required young audiences to recognise that the actor was playing numerous roles and not just the one character, which would be the usual practice from television and film. Though this performance contained aspects of *Identity*, as shown in chapter seven, in its scientific explaining of what happened in history to young people the same age as the audience, its real power was in portraying human resilience, "we hung on" and in showing young people helping themselves.

*Lifeboat* utilised stylised storytelling performance, poetry, and choreography, to tell its real life story through multiple voices. Though the chronotope kept the ship as its constant reference, the historical and causal time references changed so that audience could see characters at different times and in different places juxtaposed against each other; one from Liverpool and one from London; one eldest, one youngest; one wants to leave home, one wants to stay with mum. These differences were emphasised along with similarities, like a love of singing (to the radio but one operatic and one popular). As such in this one universal story we see a blending of individual stories told in episodic scenes with actors playing a main character and smaller characters, allegorically emphasising human connections.

The sense of chaos, which emerged through the varying narrative styles and heterogeneous theatricality, underpins all these described performances in which audiences work to make sense of the work in its entirety. In this way the code of *Enlightenment* offers complexity to present moments of satisfaction in which the audience suddenly sees the whole picture, as though looking through a magic eye picture. This unfolding through aspects of obscurity evokes wonder and contemplation.

### ***8.2.2 Nonsense and the surreal***

The effort of decoding theatre signs along with a sense of *Identity* and *Enchantment*, *Enlightenment* encourages audiences to connect with ideas; to know, think and question their world but also to see themselves as active participants within it. Another technique that actively engages in this way is nonsense, which develops imagination (Warner,

2002) and critical thinking. In literary traditions, nonsense questions sense, reason, and all commonly held societal values through humour, mockery and satire. Shaeffer and Hopkins (1988) describe this as a form of intellectual play, requiring cognitive ability and incongruity to challenge normal perceptions around an idea. In this way nonsense, defamiliarises situations to make them seem uncomfortable and even alien. This is further achieved for the audience through “Dialogue Replica” in which everyday language is stylised or theatricalised for effect to make it ridiculous, reduced, even absurd (2004, p.147, Jameson). When language becomes absurd, no longer making meaning or sense, it becomes a parody of itself.

Both philosophical and satirical, the art of nonsense requires active critical thinking and the ability to predict. Like the cautionary tales of Dr Hoffman and Belloc, it also relies on cultural significance to contradict commonly accepted values and as such nonsense has the capacity to generate an anarchic response. Carroll encouraging his readers to laugh at adult reasoning and sensibility demonstrated this. In the same way modern authors like Dahl also conveys nonsense in league with their audiences, turning reason and “the natural order” on its head to laugh or examine it. As such, like satire, nonsense unsettles the certainty of sense and distorts conventional ascriptions of meaning, though it does so through a more gentle surreal interpretation of events. Its greatest power, to the child audience, is its ability to create curiosity and secondly its ability to poke fun, deconstructing and destabilising rigid moral and traditional behaviours so that like the mythic Gryllus (Warner, 2000) it enables a deeper truth about humanity to emerge. Nonsense endorses an attitude of anarchy, breaking the rules, bravery and daring. A sense that if you are going to have courage, you have to take a risk.

*Rabbit* (Buzz Dance Theatre, 2007) was a beautiful example of this. Building on the themes of Alice’s adventure, this work was developed and presented from the rabbits’ point of view. Here, the child rabbits audition a girl to play Alice in their game. The games and audition take on their own wonderland quality with the twin rabbits, the mad hatter’s tea party and the baby sister so jealous that she takes on the character aspects of the red queen. Oversized props ever present on either side of the black and white checked stage added a further surreal quality to the atmosphere. In both costume and set, audience enjoyed intertextual reference to the original stories and its skewed themes



in similarities such as the power play found in the nonsense behaviour of the rabbits who were in control of the action, the idyllic ideas of children's games which went wrong, and the masking of characters (humans playing rabbits playing characters) and the rather strange question "[a]re you Alice enough?"

### ***8.2.3 Reframing expectations***

Reframing expectations in ways that subvert or mock creates a jarring effect that forces the audience to look again and in the process understand aspects, which might not have been noticed before. *Flying Babies* (Drak Theatre, 2004) and Linsey Pollack's *Playpen* (Pollak, 1999) both created performance entirely from the child's perspective and exemplified reframing. Like *Midnight Babies* (Wilde, 2000) it imagines the secret world of the powerless baby who cannot talk to the outside world and yet can create music and magic, offering a rather poetical and surreal portrayal of the daily "not so mundane" lives of infants exploring their worlds as powerful agents and alchemists. In presentations like this, which utilise a surreal approach, societal aspects denote real issues or situations but they take place in an alternative reality to focus on symbolically presenting our society through the world of dreams. This surreal world was also seen in performances like *Fluff* (Cre8ion, 2004), through which the issue of lost toys is addressed. *Fluff* took place in the strange vaudevillian world of a rather odd, kitsch trio, all dressed in identical black and white checks. Performance starts with photos showing these characters with a shopping cart rescuing lost toys from around the world. Like *The Lost Thing*, the world of *Fluff* addresses a flawed world and the human fear about being lost. Implicit in this performance was the idea of empathy for how a toy feels about being lost, creating a sense of belonging and all being welcome.

Though the title suggests a focus on the lost toy as a hero, *Fluff* was the causal agent, for a theatrical study on the rather bizarre sister Nanny/Nurses who like guardian angels travel the world rescuing lost toys. Female dominated, the curiously strange women, with their nanny matriarchy, refer back to a familiar old world of the nursery and from a Cixous (1975) point of view rise up against misogyny, patriarchy subordination and silence. Their stylised movements serve to create an ongoing sense of surprise or gothic atmosphere of uncertainty.

Their mission portrayed in an opening photomontage of the ladies in different places with their trolley finding toys sets the context, before their return home where the live show begins with them getting the toys fed and ready for bed; carefully lining up each toy for their unique sad bedtime story which is projected through photographic documentary. Each toy resembles the alienated misfit, the child with lack of agency now saved, finding acceptance and love for who they are without prejudice. The show is based on the secret world of the lost toy. What happens to those hundreds of toys lost in shopping centres and on holiday? Where do they go? In response the production introduces a mythic idea of the toy nannies travelling the world to find lost toys that need a home, made more curious by their lack of naturalistic dialogue. Performed by Cre8ion the show mimicked an old time musical style, the identical black and white checks suggestive of the early twentieth century Victorian institution.

*Just Macbeth* (Bell Shakespeare, 2008), discussed in chapter six as an educational tool, succeeds because it recontextualises the familiar script to subvert and surprise. This idea of making the story relevant to young people in order that they take ownership of it mirrors the work of Carroll in deliberately turning phrases on their head and giving them new meaning. Through laughter the audience acknowledges and honours the original.

Through interpreting, changing and reframing original works and ideas, theatre creators breathe new life into text (Benjamin in Auslander, 2008) and expand their meaning to reflect not only the original intention of the work but also a cultural response to those intentions and a new context by the new producers.

#### ***8.2.4 Outrageous theatricality***

In adapting *Shockheaded Peter* (Improbable theatre, 2005) to the stage while respecting the original intention of the book, that of laughing at certain parental attitudes, the directors framed the work within a Victorian paper theatre setting that honoured the aesthetics of the original illustrations and the melodrama style of the period. Focusing on the Master of Ceremonies and the catastrophic consequences that awaited each child, each poem (using the original words) was sung in an overtly theatricalised song by The

Tigerlilies, while puppets dramatised each tale to its bitterly sad conclusion including hilarious but horrific deaths and mutilations portrayed through red ribbons and other domestic items of the Victorian household. Running through the subtext was the scenario of the perfect husband and wife humiliated to find that their longed-for child is the disobedient and slovenly Peter, who they subsequently attempt to hide under the floorboards in shame. Unfortunately the “skeleton in the cupboard” will not go away, and his fingers and hair continue to grow through the floorboards, referencing the absurdity and of Ionesco’s own drama the *Bald Prima Donna* (1982). Within this contextual theme of the disappointed parents, the rest of the discourse reflects not so much on naughty children but commentary on weak inconsistent parents. As such, the humour of the original cautionary tales remains but with an added commentary on exaggerated parental expectation and their own bad behavior, which though placed in a Victorian era, may well reflect the aspirations and expectations of certain parents today.

The shock effect of overt, outrageous theatricality can thus be used for humour but it can equally be used to evoke a sense of horror and foreboding found in the futuristic themes of fantasy where society no longer makes sense, either broken or so controlled that it has lost connection to the individuals within it, creating isolation and disharmony. This was shown in *Freedom to Launch* (Dance Tank, 2007) a youth performance co-created by and for young audiences by young performers, in which futuristic, worlds of authority and parentification reflected an atmosphere of being closely monitored. Right from entry in to the foyer the audience were watched and had to go through a series of test by a regimented group of people in “authority”, resembling a fascist or dictatorship state.

Like Godwin, many producers of youth theatre like Shopfront theatre, use futuristic fantasy to good effect, helping young audiences engage imaginatively with the subject matter. In particular contemplation of so-called utopian societies are often presented, particularly in works created and performed by young performers for young audiences. This is probably because like Orwell, such despotic work reveals a sobering view of the world and psychological uncertainties sometimes experienced by adolescents (Erikson, 1993). A form of “historicism” (Willett, 1964), this disconnection theoretically enables its young people to disengage from the immediacy of circumstances specific to our

current political climate to explore more phenomenological questions, which are no the less relevant to the “real world” which we live in or which give opportunities to express feelings about it.

### **8.2.5 Naturalism and social realism**

Naturalistic discourse *Enlightenment* expands understanding about issues with an emphasis on the real world, representing issues which a child understands or may be familiar with from a school community point of view, whether they have in actuality experienced those problems or not.

A performance utilising the traditional fourth wall of naturalistic drama was *Afternoon of the Elves* (Windmill Performing Arts, 2006), also presented as social realism. This work presented a story which also began by focusing on the other; the strange “fay” character represented *In the Shape of a Girl* (Sydney Opera House, 2008) as the other unworldly character that is not easily understood by her cohorts, the person who appears weird and who is often bullied for being different and not fitting the mould. The play's ethos was to show some of the intolerable difficulties that some young people face on day-to-day basis in order that audiences might be more empathic to others. A device used to do this was the revolving stage in which the stage was quite literally turned around to show the audience what is behind the wall; allegorically showing another point of view. In doing so the audience alongside protagonists are shown the other perspective and explanation. Suddenly we see “the other” for who s/he is to better understand their plight or difficult circumstances, such as in this case of being the carer of a mother who is sick and dependant on her, of living in poverty and with no adult support.

Performance-wise these naturalistic plays example how “real” characters can be portrayed “truthfully”. With sets deliberately iconic to represent the teenage bedroom or the garden of a suburban house respectively, each was recognised as resembling the home of many of the implied audience. Costuming, make up and props further endorsed realistic presentation of an ordinary family. Script and presenting events chronologically

further reinforced this world utilising the everyday language and rhythms of family and friends.

Within these naturalistic approaches both performances projected strong social realism by helping audience *connect* with the context and feel comfortable with the modern protagonists as resembling themselves, before “queering’ or defamiliarising it by examining more uncomfortable issues. In Heimlich (familiarity) of the home, the audience emotionally engage with the journey even as it expands to the point of making them feel awkward. The change represents “the uncanny” (Freud, 2003), in which things that are usually kept concealed and out of sight are exposed. This type of theatre encourages young people not only to know but also to think and question their world and to see themselves as active participants within it.

#### ***8.2.6 Documentary and aischrological styles***

Though dialectical approach directly confronts the audience, naturalistic techniques can project a sense of immediacy and also provide ways of evoking thoughts of “other”. This is evident in performances such as *The shape of a girl* (Sydney Opera House, 2008) which explored the real life circumstances around how a schoolgirl became involved in a murder. Essentially a “one-person” show, the main character portrayed explains in real time, her part in the event. Set in the girl’s own bedroom, paradoxically a prison, the discourse unfolds through a diary narrative that follows the girl’s relationship from primary to secondary school days until like a train gathering pace we are engaged in the brutal honesty of her confessional in which behaviour and attitudes become more and more out of control.

The work appeals by creating an atmosphere in which the audience feel that they are sitting in the room with her listening to a confession. In identifying with parts of it, in understanding the chain of events from the perpetrators perspective, audiences become almost complicit in the action and are both horrified and mesmerised. A Marxist argument may be that we are seeing only one view here in which we are seduced into understanding and feeling emotionally attached to the wrong doer. An alternative view however is that the audience is led to really contemplate not what but how such awful

things happen. From this perspective it created awareness around one's own actions and served as a tool for protecting oneself from similar events, both as a victim and perpetrator. This technique like that described by Illouz (2003, p 69) represents a letting go "aischrological" experience and a "queering" representation of the middle class family, made more confrontational by its lack of moralising.

The power of this particular performance was in its documentary reality style, presenting the actual true feelings of the girl's perpetrator in a Stanislavskian performance, in which the audience watch as flies on the wall. As such they hear the chronological circumstances, which drove the tragic outcome along with the regret of the girl. This style of performance is particularly poignant and familiar for young audiences used to reality or confessional television and YouTube, which celebrate the antics of anti-hero and ordinary people just like them!

### ***8.3 Primary actants of Enlightenment***

The primary actants of *Enlightenment* are those characters that are either seen as being other or completely invisible. They are those very people on the outer of society.

#### ***8.3.1 Representations of other***

As seen in the descriptions above, the code of Enlightenment, whether through the vehicle of absurdist humour or naturalism, causes us to consider the perspectives of those different from the usual. Further they are portrayed in very considered, humane and truthful ways.

### ***8.4 Staging consideration***

All staging considerations in communicating the ideals of *Enlightenment* are thus about finding techniques of defamiliarising comfortable assumptions and shocking the audience out of their lethargy.

#### ***8.4.1 Aesthetics of dialogic performance***

Performances that portray ethical considerations rely on an assortment of theatrical voices including “heteroglossia” (Bakhtin, 1981) approaches in which scenes are changed and located through a single piece of scenery, a prop, music or costume. Throughout performance, stage machinery often remains visible to the audience signifying and articulating its artificiality, while the use of mediators, such as puppets and multimedia images, serves to frame attention on particular actions of importance and underline certain issues. Actors often remain in full view of the audience when not performing, and speak directly to them while not in character but as actors. Scenes are explained prior to them being shown in order that they are watched not for entertainment but for scrutiny. In this way, the company offers intimate performances by actors honestly communicating with audiences.

These performances embrace in particular the philosophical idea of Brecht in their reliance of alienation, their use of a single space in which actors can freely transform from one character to the next. But the heavy reliance on technology, the use of audio-visual techniques, installations, soundscape, and the use of real and animated video work emulate in particular the impact that Piscator (1980; Willett, 1986) was searching for in his political work. This style is effective in works that focus on youth issues in particular and is utilised by companies like Real TV to produce high impact performance that emotionally connect with young people but which through realistic sounds can take them to dark places such as in *Hoods* (2010).

The reality of homelessness and death in *The Little Match Girl* (Gruppe 38, 2007) was dealt with honestly, but not sentimentally, through typical Brechtian techniques of describing events objectively and unemotionally. The overt way of stating where the story is headed at the start meant audiences watched and understood the social and economic circumstances rather than getting emotionally caught up in the tragedy. Key was not to reprimand or sadness, but *awareness*: “what are the situations in which other humans like me live?” “are you fortunate?”, and aren’t we clever in telling you this story!

This inclination of theatre of young audiences in introducing company members and the characters/roles that they will play originates in Europe and celebrates a storytelling approach that create a “scientific” (Brecht & Willet, 1964) and humanising theatre that values humans but which is capable of laughing at itself. The separating out of actor and character, with significant moments observed as though under the microscope, helps the narrative be observed as a series of conscious decisions on behalf of the protagonist rather than a fatalistic response. Ironically the playfulness evoked within such companies helps performers deal sensitively with all sorts of challenging concepts, because like the parent child relationship, ground is laid for honest conversation and debate. This frankness endorses a philosophy that it is not the topic but the *way* in which the topic is presented that is of importance. Optimism and the ability to rise above and handle the situation is what matters and children can benefit from being sensitively introduced to all sorts of issues, mentally rehearsing them to cope with all sorts of situations in which they find themselves with safety, effectiveness and resilience (Porter, 2001; Erikson 1994).

### ***8.5 Spatial Aspects***

The spatial aspects of this system requires that the falsity of theatre is constantly reinforced through visual mechanisms such as words on screen or banners or through costume and staging which requires completion during the performance itself. For example the poor “naked” musicians playing in their white vests, white underpants, socks, shoes and bowler hat in the foyer, for the *Red Shoes* (Knee High, 2012) performance entered the theatre and changed in to character in front of the audience. Only one, the drag storyteller, appeared to have a personality until she also lost her “persona” to reveal *his* white underwear at the end, implying the fragility and equality not just of this ensemble but all of humanity.

This vulnerability highlighted the theatricality of the performance and reinforced the idea that it was being created from “scratch” in front of the audience’s eyes. The performance is both intrinsic and extrinsic to the audience in that they watch and judge but they do not change the outcome of the action in terms of their actual agency.



## ***8.6 Defining characteristics of Enlightenment***

A defining characteristic of *Enlightenment* is the engagement of the audience in critical thinking by forcing the audience to interpret complex symbols semiotically and consciously (Ricoeur, 1991, pp.27-28), encouraging understanding of our world and our place in it.

### ***8.6.1 Involving audiences in politics***

In his work *Political plays for children*, Zipes (1996) investigates theatre as an emancipatory tool for young people, showing how the German company Grips theatre, strove to help audiences see that our personal conditions are changeable; “We hope to show different possibilities and to foster critical thinking...Primarily this means that we want to encourage children to ask questions, to understand their criticism is their undeniable right, to enjoy creative thinking and to gain pleasure from seeing alternatives and making changes” (1996, p.2).

The Grips system, strongly influenced by Brecht's theatre of social idealism, looked to attack dogma and create experiences for audiences in which they were challenged to see difference between oneself and others, to recognise situations, find solutions and develop ideas. In this sense the theatre doctrine was that of anti-authority and revolution, in which children were encouraged to overcome their social situations and to change their status. Such philosophy has resonance in the Australian based companies such as Arena theatre, which provoke young people to look at complex situations and think about their responses to them for example *Hoods* (Real TV, 2008) and *War Crimes* (Real TV, 2009).

If theatre has the power to question, does it also have the power to help young people change the status quo? As discussed in chapter seven, watching heroes conquer difficult situation can inspire but does it provide the actual resources to change a real life situation themselves?

The forum theatre in Kurturstendamn, also described by Zipes (1996), looked to offer greater contact and freedom to child audience. This aim mirrors the empowering goal of Boal's forum theatre in which "spec-actors" are encouraged to participate (practice) in the work and change the outcomes. This type of work might be termed "revolutionary theatre" and emerges from Marxist ideals with emphasis on action. Boal using theatre to fighting oppression in South America is a great inspiration in revolutionary thinking. Boal's vision of theatre was focused on empowering and activating. Of particular interest is his development of forum theatre in which a theatre or community hall is transformed into a laboratory in which spectators are offered the opportunity to discover their own solutions to collective problems. Boal described spectator activation in Marxist terminology as the spectator taking control over the means of theatrical production (1974, p.22) and using it as a concrete tool for creating role models that may be used in real life situations. Theatre in this sense becomes a rehearsal for life.

Recent productions that mimic a similar philosophy include *Emergence* (Synarcade Audio-Visuals, 2006), in which audiences actively help create the model human being. For this, theatre was set up as an installation or promenade space in which the audience could have access to the entire set. They were given a series of choices, which they responded to by moving to a particular side. At the end of the performance they had consequently designed the perfect human being according to that group. This type of performance signals a desire to respect the audience decisions but it also responds to the social media status quo in which audiences are demanding that they have a direct impact on the performance.

Another production, which required active involvement from the audiences as spect-actor, was *Apollo 13: Mission Control* (Chapman Tripp Theatre, 2010) in which the audience took part as the "crew". This active participation within the theatrical drama was a critical method of stimulating thought on a specific and real historical incident while also broadening social concern about others. This type of vital theatre opens up an experimental field in which situations might be trailed, changed and practiced for real change in the actual world. As Boal (1992) endorses, performance thereby represents a safe space in which unfortunate real life situations might be examined through re-enactment in an attempt to understand them and in which audiences can be given

opportunity to take the actors place, in trying to solve a particular problem. Encouraging active audience involvement within the action, philosophically endorses Young's (2008) idea that freedom is about engaging in ideas rather than finding distraction, or *Enchantment*, and ignites discussion that theatre at its best plays a valuable role in evoking critical evaluation in children.

Whatever the audience age, political or dialectical theatre helps us consider what it is to be human. Discussion that performance for young people might contemplate life rather than simply present an involving story returns us to discussion on whether theatre should challenge its audience and is a reminder of Corey's (1974) concern that as a society we tend to both protect and resist our children facing harshness on one side but ironically force them to grow up very quickly on the other as we fill their imaginations with concrete images of adult behaviour, in particular sexualised images. Not just the narratives but also the treatment of the stories and their discourse is of most interest here, the way that a performance is presented and how it communicates particular ideas and points of view to its young audiences.

### ***8.7 The ideal aesthetic response to Enlightenment***

The ideal effect of *Enlightenment* is in creating critical thinkers and conscious citizens. This sense of "really understanding something" is in Greenfield's words that "Aha" moment, from making a connection' (2008, p.7). By contrast, having fun, she explains, is usually based on *dissolving* connections, "letting yourself go" and living in the moment.

#### ***8.7.1 Critical thinkers and conscious citizens***

*Enlightenment* is the theatre of consciousness and citizenship, because it demands audiences think about what is happening around them. Its purpose is to artfully link ideas and provoke responsible thinking, rather than knee jerk reactions. Thus it looks at "the other" in revealing ways, developing understanding and tolerance of others.

In each of the dramatic discourses examined above, the audience is positioned to sharpen young minds critically offering alternative ways of thinking and being in the world. This framework ideally presents choice to awaken audiences to the reality of the world (their own society and beyond). Positive examples may be that friendship can be had with people outside “societal norm” and with those considered “other”. The most vital benefit of including devices that cause *Enlightenment*, however, is that theatre generates young people who do not take things automatically at face value. *Enlightenment* stops automated thinking and reaction and ignites individual thinking and responsibility. This is particularly so when the same story is presented in numerous ways from different perspectives, encouraging audiences who are conscious of alternative ideas, choice, and societal responsibility but who most importantly are critical and discerning thinkers.

Participation is encouraged through extrinsic criticism and integral participation in forum theatre aspects, where choice changes the outcome of the drama. As such *Enlightenment* promotes dialectical debate, which infers that the world is not always fair but that there are ways by which we as humans can cope with it. This is a move away from didactic or black and white instruction that offer prescriptive instructions about how to live or what should happen in a fair world. As such *Enlightenment* endorses the ideal of engagement versus distraction, in the theatre discourse.

### **8.8 Summary**

This chapter has explored ways in which theatre, like other art forms, can contain or expand audience thinking, helping them to know themselves and life (Barrault, in Hodgeson & Hodgeson, 1972, pp.23-24). In doing so, theatre becomes a holistic vehicle for developing intellectual thought and aesthetic sensibilities. In provoking questions that explores and develops critical thinking, it is also a quintessential tool of humanity and a way of civilising societies.

As such the system of *Enlightenment* actively encourages consideration of others and is therefore ambassador of conscious thought and cognitive development; thinking about new concepts, alternative ways of being, acceptance, trying new things, thinking

differently, and proactivity. Children exposed to a wide range of theatrical experiences and dramatic ideas expressed within such a positive environment are thus tolerant to change, empathetic, and empowered.

In the next chapter, the final system and most complex aspect of the theatre for young audience is explored within the idea of *Alchemy* as the ideal of growing the imagination.

## CHAPTER 9: THE ENGAGEMENT OF ALCHEMY

**alchemy** V. **1.** the medieval chemical science which sought in particular to transmute baser metals into gold and to find a universal solvent and an elixir of life. **2.** Any magical power or process of transmuting.

**Associated theatre system:** Artaud, Boal, Brecht, storytelling, the Ridiculous

**Driving Purpose:** growing the imagination through metaphorical, poetic and symbolic observations of the world.

**Audience participation:** Extrinsic and Integral, curious and activated, audience connects with the experiences and connects through the aesthetics and the architecture of the space.

### **Theatre events, that example using these engagement styles are:**

*Wolf Under The Bed* (2008) performed by Theater Sgaramusch at Playhouse, Sydney Opera House, originally performed in Switzerland.

*We Built This City* (2008) an interactive play space, performed by Polyglot Theatre at Sydney Opera House Forecourt.

*Pigs, Bears & Billy Goats Gruff* (2009) performed by Patch Theatre Company at Playhouse, originally performed in Australia

*At the foot of the storyteller's chair* (2005) storytelling, performed by Bronwyn Vaughan at the Ashfield Town Hall.

*The Green Sheep* (2007) based on Mem Fox and Judy Hoacek's book, performed by Windmill Performing Arts at The Utzon Room, Sydney Opera House

## CHAPTER 9: THE ENGAGEMENT OF ALCHEMY

**“The actors bring their 'world of the imagination' to meet with the audience's  
'world of the everyday’”**  
(Brook, in Hunt & Reeves, 1995, p.176)

In this chapter we look at the last of the six artistic codes, as systems of engagement, that of *Alchemy*. *Alchemy* is examined last because it is perhaps the most mysterious term and the most difficult to fully clarify as the theatrical vehicle for growing the imagination of its young audiences. Named after the effect of transmutation or the process of becoming, *Alchemy* is within this continuum the essence of ideologically conveying conscious awareness or what Zipes calls “Erfahrung” (2002, p.130), a moment when one learns about oneself. It is the magical transition or connectivity that is created between actors and audience in the playfulness of storytelling and the aesthetic of making theatre out of the everyday. As such, it marks the shared experience that occurs in the moment of watching and represents the journey of the performance, not the narrative discourse, the mise-en-scene or long-term outcome.

### *9.1 Artistic purpose*

Overall, the paradigm of *Alchemy* emits curiosity, presence and journeys of self-discovery; symbolically and metaphorically. Like *Enchantment* it aims to ignite a sense of wonder; but if techniques of *Enchantment* work to astonish and amaze audiences, *Alchemy* is its opposite. For while *Enchantment*, as shown in chapter five, might be said to parentify audiences by endorsing a state of soporific innocence, *Alchemy* demands that audiences pay attention. The implied archetypal audience within this approach is thereby that of “magician” (Pearson, 1998), the self-reliant child who recognises their own power and ability to turn around scary, uncontrollable situations by reframing the way they see themselves in the world. If other sign-systems concentrate on either endorsing, separating or controlling challenging events by exaggerating actions or idealising them, *Alchemy* concentrates on reframing challenges as universal situations, assisting spectators to see themselves as both separate individuals and at the same time part of the whole performance. It humorously helps the audience experience life as it is and can be, through acceptance and correlation. This aspect of understanding the world

in the light of connectedness, of recognising our potential by surrendering to whatever is and finding solutions from within ourselves rather than being saved by others, is the distinctive feature of *Alchemy*.

*Alchemy* encourages philosophical as well as spiritual understanding and thinking, unlocking the mysteries of humanity through symbols, pictures, ideas, and above all magic. Magic here is used paradoxically not to deceive but to make clear (Zipes, 2002, p.169). It accesses the wonder of *Enchantment*, the fun of *Revelry* and reveals not through direct lesson or snap shots of life but by presenting discourse as though we are looking through a magic eye book so meaning is found looking through the performative aspects to its symbolic ideas. It is an aesthetic, which encourages us to look again at ourselves, and above all, grows the imagination.

Poetics within *Alchemy* concern active, rather than purely cognitive engagement through: curiosity, spatial exploration, audience participation, surprise, suddenlies, even a sense of the ridiculous which deliberately sabotages familiar stories and setting to create completely new and diverse experiences. As with *Enlightenment*, aesthetics plays an important role, evoking the idea of art for art sake. Within *Alchemy*, however, aesthetics endorse the power of creating something from nothing, actively transcending the ordinary to become extraordinary; thus, positively developing such progressive attitudes of efficacy within audiences. Where *Enchantment* aims to emotionally control, the code of *Alchemy* aims to evoke a considered response, teasing to see through the illusion and mystery and ultimately find out how was it done. *Alchemy* succeeds when the audience member says, “that is simple, and even can I do that!” In this sense *Alchemy*, like *Enlightenment* projects a Nietzschean ideal of inspiring effort, of talking to the audience on a cerebral rather than purely emotional level.

Recognising what he termed the “oppressive power” of traditional theatre practice, Boal (1992) endorsed *Alchemy* principles in his drive to develop “spect-actors” in his invisible and forum theatre based works, aimed at inspiring real and fundamental change in individual lives, and creating revolution from the inside out. The idea that the audience, not the performer, is magician is of importance here. In *Alchemy* theatre exists as a tool for transforming lives not merely as a moment of respite or escapism.



*Alchemy* is recognised by high quality storytelling theatre in which spoken word and staging harmoniously come together to complement and sharpen each other. In the same way that the picture book is understood by the combined discourse that emerges through both word and picture each expanding and developing elements of the other, so in theatre discourse, word and staging combine to enrich the story. Further in interpreting performance through an *Alchemy* paradigm one sees the aim to inspire appreciation and mindfulness, particularly in the beauty of small things, delicate, nuanced and softened as well as awareness on the mysteries of humanity not through didactic lectures or sentimental literalism but through allegory, symbols and pictures. This encouragement to notice, to decode and inspire action, is the essence of *Alchemy* creating reflective, activated and motivated audiences.

So what are the primary communication signs and indicators of Alchemy?

### ***9.1.1 Playful honesty***

A primary device of *Alchemy* is a “glint in the eye” playfulness within performance that reminds us that everything we are watching is pretend. When *Playschool*’s Little Ted is dressed up in his newly made newspaper hat ready to play a sailor in an adventure sailing the seas in a plastic bowl or two actors explain how they are going to show a complex adventure which includes numerous characters between them this is a call to play. As such the production overtly celebrates its falsity and in doing so discourse takes places as a ceremonial unveiling the theatre’s mechanics (Counsell, 1996, p.95) and its ritual base (Davis & Postlewait, 2003, p.8).

Such directness “emphasises the performer’s presence within the act of the performance” (Sauter [Cremona et al]; 1990, p.4); philosophically making visible the actor as interpreter of the role and ensuring that the beholder is not mistaken into thinking of the individual characters as “real”. By showing performance to be artificial the presented protagonists are shown to be two-dimensional (fake) characters (Bal, 1997) played by living breathing real human beings and reinforcing “play culture” as different from the “written culture”.

Paradoxically in showing its falsity, production honestly and truthfully presents human dilemmas, and essentially connects spectator, actor and character. Further this effort, reiterates the spectator's role as dynamic participant in the theatre event, and their role in pretending. This theatrical "mode of excess" (Brooks, 1976, p ix) or willingness to enter the spirit of the event, to suspend disbelief is endorsed by the Remedi (2004, p.104) recognising how community makes use of theatre's "unstable and transitory nature ... without necessarily needing to pass as real", Jardine (1983) and in particular Prest (2006) who celebrates the phenomena of cross dressing in performance stating "The cross-cast actor brings into relief the crucial question of reality and falsehood in performance and in this way he is a quintessentially theatrical figure" (2006, p.1). This aspect of communication was the basis of Brook's theatre that recognised that children simultaneously "see" both the everyday and the imaginary in theatre (Cohen in Counsell, 1999, p.160).

As Brechtian ideals, these notions of overt theatricality are achievable in any space large or small. *Tashi* (Imaginary Theatre, 2009) exemplified this when starting an adventure by declaring its artificiality, introducing performers and showing how to recognise them; by dressing up in front of the audience and explaining how theatre shows worked, including when to expect a break for interval! Similarly, Gruppe 38, framed within a simple mechanical theatre, faithfully and sensitively retelling *The Little Match Girl* (2008) using a text translated from Hans Andersen's original text. A significant proportion of the performance was spent not "telling the story" but by carefully introducing each of the three members of the company and explaining their role and craftsmanship within the show: "the lighting man", "the sound man" and the storyteller. Though quiet and understated, the storyteller teases and mocks her companions, to show off their tricks (or effects), which include a torch that is to be used in the shadow puppetry and the hose that make a whirling noise when required later in the story.

Effort, in such openness to the work behind the performance, is given to:

- introducing the actors as the performers of the show and explaining the roles they will play;
- building the atmosphere of the setting that *frames* the story;

- creating a sense of equity, open transition and shared play between the actors and spectators;
- directing the audience on what to look out for; this serves to bring the audience into the performance as direct actants of the process.
- open communication with the audience either playfully ribbing, or making fun of the audience, or allowing the audience to “talk back”.

Talking to the audience through scripted “characterisation” has a contrived air about it, particularly when the lights in the auditorium are low. In *Alchemy* however it is not unusual to start with lights in the auditorium up high so the storyteller can look the audience in the eye. For an actor to state “I am now going to attempt to...”, building up expectations which may be followed through with a trick or clever unexpected staging which makes the audience laugh. Further the audience is encouraged to comment and actors will respond to their comments.

Other strategies that develop these feelings of closeness with the audience include involving them through tasks and questions, sing-a-longs and even deliberately cheap staging effects and cheesy magic illusion that create a sense of homeliness. In all these strategies the most important aspect is that of communication. It is at these moments that performers show their vulnerability, encouraging the audience to connect with the protagonists. Such honest interchange builds rapport and atmosphere, bringing the audience together in readiness for the stories that surprises delights or confronts them.

### ***9.1.2 Ridiculousness***

Another indicator of playful *Alchemy* evokes what in 1970’s America was termed the “Theatre of the Ridiculous” (Marranca & Dasgupta, 1979). Though seemingly more appropriate in a *Revelry* paradigm, a sense of the “ridiculous”, emerges out of the “dichotomy between academic and expressive art” (1979, p.263) and presents a new version of the clown, which experiments, subverts and parodies both popular and classical forms, taking what is considered worthless and transforming it into high art. For this reason it is a key technique of *Alchemy*. Shona Reppe (*Cinderella*, 2010) with her cheeky portrayal of the naughty godmother and the ugly sisters, intriguingly

represented by glamorous gloves was a primary example of this. Another was the strange sisters of *Fluff* (Cr8ion, 2004) outrageously and absurdly dressed in their matching black and white checked Victorian dresses, along with Zeal Theatre (*The Paper Bag Princess*, 2007), presenting an outrageous company of disparate characters including Mama and children (all with different Fathers from around the world!). There was baby (in a big nappy) who becomes the dragon, the brothers auditioning for the parts with by trying out different theatrical approaches including a Stanislavskian and an Artaudian approach with the dragon “symbolically” represented! Finally the pantomime influenced *Revelry*, the outrageous taboo, the slosh scenes and cross-dressing conveyed in *Just Macbeth* (Bell Shakespeare, 2009) along with the fun of adults pretending to be teenagers, all encode in their unapologetic theatricality the purpose of ridiculous as anarchic, humorous and authentic.

## ***9.2 The dramatic discourse of Alchemy***

The discourse of *Alchemy* is the quality of interchange between audience and performer and the sense agency that the audience has as direct contributor to the action and the power of creating performance. With emphasis on the quality of creation rather than illusion, dramatic discourse focuses on the self-reliant creativity and power of “poor theatre” (Grotowski, 1980) and, as discussed, the vitality of the “ridiculousness” (Marranca & Dasgupta, 1979).

### ***9.2.1 Aesthetics of poor theatre***

In the sixties Peter Brook, searching for authentic theatre experiences, articulated the power of the empty stage (1968, p.1) by framing the action within it. Utilising his mantra, *Alchemy* enjoys the capacity to generate performance from nothing, in any situation or space to create a happening that transcends the ordinary to become extraordinary, actively growing the imagination. This creative approach inspires exquisitely detailed costume, props and puppets often made from simple tangible household materials. Such art constructed with careful precision, deliberately placed to convey specific thematic ideas is evident in the overall mise-en-scene. Where art in

*Enchantment* systems aims to stun or arrest the viewer with clever illusion, in *Alchemy* it activates enquiry on how to unravel the mystery; how was that done, can I do it?

Where in *Enchantment* effort is spent to conceal the mechanics of how an effect works so that the illusion itself is celebrated, in *Alchemy* effort is spent in creatively showcasing the actual mechanics of the moves so that even scenic moves are ceremonial contributions to the overall performance made by actors themselves. Similar to drawing attention to the puppeteer or the performer behind the character this device serves to celebrate the false nature of theatre. This emulates what Grotowski called “poor theatre” in its emphasis on connecting with the audience and what Brook called “rough theatre” (1968).

*Alchemy* therefore carefully considers how space can be maximised through design that offers multifarious use. This neutrality or “transformability of signs” (Honzi, 1976) enables numerous scenes to be played within the one set. Sculptures like the large grain of rice used in *Aborio* (Jigsaw Theatre, 2004) become not just indicators of place or a change in scene but also props which can be utilised as part of the action, such as a table, tree or a mountain chair. Other techniques are easily transformable flats or scenic structures that can be moved by the performers on stage to create other scenes or vary interest, such as in *Hairy Maclary* (The Nonsense Room, 2012) in which the swinging around of a podium transitioned easily from one act into the next.

### ***9.2.2 Design as master of ceremonies***

Multifaceted, transformable set and costumes are beautiful to look at and intriguing in their purpose of guiding the audience through the work like a silent playful master of ceremonies. Sometimes the set might be built up through the performance to deliver or reveal the salient final message with which the audience goes away. For instance in *Helena and the journey of Hello* (Terrapin Puppet Theatre, 2010), the letters were slowly placed throughout the action and lit up during the very end scene, to speak her unspoken words and symbolise her rite of passage through a time of trouble. “Hello” thus represents her new position on the threshold of freedom.

Other interesting artwork includes what might be termed *pocket or pop up shows* where epic stories are contained within staging vehicles such as a small suitcase which opens into a mini stage (similar to the Victorian paper theatres). Poetically, the traditional jongleur carries a world of imagination in his head, told through voice and the assistance of the lute; like their medieval counterparts, lacing epic adventures with musical moods, the modern equivalent utilises the accordion, cello, big bass etc. and props or “puppets” in the form of miniature sets which visually illustrate the story and often add drama and humour. *Goodbye Mr Muffin* (Theater Refleksion, 2008), *Cinderella* (Shonna Reppe, 2010), *Dave Fennel Fairy Tales, A Sonata* (Gruppe 38, 2009), *The Grugg* (Windmill Theatre, 2010) all example such works in which the audience view entire worlds able to be changed, rearranged, made into something new and neatly packed away. Philosophically these miniature sets capture a child’s way of storytelling using a dolls-house or a creation from a cardboard box and portray manageable or easily understandable scenarios, which unfold like pop up books. The child audience is given agency to view situations from various angles and perspectives including a bird’s eye perspective rather than usual selective perspective of the “fourth wall”. This happens because the props within the storytelling are essentially malleable puppets, manipulated sequentially like picture books to reveal close up or distant images as required by purpose of the discourse. This approach appreciates the beauty in the small things and pays particular attention to delicate, nuanced, and softened, details that inspire the appreciation and mindfulness of the young audience as the skilled teller skilfully manipulates objects to tell his/her poetic story.

Skilled musicians help create moods within the discourse and work as a foil from which the main storyteller might “bounce off”. A powerful example of this was *Goodbye Mr Muffin* (Theater Refleksion, 2008), performed by a male storyteller/ puppeteer and female cellist. The show was performed for an intimate audience of fewer than fifty people seated closely around. The tiny set placed on a table was of Mr Muffin’s home complete with arm chair and garden. Mr Muffin focuses on the life and death of a beloved pet Guinea pig who dies of old age. He resembles not just the family pet but older grandparents too. Like the picture book *Granpa*, the purpose of this performance is to look at the death, not through the eyes of an implied child but through the eyes of “everyman”. Gentle, classical cello music fills the air as the performer talks directly

and honestly to the audience. It is underplayed and extremely gentle, very different from the over enthusiastic, highly energised performances that usually characterise theatre for young audiences.

Though as shown, such performances have an enchanting look in terms of its overall aesthetic; most storytelling performances have only a small budget in comparison to the large musicals, which spend millions on creating exquisite sets and flawless staging effects. *Alchemy* is therefore also characterised by problem-solving this poverty to find unique and eclectic ways of overcoming challenges, producing in its wake surprising ways of recreating stories in unusual ways that might challenge concepts on “how the story should go”. Further it endorses a dialogical (Bakhtin, 1981) approach to creating story. Techniques of “poor” performances are the antithesis of those in *Enchantment*, deliberately reminding the audience of the falsity of the stage and paradoxically creating moments of intense theatricality. Such devices might include:

- clearing a stage at high speed utilising comic choreography and quirky music such as old black and white movie music;
- filling gaps with verbal description of what is going on;
- slowly creating the scenery in front of the audience;
- getting the audience to help with scene changes;
- using dolls to create crowd scenes; or
- explaining where the story is set through butchers paper or a map projected on to a pocket handkerchief.

These homespun techniques mean that the productions can be reproduced anywhere and is highly transportable.

### ***9.2.3 Chameleons***

Such examples demonstrate that like chameleons, storytellers communicate with whatever means to keep the audience interested. *Alchemy* as a storytelling vehicle uses many different intertextual approaches to present ideas, endorsing its creativity, playfulness and freedom, including spontaneity, which reads as though the performance is still being created or has not been fully rehearsed. Rough and ready

theatre ensures that audience have to do work that may be more empowering than the slick performances of bourgeois theatre. This challenges the notion of the “well-made production” and generates an engaging sense of “will it won’t it work” (Jameson, 1999). Further as Brook recognises this type of theatre “freed of unity of style, actually speaks a very sophisticated language: a popular audience usually has no difficulty in accepting inconsistencies...or darting between mime and dialogue, realism and suggestion” (Brook, 1972, p.75).

Works like *Jason and the Argonauts* (Visible Fictions, 2008) capture the essence of rough theatre in its attempt to create theatre through performance integrity rather than beautiful illusion. The context of the action is established as two boys creating a favourite story in real time using favourite toys: Action man and Spiderman. The title role initially played by Action Man is swapped between the boys, played by adults. This movement between human and doll puppet assists to give bird’s eye and close up perspectives to the action. Similarly the one piece set neatly changed, like a child’s transformer toy, to become different scenes including a ship and a monster puppet. Philosophically audience engaged with the show on a naturalistic level watching two real boys playing with their toys who fall into the adventure, which becomes real. On the other hand the boys are played by grown up men pretending to be 8yr old boys. As seen in chapter seven, this encapsulates the dramatic irony of adults pretending to be boys playing at home, pretending to be men on high adventure! This nod to the audience is appreciated by the children who enjoy watching adults play themselves and they laugh at the layered pleasures of seeing adults behave like children but also the adult’s commentary and ultimate appreciation of children. Overt theatricality here reads as “let’s pretend”, implying; “this is a show about you, the audience, confirming you are powerful, adaptive and clever”. Further as an epic, noble, emotional tale it reinforces the idea that children can recreate their own stories and their own magic; that there is not only one way.

#### **9.2.4 Transformability**

Transforming through play is evident in *What Red Does On Thursday* (Thallis Kopagnons, 2008), in which a painter adapting his pictures to the mood of the music



essentially constructs this performance. The evolving story emerged through the expression of the paintbrush dancing on the clear screen and was interpreted by the hypnotised audience. Magically the causal agent or hero of the show is a blob of red paint, which anthropomorphically takes on a life character of its own, cleverly responding to its changing surroundings and the emotion of the music. This aspect of transforming an inanimate object whether through the paintbrush or the manipulations of household objects - even the set so that it becomes part of the semiotic part of the story - is an extension of the artistry of the puppeteer. This is a common technique in theatre for young audiences whether it is the opening of a door like a picture book to reveal a missing character or in turning a broom in to a galloping horse.

Another intimate performance incorporating a “little drawing” projected on screen as the hero/ protagonist was *Queen of Colours* (Erfreuliches Theater Erfurt, 2009) in which as shown in chapter seven, “a little child” comes to life and interacts with her creator (Ms Court Painter) who, along with the “the court musician”, responds to the Queen’s constant demands for different colours and new settings for her to explore. In this production the stage set is an accordion, small arched screen used for projection, shadow puppetry and a writing desk set with camera for live projection. Though incorporating more direct dialogue in which the exaggerated childlike characteristics of the “queen” are fully appreciated by the audience, the expressionist aspect of the drama uses the visual cues to depict changing moods and feelings where very similar.

Stand out in *Queen of Colours* was the verbal relationship between the three characters mirroring a contemporary family dynamic of parental desperation to please an affable but demanding child! Though the individual importance of all “the court” is emphasised, it is the Queen who has the power, until things get out of control and the “loving parents” come to the rescue; implicitly warning the autonomous child that there are consequences to behaviour, implying “be careful what you wish for!” Also conveyed in this discourse however is the freedom not only to make choices but also to change them and put things right. In other words, if don’t like an ending you have the power to change it.

### 9.2.5 *Ritual*

Performance that conveys opportunity for emotional expression and which cognitively expand understanding of the world is a performance like *The Forest* (Fevered Sleep, 2012), which creates an intense sense of surreal spontaneity found in ritual. In this performance authorial control and the stability of written text gives way to dispersion, discontinuity and dissemination, by which Artaud's vision is realised to create work “of facial, gestural and vocal expression” (Wolford, 1996, p 5). The circus of Archaos and Cirque du Soleil creates theatre spectacle that seeks to destroy the preconceptions of their audiences, and through thrill and fear evoke senses of dream and of “Carnival” (Bakhtin, 1981). This dream- like carnival and ritual also endorses Bataille’s (1985) search for the intimate “inner experience”, found in a religious context which contrary to dogma refers to the sacred and profane, found also in the work of Grotowski (1967).

This work opens up cognitive thinking by appealing to emotional expressionism. As such the performance of *Pixel* (Image of Theatre, 2008) seen in the Sydney Powerhouse Museum might be seen as a journey of colours, representing in the different genres and moods of music, emotions and scenes that might be associated or promoted by each. For example, yellow produced a saxophone playing jazz, dusts and a waking prince; green evoked a sense of loss and jungles; red was dangerous, an apple. The dancing pixels as actants represented “individuals” who change and emerge through the helter skelter of kaleidoscopic action transformed, playfully interacting and responding to each colour as it animated the screen as though they were part of it. Of essential importance to the performance was the rhythm and shapes generated by the dancers’ bodies to reflect the different feelings emoted by both sound and image. Choreographed by Narrelle Benjamin, the audience was inspired by a dreaming in which they witnessed responses to different aspects of being: lost in jungles, swamps, drained away and left alone in the world to become a “a real girl” complete with emerging suns; new skies; and oceanic worlds. Culminating in a “breathing in of all the colours of the city”, the newly coloured pixels fall from a tree and make a quilt for Pixel as “Pixel is happy to be every colour”.

### ***9.3 Primary actants of Alchemy***

Capturing the essence of *Alchemy* discourse, primary actants are either performers working as an ensemble or a single storyteller who magically transforms objects into various characters.

#### ***9.3.1 Storytellers***

Within the *Alchemy* paradigm the traditional power of the storyteller is celebrated in all its forms, from shadow puppetry and full acting ensembles, to the solo storyteller alternating between the metaphorical attitudes of Circe as the goddess/witch creating illusion and Gryllus the deformed, transformed animal seeking truth.

It is the aim of Circe to study the human condition, which she does to her enduring personal entertainment, by meddling with status through transformation and the wheel of fortune. She traditionally represents the loss of self and the secrets of survival reflecting the dualities of humanity and inhumanity, duty and pleasure, heroism and cowardice, chastity and sensuality, and for this reason she embodies ironic laughter over high matters. Circe's controlling, unpredictable perspective provides a challenging link between audience and the production (story). More ethereal and powerful than the jester who is merely at the mercy of her fate, Circe's realm, as Warner (1996) explains, is both as alchemist and magician and embodies the grotesque (mordant humour) which mocks human vanity with transmutations into beasts. The storyteller in *Hansel and Gretel* (Gruppe 38, 2010) exemplified a Circe inspired approach to storytelling. Her seat placed her in an elevated position and her large pale dress was used as a projection screen, with images appearing and disappearing at her command, signalling her controlling, all seeing aspect.

If illumination, and power play exemplify certain characteristics of storytelling, on its opposite axis sits the traditions of Gryllus, the transformed human and grotesque conveyer of truth, representing humility. An apparent monster or deformed fool, he represents a combination of the beast man, migrating souls and caricatures. A comic player and outsider he mocks conventional meaning and reveals hidden truth. In mythic

terms, Gryllus represents the giving up of human responsibility in the name of freedom (Warner, 2000, p.290). Socrates and Aesop embody the living Gryllus in that both renowned men were respected for their integrity; search for improvement and for their ability to challenge their individual societies. Within theatre such characters are resembled by the paltry, ugly, and ridiculous figures of the fairy godmother, Mother Goose, or Gossip, a conscious guide, speaking the motley truth as wise counsellor (Warner, 1996); mission being to convey gifts of truth to those who recognise their worth.

The green snake of *Dr Egg and the Man with No Ear* (The Sydney Opera House & Performing Lines, 2007), discussed in chapter eight, probing and challenging the audience to analyse the performance that she is “creating for them”; is an example of Gryllus, while her “act of creation” resembles that of Circe. As such, like all storytellers, she balances the role of narrator and judge.

As exotic traveller, Bronwyn Vaughn (Carnivale Festival, 2004), weaving a yarn on the people she has met on her adventures, also enacts both aspects of Circe and Gryllus. Such storytelling, as Warner (1998) recognises, is a traditionally popular image. Vaughn spins her yarns with the help of anthropomorphic puppets like a camel or armchair, who act as commentators and the voice of the implied audience, enabling Vaughn to explain and correct misconceptions, gently and non-judgmentally. Typically Vaughan, like many storytellers, conveys:

- numerous characters told through some puppets but mainly through changes in voice (accents, intonation, tone, pace), body language and facial expressions;
- many exotic scenes changes which are conveyed through the voice and spoken imagery along with body language that happens in response to “arriving or being in this new place” portraying ideas of temperature, wonder, fear, excitement;
- breaks and thematic links between each story which serve to reinforce purpose For example Bronwyn’s banter with the Camel;
- objects which transform according to tale (Honzi, 1976); and
- narration which comments and stimulates interest on the action, looking at things from another point of view and witnessing changes.

The multifarious roles of the storyteller reinforce the idea that the tale is always created at the very moment of performance, and as such is unique each time. Zipes reminds us that the storyteller's power is conveying a story for a particular purpose and that this will change with each new performer who recontextualises it afresh with different and new elements. This flexibility of the tale to be reformed is the very life and strength of the storytelling art form. The changing perspectives, ideas that challenge and remodel familiar narratives, help young audiences to interpret stories as having complex layers. The nuanced discourse stops any plot from becoming a rigid "truth" or dogma (Zipes, 2002) and assists audience in dealing with the world as it is.

### ***9.3.2 Metaphor and signification***

Storytellers use everyday objects to stand in or signify something else. These metaphors open up new ways of understanding and these have an impact on understanding (Ricoeur, 1986). This was shown in Gruppe 38's interpretation of little red riding hood (*A Sonatina*, 2008) in which the character of red riding hood was played by an egg, the grandmother by an old potato and the wolf by a garlic crusher.

The storyteller, Shona Reppe cut a rather fantastical figure in her role as storyteller in *Cinderella* (2010). Far from the motely traveller, this godmother emitted the glamorous air of the 1950's in her black suit and court shoes that hinted of prim respectability and playfulness. She had the air of a cabaret performer with her slightly wicked smile, her melodramatic gestures and her rather becoming self-appreciation, reminiscent of Mary Poppins. Her entrance, cleaning the audience with the feather duster, had a touch of familiarity and signaled a desire for connection with the audience, as well the casual purpose of finding three notes reading "Help!" by which the audience learns of the plight of Cinderella. The Reppe show then became focused on Cinderella's perspective portrayed in puppet form, metaphorically representing a girl in living with a difficult family. Her small stature initially represented her lack of agency. The sisters were reduced to "signification" (Artaud, 1958, p.69), represented by outrageous pink silk gloves hemmed with fur. The gloves did not have a face or eyes, however, the ceremonial building of the stage, along with the vanity box, from which the sisters make

their entrance to strip tease music as they are theatrically placed on Shona hands, demonstrated the power of suggestion. The father was symbolically represented by the Brechtian *gestus* (Brecht & Willet, 1964) of *invisible* footsteps. The lack of other human figures conferred a sense of isolation for Cinderella who appears all the more human in that world. Further, the colourful puppet set full of trap doors creates an intriguing glimpse into a three dimensional world but leaves much to the imagination. Realistic representation of Cinderella, in particular her grunts of effort, climbing the giant lamp to clean it, and the “floating” when happily in love, offered human expressions with which the children could directly identify.

Working as puppeteer, Shona’s neutral costume colouring means she neatly disappears when her puppets come into focus. Like Grotowski’s poor theatre (1980), the work found clever ways of filling gaps and covering lack of resources such as the ability to change the set in to a ball scene. Solution was found in stopping the audience from going to the ball because, they, like the Godmother herself (played by Shona) in fancy dress, were not invited, and “not dressed for it!” Instead the audience is treated to a night in waiting for Cinder’s return: tuning into radio pumpkin for some fifties’ inspired music and a prince’s ball update and a rather “dodgy” magic trick. This aspect of waiting gave the story a temporal accuracy and immediacy.

At the end of Reppes’ performance, Cinderella leaves home for her prince, represented by the sound of wedding bells and a picture of her in her wedding dressing. Interestingly the prince, like the father figure, was never shown; the image of Cinderella leaving by herself signals instead the powerful impression of Cinderella rescuing herself from a tyrannical situation rather than being saved and living happily ever after.

### ***9.3.3 Erfang***

The solving of immediate problems, rather than a generalised “and we all lived happily ever after” is another aspect of *Alchemy* reinforcing the ability of its audience to face problems in the here and now. As discussed in chapter four, where certain stories can become homogenised and hardened into strict dogma, in the hands of storytellers in more intimate settings the storyteller manipulates the story to tell it from different

perspectives emphasising not just what happened but why. This important aspect of *Alchemy* represented in all the unique discourses of a particular storyteller represents a moment of what Zipes (2006) calls this “erfang” (2006, p.130) a moment of learning about oneself. In such a way both Circe and Gryllus serve to remind us of our humanity and build bridges around important stories to live by, to tell your friends and enemies (Kohn, 2010)

#### ***9.4 Staging considerations***

The code of *Alchemy* is focused on breaking down barriers between the performance and audience, endorsing what might be termed the democratisation of space, in which spectator and actor share an area, blurring the segregation between stage and auditorium.

##### ***9.4.1 Democratisation of space: intimacy and experience***

In the examples above, the intimate spaces of the salon style theatre suits the aesthetics of the performances and assist performers to adapt to the particular characteristics of its small audience, creating a three way exchange (Brook, 1995, p.16) that responds to spectators as individuals rather than an group of faceless individuals to be addressed en mass. Intimate spaces encourage:

- younger audiences to participate in the action;
- natural rather than stylised speak, enabling more genuine relationships between actor and audience;
- adjustment to unusual circumstances as well as the particular needs of unique groups rather than formulaic, impersonal, hypothetical questions designed to manipulate the audience into acting in a particular homogenised way; and
- vulnerability where performers are able to reveal their human fragility in their responses to the space and their eye contact with the audience, rather than just presenting an image.

Layout of the space assists this in placing the performer at a level that is equal to the audience rather than at an elevated level, which might imply a higher authority that

changes the dynamic of the relationship. This humanistic approach to creating performance philosophically mirrors Boal's (1992) forum theatre, which acknowledges the ideas and contributions of the individual audience members.

Spatial aesthetics also consider the pleasures of exploring different architectural spaces and how these poetics contribute to overall enjoyment of the ephemeral light and sounds events in spaces such as *The Chinese Gardens* (Sydney Festival, 2011), *Mirazozo* (Architects of the Air, 2011) and *Vivid* (Sydney Opera House, 2010, 2011). This endorses Craig's philosophical basis for theatrical design "the human figure in relation to its environment, the three-dimensional "place" rather than the two dimensional "scene" (Leeper, 1948, p.15).

Effort is not just to establish mutual communication but also connection that determines a priori by the sharing of a formal structure (Cremona, 2004, p.29). *Green Sheep*, as shown in chapter two and six, exemplified this reliance and manipulation of space, utilising an art installation for a set in which "sheep like" young audiences and parents sit in the middle of a picket fenced space and enjoy the story unfold around them. Members enjoyed the participatory aspect to the performance in their occupation of the sheep's space and by implication, their role as sheep. The final adventure to leave the enclosure and visit the elusive green sheep gave the performance a further promenade aspect and worked to create the excitement of "visiting" a special person, like Santa Claus found after the child has effectively undergone a journey through an art installation experience to get to him, all building anticipation and excitement. This is exemplified in places like Harrods where children queue for hours before they see him and the back or house corridors are decorated with wondrous moving displays storyboarding a different tale each year. Other works where children were guided through a rite of passage experience was *Winter Wonderland* at Fox Studios (2003), showcasing the magic of snow, stories, art and even climbing equipment as part of the pre-visit build-up. Similarly at Vaucluse House Christmas Carols (Historic Houses Trust, 2009), the experience was built with old fashioned games, an old street organ and tour of the stables in which guides told the story of the original St Nicholas, before they met him in the stables making toys in a Victorian styled workshop, dressed in his older styled green rather than his now traditional "coca cola" inspired red suit.



### 9.4.2 Art installations

Production Company Fevered Sleep discussed above, created an art installation for their performance of *The Forest* (2012), so beautiful that children gasped as they entered the space that represented both stage (as the place of action) and seating (as the place on observation). Extending to the auditorium, the gold floor of the forest being the gold of the benches, the real trees sat behind the audience so that they effectively sat within the artwork. Utilising a mix of real tree trunks, mirrors, tiny berry like chandeliers and gold shiny flooring, the set served as both real wood (inspired by the natural woodland sounds) and playground (as a place of adventure, games and pretend). This set design philosophically endorses a search for wholeness in the performance. Like a gentle giant, the forest itself was both the instigator and hero of the action, magically gifting conkers, cones and leaves as wonderful surprises, including in the final drop inviting the audience to step into the “sacred space” (Bataille, 1985) to collect the fruits, and become part of the performance itself. This sense of ritual, contribution, along with the integration of cultures, genres, art forms from high art and more popular cultures is part of the energising dynamic that emerges in this paradigm of *Alchemy*.

Like *The Forest*, *Saltbush* (Children's Cheering Carpet, 2010) also created a ritual / sacred space and relied on movement rather than dialogue. The “hero” of the performance was also its art space this time a super stage “carpet” upon which animated images were projected to “respond” as dancers performed upon it. Though honouring places and spaces, this Indigenous work presented Aboriginal culture from a living, thriving perspective as opposed to the more commonly watched traditional music and dance “culture” shows. The indigenous performers, in modern costume, performing modern dance, as response to interpretive modern music, and the sense of place evoked through the carpet, were based on traditional and natural sound scapes and resulted in work that reflected a vibrant, modern, exciting culture.

Other shows which gained from art installation spaces as a way of clarifying the small close proximity between actors and audience was *The Tragical life of Cheese Boy* (Slingsby, 2009), which was performed under a travelling Moroccan tent, designed to mirror the Victorian mood of the original picture book, and create an atmosphere of

strangeness and curiosity that aesthetically resembled the steam punk aesthetic (Vandemeer, 2011). Like the *Green Sheep* set it contextualised and worked as end pages for the entire performance which began for the audience on entrance to the space.

The manipulated spatial aspect added to the dramatic irony of the performance itself, in that the tent realistically inferred an exotic space with genuine historical artefacts in it. However aspects of it, such as suitcases and travel charts, transferred into symbolic roles as they became the backdrop to a different scene within the plot once they were opened or turned inside out. Further, the tent itself could be used for projection, creating magical effects and illusion; of particular note was the Victorian illusion of projection onto a handkerchief, which was then “thrown against the wall” to make the image bigger until it created the image of the night sky. In this context the realistic setting became a place of magic.

Philosophically, the actor/storytellers as the barefoot “creators” of the story showcased playmaking within created spaces that could be manipulated to represent different places. Meanings were provided within the “play within a play” context. Thus through the device of the tent, the audience are taken to a different historical time and place, to watch actors playing “real people”. Victorian gentlemen explorers enacted a pretend theatre (told through a chalk board and bell which indicated scene changes and a one minute interval), and the audience was required to imaginatively “travel” with the visual help of suitcases which contained gypsy caravan or three dimensional cities, that contemplated cheese boy’s life from a bird’s eye and close up perspective.

The audience participated as actors in that they watched as the invited “British explorer” guests of the elite tent. The welcoming of the guests in to the tent by the actors helped further create the sense of an exotic yet playful atmosphere. The boundaries of the bedouin tent mark the physical parameters of the space, and resemble the end pages or the framing of the experience.

### 9.4.3 Informality

Including the audience from a “place of theatrical power”, not in character but as a fellow human, indicates a communal space and is emphasised in Boal’s invisible theatre. Gentle speech, rather than projection, suggests interest in the audience and emphasises the stage area not as sacred, but shared and relevant. This aspect of informality is exemplified in the Welsh show *Floating* (Hoipolloi, 2010), in which actors commented on some of the action that they had seen in the audience. Unable to “start” the performance until he has found out “what the person was thinking when he was shown to be sitting in the wrong seat”, Hugh Hughes got the entire row to re-enact the inconvenience to the rest of the audience so they could see what had happened; interviewed a couple in the audience; checked that no-one wanted to go to the toilet; and eventually after a blow by blow account of what they were going to be doing in the show, “started” the performance after allocating tasks to the audience and sending out some “significant” artefacts related to “cause” of the story. This preamble serves to settle and relax the audience and when in character created a context for the performance, which is similar to the specific images used in the end pages of the picture book. In the theatre there was a thrill in being recognised and spoken to as intelligent people, and in being included the experience. In true Brechtian style, theatricality emerges through the variety of unique ways including how each unique audience serves to make the show as a whole. This reinforces the idea of shared connection and that performance is essentially a moment of communication.

Companies that relish the challenge of genuinely talking and responding to their audiences rather than faithfully trying to recreate a perfect performance night after night offer truly exciting ephemeral experiences for their audiences. This is very rare in a more formal and traditional commercial theatre context, where the risk of going off script is too financially costly. Some generous performers continue their performance after the show to speak to young people after the show and this interaction represents the most significant memory of the entire event for those lucky patrons.

### **9.4.2 Shape shifters, metamorphoses and expansion**

Like *Enlightenment*, *Alchemy* looks to consciously create impressive moments that require an audience to look (or see) in new ways. Where *Enlightenment* focuses on issues, critical thinking or what can be done; *Alchemy* simply expands the imaginative response and creative possibilities of its viewers. Art within this paradigm thereby aims not to mesmerise but expand possibility. As such it is the opposite of the homogenised literal, or sentimental, view that is presented when a producer recreates exactly what the audience expects to see as opposed to suggesting slanted perspectives on a familiar idea. This is important because effective art does not just mimic but “strikes the imagination” (Calloway, 2000, p.xi) and grows the soul.

Puppeteer Russell Garbutt, and other innovative theatre practitioners creating black light shows like *Twinkle Twinkle Little Fish* (Windmill, 2003) or expressive illusions like *Think in Thongs* (The Etcetera Duo, 2004), *Imagine Toi* (Julien Cottreau, 2007) and *Slava the Snow Clown* (Polunin, 2000) takes the audience on surreal journeys of the imagination and often delightfully surprises as one image slowly becomes something else. With each transformation, the audience interprets what they are seeing, by “leaping the gap” or anticipating what the next visual image is as objects kaleidoscopically morph from one image into another, so that a dress becomes a magnificent bird or a sheet turns into a thousand moths (Garbutt, 2007). Such theatre signals playful metamorphoses, which is their main power. It is this integration between the subject matter and its expressionistic form that makes this an art form of existentialist contemplation (Esslin, 2001, p.25). Metamorphoses or the art of changing one thing into another reminds us of the ephemerality of all things. Further it evokes the idea that just as beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so how we frame things can be changed to see things in a different light.

### **9.4.3 Linking devices: mise-en-scene and chronotope**

*Alchemy* is characterised by a holistic approach to creating performance that excites the senses, while also evoking a sense of community and providing tools that might help a young person recognise their own power. As such, each work organises episodic scenes,

ideas and stories through thematic links, which knit separate scenes under a cohesive unit. These linking devices act to create a *mise-en-scene* context by which each of the scenes can be understood. This might happen through design including intrinsic constructions that define space such as the Moroccan tent and sheep pen described above, or costume and prop motifs, which repeated in each scene such as stripy shirts and socks, alluding to a wonderland or nonsense theme.

Focusing on the tangible concerns of its young audience, *chronotope* as a Bakhtin (19981) narrative device used to indicate time and place, tends to conjure the immediacy of the everyday for very young audiences, and places of discord and curiosity for young people over eight. In either case *Alchemy* aims to connect with what audiences know or are interested in as a starting point before taking them on a journey which turns what they know upside down, thus expanding their understanding of it and creating a sense of curiosity. To this end this *Alchemy*, like *Identity*, creates magic, story and illusion from what is available within the contexts of the age groups of its implied audiences. It is from this milieu that the theatre happens with *Everydayness* or *Strangeness* as its main *mise-en-scene*. For example the realistic kitchen becomes the setting for numerous scenes, the pan becomes a crown, a tablecloth becomes a cloak made of gold as in *Pigs, Bears and Billy Goats Gruff* (Patch, 2004 & 2009).

This performance contained three vignettes around the idea of bravery in which the three different performers have their turn being the hero protagonist of stories in which the “monster” is swiftly and un sentimentally dealt with and celebrated; the wolf in the soup eaten, the troll drowned; Goldilocks chased out. Play and artificiality is constantly reinforced in their efforts to make use of the props and costumes available in the kitchen, rather than using glamorous costumes and expensive stage effects. In this show the troll was implied through microphone voice distortion and a moving trap door; his demise simplified through the use of light and the reaction of the three actors.

In each story, focus is given not to the monster per se but on the immediate threat and the way that the hero deals with it. Efficacy is remodeled when the eldest pig succeeds not just because she works hard but because she is vigilant and thinks ahead, three times

she uses her cunning to trick the wolf and it is only when he attacks that she puts the boiling water at the bottom of the chimney to stop him physically harming her.

In such productions, audiences enjoy the dramatic pleasures, witnessing characters struggle against the odds and effectively dealing with the crisis so that they are in control of the action. In this sense the *Alchemy* message is clear, “yes there are monsters but you can overcome them and survive if you are clever, if you think ahead, are vigilant and prepared!” Further while *Revelry* is about being let in on the joke, joining the gang, the pleasures of *Alchemy* is in conquering the puzzle or contemplating an intricately constructed work of art. Thus everydayness in *Alchemy* subliminally expands the audiences’ reality, suggesting that they too can expand their inner world through imaginative play, with siblings, friends and parents. This is suitably endorsed in the beginning of the show with the song about the activity of the children waking the house up.

When young people are exposed to the everydayness of other cultures, or understanding outside their immediate circle of experience, the ability to connect with what is outside their community or experience is enormously enriched. This vigilance, self-reliance and efficacy was emphasised in Tashi’s (Imaginary Theatre, 2009) adventures which expands everyday concepts of going to the market, getting lost and finding one’s way home from a different country. From a Brechtian point of view this distancing from one’s familiar world creates a “historification” (Brecht in Willett, 1964) and serves to draw parallels with one’s own situations, thus broadening engagement and understanding of the world.

*Wolf under the bed* (Theater Sgaramusch, 2008) illustrated this ability to enrich a child’s world, in its exploration of fears around the wild beast, based on the stories written by children themselves. Here the chronotope was set in a hut in the woods “one winter afternoon”, “somewhere in the northern hemisphere”, three adults hearing ominous noises anticipate an attack and comfort each other with tales that they have heard. In the isolated house, the atmosphere is tense with stories surreal and abstract that include bizarre motifs of bad spleens and flower hearts, reminiscent of Carter’s (1995) warning about the wolf in the man being more frightening than the man in the

wolf, - the beasts in these stories are not outsiders but the appalling potential of all human beings.

Though seemingly the substance of *Revelry*, the following aspects signal Alchemy:

- the presentation of stories created by children for children;
- the unusual quality of the stories which contain aspects which are not always understood, effort is required to decode allegory and metaphor;
- the storytelling qualities in which the adults take it in turns to tell a story playfully using the furniture as settings;
- the atmosphere of the house, and the beginning with the music playing and in an almost Pinteresque fashion, the music that goes on and on and on; and
- the calm, non-hysterical declaration of its theatrical artificiality including explanation of where the company comes from and where the story is situated on the map, which is reminiscent of Hoipolloi's theatre, including actors actually communicating and talking with audience, not to excite or "rev" them up, but to create a shared experience unique for each audience.

Here, as in many such stories, chronotope serves to provide the context for the performances as a whole and represents its mise-en-scene. In each short story performed within this context we experience adults behaving as both themselves and as the implied child audience. As such their everyday costume signals a carnivalesque childlike adventure and freedom rather than a glamour fashion that might be signaled in more cool pop culture.

### ***9.5 Spatial Aspects***

As shown in the *informal* (9.4.3) aspects of *Alchemy*, audience is vital and intrinsic to the performance. Meaning that the audience has capacity to change the direction of the performance and make it different each time.

### ***9.5.1 Shared experiences: community, connection, cooperation***

*Alchemy* is about shared experiences or dynamic interactivity in which audience and cast connect, not in an “us and them” way but as a community. Schechner (1988, pp.185-187) notes that this aspect of theatre as a ceremonial centre mirrors that of the Indian, mediaeval and avant-garde experimental theatres paradoxically aiming to arouse individual consciousness through a sense of connectedness within the collective. This mirrors the ideas of Raymond Williams’ (1958) concept of a common or shared culture as opposed to a high or popular culture. Being recognised and spoken to in a meaningful way, what Marar (2012) might call ‘sens[ing] the texture of another person’s consciousness’, is transforming for an audience. Along with spatial considerations, eye contact, body language and facial expression convey unspoken interest and connection with the audience; an important aspect of theatre experience as a moment of communion and democratisation (Bourke & Hunter, 2011, p.21). Bristol contributes that within the framework of a specific space or game playing, “festivity, ceremonial form and the transgression of social boundaries are animated with the strongest possible feeling of solidarity and community affiliation” (1985, p.30). For Csíkszentmihályi and Robinson, this type of aesthetic experience represents a specific form of flow experience for people involved in autotelic activities, in which participation is its own reward (1994, p.144).

Cooperating makes humans feel alive and valued. Young audiences in particular enjoy involvement that allows them to believe that they have directly contributed to the outcome through their assistance and decision-making (Wood, 1998). Cooper, Collins and Saxby (1994) note that storytelling allows students to interact with adults on a personal level. This is seen in theatre from the very young such as the *Babies Proms* (Sydney Opera House, Kids at the House program) to young adults watching theatre performed by young people. These performances emphasise social interaction, emotional and ethical responses, rather than dramatic plot, and democratises the theatrical experience to cause real connection that moves away from the rigours of the script to create moments of freedom similar to jazz improvisations and even a sense of anarchy (Schechner, 1988, p.73; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995; Cremona et al., 2004, p.54).



Group activities in performance create communal moments in which everyone is joined together, cooperating as equals. Cooperation can be initiated through:

- casual (genuine) talk to the audience, free from a particular requirement;
- an enjoyable task;
- a sensual activity or game; and
- creating a sense of formality or ceremony within the performance.

As discussed, when performers talk to the audience as individuals, they make the whole group feel special and worthy of being spoken to. In the *Paper Bag Princess* (Zeal Theatre, 2007) Mama's cry to the young audience member "oh you are so talented I wish you were my daughter" was humorous but also projected a sense in which the whole audience that she represents is also appreciated. As representative of the audience, the whole audience sympathetically feels Mama's appreciation of her. Further, in the young girl playing the "coveted" part of the princess which Mama's children wanted but "failed at", the child participant succeeds where the adult performers failed, signaling and celebrating the agency and abilities of young people.

As discussed in *Enlightenment*, performances like *Apollo 13: Mission Control* (Chapman Tripp Theatre, 2010) also aimed to promote understanding and ideas by significantly involving audiences in the actual drama as participating actors. Here members manned the operation centre, giving instructions to the astronauts in the shuttle. In *Emergence* (Synarcade Audio-Visuals, 2006), participants made their ideal human through a series of votes. The entire show was created in a futuristic environment in which audiences were required to move to specific places in response to ethical questions asked by the controller computer, which was both MC and main actant in the drama, apart from the audience en masse who participates as though in a game. Housed in the architectural space of a futuristic giant computer the sense of communal interaction came from interaction with one's fellow audience and the outcome changed according to the dynamic of each audience.

Other performances that build this camaraderie or direct eyeballing with the fellow audience members as well as performers include *Freedom to Launch* (Dance Tank,

2007) in which the audience was either checked, screened, scrutinised or given obstacles on the way to the performance space as a way of creating atmosphere before the performance began.

*Fluff* (*Cre8ion*, 2004) communicated with the audience by setting them a vocal task and recording the audience as an ensemble. Spectators at *Slava's Snow Show* (Polunin, 2000) enjoyed creating a snowstorm with the paper snow deliberately left in the seats from the previous show. Later they enjoyed bouncing giant balls to each other. This activity that required the audience to pass objects to each other is a superb way of initiating community involvement and is also used in the context of *Enchantment* as seen in *Glow* (Lior Kalfon, 2010).

As shown, *Saltbush Carpet* (Children's Cheering Carpet, 2010), exemplified an exquisite show that utilised *Enchantment* in dancing over animated Indigenous artworks. The modern Aboriginal choreography, based on traditional ideas of belonging, art and dance acknowledged Indigenous culture not just as traditional but thriving and developing in a unique way. Important to the experience of shared experience, was that after each dance piece children were encouraged to join the dancers and play a short game on the carpet themselves. This reinforced the sense of place that was set with each dance; whether using quick reflexes to dodge cars in the big city or the use of swift soft movements to follow lily pads down the stream. In a final act of communion all the children sat on the carpet for a corroboree. It was moving to watch 8yr old boys enthusiastically joining in to experience the fun of interacting with magical technology but also actively engage in indigenous art and culture.

### ***9.5.2 Performance or play space***

*We Built this City* (Polyglot, 2008) represented another work that demanded physical rather emotional or intellectual response. In this performance the audience was completely in control of the action as they created a city with cardboard boxes. A festival event in a public space, each group is strictly timed by performers dressed in builders' work clothes and hats. At the end of the session participants enjoyed knocking down all the buildings into rubble ready for the next group. This movement away from

script to direct audience engagement within a safe space has a freeform atmosphere of anticipation and pushing the question on whether the event represents performance, workshop or play. As such it has the air of an art installation and playtime as passers-by stop to watch the construction. Performances like this evoke all the senses of touch, feel smell and they allow the audience to physically explore the architecture of the space.

Like Erth's *Amazing Room* (2008), *We built this City* (Polyglot, 2008) exemplifies engagement in physical play and of theatre as play. It is as discussed a democratic experience that builds on individualistic expressions and responses to the space. Here actors respond to the audience rather than the usual way of the audience responding to actor. It is the skill of the performers to enhance this energy and move the performance along, without crushing the unique beauty of audience contribution and involvement.

*Haircuts* (Sydney Festival 2009) was an example of young people participating in an event and of being heard and being responded to at a really individual level by adults. The premise of the performance was the question would an adult allow a child to cut their hair? Thus for a limited time people were invited to make an appointment at a city real salon and go through the challenge of giving a child control of something as important as their hair. Question might lie on the extent to which this was a real performance rather than a happening, a role-play or even social experiment. The drama took place on a personal level in the engagement between customer and hairdresser with traditional roles of power reversed. However the event was also an investigation on trust and the adult/child role in society.

*Celestial Bells* (Trans Express, 2003), a festival theatre event performed for over ten thousand people, exemplified the power of ceremony on an enormous scale. The grotesque Rabelais figures of the medieval European village, running wild with fire and mayhem in the crowd, harmoniously came together from different parts of the Sydney Opera House forecourt to be flown on a gold carousel driven by a crane as the bells were chimed by angels and the "holy spirit" (played by an acrobat) tumbled above the heads of the crowd. The subsiding of the carnival chaos into peaceful harmony evoked the beauty of ritual (Artaud, 1958; Grotowski, 1980; Schechner, 1988). Religious here does not refer to social utility or ethics but rather heterology and intimacy (Bataille in

Boldt-Irons, 1995) in which the audience is taken out of the everyday and relinks (Campbell, 1988) itself with the unknowable, the sacramental. As such this type of performance as essentially a theatrical “happening” (Marowitz, 1978), represents in Bastille’s terms a search for “lost intimacy”. Similarly *Sticky* (Improbable Theatre, 2004) utilised volunteers as performers who together created a magnificent procession with Sellotape that with dreamlike fluidity was attached onto a crane and raised to become one image into another finally resembling a cathedral. Though incorporating *Enchantment*, the proximity of the audience through whom the actors came, the sheer space and numbers, along with the ceremonial aspect of the entire event, created a breathtaking union with unknown members of the crowd and a unique moment of shared the experience.

*Celestial Bells*, *Sticky*, *We Built this City*, and *Haircuts* all represented diverse theatrical experiences that sit within family festival events, and evoke moments of *Alchemy* within public space as opposed to the intimate space normally emphasised. They are included because they example theatricality through which spectators were encouraged to cognitively connect with the action and see a familiar setting being used in an unusual way, thus challenging our personal sense of what is possible. Moreover this sensory aspect of adventure within theatre events is an important part of evoking curiosity, and inspiring young people to explore their world.

### ***9.6 Defining characteristics of Alchemy***

As shown, dance pieces *Pixel* (Theatre of Image, 2008) and *The Forest* (Fevered Sleep, 2011) example expressionistic aims to mirror child’s play and emotions, and they communicate *Alchemy* by signalling the power of the audience, to metaphorically reframe how they might see the world and transfer a sense of efficacy and freedom on to the viewer, encouraging them to see and use their own power to change things. It is the art of possibilities and change; philosophically endorsing the view that freedom is about engaging in ideas and handling things as they are rather than searching for constant stimulation. The world is magical, awesome and active children have the tools to transform the material objects of their culture to bring about greater choices, improve and expand their understanding and bring about a sense of freedom.

This is the fundamental difference between *Enchantment* as seen through the musical spectacular and *Alchemy* as a storytelling based, advent-garde theatre. *Enchantment* is about fooling or blinding the audience, while *Alchemy* is about transformation and revealing that encourages an audience to take control of their interpretation. It is a theatre that helps an audience engage directly in the world, “to alter, expand, or escape from the stylistic rules passé on to them by culture” (Kirby, found in Schechner, 1993, p.6).

### ***9.6.1 Meaning, engagement & effort***

As discussed in chapter four, all monsters and instigators of terror signal multiple meanings that fulfil within performance both real psychological and metaphorical functions. The wolf for instance is not just an animal but also that which represents fear itself; it signifies sexual innuendo, human characteristics and behaviours as well as specific cultural responses and changing social circumstance. These differing meanings will not always be recognised by all of the audience but such rich observations offer layered experiences for audiences of different ages and leave room for reflection and questions after the event has finished. Philosophically it is a reminder of the power of the theatre producers to interpret and present different versions of the truth according to their storytelling purpose. Aesthetically, as shown, chronotope and mise-en-scene serves to create a cohesive whole by which storytelling performance can emerge from a particular context to retell a story in the here and now. In other words, like Brecht’s own manifesto (Willett, 1964) such performances continually reminds the audiences that they are in the theatre watching motley performers “weave a yarn”. Theatrically, purpose is not to fool the audience into believing but to intrigue, excite and create curiosity around the stories and the telling of them.

In this storytelling context a real historical character or mythical character will not be presented naturalistically as a living breathing human but as a representation. To this end just as the reader uses imagination to build a picture of a character described through textual imagery, so in storytelling theatre, audiences reinterpret what they are watching to create a picture of the actual character that is being enacted. What they watch is not truth but a representation of the essence of truth contained within an idea. It

is the viewer's own imagination that actually brings the character to life, and the more practice the child has the more easily they as watcher fall into this role of active spectator.

When alluding to myth, loose, abstract representations of events and character actually strengthen the "reality of it in the mind of the reader". The lack of detail creates intrigue and attachment to the *purpose* and ideas evoked within the events. Audiences leap the gap (imaginatively), to anticipate or make sense of what is happening. Ironically too much attention to concrete evidence, in terms of creating naturalistic characters through set and costuming, can cause diversion as the audience gets caught up in assessing or criticising the details and miss the overarching purpose of the story. This is highlighted in sound research, which demonstrates how audiences can only process so much information (Bassett, 2008). When presented with very visual information they do not notice the sound quality (Bassett, 2008).

### ***9.6.2 Storytelling and the development of the brain***

"Storytelling is part of being human, and the art of storytelling is almost as old as the human race...all that was unknown and seemingly unknowable were given expression and rationalised through story... Story was – and is – an expression of the human spirit a product of the creative imagination. The drive to tell stories is universal and timeless" (Saxby in Cooper, Collins and Saxby, 1994, p.vii).

Primatologists have theorised that storytelling communication (Campbell, 1987) around the warmth of a flickering fire, might well have contributed to the extraordinary development of the human brain more directly than the traditional ideas of warfare and survival of the fittest as conjectured by Darwin (2009). Pizzato (2006) surmised that various forms of art and entertainment have their neurological sources in the evolution of theatrical elements within the human brain and body, while scientific research into the plasticity of the brain have shown that when listening, watching, interpreting movement, body language, tones and facial expressions our brains process and makes connections with new information in a way that directly contributes to the development of the hippocampus, important for sophisticated ideas, rationale as well as the

imagination (Greenfield, 2001). If this were so, such theories would support Hughes' (1965) ideas of primitive theatre being an intrinsic tool for bonding community through a unified experience and as an integral part of our human growth and wellbeing, stimulating concentration, cognitive effort and cooperation. It also endorses the importance of the storyteller as ways of providing sense and coherence (Warner, 1996) through "event sequencing structures, which might be considered "innate" within humans (McEwan and Egan, cited in Poston-Anderson 2000, p.86]).

### ***9.6.3 Ephemera***

Ephemera concerns being in the moment and requires audience participation within the total theatre experience. The cognitive effort that young audiences use to decode performance is an area of theatre theory that would benefit from more research. What is known is that as with reading or interpreting a written text, the audience uses the numerous codes that theatre utilises including, words, verse, rhyme, song, projected text, painting, sculpture, dance, and stylised movement including their own experiences to interpret works. Performances are further layered by thematic ideas of place, family, belonging and social issues, presenting them through narratives that play with causality, intertextuality and other plot devices to ignite audience response. Further, as suggested by Bennett (1997), audiences are also influenced by the circumstances around the performance itself, which serves to affect how an audience reads the performance including the dividual response of the audience en masse.

### ***9.6.4 Everyday Epiphanies***

Theatre helps us look again at so called everyday epiphanies; encouraging synthesis and analysis as spectators make their own meaning from performance codes, which are implied rather than stated. As such, we decode as though looking through a magic eye picture, where meaning is found looking through the dots to see the three dimensional image or "idea" within. This poetic was in fact staged in the *Lion King* (Disney, 2010) as the young Simba looked through the stars to see his father's face revealed. Reading this type of performance requires a spectator think metaphorically rather than literally. Access and participation in a variety of different performances will thereby stimulate

different ways of interpreting work in young children. This distinctive feature of *Alchemy* helps audience recognise unifying patterns from which we see others and ourselves as linked. Seemingly random, mayhem within *Alchemy* is designed not around narrative story but inner emotional experiences that like a well-constructed ritual contains a logical flow as well as elements of *Enchantment*, reflection, and communion.

Schechner argues (1988, p.187) that techniques of democratically creating theatre by metaphorical and allegorical means were used not only by Shakespeare and the makers of radical political ‘Guerilla’ Theatre (Bogad, 2005) alike, but in fact anthropologists concur that the very essence of drama is to convey a single social lesson, how to survive crisis situations (Bateson, 1958, pp171-97; Campbell, 1988, pp.28-29; Turner, 1974; Goffman, 1959).

### ***9.7 The ideal aesthetic response to Alchemy***

Attempting to actively engage in situations, rather than look to a generalised “we all lived happily ever after”, is an aspect of *Alchemy* that reinforces the ability of its young audience to face problems in the here and now. As discussed in chapter four, where certain stories can become homogenised and hardened into strict dogma, in the hands of storytellers in more intimate settings story can be manipulated to explore it from different perspectives emphasising not just *what* happened but *why*. As shown in *Enlightenment*, making connections according to Greenfield’s (2008, p.29) scientific research, significantly improves the personalisation of the brain which Greenfield defines is the basis of the autonomised individual.

#### ***9.7.1 Growing imaginations***

The ideal of *Alchemy* is the communicative dimension of audience reception integrating perceptual, emotional and cognitive aspects (Cremona et al., 2004, p.157) and represents a puzzle to be solved. As such, audiences in the framework of *Alchemy* are the interpreters, magicians and creators of the interpreters of the performance because participation in the action happens both imaginatively and “extrinsically” referring to the cognitive or symbolic connections discussed in chapter seven.



An important part of this artistic system is the “integral” participation of the audience, which engages the social dynamic of the event rather than just the dramatic plot. *Alchemy* represents a democratic theatrical experience. As shown, tasks include asking spectators to problem-solve situations, cast opinion on how a performance should continue, actively move in the space, and role-playing. These all epitomise activities of the third theatre (Barba, 1991; Watson, 1993) Schechner (1988, p.73) and this involvement thereby goes beyond the simple reception process of interpretation to become physical action, giving *Alchemy* its anarchic sense of freedom, while spatial dynamics provide a sense of spontaneity and the feeling that it is freshly created for every new audience.

### **9.8 Summary**

This chapter has looked at those aspects of *Alchemy* which essentially communicate a playful storytelling experience; the moment of being transported from the ordinary to the extraordinary. *Alchemy* recognises children’s ability to make connections and understand all sorts of concepts if told respectfully. It thereby endorses thinking outside the square. Moreover *Alchemy* aims to engage with both space and story in an act of defiance or defamiliarisation mischievously turning an image on its head so that it becomes something else. Techniques include creating a sense of ritual by which every day or commonplace objects, through intimate connection and stimulated imagination, take on a temporary new significance, philosophically endorsing the temporary nature of everything and the power of manipulation and change. Communication and ephemera are *Alchemy*’s greatest power showing that it is possible to transmute conventionality into a sacred space and a sacred experience. This is not magic or illusion, it is a certain way of seeing. As such the audience is taken on a journey by which they themselves participate in the action either mentally and physically.

In encouraging play and curiosity, outside the traditional theatre space, *Alchemy* turns on its head the notion of separating spectators and limiting eye contact. Further it deliberately pushes against a uniformed, homogenized way of presenting story, to create

refreshingly new approaches to familiar stories. To this end it celebrates small ephemeral events, rather than long runs.

Idealistically *Alchemy* is audience centred in that it encourages choice. Theatrical discourses reflect seemingly random scenes in conjunction with each other to create a sense of mayhem, which is in fact a metaphorical rite of passage resembling growing up and flying free. This system thus uses poetry and aesthetics to open the mind, hearts and imaginations of its audience, encouraging them, like magicians, to recognise links between self and others and to ultimately celebrate their human potential; to “give them wings” (Saxby, 1987).

## CONCLUSION

**High quality creative work, which is aesthetically pleasing, is likely to have potential benefits to children's overall social emotional and cognitive growth**

(Powers & Young, 2008)

As noted in the Introduction, for many years theatre for young audience has been regarded as the poor cousin to “real theatre” (Powers & Young, 2008; Bourke & Hunter, 2011) and as such has suffered not just from lack of funds, but also from lack of serious attention by theatre practitioners and artists. Exceptions were in the area of theatre in education spearheaded by drama therapist visionaries such as Slade (1954, 1995), Way (1975), Bolton (1985) and Heathcote (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995). In general the emphasis has been on producing shows which appeal to an adult sensibility of what parents and sometimes teachers, as main consumers, would like their children to see and be (Schonmann, 2007; Lorenz, 2002). The genres have traditionally been focused on education or pantomime, which have been criticised for being poorly funded and of fringe quality, with effort on functional rather than artistic design.

As discussed in chapter eight, Weber (2004) draws attention to the Greek definition of theatre as a place of “seeing”, discussing how the poetics of dramas like Homer’s *Odysseus* were valued by Aristotle, precisely because they enact this very role of “showing” or revealing a particular truth about humanity. On the other hand theatricality can “show” in order to amaze, mesmerise and bewitch. This dichotomy, the dual purpose of theatre as illusion and illumination, truth and falsity, is a poignant metaphor and is an ethical dilemma that has divided and inspired practitioners and playwrights across the millennia, and in the last ten years, no less in works for theatre conducted for the young.

In examining and interpreting theatre works created specifically for young audiences through six artistic codes, this study has looked at the methodologies, aesthetics and philosophical intentions of over one hundred works that have been presented in the greater Sydney area since 2000. Findings show that, like the critical attention given to the picture book as art in its own right (Doonan, 1993), children’s theatre is beginning

to receive similar critical attention, steered by the commitment of theatre practitioners, artists, child therapists and activists. In all areas from babies to young adults, theatre is being created that is child centred and specific to the interests of different groups. These creative works utilise the philosophical practices of serious theatre makers including the up-to-date audio visual technology advocated by Piscator (1980); art installation spaces that challenge the very notion of what theatre is (Boal, 1985); gutsy agitprop drama that utilises the directorial techniques of Brecht (Willett, 1964) and Stanislavsky (1980); experiments in storytelling experiences developed specifically for babies in arms (Young, 2004); as well as the emergence of black light theatre creations blending dance, puppetry manipulation and architecture. Moreover, the content, like that advocated by Chambers (1985) for literature, follows a demotic tradition of creating more obscure performance that is fun, challenging, subversive, comforting, and exploring in differing ways the human heart and questioning “who we are”. Such works can provide access to a layered pleasure for both child and adult audiences and help provoke imaginative responses as well as new knowledge.

### ***10.1 Summary of artistic codes***

This research confirms that many productions for young people are concerned about unveiling, inspiring and engaging their audiences directly into the works as rich artistic experiences. Performances do this through a variety of techniques and methodologies that intrinsically appeal to human nature and the way children see themselves as members of a community. As such the aesthetics, methodologies and philosophies are found in the following systems of engagement, referred to here as artistic codes:

- **The code of *Revelry*.** A particular pleasure of *Revelry* is the sense of unity and community it creates in rising up as a united whole against another preserved in opposition, as when children are encouraged to shout and boo at the villain. This aspect of outrage evokes guttural release and deliberately aims to create a sense of riot or outrage in the auditorium. This was particularly observed in the performance of *Bad Jelly the Witch* (New Theatre Company, 2007) as Bad Jelly sets out to destroy the children, to find herself vanquished by the children themselves both the child characters and the child audience. In constantly creating an atmosphere of danger through monstrous villains that are overcome,

this paradigm acknowledges the Jungian characteristic of the orphan, constantly struggling against the greater forces to triumphantly survive against the odds.

- **The code of *Enchantment***, appeals to human wishful thinking for “paradise”, for peace and calm, and to be looked after. Thus the aspect of *Enchantment* appeals to the pleasures of being completely consumed by a powerful, awe-inspiring experience akin to the sublime. The magnificent sets and costumes of the musicals like *Mary Poppins* (Disney, 2011) particularly the aspects of her flying, along with the life-size puppets of the *Live Dinosaur experience* (Global Creatures, 2010) exemplify how *Enchantment* indulges in illusion, beauty and wonder, allowing the audience to escape and dream for a while. Within this paradigm theatre soothes the archetypal aspect of the innocent in the audience psyche, the part that wants to be constantly rescued and which looks for the positive ending in every scenario.
- **The code of *Instruction*** as the presentation of concrete information provides theatrical strategies that essentially help engage audience members in the process of learning and creatively aide memory recall of those lessons taught. This is shown in site specific performances of the time traveller series produced by the Historic Houses Trust, in which the audience is “taken back in time” to experience what was happening on the property in another era. As such this framework assists spectators to consciously recognise things that are of use to them, appealing to the warrior and the student archetype within the audience and desire to both know and better oneself.
- **The code of *Identity*** provides characters and situations by which young people recognise themselves within the key protagonists of the action that they are watching. This aspect appeals to the sense of being important, functioning as autonomous individuals trying to take control of their own life circumstances. Curious child characters negotiating and trying to understand the everyday world like sassy little girl characters such as *Emily Eyefinger* (Monkey Baa, 2011), played by a female adult but emulating girlhood through costume and voice, and *Lola* (*Charlie and Lola’s Best Bestest Play Live*, Polka Theatre, 2010) in which two dimensional puppets exactly emulating the picture book are manipulated by puppeteers to a playback voice over. None the less, colloquial phrases, references to school, music, clothes, attitudes to cleaning the bedroom

and so forth reinforce aspects of childhood. This framework thereby recognises the wanderer archetype, the growing personality looking for a sense of self, place and belonging.

- **The code of *Enlightenment*** appeals to the cognitive power of understanding something deeply, of considering alternative options, of contemplating big ideas, ethical values and situations in a new way in order to understand it and the world differently. Based on a true case *The shape of a girl* (Sydney Opera House, 2008) explores through the mouth piece of the culprit what motivates a girl to participate in bullying and later the killing of a former friend. Other examples are works that look behind the strange or “weird” characters to see what is happening in their homes, such as in *Afternoon of the Elves* (Windmill Performing Arts, 2006). The archetypal aspects of the altruist are contemplated within this framework engaging those audience members interested in compassion, consideration and critical thinking.
- **The code of *Alchemy*** democratically recognises the audience as being the key players in the performance itself, as both interpreters and active participants. This is shown in the inclusion of the audience in the extension of the performance space, as in the art installation of *The Forest* (Fevered Sleep, 2012), storytelling practice that talks directly to the audience or even invites them to change the ending of the performance or which uses children’s drawings as the inspiration for the stories such as *Wolf under the bed* (Theater Sgaramusch, 2008). In this framework the audience is the archetypal magician that imaginatively controls and builds the performance as an extension of free play. It is this aspect that gives the performances a sense of anarchy and helps the audience feel inspired and changed.

### ***10.2 Summary of devices used within artistic codes***

Each code highlights a particular set of theatrical techniques which signal the philosophical values or purposes at work within each framework as well as dramaturgical choices that refer to how the ideology of the performance influences choices around organizing audience response in terms of form and style (Pavis, 1988).

- **The guiding principle of *Revelry* is survival.** Theatrical techniques thus focus on ways of getting the audience agitated and involved by encouraging outrage. This paradigm therefore primarily concentrates on *action-based choreography, dialogues and staging to emote spectators into participation as a team player*. *Revelry* is successful when the audience shows themselves to work as a united whole to shout out a rehearsed response in unison, or impulsively getting out of their seats to yell with excitement.
- **The guiding principle of *Enchantment* is to soothe.** Theatrical techniques focus on helping the audience to escape. This is primarily done through magnificent *design aspects such as set, costume, puppets and stage machinery* that create the wondrous experience of being subsumed into another world; or feeling smaller and insignificant to the vastness of the extravagance so that an audience leaves the theatre refreshed and revitalised. Wishful thinking is further satisfied in *hero-based plots* that conclude in happy relationships and guaranteed comfort that promises to last forever. *Enchantment* is successful when the audience walk away from the performance with a sense of satisfaction.
- **The guiding principle of *Instruction* is to teach.** Theatrical techniques predominately utilise effective *education strategies* as a way of efficiently presenting information to be understood and remembered. Techniques therefore emulate the teacher/student relationship as well as the teaching models found in dramatic presentations in which characters effectively role model particular behaviours or present learning through rhetorical questioning. Importantly this paradigm works in conjunction with other paradigms to ensure that audiences identify and enjoy the experience, as another aspect of memory recall. *Instruction* is successful when the audience remembers some of the salient points or facts in the performance such as a year that an event happened, the name of the people who lived in the house or what a particular process is called.
- **The guiding principle of *Identity* is to mirror the individual spectator.** Theatre techniques find ways to reflect the audience back to themselves. To do this the techniques of acting are relied on, in particular *characterisation and relationships with others* alongside costuming and everyday language, as ways of indicating a direct connection with the audience. *Instruction* is successful when the audience laughs at characters because they are doing what they

themselves might do, or they see a dance and recognise the movement has represented the games they might play at home.

- **The guiding principle of *Enlightenment* is to promote critical thinking.** Techniques utilise the *experimental theatre techniques of epic theatre including alienation effects, projection and happenings* in order to create a jarring performance that forces the audience to engage not just in *what* is happening but *why* it is happening. In this sense the audience watches the action not emotionally but cognitively. *Enlightenment* is successful when the audience sees a situation in different way, recognises that people live differently to themselves and consider choices.
- **The guiding principle of *Alchemy* is connection and change.** Techniques focus on acknowledging theatre as a playful engagement between *actor and audience* through *storytelling* and the *spatial architecture* of the performance. *Alchemy* is successful when a spectator goes home and is inspired to try something new.

### ***10.3 Numerous codes within one performance***

Though each code has a distinct purpose, numerous codes are often found to be at work within a single production. Powerful experiences are thus created when theatre utilises this layered approach. For instance *Helena and the Journey of Hello* (Terrapin Puppet Theatre, 2010) utilised a number of frameworks in its presentation including *Identity*, *Enlightenment*, *Alchemy* and *Enchantment*:

- *Identity*; this framework was conveyed in the constant referencing of things that the young audience might recognise or empathise with to signal Helena as the implied child of the audience. She is small (referenced by her size next to her father and the other characters, including her toys), she is a girl (referenced by her clothes) and has large eyes and face that is young - all implying that she has the same vulnerabilities as many in the audience.
- *Enlightenment*; the trauma of her mother's disappearance may be recognised and identified, but its poetic strangeness, referring to her symbolic disappearance "from the pots and pans and into the phone", is absurd and alienating, and signals the code of *Enlightenment* because the metaphor of the phone requires



interpretation by the audience. The spectator is thus placed in the position of critical observer, to gradually build a picture of what may have happened, and to question whether both father and mother as absent figures have done Helena wrong in some way.

- *Alchemy*; in lighting up the individual letters of the word “Hello” across the stage in a random pattern that, the audience saw how Helena, as representative of the implied audience, used her own magical powers to turn her own circumstances around and to rescue herself.
- *Enchantment*; the satisfaction when the end culminates in a moment of peace that reflects of the pleasures of the *total experience*.

#### ***10.4 Similarities and distinctions within the code systems***

Though closely related the six systems have very distinctive differences.

- ***Enchantment and Alchemy both emphasise the aesthetics and wonder*** but where *Enchantment* evokes the theatrical glamour of illusion, romance and the theatrical space, *Alchemy* utilises everyday places and spaces, instruments and clothing and turns them in to unique moments of ceremonial ritual and play. In *Jason of the Argonauts* (Visible Fictions, 2008), a boy’s play space, consisting of boxes and Acton Men became a sophisticated telling of the legend, completely orchestrated by the two actors on the stage, dressed in everyday clothes of the audience. This represents Alchemy, in that simple household items are transformed in a roughened way, in full view of the audience, to tell a magnificent story that exists for a short while and then reverts to the playroom. The same story in solely Enchantment paradigm would present the story as though it was actually happening, through specialised costumes, relying on technical artistry to create mood through scenery and lighting. *Enchantment* succeeds when the spectator watches mesmerised and amazed, *Alchemy* succeeds when the spectator takes an, “I know how that is done”, approach and tries it later at home.
- ***Revelry and Alchemy both emphasise audience participation***, however where *Revelry* is controlled and controlling as the audience responds loudly and joyfully to particular parts of the action which makes them peripherally important to the outcome of the story, *Alchemy* offers a more spontaneous

democratic experience that calls the audience to playfully respond to the action on stage. *Revelry* predicts the audience response and manipulates it to get a desired outcome, either teaching a special rhyme or agitating the audience so they act en masse to a situation. It feels reckless and wild but it is specifically orchestrated. *Alchemy* is more un-programed, because it requires responding genuinely and quietly to questions. At the start of the *Little Match Girl*, (Gruppe 38, 2008) the storyteller explained what was going to happen and asked the audience if they had any queries. Her hushed tone, ability to look each speaker in the eye gave it the feel of an improvised happening. Further because the actors as storytellers communicate to individual audience members, an intimate setting is created for the performance and has the ability to change according to the characteristics of a particular audience.

- ***Revelry and Identity both encourage allegiance***, but where *Revelry* looks to celebrate commonalities on a tribal level, evoking a sense of communal identity which emulate an en masse response, such as noisy cheering for the heroes as they reach their goal, the code of *Identity* communicates autonomous thinking that both respects others, and honours one's own unique qualities and powers. The response in *Identity* is internal respect rather than outward verbalisation.
- ***Instruction and Enlightenment both encourage education***, but whereas *Instruction* emphasises truth, certainty and particular ways of doing things, *Enlightenment* follows a philosophic ideal of questions, answers and uncertainty (Spillane, 2007, p.7), Thus *Enlightenment* does not pose answers so much as stimulate questions. At the end of the tour with the detective on the case of discovering the murder of Ortsey the Stone Age iceman (National Maritime Museum, 2007), it was possible to measure the success of the performance in conveying facts by confirming the correct answers to factual questions. Its *Enlightenment* aspect is in the questions that emerged around seeing the actual mummified figure, which inspired the children's own responses on who Ortsey might have been when he was alive those thousands of years ago, and the idea of his actual humanity.
- ***Enlightenment and Alchemy both encourage understanding***, but where *Enlightenment* focuses on cerebral and critical thinking, *Alchemy* looks to connect ideas through the heart, encouraging a person to believe that they

themselves can make a difference, try something different, or contribute in a practical way. Thus the intellectual story of *Lifeboat* (Catherine Wheels Theatre, 2008) generated understanding on what it might have like for children who were sent away, as refugees, for their own protection during the war. But the telling of the story which including jumping backwards and forwards in time and the use of the same props utilised in different scenes and representing different things meant that the spectator had to engage not just in the story but in the challenging method of the story. Thus involvement was through cognitive effort, creates a sense of actual participation in the story itself as storyteller (Chambers, 2008, p.9).

### ***10.5 Theatre is good for kids as agents of change***

A major observation of the study is that there is a wide diversity in the presentations of performance events that are available for young audiences. This includes big budget musicals, dance, plays and musical concerts as well as small performances in museums or private homes. These performances are produced for different purposes, which include commercial and educational and even just entertainment opportunities for young people and implicitly these performances signal particular views or ideas about childhood, which defines their very audiences. Codes of *Alchemy* and *Enlightenment* in particular present very liberating philosophies in which childhood is implied as a time of enquiry, exploration and expansion, as such endorsing the individual child as agents of change, rather than just controlled innocents. Child characters like 12yr old Waylon (*Snow on Mars*, Theatre of Image, 2011) exemplify this idea of the courageous child as he tries to navigate his way in the world after the death of his mother.

### ***10.6 Recommendations for further study***

This study celebrates theatrical events for young people as more important than simply providing a pleasant break from the everyday, paralleling both Turner and Schechner's (1988) observations of drama as vital for evolving humans in diverse areas such as cognitive development (motor neurons in the brain), emotional response (catharsis),

observations and perceptions, intellectual curiosity, artistic inspiration, a call to action, teaching, as well as a way of interacting and connecting within community. As such it is hoped that this study affirms the positivity of the theatre as a holistic experience offering pleasurable cultural, educational experiences, which contribute to building connections and a sense of self within the child spectator.

As with most enquiries, this study inspires more questions than it answers. This study is based on my own critical observations and perceptions around the purposes and functions of theatre for young audiences. As such I recommend further research in the following areas:

First in the area of a quantitatively measuring “engagement” by young people to assess the actual responses and perceptions of actual theatre experiences by young people and the meanings they take away with them and to see whether they parallel the philosophical observations proposed within this thesis of theatre being purposeful in six main areas of *Revelry*, *Enchantment*, *Instruction*, *Identity*, *Enlightenment* and *Alchemy*. It might be proposed that children exposed to all different theatrical experiences emerge as critically appreciative (galactic) spectators (Chambers, 1985, p.141). That similar to a young reader’s engagement in books, there is power and enjoyment in learning to decipher theatrical signs and a pleasure to be found in decoding or reading different aspects of theatre generally. This is not possible in a single expedition but through a merging of numerous exposures to theatrical ephemera; the experience of live theatre, layering subsequent encounters with new performances. Confidence in reading theatre signs could thus be gained through ongoing contact with eclectic art forms and by building cultural awareness of theatre traditions that ultimately lead to a willingness to try diverse experiences. Radbourne et al. (2009) on observing and measuring ephemeral engagement, Thomson and Sefton-Green’s (2011) work on measuring creativity and MacCallum and Pressick Kilborn’s (2011) work on examining motivation will be useful in articulating:

1. How do audiences describe their experiences of attending arts performances?
2. What is the relationship between audience engagement and artistic quality?
3. How do companies maximise the audience experience?
4. How can this be interpreted in performing arts policy and funding?

Secondly, further study of parents is recommended to understand the specifics of why they take their children to theatre and what they hope their children will get out of the experience. I suspect that answers will include parents who go for cultural reasons, for educational reasons, for family outings and those who would only go for the sake of the kids. Falk's (2009) work on identifying the individual motivations and the visitor experience of museums will be useful in this area of research, focusing not just on the immediate but the long term response after a significant period of time.

Thirdly, this study advocates empirical research into the impact of ephemeral art experiences in early childhood looking at the effect of ephemera on the psychological development of children. Such a study may confirm the extent to which art, theatre and museum events impact on school readiness for the preschooler. It is suspected that ongoing exposure to new ideas presented through exciting, warm, safe experiences positively develops the growing mind and spirit, directly developing the neurons of the brain (Greenfield, 2001 & 2008). Greenfield's research on the *personalisation* of the brain in the building of identity is of particular interest here in understanding that theatre experiences can be divided into moments of *connection* (2008, p27), seen in particular in the codes of *Identity*, *Enlightenment* and *Alchemy*, and moments based on *dissolving* connections, letting yourself go and living in the moment, seen predominately in *Revelry*. As well as being integral to childhood wellbeing and the whole child it might be expected that the impact of pleasure and informal learning experiences positively promote literacy (Lumby & Fine, 2006; Willis, 2008).

Fourthly, in endorsing conviction that theatre and storytelling events provide opportunity for social, emotional, aesthetical, cognitive growth as well as connection and wellbeing in individuals this study advocates the work that is undertaken in deepening literacy through holistic wellbeing in communities of disadvantage, particularly for mothers and babies and recommend further study in this area. Such research might be informed and enriched by Young and Power's (2008) theatre performance for preschoolers in the Scottish based Starlight Company.

### *10.7 In conclusion*

By examining the live performance works that have been available to young Australian audiences over the past six years, it is clear that whilst children's theatre can be educational and can be diversion (and both are valuable and impressive), it even more significantly can provide in-depth works that work towards taking young people on complex aesthetic experiences that may be emotional, thought-provoking, enriching, and inspiring, and that lead them into deeper understandings of themselves and their societies. Thus theatre for young people continues its noble and ancient role of complex storytelling, showing each generation a little more of itself, mocking foolishness and identifying and facing challenges and change.

In the words of award-winning Australian children's writer Jackie French, "[It's] an adventure of the mind and spirit. It makes kids think as well as feel. Live theatre is kid's heritage – the unbroken link with the storyteller around the campfire or ancient Greek dramatists" (Monkey Baa, 2012).

# APPENDIX

**Table 1: Children’s access to theatrical experiences**

This table outlines the theatrical events that children might have access to, and the context in which they might attend them.

Type of performance	Producer Rationale	Performance Space	Cost to spectator	Parental Rationale	Frequency of attendance
<b>“High culture” performances:</b> Opera, ballet, orchestras, play, circus etc.	ART: National companies (Bell Shakespeare, Sydney theatre Companies, Opera Australia ).	Traditional Theatre spaces: Sydney Opera Theatre, Capital theatres	Mid to high	Cultural ART experience: Aspirational, enjoyment, art or life. Parent decision.	Often as financially possible
<b>Theatre plays and performances specifically for children:</b>	EXPERIMENTAL ART CHILD ORIENTATED: Professional Storytelling Companies (Windmill, Theatre of Image , Sydney Opera House Babies Proms)	Theatre and regional tours to alternate art spaces: Seymour, Glen Street, Stables...	Low to mid	Cultural ART experience: Thought provoking experience / aspirational, enjoyment, art or life. Parent driven decision.	Often as financially possible
<b>Corporately promoted musical spectacles:</b> Disney on Ice, High school musical, Thomas the Tank Engine	PROFIT: Commercial Producers and promoters (Disney, Global Creatures, ABC events)	Entertainment centres: ACER arena...	Mid to High plus merchandise	Spectacular: Guaranteed enjoyment, known product. Popular Entertainment. Child driven decision.	Once a year – costly
<b>Musical (TV) entertainers:</b> Wiggles, High-5, Hooleys, Sesame Street.	PROFIT: Commercial promoters (Hit Entertainment, ABC events)	Touring regional RSL and Entertainment centres.	Low to high plus merchandise	Edutainment: Guaranteed product, popular guaranteed interest for child. Wholesome messages? Child and parent driven decision.	Once a year – possibly more
<b>Commissioned Cultural entertainment:</b> Professional performers creating site-specific plays, Character Guides and so on.	ART/CULTURE: Public work/ educational curators, to generate interest in a space (on the day and also marketing), or compliment an exhibition through storytelling engagement.	Heritage spaces, and galleries: Historic House Trust, Royal Botanic Garden...	Free (with entrance)	Cultural/educational - acculturation (getting children used to art).	Often as possible
<b>Professional storytellers:</b> Bronwyn Vaughan	CULTURAL: Child centred stories for the local community.	Library, cultural, education, community spaces	Free	Conscious decision, timing	When the opportunities arise



Type of performance	Producer Rationale	Performance Space	Cost to spectator	Parental Rationale	Frequency of attendance
<b>School Spectaculars:</b> Performing Arts Unit (PAU NSW), Rock Estefford, music dance, choral songs and so on.	DEVELOPMENT/EDUCATIONAL/CULTURE: Schools or Art Unit, showcasing talent and providing opportunities for kids.	Professional venue or school hall	Varies	Social, to support family and friends.	Dependant on family involvement
<b>Youth Theatre:</b> Performance created with young performers.	CULTURAL/SOCIAL/PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT Organisations trying to develop the artistic talents of young performers through cultural and artistic work that is relevant and youth centred. (ATYP, PACT, SHOPFRONT)	Usually a “home” theatre venue	Low - high	Social / Cultural – often supporting family and friends. N.B. subject and performance is often relevant to the younger audiences.	Dependant on family involvement
<b>Amateur Dramatics:</b> Performance with members of local community	SOCIAL/LESUIRE/CULTURAL: Local communities creating well-known work in which young people part take.	Usually a “home” theatre venue	Low - high	To support friends and community.	Dependant on family involvement
<b>Festival Theatre:</b> High spectacle groups and street theatre.	ART/CULTURAL/LESUIRE: Art festivals: offering free entertainment that promotes other works in the festival (Sydney festival, government or council commemorations).	Open air and Street environs	Free	Celebration, festivity, cultural, curiosity. Distraction	Numerous
<b>Street Entertainers:</b> including singing groups, puppets, ABC “skinned” characters, dancers, and jugglers.	MARKETING: Public spaces, community fairs or shopping centres to keep children amused while parents shop.	Public spaces, shopping centres	Free	Opportunity / distraction, free “give-aways”.	School Holidays
<b>Children’s Party entertainers:</b> magicians, fairies etc.	Parents/ party hosts: to keep children amused distracted.	Domestic & privates spaces, i.e. parks, church, hall spaces	One off fee charged to hosts	Private family celebration, festivities and parties.	Dependant on circumstances

Table 2: Six ideological systems of engagement

*This table breaks down the different experiences that theatre offers young people.*

	<b>Revelry</b>	<b>Enchantment</b>	<b>Instruction</b>	<b>Identity</b>	<b>Enlightenment</b>	<b>Alchemy</b>
<b>Purpose</b>	Cathartic	Escapism	Education	Individual Empowerment	Social congruity and critical thinking	Growing the Imagination
<b>Rationale</b>	To re-link us to our primal responses & emotions. Create a physical and cathartic reaction through shock and horror.	To present the world as we would <i>like</i> it to be. Make people feel good.	To teach and explicit lesson.	To present life as it is truthfully.	To empower society, to know itself better, to re-evaluate.	To connect with others and initiate a sense of change in the audience.
<b>Production examples</b>	melodrama, farce, commedia, pantomime, medieval theatre Rabelaisian.	Hollywood Films. Disney. Some circus, Saloon theatre	T.I.E, Museum,	Drawing room drama, court scenes.	Invisible theatre, Forum theatre, theatre of the oppressed, old time musical hall Mother courage, political theatre, and feminist theatre.	Storytelling theatre, pocket theatre, theatre of the ridiculous, Promenade theatre, workshop theatre.
<b>Associated Theatre system</b>	Commedia dell' art, vaudeville,	Musical Theatre, pantomime	Bolton, Heathcote, T.I.E	Stanislavsky	Boal, Grotowski, Piscator, Brecht, Stanislavsky	Artaud, Boal,
<b>Presented as</b>	Emotional release	Charm/Idyllic	Rhetorical information	Real people	Agi-prop, satire, and documentary	Storytelling, playful

	<b>Revelry</b>	<b>Enchantment</b>	<b>Instruction</b>	<b>Identity</b>	<b>Enlightenment</b>	<b>Alchemy</b>
<b>Directors drive</b>	Emotional release  Connecting to the audience through performativity to affect them emotionally.	Escapism  Presenting a peaceful view of the world.	Rationale  To get the audience to know things.	Psychology  Presenting character recognised by the audience.	Critical thinking  To empower the audience. To present and deconstruct social issues. And cause audience debate.	Playfulness and audience connection.  Presenting metaphorical, poetic and symbolic observations of the world, which are interpreted.
<b>Audience reaction</b>	Shouting at the action, out of their seats.	Spellbound	Engaged	Recognition	Puzzled and questioning	Curious and activated. Going home and re-enacting.
<b>Audience</b>	The audience travels an emotional journey / rite of passage, experiencing the drama as survival.	The audience is encouraged to project themselves in to an alternate reality.	The audience absorbs ideas and facts.	The audience stands outside of the action but psychologically and emotionally identifies with the leading character.	Audience interprets the works and also encouraged to ask questions and contribute.	Audience connects through aesthetics & architecture of the space.

	<b>Revelry</b>	<b>Enchantment</b>	<b>Instruction</b>	<b>Identity</b>	<b>Enlightenment</b>	<b>Alchemy</b>
<b><i>Implied child</i></b>	<b>The orphan</b> the child as hero surviving against the odds.	<b>The innocent</b> the child to be cocooned and protected against the unpleasant parts of life. Guided and in the hands of another.	<b>The rationale champion</b> The child as doing one's duty to be the best that one can be.	<b>The wanderer</b> the independent child of free will, finding oneself order to become.	<b>The altruist / critical thinker</b> The child as independent thinker capable of taking responsibility for others as well as ourselves.	<b>The magician</b> The free child able to change ones thinking in order to change circumstances.
<b><i>Actor's role</i></b>	Demon/protagonist	Illusionist	Teacher/Guide	Identification with audience	Demonstrator	Interpreter
<b><i>Actors</i></b>	Clown	Romantic hero	Worker (Storyteller)	Actor presenting truth (Stanislavskyan)	Workers/therapist/instructors (Brechtian)	Artist/facilitator (story teller / invisible theatre).
<b><i>Actor in performance</i></b>	Entertainer	Hero, provider, fantasy figure, magician	Narrator	Three-dimensional character, portraying psychological truth.	Teacher / therapist / observer	Facilitator / narrator
<b><i>Actor/audience relationship</i></b>	Audience knows more than the actors, opportunities for exchange in many performances.	Not necessarily interaction Actors know more than audience.	Actors converse with the audience but remain in control.	Audience knows more than the actors, little interaction.	There is an exchange of ideas between the actors and audience. With the Audience having the opportunity to change the ending in forum theatre.	audience interpret & connect what is happening on staging to the outside world.

	Revelry	Enchantment	Instruction	Identity	Enlightenment	Alchemy
<b>Narrative structure (Script)</b>	Comments on human actions and human fragility across the spectrum. Extends reality – situations become ridiculous or obscure (caricatured). Offers a deeper meaning under the text.	Rewrites human actions in a more favourable light. White washes the heroes more murky realities.  A metanarrative view	Short stories and information presented in short scenes which emphasis different topics.	Observes the real trauma of natural relationships.  Chronological and logical story.	Epic Theatre, numerous small scenes, not in chronological sequence.	A narrative may be loosely created but which relies and changes according to the responses from the audience.  Not necessarily chronological. Emphasis on the ritualistic.
<b>Company dynamics in the performance</b>	<i>Ensemble of individual characters.</i> Play centres on the <i>dynamic of a group</i> : based on reality then situation is imaginatively enlivened, extended, and caricatured.	Hierarchy of characters starting with lead characters.	Either an ensemble performance or a single storyteller.	<i>Mixed</i> 1. <i>Hierarchy of characters</i> starting with the <i>lead characters</i> 2. Ensemble	Ensemble performance	<i>Ensemble – equal importance.</i> Symbolic representation of earthly elements.
<b>Performance</b>	Externalisation	Internalisation	Externalisation	Internalisation	Externalisation	Externalisation

	<b>Revelry</b>	<b>Enchantment</b>	<b>Instruction</b>	<b>Identity</b>	<b>Enlightenment</b>	<b>Alchemy</b>
<b>Staging</b>	Body language and staging is exaggerated to become almost a physical choreography.	Simulates real relationships and recreates real body language while creating a Arcadian, romantic atmosphere.	Use of film, banners and other visual aids including vaudevillian music etc.	Simulates real everyday relationships and recreates real body language recognised by the audience through characters and staging.	Workshopped forum theatre, with everything open to change.	Choreographed, symbolic stylised storytelling through the use of puppets & marionettes & architecture.
<b>Props</b>	Realistic	Iconic	Iconic and symbolic use	Iconic	Representative	Symbolic
<b>Scenery requirements</b>	Not required	Iconic, heavy use of sets and aesthetics	Not required	Iconic	Not Required	Symbolic, Aesthetic
<b>Costumes</b>	Realistic – costumes may indicate significant character traits.	Realistic portrayal per individual character	Representative	Realistic	Realistic	Symbolic – black with changes of hats, jackets.
<b>Lighting</b>	Varied	Variable: realistic portrayal, fantasy.	Open White	Realistic	Dramatic use of Lx for aesthetic purposes and storytelling purposes and discord. Not to create a sense of realism.	For aesthetics only. Not required for telling the story.
<b>Music</b>	Used to change mood, Pace, dramatic interlude, change scenery etc.	Creates atmosphere, & emphasises drama .		Used to top and tail performances	Music used to help audience relate, relax or create slight discord, make the audience think again (Kurt Veil).	To create atmosphere

## LIVE PERFORMANCES THAT HAVE INFLUENCED THIS RESEARCH

- A Fevered Sleep & Fuel Production, *The Forest*, seen at The Studio, Sydney Opera House 2011, Housed, originally performed in UK.
- A Movable Theatre, *Wake up Beauty*, seen at Royal Botanic Gardens, 1999.
- ABC Events with Andrew Kay & Associates, *The Fairies* seen at Sydney Enmore Theatre in 2010.
- ABC Events, *Playschool*, seen at Petersham Town Hall, 2002,
- ABC Events, *The ABC Christmas Show*, at Sydney Opera House, Concert Hall, 2002.
- ABC Events, *The Hooley Dooleys*, seen at Paddington RSL, 2002, NSW Tour.
- ABC Events & Historic Houses Trust, *Angela and Penny's Holiday*, seen at Government House 2006,
- ABC Events & Kids promotions, *Bananas in Pajamas All Star Show*, seen at The Sydney Entertainment Centre, 2007.
- Architects of the Air & Sydney Opera House, *Mirazozo*, seen at Sydney Opera House, Forecourt, 2011.
- Arena Theatre & House:ed, *Australian Marriage Act*, dir. Ferguson. M., seen at Studio, Sydney Opera House, 2007.
- Arena Theatre & House:ed, *Girl Who Cried Wolf*, dir. Myers. R., seen at The Studio, Sydney Opera House, 2008.
- Australian Ballet Company, *The Nutcracker*, Ballet, dir. Wright, P., seen at The Opera Theatre, Sydney Opera House, 2007.
- Australian Chamber Orchestra & Gondwana, *The Red Tree and The Arrival*, dir. Tognetti R., seen at The Recital Hall, Angel Place, 2008.
- Australian Theatre for Young People, *The Birds*, seen at The Studio, 2000.
- Australian Theatre for Young People, *Stories in the Dark*, dir. Jones, T., seen at Lennox theatre, Riverside Theatres, Parramatta, 2007.
- Australian Theatre For Young People & Sydney Theatre Company, *Tusk Tusk*, dir. Murphy, S., seen at Wharf 2, 2010.
- Babies Proms, *Conductor and the clown*, seen at The Studio, Sydney Opera House, 2003.
- Babies Proms, Kids at the House, *Outtaspace*, seen at The Studio, Sydney Opera House, 2005.
- Babies Proms, *The Colour of Fun*, dir. Liberman. D., seen at The Utzon Room, Sydney Opera House, 2007, Kids at the House.
- Babies Proms, Kids at the House, *Dougal the Garbage Dump Bear*, dir. Liberman. D., seen at Utzon Room, Sydney Opera House, 2007.
- Babies Proms, Kids at the House, *The Drum*, dir. Liberman. D., seen at Utzon Room, Sydney Opera House 2008,
- Babies Proms, Kids at the House *Mozart Boy Genius*, dir. Liberman. D., seen at The Utzon Room, Sydney Opera House, 2008.
- Babies Proms, Kids at the House *Pecorino's First Concert*, dir. Liberman.D., seen at The Studio, Sydney Opera House 2008.
- Babies Proms, Kids at the House, *The Royal Seed*, dir. Blackwood, S., seen at The Utzon Room, Sydney Opera House, 2009.
- Babies Proms, House:ed, *The Little Mermaid*, composed by Dr. Navok, L., dir. Blackwood, S., seen at The Concert Hall, Sydney Opera House, 2009.
- Babies Proms, Kids at the House, *Jack*, dir. Blackwood, S., seen at The Studio, Sydney Opera House 2010.
- Back to Back & Adventures in the Dark, *Food Court*, dir. Gladwin, B., seen at Opera Theatre, 2009.
- Barking Gecko Theatre & House:ed, *Hidden Dragons* Drama, dir. Sheedy, J., seen at Utzon Room, Sydney Opera House, 2004.
- Batsheva Ensemble & Sydney Festival *Kamuyot*, dir. Naharin, O., seen at Carriageworks, 2007.
- BBC Worldwide & Sydney Opera House, 2012, *Dr Who, Spectacular*, seen Concert Hall, 2012.

- Bell Shakespeare, *Sadako And The Thousand Paper Cranes*, dir. C. Chris seen on NSW Tour, 1997.
- Bell Shakespeare, *Actors at work*, seen at Glen Forest Theatre, 2006.
- Bell Shakespeare, *Just Macbeth*, dir. W. Harrison, sound Cray, T.D., seen at Seymour Centre, 2009.
- Belvoir Theatre & Sydney Festival, *Snugglepote and Cuddlepie*, adapt. John Clarke & Alan John, dir. Armfield, N., seen at Theatre Royal, Sydney, 2006.
- Biennale Storytelling & Fundays in the Gallery, seen at Art Gallery NSW, 2006.
- Bristol Old Vic, *Grim Tales*, seen at Seymour theatre, 1997, originally performed in London.
- Bronwyn Vaughan & Carnivale, *The Camel and other stories from overseas*, dir. Joyce, B., design. Clouston, J., seen at Seymour Centre, 2004.
- Bronwyn Vaughan, *At the foot of the Storyteller's chair*, dir. Joyce, B., design. Clouston, J., seen at Ashfield Library, 2005.
- Buzz Dance Theatre & House: ed, *Rabbit*, Contemporary Dance, dir. Bott, F., seen at Playhouse, Sydney Opera House 2007, originally performed in WA.
- Capital E National Theatre for Children & House:ed, *Hinepau*, Epic Theatre, dir. Blackburn, S., seen at The Studio, Sydney Opera House, 2006, originally performed in New Zealand.
- Catherine Wheels Theatre Company & House:ed, *Lifeboat Drama*, dir. Robertson, G., seen at The Studio, Sydney Opera House 2008, originally performed in Scotland.
- Chugg Entertainment, *Yo Gabba Gabba*, seen at Concert Hall, Sydney Opera House, 2011.
- Circa & Sydney Children's Festival, *Circe's 46 Circus Acts in 45 minutes*, dir. Lifschitz, Y., seen at Carriageworks, 2009, originally performed in Brisbane.
- Cirque Du Soliel, *Saltimbanco*, dir. Dragone, F., seen at Moore Park, 1999.
- Compagnia TPO & Come Out, Teatro Metastasio Stabile Della Toscana, & Insite Arts, *Children's Cheering Carpet Saltbush*, seen at The Studio, Sydney Opera House 2010, originally performed in Italy & Australia.
- CREA, UTS & RTA, *Stop, Look Listen, Santa in the City*, seen at the Greenhalgh Theatre, UTS, Kuring-Gai, 1999.
- CREA, *Where the Wild things are*, dir/perf. Sinclair, N., seen at the Greenhalgh Theatre, UTS, Kuring-Gai, 2002.
- Cre8ion & Kids at the House, *Fluff*, dir. Johnston, C., seen at The Studio, Sydney Opera House 2004.
- Dave Funnel, *Fairytales on tour*, seen, Grafton Regional Gallery, 2008.
- Det lille Turneteater & House:ed, *Hamlet*, J.B. Kelsen seen at The Studio, Sydney Opera House, 2009, originally performed in Denmark.
- Disney, *The Lion King*, Dir. Taymor, J., seen at Lyceum Theatre, London, 2009, originally performed in West end.
- Disney, *Mary Poppins*, dir, Eyre, R., seen at Capitol Theatre, Sydney, 2011, originally performed in Broadway.
- Disney on Ice & Feld Entertainment, *The Magical World of Disney on Ice*, seen at Sydney Entertainment Centre, 2006.
- Disney on Ice, *High School Musical Ice show*, seen at Sydney Entertainment Centre, 2007.
- The Wiggles Inc., *Dorothy the Dinosaur Show*, seen at Enmore Theatre, Sydney, seen 2010.
- Drak Theatre, Sydney Opera House & Windmill Performing Arts, *Flying Babies*, dir. Krofta, J., seen at Drama Theatre, 2004, originally performed in Czech Republic.
- Dschungel Wien theatre for young audience & House:ed, *Surprise*, dir. S. Rabl seen at The Studio, Sydney Opera House, 2009, originally performed in Austria.
- Ecetera Duo & Gallery Fundays, *Think in Thongs*, dir. Russell Garbutt & Phillippe Genty, seen at the NSW Art Gallery, 2005.
- Elyse and Kerry Jewel & Jim Henson's Creature Workshop, *Peter Pan*, dir. John Baner, music. Harvey, M., seen at Capitol Theatre, 2000.
- Erfreuliches Theater Erfurt & House:ed, *The Queen of Colours*, Paul Olbrich & Eva Noelle seen at



- Playhouse, Sydney Opera House, 2009, originally performed in Germany.
- Erth & Australian Museum, *Gondwana*, dir. Wright, S., seen at Sydney Grammar School theatre, 2006.
- Erth & Family and Education program, *Dinosaur Hunt*, seen at Sydney PowerHouse Museum, 2006.
- Erth & Sydney Children's Festival, *Petting Zoo*, dir. Wright, S., seen at Carriage Works, 2008.
- Erth & Sydney Children's Festival, *Erth's Amazing Room*, dir. Wright, S., seen at Carriageworks, 2009.
- Erth & Sydney Children's Festival, *I Bunyip*, dir. Wright, S., seen at Carriageworks, 2011.
- Gallery Guides, Fundays at the Gallery, *Queen of Sheba*, dir. Beard, R., seen at Art Gallery of NSW, 2005.
- Gallery Guides, Fundays at the Gallery *Gert by Sea*, dir. Beard, R., seen at Art Gallery of NSW, 2005.
- Gallery Guides, Fundays at the Gallery *Ngununy*, dir. Beard, R., seen at Art Gallery of NSW, 2006.
- Gallery Guides, Fundays at the Gallery *Japanese Grave Warrior*, dir. Beard, R., seen at Art Gallery of NSW, 2005.
- Glenn Elston Productions & Botanic Gardens Trust, *The Wind in the Willows*, dir. Bragge, M., seen at Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney, 2011.
- Global Creatures & BBC, *Walking with Dinosaurs - Arena Spectacular*, seen at Acer Arena, Sydney, 2010.
- Global Creatures & Dreamworks Animation, *How to Train Your Dagon*, Arena Spectacular, seen at Acer Arena, Sydney, 2012.
- Gravity Feed, *Host*, seen at Newtown Theatre, 1999.
- Gruppe 38 & House:ed, *The Little Match Girl*, dir. Poher, C., seen at The Studio, Sydney Opera House, 2007, originally performed in Denmark.
- Gruppe 38 & House:ed, *A Sonatina*, dir. Alling, B., & Sorensen, O., seen at The Studio, Sydney Opera House, 2008, originally performed in Denmark.
- Gruppe 38 & House:ed, *Hansel and Gretel*, dir. Ronne, H., seen at The Studio, Sydney Opera House 2010, originally performed in Denmark.
- Hackman & House:ed, *Apollo 13: Mission Control*, dir. Chapman, K., seen at The Studio, Sydney Opera House 2010, originally performed in New Zealand.
- Hi-5 Operations Pty Ltd., *Playtime*, seen at Acer Arena, Sydney Olympic Park, 2008.
- Historic Houses Trust, *Time Travellers*, dir. Marsh, G., seen at Susannah Place, The Rocks, 2006.
- Historic Houses Trust, *Ratticus and Reidar*, dir. Valentine, A., seen at Hyde Park Barracks Museum, 2009.
- Historic Houses Trust, *Red Coats and Convicts*, dir. Valentine, A., seen at Hyde Park Barracks Museum, 2008.
- Historic Houses Trust, *Father Christmas at Christmas Carols*, prod. Sinclair, N., seen at Vaucluse House, 2009.
- Interact Theatre, *Puss in Trainers*, seen 1995, UK Tour.
- Imaginary Theatre & Sydney Children's Festival, *Tashi*, (based on book by Anna and Barbara Fienberg), dir. Radvan. M., seen at Carriageworks, 2009, originally performed in Brisbane.
- Imperial Ice Stars & Lunchbox, *Cinderella on Ice*, music. Duncan, T.A., & Barnwell, E., dir. Mercer, T., seen at Theatre Royal, Sydney, 2008, originally performed in Russia.
- Improbable Theatre, *Shockheaded Peter*, seen at The Wharf Theatre, Sydney, 2005, originally performed in London.
- Improbable Theatre, World Famous, Sydney Festival in assoc. Sydney Opera House, *Sticky*, Dir. P.E. Rob Thirtle, Graeme Gilmour, Sarah-Jean Couzens, Phil Supple, Geoff Southall, Bruce Luckhurst, Gill Roughley, Peter Williams, seen at The Forecourt, Sydney Opera House 2002.
- Le Cirque Invisible*, Victoria Chalin Jean Baptiste Thierree James Spencer Thierree seen at Riverside Studios, 1994.
- James Thierree, *Au revoir Parapluie*, seen at Walsh Theatre, Sydney, 2008, Sydney Festival, originally performed in France.
- Jeral Puppets, *In repetory*, seen at Randwick.
- Jigsaw Theatre Company, *The Lost Thing*, dir. Lissaman, G., seen at Riverside Theatre, 2004.
- Jigsaw Theatre Company & House:ed, *Aborio*, dir. Lissaman, G., seen at Utzon Room, 2005.

- Jigsaw Theatre Company & House:ed, *Sharon Keep Ya Hair On*, dir. Lissaman, G., seen at Playhouse, 2005.
- Jigsaw Theatre Company, *Spin*, dir. Roach, C., in development for 2013.
- Julien Cottureau & Adventures in the Dark, *Imagine toi*, dir. Daouphars, E., seen at The Playhouse, Sydney Opera House 2007, originally performed in France.
- Just Imagine, *Musical Pirate Adventure*, Character Tours, seen at National Maritime Museum, 2007.
- ABC Event, Sydney Opera House Presents, *Justine Clarke's Little Day Out*, seen at Concert Hall, Sydney Opera House 2011.
- KAGE & House:ed, *Headlock*, dir. Denborough, K., seen at The Studio, Sydney Opera House, 2008, originally performed in Australia.
- Kneehigh Theatre, Sydney Festival, *The Red Shoes*, dir. Rice, E., seen at Seymour Centre, Chippendale, 2011, originally performed in UK.
- Sydney Opera House presents, *Le Grand Cirque*, seen at The Concert Hall, Sydney Opera House, 2009.
- Linsey Pollak, Sydney Opera House Trust presents, *Playpen*. seen at The Studio, Sydney Opera House, 1999.
- Linsey Pollak, Places and Spaces, *Passing Wind*, seen at Coles Theatre, Powerhouse Museum, 2010.
- Lior Kalfo, Adventures, *Glow*, dir. Obarzanek, G., real-time interactive software. Weiss, R., seen at The Opera Theatre, Sydney Opera House, 2010.
- Loose Cannon Arts, Kids at the House, *Monkeyshines: Kaberet 4 Kids*, dir. Sheedy, J., seen at The Studio, Sydney Opera House 2008.
- Loose Cannon Arts, *Darlingwood Tales*, Turner, J. seen at The Studio, 2009, Kids at the House.
- Loose Cannon Arts, Education Program, *Ice man the story of Ortzi*, Neisser, J., seen at National Maritime Museum, 2007.
- Loose Canon Arts, Sydney Children's Festival, *Snack Sized Sensations*, Badorrek, L. & Neisser, J., seen at Carriageworks, 2009.
- Mammalian Diving Reflex, Sydney Festival, *Haircuts by Children*, seen at Walsh Theatre, Sydney, 2008, originally performed in France.
- Marc Platt presents, *The Broadway Musical Wicked*, dir. Mantello, J., seen at Capitol Theatre, Sydney, 2010, originally performed in Broadway.
- Marion Street Theatre for Young People, *The Ugly Duckling and The Emperor's New Clothes*, seen at Marian Street Theatre, Killara, 2007.
- Mark Bolotin, Sydney Opera House presents, *Emergence*, seen at The Studio, Sydney Opera House 2006.
- Marrugeku Company, Sydney Festival in assoc. with Perth Festival *Crying Baby*, dir. Yulidjirri, T., seen at Australian Technology Park, Redfern, 2002.
- Martin McCullum and Marc Platt present, New Adventures Series, *Edward Scissorhands*, dir. Bourne, M., seen at Opera Theatre, Sydney Opera House, 2008.
- Monkey Baa, *Pearly in the Park*, dir. Saunders, J., seen at Seymour Centre, 2001.
- Monkey Baa, House:ed., *Hitler's daughter*, seen at The Studio, Sydney Opera House 2005.
- Monkey Baa, *Emily Eyefinger*, adaptation, Ball, D., dir. Saunders, J., seen at Seymour Centre, 2011.
- Murphy's Puppets, *Traditional Commedia del Arte Puppet Shows*, seen at Art Gallery NSW, 2005.
- National Maritime Museum Education program, Mini Mariners, *Aqua Man*, seen at National Maritime Museum, 2004.
- National Maritime Museum Education program, Mini Mariners, *Pirate Ahoy*, seen at National Maritime Museum, 2007.
- National Theatre of Great Britain & South Africa's Handspring Puppet Company, *War Horse*, dir. Elliott, M., & Morris, T., seen at the Lyric Theatre, Sydney, 2013.
- Musica Viva, *Classical work - various*, classical music, seen at Leichardt primary school, 2005.
- New Theatre Company, *Bad Jelly the Witch*, dir. McNamara, F., seen at New Theatre, Newtown, 2007.
- New Theatre Company, *Second Childhood*, dir. Green, L., seen at New Theatre, Newtown, 2008.

- Nonsense Room, House:ed, *Hairy Macleary*, seen at The Playhouse, Sydney Opera House, 2012.
- Ontroer Goed Kopergietry & Richard Jordan Productions Ltd, *Once and for all we're gonna tell you who we are so shut up and listen*, dir, Devriendt, A., seen at Sydney Theatre, 2010, originally performed in Finland.
- Opera Australia, *Hansel and Gretel*, seen at Leichardt Primary Schools, 2005.
- Opera Australia, *The Magic Flute*, Opera, dir. Taymor, J., seen at Opera Theatre, Sydney Opera House, 2012.
- Sydney Opera House Presents, *Circus Oz*, seen at Concert Hall, Sydney Opera House, 2006.
- Patch Theatre, House:ed, *Who Sank the Boat and other Pamela Allen Stories*, seen at The Drama Theatre, Sydney Opera House 2003.
- Patch Theatre Company, House:ed, *Me and my Shadow*, dir, Barry, Z., seen at The Playhouse, Sydney Opera House, 2011.
- Patch Theatre Company, House:ed, *Sharon Keep ya hair on*, dir. Brown, D., seen at Drama Theatre, Sydney Opera Theatre, 2004.
- Patch Theatre Company, House:ed, *Emily Loves to bounce*, Brown, D., & Voorendt, I., seen at Playhouse, Sydney Opera House, 2007.
- Patch Theatre Company, House:e, *Special Delivery*, Brown, D., & Voorendt, I., seen at Playhouse, Sydney Opera House, 2008.
- Patch Theatre Company, House:ed, *Pigs, Bears & Billy Goats Gruff*, dir Brown, D., seen at Playhouse, 2009.
- Petie and Hit Entertainment Presents, *Barney We're all friends, Live on Stage*, seen at Sydney Entertainment Centre, 2007.
- Polka Theatre Sydney Opera House & Watershed Productions presents BBC Worldwide, *Charlie and Lola's Best Bestest Play Live*, dir. Stefanski, R., seen at The Playhouse, Sydney Opera House, 2010, originally performed in the UK.
- Polyglot Theatre, Sydney Opera House Presents, *We Built This City*, dir. Abrahams, S., seen at Forecourt, Sydney Opera House, 2008.
- Power House Museum, *Getting away with murder: the intriguing case of a diabolical assassin*, seen at the Sydney Observatory, 2009.
- Powerhouse Museum, School Holiday program, *Cogs and the Dragon*, seen at the Power House Museum, 2008.
- R.E.M Theatre, Historic Houses Truct, *Poo Stories*, seen at Museum of Sydney, 1997.
- Real TV, House: ed, *Children of the Black Skirts*, Drama, dir. Caceres, L., seen at Playhouse, Sydney Opera House, 2005.
- Real TV, House: ed, Hoods, dir. Caceres, L., seen at Playhouse, Sydney Opera House 2008.
- Real TV, House:ed, *War Crimes*, dir. Caceres, L., seen at Utzon Room, Sydney Opera House 2009.
- Red Leap, Sydney Festival, *The Arrival*, seen Carriageworks, 2010.
- Ryde Council, PAU School's *Spectacular*, seen Concert Hall, Sydney Opera House, Annual.
- Sesame Workshop Presents, *Elmo's World Tour*, seen at Parade Theatre Kensington, 2012.
- The Fondue Set, Historic Houses Trust, Fifties Fair, *Roving performance*, seen at Rose Siedler House 2009.
- Seymour Centre presents, *The Dandy Lionz*, seen at Seymour Centre, Chippendale, 2007.
- School certified performers, Mime artist, seen at Hunter's Hill School, 2006.
- Shark Boys, Sydney Opera House Open Day, *Roving performance*, seen at Forecourt, Sydney Opera House 2007.
- Shopfront Theatre for Young People, *Angels in the Architecture*, seen at Shopfront Theatre, 2005.
- S. Polunin, *Slava's Snow Show*, seen at The Old Vic Theatre, 2000, originally performed in Russia.
- Slingsby, House:ed, *The Tragical Life of Cheeseboy*, dir: Packer, A., seen at The Studio, Sydney Opera House, 2009.
- Spare Part Theatre, *The Velveteen Rabbit*, seen at The Studio, Sydney Opera House, 2006.

- Sudden Impact Entertainment, *Prison Escape*, seen at Luna Park, 2006.
- Surf 'n' Theatre, Historic Houses Trust, *Time Travellers Meet the MacCarthurs*, dir. Helmi, N., seen at Elizabeth Farm, Parramatta, 2005.
- Surf 'n' Theatre, *Not In My Backyard*, dir. Helmi, N., seen at Seymour Centre, 2008.
- Surf 'n' Theatre, Historic Houses Trust, *Time Travellers meet the Wentworths*, dir. Helmi, N., seen at Vaucluse House, 2008.
- Surf 'n' Theatre, Historic Houses Trust, *Time Travellers Meet Banjo Paterson and Rouse Hill Family*, dir. Helmi, N., seen at Rouse Hill House and Farm, Rouse Hill, 2008.
- Surf 'n' Theatre, *Seven Marbles*, dir. Helmi, N., seen at Seymour Centre, 2011.
- Sydney Opera House, House:ed. *The Shape of a Girl*, One woman show, dir. Jordan, N., seen at The Studio, Sydney Opera House, 2008.
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- Sydney Opera House in assoc. Performing Lines, *Dr Egg and the Man With No Ear*, dir. Wilson, J., & Fargher, C., seen at The Studio, Sydney Opera House 2007.
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- Thallis Kopagnons, *What Does Red Do On Thursday?*, artist Torbahn, J., dir. Platais, R., seen at Utzon Room, Sydney Opera House, 2008, originally performed in Germany.
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- Theatre, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, Epic theatre, seen at The Studio, 2003.
- Theatre Kazenoko Kansai, Sydney Opera House in assoc. with Windmill Performing Arts *A World of Paper*, Visual Theatre, dir. P. Wilson seen at The Studio, Sydney Opera House, 2003.
- Theatre of Image, *Go Pinocchio*, Theatre spectacular, dir. Carpenter, K., seen at Seymour Theatre, 2005.
- Theatre of Image, *Pinocchio*, dir. Carpenter, K., seen at Seymour Centre, 2005.
- Theatre of Image, *Lulie The Iceberg*, dir. Carpenter, K., seen at Wharf Theatre, Sydney, 2007.
- Theatre of Image, *The Happy Prince*, dir. Carpenter, K., seen at Seymour Centre, 2008.
- Theatre of Image, *Pixel & friends... the colour show*, chor. Benjamin, N., seen at the Powerhouse Museum, 2008.
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