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Guildhall School of Music & Drama
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Being — In Tune

A Provocation Paper



Seeking ways of addressing isolation and
dislocation through engaging in the arts

Peter Renshaw September 2013

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People's stories lie at the heart of this paper – stories about how people with vision and creative energy use the arts to address some of the challenges arising from feelings of isolation and dislocation in society. People have to be given the opportunity to speak, to be listened to, so that their observations and experiences can be fed into the wider debate about shaping the frameworks for 'next' practice in learning and development in the arts.

The initial stimulus and funding for this Provocation came from Helena Gaunt, Assistant Principal (Research and Academic Development) at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama. For many years Helena has acted as a critical friend, and together with Sean Gregory, Director of Creative Learning, Barbican and Guildhall School, they have both helped to give this research a grounded reality and sense of direction. I never take their interest and support for granted. Another staunch critical friend is John Stephens who, with his enormous experience in music education, has always served as an invaluable sounding board for my thinking and writing over the past 30 years.

But deepest gratitude goes to the many people who have so willingly shared their stories and experience with me. Their commitment to pursue what matters to them, their drive, enthusiasm and depth of insight into the many challenges they encounter are nothing but inspirational. Therefore my sincere thanks go to all those arts practitioners, directors of arts organisations, researchers, young musicians and dancers, parents, homeless people and funders who have given me their time so generously. They are the people who have given life to this Provocation.

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1 Personal perspective

For the whole of my professional life I have been driven by a strong belief in the power of the arts to make a difference and a conviction that their potential will never be fully realised unless they respond creatively to a social and cultural world that is in constant flux. Time and time again I have seen how engaging in the arts in various contexts can add a special dimension to our lives – perhaps by helping us to find our creative voice, by opening new doors, extending our personal boundaries and providing opportunities for us to understand who we are. There is no doubt that the arts can be a source of inspiration, a celebration of the human spirit and can enhance the quality and meaning of our lives. The bold inventiveness of the arts, their ability to challenge our assumptions and help us see ourselves, others and the world through a different prism, must never be allowed to atrophy due to competing economies fighting to survive.

In fact, a recent NESTA report (Bakhshi, Hargreaves & Mateos-Garcia, 2013) shows that the UK's creative economy is one of its national assets, employing 2.5 million people and accounting for around one-tenth of the whole economy. Another report produced by the Centre for Economics and Business Research (2013) on behalf of Arts Council England made the telling observation that the arts budget accounts for less than 0.1% of public spending, yet it constitutes up to 0.4% of the nation's GDP. It would be a very blind government that fails to value the contribution made by the arts, culture, education and the creative industries to the life and livelihood of so many people in the country.

But this financial utilitarian argument is only one side of the coin. The other concerns the rich artistic, creative, emotional and spiritual benefits gained from actively engaging in the arts – benefits that no government can afford to ignore, and yet to which many increasingly pay lip service as they seek to juggle budget priorities.

This is not the place to rehearse the economic value of the arts and culture because the primary focus of this paper is to demonstrate the ways in which participating in the arts can help to transform the quality of people's lives – by strengthening their self-esteem, self-respect and sense of identity, by working together and developing a feeling of belonging, by seeking a measure of connectedness and coherence through different arts experiences. One of the main threads throughout the paper is to show how creative collaborative processes can enable any person, young or old, to build up a strong sense of who they are by empowering them to believe in themselves and take responsibility for their own lives and for those of others.

During this project I have been privileged to speak to a wide range of arts practitioners, directors of arts organisations, researchers, young musicians and dancers, parents, homeless people, and funders committed to the arts and social engagement. Their enthusiasm, dedication, clarity of vision and quality of achievement, often under extremely demanding conditions, has been enormously inspiring and it has spurred me on, yet again, to question how far the whole continuum of training and development of artists is fit for purpose. To what extent are conservatoires, colleges and other training organisations willing to re-examine their priorities and rearticulate the assumptions underlying what they do? How far are they preparing their arts practitioners to respond creatively to the massive changes taking place in society?

These questions, though fundamental, are not exactly new. They have been raised in different forms since the 1960s, notably in some key reports and initiatives amongst others:

- *Making Musicians* (1965). A Report to the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation on the training of professional musicians. (Chair, Sir Gilmour Jenkins)
- *Music in the Secondary School Curriculum* (1973-82). Sponsored by the Schools Council for Curriculum and Examinations. (Director, John Paynter)
- *Going on the Stage* (1975). A Report to the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation on professional training for drama. (Chair, Lord Vaizey)
- *The Arts Britain Ignores* (1976). An Inquiry into Ethnic Minority Arts Provision for the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, supported and published in association with the Community Relations Commission and the Arts Council of Great Britain. (Chair, Naseem Khan)
- *Support for the Arts in England and Wales* (1976). An Inquiry initiated by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation at the request of the Standing Conference of Regional Arts Associations and the Arts Council of Great Britain. (Chair, Lord Redcliffe-Maud)
- *Training Musicians* (1978). A Report to the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation on the training of professional musicians. (Chair, Lord Vaizey)
- *Dance Education and Training in Britain* (1980). A Report to the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation on dance education and training in Britain. (Chair, Peter Brinson)
- *The Arts in Schools: Principles, practice and provision* (1982). A Report to the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation on the place of the arts as part of the school curriculum in the maintained sector of education. (Chair, Peter Brinson)
- *Review of the London Music Conservatoires* (1990). A Report to a Committee of Enquiry for the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council. (Chair, Lord Gowrie)
- *Fit to Dance* (1996). The Report of the National Inquiry into Dancers' Health and Injury, administered and part-funded by Dance UK and published by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. (Authors, Peter Brinson and Fiona Dick)
- *Joining In* (1997). An investigation into participatory music for the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. (Chair, Anthony Everitt)
- *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education* (1999). A Report to the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education. (Chair, Sir Ken Robinson)
- *Creating a Land with Music* (2002). A Report on the work, education and training of professional musicians in the 21st century, commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for England and managed by Youth Music. (Chair of Steering Group, Peter Renshaw; Researcher and author of the Report, Rick Rogers)

The scope of these reports has been far-ranging, and time and again the question of the nature, purpose and relevance of the professional preparation of artists for a changing workplace has been highlighted. Over a time span of 50 years it is inevitable that all higher arts education institutions and arts organisations have had to respond to major political and structural changes, within a funding climate of increasing constraint.

Quite understandably, in the past there has often been resistance to re-examining what might count as core business, but with changing circumstances there is now greater willingness for institutions to consider broadening their perception of their role. This is especially true of those leaders whose political and cultural antennae are more finely tuned to the changing landscape. But there is still a body of teachers, students and artists who remain trapped in their self-regarding silos, fearful of change that they feel will be destabilising and lead to dumbing down and the dilution of quality. Hanging on to a fixed gold standard of 'excellence' there is a stubborn refusal to search for diverse notions of 'quality' that are more appropriate to different social and cultural settings.

It is my contention that a new paradigm is now needed to address the key issues confronting learning and development in the arts – one that draws together five sets of interconnections:

- Between a social and artistic imperative
- Between access and quality
- Between context and excellence
- Between creativity, innovation and risk-taking
- Between research, personal, artistic and professional development

The purpose of this paper is to offer a unique perspective based on careful and close observation and provocative discussion. It is hoped that creating a coherent paradigm of interconnections that resonates with where we are at in the world today could be a force for change. It could also provide a more realistic orientation and breadth of outlook that better equips arts practitioners to respond to the challenges of our rapidly changing cultural landscape. The different elements in this paradigm are discussed in some detail in chapter four, partly as a response to the many social, cultural and educational issues raised in chapters two and three.

It seems to me that having a breadth of perspective that is underpinned by a sense of interconnectedness is critical if arts practitioners are to respond creatively and responsibly to the multiple needs of audiences and the diverse constituencies in the community. This would help to shape the synergy between a social and artistic imperative that should drive a major strand of learning and development in the arts. In this context it is vital to understand the centrality of process in any participatory arts project. This is not always recognised by those professional artists and managers who place greater emphasis on product rather than process. In addition, undue attention to numbers, outcomes, targets and quantitative data can result in a mechanistic culture that so easily damages the subtle nuances of a creative process whose primary concern is the artistic and human development of all those involved in a project. One of the biggest challenges confronting artists and teachers at present is how to foster an enquiry-driven space that keeps the creative process alive.

This paper, then, takes the form of a Provocation and aims to stimulate discussion and debate about some of the fundamental issues arising from current practice. It is also intended to act as a catalyst for a number of future critical conversations drawing on leaders and practitioners in the field. Each conversation will be designed to provoke further discussion, exploring the need to redefine priorities and generating ways in which appropriate interventions can be made in the area of learning and development in the arts. The main thrust of the Provocation has been to see how engaging in the arts, especially through different forms of collaboration, can address feelings of isolation and dislocation by helping people to build up a sense of connectedness – a sense of 'being in tune' with themselves and others.

What are the implications of this for the training of arts practitioners? As indicated above, the paper concludes by seeking to capture the key elements of a learning environment in which innovation and creativity can flourish. A cultural milieu in which taking risks, seeing new possibilities, seizing opportunities and challenging established boundaries are seen as a central part of the learning process. In many ways the main features of this learning environment are not just mirrored but also clearly articulated in two recent policy documents at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama (2013a & 2013b) – its Teaching and Learning Strategy for 2013–17 and its School-wide assessment criteria. I would suggest that the proposed paradigm could only grow within the kind of cultural milieu being developed at the Guildhall School.

The initial impetus for this project came from the recognition of the transformative potential of engaging in collaborative arts processes, and the search for evidence to illustrate this conclusion. All the organisations and ensembles involved have a strong track record in participatory arts practice. The approach adopted at the beginning of the research concentrated on a series of semi-structured interviews and conversations with individuals and groups focusing on the following issues:

- Strengthening people's self-esteem, self-respect and sense of who they are through participating in the arts
- Developing a sense of belonging by breaking down feelings of alienation and isolation through working collaboratively in arts projects
- The role of arts practitioners in fostering creative and collaborative forms of learning in different sectors and social contexts
- The skills and attitudes required by arts practitioners if they are to engage effectively in creative collaborative work
- The implications for institutions responsible for the learning and development of arts practitioners

It is hoped that the evidence arising from this research makes a compelling case that supports the proposal for a new interconnected paradigm for learning and development in the arts

2 Addressing feelings of isolation and dislocation through the arts

2.1 'Unleashed'

Squares and Circles

A poem by Kieron Rennie

Around here
I hear the echoes
Of those
Saying I'll make things square.

My uncle once shared
That around here things were squared with fists, around here.
He told me about the various times he did the Ali Shuffle, in a scuffle.
How his
Fist
Did the tango in an opponent's face.

My father
My father told me people were
Popping and locking, around here.
The Boom-box was rocking, around here.

Looking around, I see how things have changed.

Fists no longer tango
Due volcanic egos that are prone to erupt.
Yeah, this is a serious issue.
Knives are now pushed in you, exposing tissue.

Popping and locking is now forgotten.
It's all out war
That many are locked in.
Borders; are defined by postcode
Entering another is a no go.
Gang signs have become logos.

Around here
Many vow it's an eye for an eye
The same reason many die, and many walk blind.

This poem, written by one of the Barbican Young Poets, captures something of the feelings lying behind the powerful show, *Unleashed*, performed at the Barbican in November 2012. It was only a year previously that London had been turned upside down by the summer riots, leaving many young people angry, disillusioned and disengaged from civic society. Youth unemployment was rife and this was compounded by growing feelings of inequality, injustice and alienation.

It was in this climate that *Unleashed* was born, drawing on the creative talent of young musicians, drummers, dancers, poets and filmmakers who were being nurtured by Barbican-Guildhall Creative Learning. Under the artistic direction of Walter Meierjohann and Kenrick Sandy, the voices of the young people lay at the heart of a rigorous creative process. The lyrics, the music, choreography, spoken word, films, beats, grooves and soundscapes, although shaped by professionals, were inspired and created by the young people themselves. They translated the negative anger provoked by the riots into a positive performance full of hope and renewal. This to me and to many others was an outstanding example of how the arts, through its creative processes, can transform people's lives.

With this background I am now going to draw on conversations, discussions and correspondence I have had over the last few months with some of the dancers, drummers and musicians connected to *Unleashed*. Basically I was trying to ascertain why engaging in the arts matters to them – why it is important in their lives and why they value it so much. We kept returning to two central questions: do they think that participating in the arts strengthens their self-esteem, self-respect and sense of who they are? And do they feel that working collaboratively in the arts enables them to develop a sense of belonging by breaking down feelings of alienation and isolation?

2.2

Boy Blue Entertainment

Interviews with:

- Kenrick 'H2O' Sandy, Artistic Director and choreographer
- Michael 'Mikey J' Asante, Artistic Director and music producer
- Vicky 'Skytilz' Mantey, Artist Leader, Da Bratz
- Bruno 'Boom' Perrier, Artist Leader, Da Bratz
- Chantelle Capstick, Dancer, Da Bluez

Boy Blue Entertainment, a Barbican Artistic Associate, is an Olivier Award-winning hip-hop dance company. Based in Maryland, East London, it trains young talent in its two youth groups – Da Bratz for ages between nine and 18, and Da Bluez for dancers between 17 and 21. One of the things that stand out in the work of Boy Blue is the raw energy, discipline, precision, dedication and confidence all the young people bring to their dancing. They are at the cutting edge of street culture, 'on the pulse' of what's happening and fearless in taking risks. Teamwork is of the essence and this is strengthened by the sense of family that is integral to everything they do.

In conversation Kenrick, artistic director and choreographer of Boy Blue, was clear how dancing had enhanced his own development as an individual and had given him a much clearer view of his identity. He understands how the skills acquired through dance – self-esteem, confidence and team-building – can be applied to everyday life. This is a very important aspect of his work with young people. He said that:

my experience in life has made me unconsciously push other people into having self-respect, self-esteem and self-confidence because you need that in the arts. In order for you to feel that you can be an expressionist in this field, you have to believe in your work. We are in a world of opinions and you have to be strong, stronger than the opinion, in order to make sure you are 100% of what you've done....

With a lot of the young people one of my major goals is as much as you're learning and understanding dance technique, dance styles, it's also important to understand yourself. For example, in freestyling and solo work, if you're learning choreography, you get into a system. You get a sense of order and a lot of young people are very comfortable with order...But when you actually put them on the spot to create their own directions, that's when they start to lose that confidence. You then have to build that confidence because once you as an individual are confident in your own particular movement, when you come back as a team, the team becomes even stronger because each individual is confident within themselves.

In discussions with Boy Blue leaders they all stressed the important link between building up confidence in dance and transferring this attitude into everyday life. They see this as critical in the training and development of the young people, not only in the context of dance but also in giving them the strength and skills to deal with the challenges they might encounter in their daily lives. As Bruno said, "if we can at least give them that confidence in their dance, then hopefully this will filter out to other areas in their life where they are not so confident".

For Boy Blue confidence lies at the heart of everything they do. Without it they would never move forwards and extend the boundaries of their artistic work. Kenrick just doesn't see failure as an option.

Being fearless has been embedded in the kids indirectly because they see it in us. I wouldn't say we're over confident but we're just like, 'I'm going to get up and go'. We're go-getters. We're trend setters. We're going to do our thing. If everyone is going to the left, we're going to the right. Let's just bring in something new.

And the kids are also doing that. The risks the kids are taking in their movement is now making us step to the plate even more, to bring them new and exciting adventures and challenges. Because they're advancing so quickly at such a young age, I have to sometimes look and say, 'OK, so you can do this, you can do that'. I now need to find a way of challenging you and give you some different combinations of movement because you've excelled even my physical parameters.

Boy Blue can be seen as a learning community, a family with a strong work ethic sharing a similar perspective on life and holding similar values. In her interview Chantelle, a 19-year-old dancer, considers that a communal respect energises the company in which people are treated fairly and individual voices listened to. At the core of Boy Blue lies a cooperative spirit which is passed down through the generations. Chantelle feels that:

Boy Blue has a strong sense of cooperation – a big family – it is not about superficial appearances and being competitive. It is very supportive and everyone wants the best out of each other. We all know that we are together, that we perform together and we help each other to be better.

Addressing feelings of isolation and dislocation through the arts

Everyone teaches each other. Kenrick may be the leader but he respects what others say and contribute. He also respects other art forms and encourages people to pursue their own other interests. The world is Boy Blue but each person is very different, with different beliefs and ways of dancing. They respect each other but also bring something new to each other.

Initially dancers might be attracted to Boy Blue because of its visceral artistic language. Skytilz feels it has “a different kind of swagger and vibe...It is more streetwise and a bit more rugged”. She went on:

I guess with choreography you can do stuff that’s really neat, clean and tidy, which we do sometimes. But what I like is that there have been times when it’s a bit more raw, I suppose, a bit more street.

But Skytilz and Bruno also see the importance of the relationship that has been built up between this cutting edge artistic language and the sense of belonging, the collective identity of the company. They are convinced that the feeling of ‘family’ is fundamental to the success of Boy Blue. Skytilz puts it this way:

I guess that [family] is probably one of the most important things. Because if you don’t feel like you fit somewhere, you’re not going to want to stay, no matter how great the company might be and how much dance-wise you might fit in. If you don’t fit in personality-wise and vibe- and family-wise, it can be the most uncomfortable position to be in.

Kenrick and Mikey also stressed the significant place that family holds in the company. It gives people a sense of connection, a feeling of identity that not only contributes hugely to the success of its work but also binds everyone together. The importance of artists being open to place and to others as they seek to understand the identity or multiple identities of the participants in any creative process is discussed further in section 4.2. In the context of Boy Blue Kenrick feels that:

For us, family is one of the most important things. It’s about that unit and it’s about patriotism. It’s about being a part of something and the individual taking ownership of it. So if you’re a part of Boy Blue, understand it’s not just about I’m in Boy Blue; it’s about ‘I am Boy Blue’. I am part of this crew and this crew is a part of me. From a social point of view they jam with each other, they go out with each other. You know, they look out for each other. In the same way, we look out for them. It’s like we are kind of big brothers, uncles, dads to some of these kids, because as Mike was saying, we have that kind of time.

What stands out with Boy Blue is that they have created a holistic way of life in which there is unity between the artistic thrust of the company and its moral purpose – its concern for people and how they relate to each other and to the world outside. Its discipline, work ethic, drive, sense of shared responsibility and understanding of where young people are coming from can only help everyone to deal constructively with the pressures, challenges and expectations that might arise in daily life.

A powerful example of understanding the connection between dance and the realities of the world outside could be seen in *Unleashed*, with the choreographed dance of rival gangs, Orange and Purple. It was clear that the young dancers understood the dynamics of gangs only too well, but their knowledge was internalised through the dance and presented in a strong authentic performance. In discussion with Bruno and Skytilz I asked the question, ‘if the kids were not creating this dance with Boy Blue, would they be engaged in gangs on the streets?’. They saw the connection immediately and recognise that as the dancers get older, some of them lose their focus, and change direction that might lead them into a gang. But there is only so much they feel they can do as they are not their parents. Both acknowledge that young people “are going to do what they’re going to do”.

Nevertheless, both Bruno and Skytilz are acutely aware of the importance of being there for the young dancers if they are having problems at home or with their peer group, and might be feeling alienated and disconnected from things. But they also understand why there have to be boundaries in their dealings with the young people. They form part of the mutual respect and trust that help to bind the family together. Skytilz comments that:

You can tell if something's wrong with any one of the kids because we know them really well. I think being in our environment probably takes their mind off it but it's one of those things where you can't cross that line. So you might know that there is something going on, but you can't ask that much in depth. If they come and tell you, then that's different. But I don't think I've ever really gone up to any of them when I've thought there's something really wrong, and said anything, because I just think you've got to be careful of that line.

This view is echoed by Bruno:

I don't want to cross that line. I think what we want is for them to know that we're there if need be. But I'm not going to come and pester you if something's going on because I am the type of person that just wants to be left alone. If something has really got to me, then just leave me, let me do what I need to do, leave me alone. So that's how I see it with these guys.

Boy Blue manages to create a safe space, a nurturing environment, in which dancers can pursue their passion, but also one in which they can discover who they are in a supportive social group. There is no need for them to search for their identity in the context of a gang. Their sense of belonging, their self-knowledge is gained through their interaction within the group.

When discussing this with Chantelle, the very committed 19-year-old dancer, she is convinced that engaging in dance with Boy Blue has helped to ground her, strengthen her sense of self-worth and given her a clear reference point with which to view her life. It has given her knowledge, skills and motivation, but has also opened doors about understanding how others feel and interact within the group. Learning how to respond to these reciprocal relationships can only enhance the development of each person and as Chantelle points out, through the richness of her experience with Boy Blue "you have choreographed your own journey and that's a very strong element of who you are".

There is no doubt that Boy Blue is an exemplar of the new paradigm of learning and development outlined at the beginning of this paper, with its strong connection between social and artistic drivers; between access and quality; between context and excellence; between creativity, innovation and risk-taking; and between personal, artistic and professional development. It is not surprising that Boy Blue Entertainment is seen as a much respected Barbican Artistic Associate.

2.3 Barbican Drum Works

Interview with:

Jo Wills, Co-Founder and Artistic Leader of Barbican Drum Works

Discussion with:

Members of Drumheads

Barbican Drum Works see themselves as a large ‘family’ of professional and non-professional musicians who share a passion for making and performing music through drumming. Its members are aged between 11 and 23, and come largely from East London. Energy, precision, discipline, power, creative flair and teamwork help to characterise Drum Works, which has a compelling collective identity and a commitment to strengthening the self-confidence, self-esteem and self-respect of the musicians. The way in which the drummers explore and create their music together enables them to have a clear sense of purpose and a strong sense of belonging – a similar pragmatic philosophy to that of Boy Blue.

For Jo Wills, co-founder and artistic leader of Drum Works, a key thread running through their work is its capacity to engage young people and to empower social change. Fundamentally it is about ‘positive empowerment’.

It’s empowering people to be in control of their own lives. What we’re trying to do is show people that they can achieve great things if they put their mind to it. And we’re doing that through this drumming medium. All these things about self-esteem and self-respect are really core to the project.

Jo points out that drumming in many cultures, for instance in Latin American, African and Afro-Caribbean countries, pursues a transmission model of teaching. This might work in some contexts but the philosophy underlying Drum Works necessarily points to a more interactive mode of learning in which the young people share in the decision-making process. Part of its success lies in everyone building up a sense of shared responsibility, both towards each other and within the creative process. They need to feel that they are achieving at an individual and collective level.

It’s about people setting goals for themselves and attaining those goals, supporting each other and being really respectful of each other as well. One of the guys said that ‘if the support and respect for each other that exists within the programme existed all round the world, the world would be a much calmer place’. Maybe calmer is the wrong word, but maybe a more respectful place!

One of the challenges confronting any successful group is to ensure that the attitudes and principles embedded in its ways of working can be transferred to other contexts. They have to have currency in the outside world – they cannot remain enclosed in a bubble. Jo is well aware of this possible danger and he gave a compelling example of how the attitudes caught through Drum Works have helped to transform the life of one of the drummers. So much so that this young person has now become a linchpin within the drumming group. Jo felt that this young musician was at a pivotal point in his personal and school life where so many aspects of what he was doing were falling apart. Nothing seemed to work for him. All trust had broken down and the result was negative angry behaviour.

Drum Works became his lifeline. Both Jo and his colleague, Ross, offered the drummer something he could do well and that he enjoyed doing. But most importantly, they gave him the trust that he didn’t experience in other areas of his life. He was valued, respected and given the support and understanding that he so sorely needed. What’s more, he was given responsibility which gave him the motivation to become one of the strongest members of the project and is now

being trained for leadership roles. With this newfound confidence he has become committed to other activities beyond drumming. As Jo points out, “it has opened new areas of the world for him. I think it’s given him a belief in himself. That’s exactly what we’re trying to do”.

In discussion with Drumheads, the most experienced musicians in Drum Works, they expressed the importance of the strong connection between making music together and the social bond this builds up, with its shared sense of responsibility. They understand that there is a synergy between their musical and social development. One of the Drumheads puts it this way:

I think socially it’s really important, but also in a musical sense....I think there’s something about drumming and the rhythm stuff for me personally in terms of music. It’s affected the way I think about music at so many different levels, even in terms of the connections in the brain. Do you know what I mean? The way of thinking about music has just changed for me. So musically it’s really important to me, in terms of my musical development.

Another important dimension of their learning in Drumheads lies in the area of transferable life skills and attitudes. They could see an immediate connection between the skills and confidence acquired through their life in Drumheads and their application in the world outside.

We gain lots of transferable skills. Like when we go into college and things, I think just the confidence of being able to work with other people, generally just being sociable. I think Drumheads is just a brilliant way of getting to know how to interact. It’s just confidence really. Like when you’re going to other places, you’ll be able to think, Drumheads – I’ll be able to talk to these people.

The live performances we’ve done with Drumheads have been amazing, really good stuff. And that really helps with confidence because we can go out and chat to however many people we want to, and there’s no obstacles because we’ve done this all before with Drumheads.

What stands out from the discussion with the drummers is their commitment to the values underpinning the interactive way of learning developed by the leaders of Drumheads – they much respect its democratic approach and its egalitarian philosophy.

I’d say as a learning group we’re socialist. If we think about how we work everyone is really equal, even compared to Ross and Jo. When they ask us to input, they will listen....they actually listen to what we say and they do what we say. It’s nice not just to be told to do something.

When questioned whether the way of life embedded in Drumheads might be regarded as rather idealistic and cut off from the tough realities of the world outside, the response was that “it’s more like a sectioned utopia away from the world”. The conversation continued:

(P.R.) Well then, is that a problem? If it becomes a utopia in which you feel good within this group, then when you get outside, is there a mismatch between the world out there and in here?

(Drumheads) Well, a utopia in here and then we want to bring the utopia to the world – want to spread the love.

We work with other groups. We’re not locked off only with each other. We work with the dancers. We work with other drumming groups. We can mix with them and do their stuff. With the dancers I feel like we’ve got a language and they have theirs, and when it came together [in *Unleashed*] we created a new language – something like that.

(P.R.) Well, that’s interesting. It’s not a verbal language is it?

(Drumheads) No, it’s more a way of being.

This insight into what it is to be human and their understanding of how engaging in the arts can strengthen people's connection with each other kept recurring throughout the discussion. They fully appreciate that their life in Drum Works has helped to give them a strong sense of place and belonging, and they carry this knowledge with them in their lives outside. But perhaps equally interesting, they are well aware that through their drumming project they are beginning to create a new genre of music that very much embodies who they are – a unique musical identity that represents the disparate voices in the group and mirrors the multi-cultural world of London. As one of the drummers said, "I think our sound is definitely like a London sound....You'll have to come back in 50 years and see if everyone says, oh yes, that's an East London drumming tradition"! The full force of this statement must not be underestimated and it demonstrates the strength of the relationship between social and artistic development. The identities of the young musicians in Drumheads are inextricably bound to the musical life of the group. But grounded as they are in the multi-faceted social and cultural world of East London, they also bring that spirit and awareness into the development of their artistic voice.

2.4 Future Band

Interviews with:

- Detta Danford, Artist Leader
- Natasha Zielazinski, Artist Leader
- Eleanor Church, Parent
- Evan Jones, Parent
- Una Murtagh, Parent
- Sian Phillips, Parent

Discussions with:

- Members of Future Band

Email correspondence with:

- Immy Blackburn-Horgan, Member of Future Band

Future Band is a creative ensemble drawn from across London, which meets regularly to explore making music, to think, compose, interpret and play. It comprises young musicians aged between eight and 16, together with students from the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, led by Detta Danford and Natasha Zielazinski.

The musical identity of the group reflects the personality and creative voice of every band member, as well as taking inspiration from musicians and artists around the world. Improvisation, composition, collaboration and performance are at the heart of Future Band's practice as an ensemble. Over the last five years their experience of working together has led them to develop a distinctive approach and sound. More recently this has included discussions, group reflection and an interest in investigating the identity of the band, how they make music and what new directions they might want to explore. Their thoughts can be captured in the following observations made by the young musicians when asked how they would describe the nature of Future Band.

Our Music	Our Identity	Our Practice
New Unique Original Remembered Flexible Adapting Complex Strong Rich	Collective A mindset Owned Connected	Investigative Reflective Reflexive Ongoing Trust Openness Acceptance Sharing Willingness
'pieces made from ideas'	'a way of thinking'	'it's like a cave that you want to explore and it's endless'
'special, unique and ours'	'being original and being yourself'	'tasting, choosing, deciding together'
'a link for the past to get to the future'	'it only works if you have everyone coming together'	'a tiny idea that can grow'
'like an ice sculpture, you do it, it will melt and then it goes away again'	'it's not mine, it's ours'	'building things, thinking how you can build that thing'
'the sound of this whole big heart going thump, thump'	'if you've got the right way of thinking, you're already in the band'	'a journey where the destination is unknown'

(See Barbican Centre and Guildhall School of Music & Drama, *Future Play: Music Systems in the 21st Century*, 2013, p.15)

One of the common characteristics of Boy Blue, Drum Works and Future Band is that each group embodies its own way of life, its own identity which brings with it a strong feeling of belonging – a sense of connectedness which strengthens the way people might respond to such feelings as alienation and isolation. In conversation with Detta and Natasha, Detta comments on the connection between creating music together and the shaping of identity.

I think there's something about the way we create music. The way we come up with ideas together and explore sound and composition always surprises me.... I feel we've seen the young people in the band really grow and express themselves in lots of different ways. And I relate to that feeling of getting a sense of who you are as a musician, but also as a person, in terms of how you feel about yourself as yourself, and how you see yourself as part of the group, and how these interact.... A sense of belonging encompasses everyone in the band. When you feel part of something in that way I think it goes across boundaries between us as leaders, students, young people and parents.

Feeling rooted within a family of musicians or dancers is critical to the social, emotional and creative development of the young people in all these groups. Belonging to a family that they can trust gives them the confidence to explore, be creative, take risks and respond to the unknown – all crucial skills that can be transferred to contexts in the outside world.

As can be seen from the above observations by the young musicians in Future Band, they are well aware that the strength of what they do depends as much on the mutual respect, mutual listening and support of the group as on its collective

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creative voice. This 'voice' is theirs, they have created and shaped it together; they feel responsible to each other and want what is best for 'their' music.

In a discussion with Future Band one member puts it this way:

As well as respect for each other, people have a lot of respect for what we're doing. Everyone is proud to be a member of Future Band and so sometimes, even when we disagree on something, normally someone goes 'well this may be my opinion', but to be honest, we always do what's best for the piece....people really do what they think sounds best for the music, and that kind of respect for what we're doing gives us a really strong unity.

The musicians in Future Band manage to strike that delicate balance between fostering individuality within a spirit of unity.

Everyone brings something different to Future Band – we're all so individual, we all play lots of instruments and we all have quite different musical styles and tastes – [but] we're also like a big family. People come and people leave; there are always new faces and new ideas and we are all really supportive....Basically we're like a family. We all support each other and we all do what's best for our unit together.

As with Drumheads, the young people in Future Band respond positively to the interactive form of learning that is democratic and egalitarian in its approach. They feel they are sharing in the leadership and assuming a responsible role in the decision making process. One of the musicians commented that:

I haven't come across many groups where you have people, yeah almost leaders, who go around and treat everyone else as equal and don't have their pre-made ideas of what music is and how you play music. It's like what *we think* music is as a group. So you can come along with some idea and it gives people a chance to pool whatever kind of creativity they have and just put it in.

This is one of the fundamental strengths of Future Band, in which they strike a fine balance between 'making' and 'playing' music. The young musicians are the authors of their own music, a feeling that is enhanced by the informal approach to learning adopted by the music leaders in a non-formal setting. Although there are music teachers who successfully use informal methods to foster music making within the more formal constraints of a school, the philosophy of practice adopted by Future Band necessarily empowers the young musicians to own the music they make together. This sense of ownership is critical to the work of Future Band.

I think Future Band is about the fact that we come here to make music, not to play music. If you go to orchestra or something, they just hand out sheet music; you rehearse it, rehearse it, perform it and then start on something else. But here we come, we put some ideas together and we actually make something of our own.

The importance of this sense of ownership was echoed by another member of the Band who put it this way:

I think going to Future Band is very different to school where you learn music or going to music summer schools. How it's different is that we're creating music instead of actually playing someone's music. Many people out in the world actually play music. Not so many compose. So having more people coming to Future Band you get to explore a different type of music. But you're also creating it; it's your own new music.

This creative collaborative approach to making music is a defining feature of the work of Future Band and it helps to give its members a broad perspective towards their understanding of music.

Personally I think this creativeness of Future Band makes us less snobbish about music. Most people look at music, they have these particular styles of music and they like a certain style. It's about a label for them – what type of music it is, what artist it's by. But in Future Band it really changes all that, because now you can listen to a piece of music, and you don't hear the composer, you don't hear the style. You hear the things you can be interested in it because you think, oh I like that bit. I may not necessarily like the style but this bit is interesting and I could use this. ...It really changes your perspective on music. You stop boxing it into different categories and start looking at it as one big thing that you can experiment with.

The way in which Future Band works has created a learning environment that gives everyone the confidence and skills to become an open, accepting, reflective, creative and flexible musician. Each individual voice matters and each is given equal respect. As one young person said, "in Future Band you are accepted for who you are".

Parental perspective

Perhaps it is not surprising, but many of the views arising from the conversations with four parents of children in Future Band tend to reiterate those that were raised in the discussions with the young musicians. Basically, they value that their children have been given development opportunities and access to a form of music education and music connections that they feel cannot be found in the mainstream. Some key points stand out.

The inclusivity of Future Band, based on mutual respect and valuing people equally, draws out the best of the young musicians. Through the creative process all the children have a voice, learning to listen and play with each other, and building on what they develop together. It is good to have the opportunity to work in a group, learning to respect and tolerate different points of view. Making and performing music with others is a very empowering experience. It helps to build up confidence, giving them a clearer sense of who they are and a positive self-image. It was noted that since the performance of *Unleashed*, the children have become more sophisticated and much tighter in their playing. They are taking more pride in how the Band sounds as a collective ensemble and how they work together.

The parents also appreciate how the richness and connectedness of the total environment in which Future Band works adds another dimension to the musical experience. Because they meet a wide range of people through their contact with the Barbican and the Guildhall, this helps them to be confident and flexible in different social situations.

One final but significant point stressed by the parents was that by encouraging the development of individuality within the group, Future Band creates conditions that enable each child to feel comfortable within themselves. One mother said that as her daughter gets older and recognises that there are a lot of pressures to conform and follow certain paths, within Future Band she has learnt that "it is ok to be the way she is, and that there are other people like her, and she can be creative and have something to say". A quality that will stand her in good stead in life.

Email correspondence with Immy Blackburn-Horgan

Immy expressed her wish to participate in this discussion but preferred to do it through email correspondence, as she feels she lacks confidence contributing in a group. She joined Guildhall Connect as a flautist when she was eight and she stayed in the ensemble when it became Future Band. She is now 13 years of age. Her family background is complex and as one can see from her correspondence, her five years in Future Band have been her lifeline. They have helped her to grow in

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confidence and to feel less isolated within her peer group. At the age of eight Immy was bullied at school and she had to move schools to get a better education. At the same time she is a Registered Carer to her disabled mother and elderly and disabled grandmother.

We have little money and little time. Mum is disabled, works part-time, and dad has a bad back and works part-time. We all care full time for my disabled Nana (since I was born my parents have cared for everyone in our family – three grandparents and three main relatives – four have now died), plus others with other issues. We cannot afford music, an instrument is too much money, lessons are subsidised due to my parents' income but there are no teachers available under this scheme.

Future Band has not only given music to me but also a purpose and fantastic experiences I could never have had in my life. It makes me want to have better experiences, not just to follow some of my family members who think drink, drugs, crime and guns are cool. I am learning how to read music, compose, play and be in performances – so awesome....

[When I joined Future Band] I was feeling isolated, not fitting in and sad at the lack of kindness around me from adults as well as the kids. Future Band and its safe and inspiring teachers made me less scared of trying a new school. I felt it was ok to be different and that could actually be a good thing. My ideas were not only listened to, but the team treated me with respect and wanted me to ask and question why and what we were doing. I did not feel stupid if I did not understand something as I knew I could ask. The music side let me get out a lot of my frustrations and feelings, helping me cope and making me have something good to look forward to.

Being part of a group saved me from feeling odd and because I did not fit in [at school], I never would. It gave me a chance to see difference as not a bad thing. The music gave us kids a common thing to work on; so not competitive or consumerism about who is the best, has the best or has the latest is the coolest. I felt valued even though I could not play the best. I had a charity loaned flute and did not feel confident talking to the kids of my own age as they might judge me or think I am odd. The way we worked in Future Band stopped all this negative and nasty stuff, and gave us a purpose to all work together. This was such a brilliant time for me.

I feel I have grown up being part of Future Band. I felt odd on my own, out of things, and the creative side of Future Band has made me feel I can be different and still belong, making me feel less isolated and alone. I feel I am me, proud to be me and Future Band has helped me come to this point. I have a new group of mates. I am not the cool or popular one but I make efforts to chat, join in and share sweets and treats. I would never have put myself forward like this before. The team encourage us all, not just the popular, the pushy or talented, but all of us to be part of all the things we do.

Future Band is an amazing place. I'm not sure anything else is around like it – have been to drop-ins locally, in London and other places, but just one offs. They are not helped by such a talented team of leaders and supporters who make Future Band somewhere I want to go, somewhere I want to do my best, somewhere I feel safe and most of all, somewhere I have got so much from. I think I am now able to cope better with problems, bullying, family, stresses, as it has a way of showing you how to manage things yourself....

At Christmas I composed some music for my parents and played it on Christmas Day as their gift. I also did the same for my Nana. I have set up my own Granny Watch on my street for the lonely grannies (all the granddads are dying) and did them a mini concert of carols on my flute on Christmas Day as they ate their food. Then I went to the Homeless and Transgender group and played for them – not carols, as they were not into Christmas. They were

wonderful, joking that I was their star attraction, filming, clapping and being really silly and great. I would never have dared do things like this on my own as I would never have felt good enough.

There is little doubt that Future Band has helped to transform Immy's life in ways that go well beyond music. This is acknowledged by her mother in her reflections on this correspondence with her daughter.

This has actually been really beneficial to Immy as it has given her time to think through her life and losses in a constructive way. She is able to laugh as she remembers the family members who are no longer with us and see how Future Band has been a constant positive in the past four to five years. Clare and the team are very balanced and not only bring music, composing and creativity into Immy's life but also a focus that is inspiring to her for her future. She sees she does not need to follow the role models in our family and that there are other choices and opportunities. I guess that has been the most impressive part, capturing a young girl when she is seven or eight and consistently offering opportunities that she would never have had access to with our family, income and life issues.

Immy's story is a powerful example of how making and playing music in a group has enabled her to build up a sense of 'being in tune' with herself and with others around her – whether it is at home, in her community or in Future Band itself.

2.5 Making music with homeless people

Over the last decade or more there has been a growing recognition that participating in arts activities can help homeless people to combat feelings of alienation and isolation. We have seen how the members of Boy Blue, Drum Works and Future Band have developed a strong sense of place and belonging through engaging in dance and music. On the other hand, for homeless people, for whatever historical or personal reason, many lack confidence, suffer from low self-esteem and feel frighteningly vulnerable and marginalised in society.

Many avenues are used by various agencies to try to alleviate at least some of these difficulties. The arts are increasingly active in providing an understanding and supportive environment that enables isolated homeless people to get in touch with their own creativity and build up social and practical skills within a group. These opportunities can really begin to change people's lives.

This mission lies at the heart of Streetwise Opera (2013) who work through music with up to 500 homeless people a year in 11 centres across England and Wales. Their aims are extremely positive, focusing on celebration rather than need, and their approach is highly professional.

Our productions platform the skills of our performers in a professional arena, showing them that whatever life throws at you, you can achieve great things; underpinning these productions, our workshops are a dependable source of creativity in lives where everything else can be changing.

In a discussion of the impact of Streetwise Opera on homeless people it points to the connection between their participation in music theatre activities and the quality of their engagement in the wider world. Much of this is to do with building up confidence and self-respect, and gaining a sense of purpose and direction in their lives.

Coming to a session, singing, tackling opera and singing a solo are all small challenges that result in showing people that they can actually take on big challenges. This leads to better engagement in the other services on offer to them,

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and onwards towards taking part in our Work Placement Scheme, community engagement, living independently and employment.

Another organisation that for many years has made an impact on the lives of vulnerable homeless people is The Connection at St. Martin-in-the-Fields (2013) in central London. Amongst their many activities they run a programme of art classes called Outsider Art Work, together with a series of music workshops, Outward Sound, in improvisation, composition and song writing, which is driven by the creativity of the participants and led by Jackie Walduck.

Jackie is also the Artistic Director of Ignite, the Wigmore Hall Learning's (2013) resident ensemble, which works regularly with homeless people at the Cardinal Hume Centre in Westminster. Again, through various creative projects the musicians respond to the existing musical interests of the participants, helping them to find their own musical voices and make new music together.

Most recently, in the Dialogue Festival of January-February 2013, Barbican – Guildhall Creative Learning formed a band called The Messengers comprising Guildhall Leadership students and homeless people from St. Mungo Community Housing Association. This was led by Sigrun Saevarsdóttir-Griffiths. The core values of St. Mungo's (2013) – respect and ambition; excellence and creativity; equality and diversity – also underpinned the collaborative work of The Messengers. As this was the first time both groups had come together to make and perform music, they all had to overcome their fears, apprehensions and vulnerabilities. Once trust had been built up and they felt comfortable with the creative process, the musicians created work they could be proud of – something that really mattered to them and would live on in their memories for some time to come.

In conversation with two musicians from St. Mungo's – Oksana, a trumpet player originally from Russia, and Dragan, a guitarist from former Yugoslavia – they both explained why their experience of making music together in the band was so important to them.

Oksana had been feeling particularly low and depressed for over two years. The support provided by St. Mungo's had become her lifeline, but playing in the band with the Guildhall students rekindled her love of life and renewed her sense of purpose. As she said in her interview:

I started doing music like six years old until probably 11 or 12. Then for 25 years I never had a trumpet in my hands. And here, fortunately, I have had the opportunity to try the trumpet. Since I've tried, I feel amazing. It's just an unbelievable feeling and has brought me back to life. I was so down before – for two years completely not myself.

I really appreciate the St. Mungo's and Guildhall music band project for that – just to bring me back to life. I feel myself, like I've been before a long time ago. I didn't have these happy feelings for a long time as well. So I think the project makes me happy and healthy – completely different.... When I play, for example, I just don't think about anything. This is number one. I'm exactly with the music, flying so fast and so far. So when the session is finished, it's just a bit like something's missing in my life.

Oksana is remarkably honest and went on to discuss the impact of making music on her mental health, on her wellbeing:

This morning I had a meeting with my psychiatrist from the focus team of three ladies. I think they saw me different because I was full of energy, yeah, completely new. I've been telling them about the band, where I'm going, and what I feel as well. And you know, they were excited to see me like that. But they know about me, I am fragile and I'm very

sensitive. Anybody can hurt me or something. But you know now I can drive myself completely differently. I learn how to cover myself and I explore myself in the music when I am playing.

Like the musicians in Drumheads and Future Band, Oksana could see clearly that making music in a group had helped her to gain a much stronger sense of who she is.

You find yourself through the music, and realise who you are, your personality. And you know, who's around you is very important as well. These people from the music school bring you up as well. They help you because I was really unsure about the notes, how I have to play when I started. Now I can't stop it.

By the end of the project Oksana commented that she had discovered a sense of place where she felt comfortable within a family – something she had not felt for some time.

I feel like this is my family and I am part...I can feel myself in a right place. That's how we say it in Russian actually...I could be here more and more. I don't want to go from here. I don't want to go, I don't want to leave. I just want to stay here and have fun with all the people around. You know, I am very happy. I was invited here by St. Mungo's and really it's unforgettable, a new page in my life. I can write about that when I'm older.

Each homeless person has their own story. Dragan was born in former Yugoslavia, in Serbia. He now sees himself as British with a British passport but he has been homeless for over ten years. In that time St. Mungo's has been his major support, providing accommodation and giving him the opportunity to take guitar classes at Westminster Day Centre and joining creative workshops with Jackie Walduck at The Connection at St. Martin's. It was through St. Mungo's that Dragan became a member of The Messengers band and he is hoping to continue with this connection.

For Dragan music has become the mainstay of his life. Making music with others has given him something to live for. In conversation with him he said that:

Without music I would be definitely still sleeping on the streets. Westminster Day Centre helped me four years ago. They still have guitar classes and I started from there. I thought, my God, this is lovely. And it's because of music. It just keeps me going, you know.

Dragan enjoys the challenge of improving on the guitar – “it just keeps me moving on and on. I'm getting stronger and better. I think I'm improving”. He values the benefits of being in a band with trained musicians who can help him develop his musical skills – “I am a street musician and don't know everything. I am still struggling but it's ok, I'm getting there”. This sense of achievement is important to him, but he also feels that his commitment to music affects him emotionally – “yeah, even now, I am still struggling with emotions, you know”.

Dragan concludes with acknowledging the role that St. Mungo's has played in opening the doors to music – “I'd like to thank St. Mungo's for this. It just keeps me moving. I've got something to do, otherwise I'd still be depressed, you know – lost”.

One of the important outcomes of the Dialogue Festival is the recognition that this kind of creative music-making needs to be sustained, not only with the young people but also with the St. Mungo musicians. In a sense there is a moral obligation to build on this legacy. What is equally interesting is that some of the parents of children in Future Band could see the potential of Future Band doing a joint project with the musicians from St. Mungo's, when all participants could learn a lot from each other.

During one of the evenings of the Dialogue Festival, after the performance by Future Band the young musicians sat in the audience and listened to The Messengers band play. According to the parents, the children, through their experience of working in Future Band, empathised with and fully understood the challenges confronting the St. Mungo musicians who were not used to performing. The rawness of their feelings was picked up by the children who were receptive to the demands of this kind of performing context. They could see that the performance meant a lot to The Messengers. They understood the feeling of togetherness in the group and found the performance not only powerful but also very humbling.

The children projected into the feelings experienced by the St. Mungo musicians because they have been there themselves. As one parent observed, “you saw the vulnerability, fear, excitement, kind of incredulousness – like, hey people are actually rooting for us and wanting us to be there”. For her, “being involved in music is about our humanness”. She then added:

I don't think it was so important that they had to make a great sound or they were fantastic musicians. It was about being....when you have a baby and it's starting to crawl and it's starting to toddle, to bang on things and make a noise and sing its song. As a nurturing parent, you encourage that and you give them a voice to express themselves.... and then you know, you want to keep that going. It's respecting their voice. I think it's something to do with....it's innate in human beings to want to be creative in that way; to want to sing, to want to be together, to want to make something. It's like a celebration, like a party, all joining in. It's in every culture in some form, whether it's in religious worship or having a party, dancing, all sorts of ways that it manifests itself. It's a way of being together and it's a safe way of being together.

Perhaps it is this 'safe way of being together', of making something together, of performing something together, of being respectful together, of being supportive together, that lies at the heart of this creative way of working. It strikes a very human chord and is fundamental to the philosophy underlying the work of both Future Band and The Messengers. If they were to work together, rich opportunities could open up for further developments in shared learning and shared responsibility. But it would also be equally important to ensure that this strong support model allows for individual initiative and individual development. The group needs to be seen as a stimulus rather than a prop. Respect for individual contributions made within the group depends on each person being encouraged to have a distinctive voice together with the technique to deliver what they want to say. This reciprocal relationship between the group and the individual is fundamental to the development of any creative ensemble.

2.6 Intergenerational arts practice

Developing further the idea of children working together with groups of vulnerable older people, a lot could be learnt from the well-tested experience of Magic Me. This is an exemplary model of intergenerational arts practice founded in 1989 by its Director, Susan Langford, and based in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Its work is underpinned by five core principles:

- **There is an intergenerational focus.**
Young and older people come together as equal partners, with a common purpose
- **Relationship building is conscious, not accidental.**
Projects, sessions and activities are designed to enable young and older people to develop relationships in meaningful ways

- **Creative and expressive arts activities are central to our work.**
Making something together is a focus for meeting and an important outcome. Through arts activity we enable thinking, feeling, doing and reflecting
- **There is equality of access to arts activities.**
Activities are designed to take account of the needs, abilities and confidence levels of culturally diverse groups of older and younger people, with a variety of life experience
- **Reflection is built into each project.**
There is time for young and older participants to think and talk about what's happening as projects develop. Sometimes this will happen in the intergenerational group, sometimes with young or older people on their own. As much as possible arts processes are used to enable reflection to happen. (See Stirling, J. [2006]. *Report on a Programme of Continuing Professional Development and Good Practice*. Quoted in Mayo, McAvinchey and O'Dair, 2012, p.18)

Magic Me draws on a team of musicians, dancers, photographers, printmakers and actors to design and lead a variety of creative projects that realise its mission of 'bringing generations together to build a stronger safer community'.

They enable young people aged 8+ and adults aged 60+ to meet and team up through shared, creative activity. Intergenerational groups might meet on a weekly basis in schools, museums, older people's clubs, care homes, community and cultural organisations. Participants are often diverse in culture and faith as well as age group. (Organ, 2013, p.47)

There is a mutual understanding that the arts practitioners and participants come together to work towards a shared purpose that helps to address the challenges of isolation and dislocation often experienced by older people. In their research into the art and craft of intergenerational work commissioned by Magic Me, Mayo, McAvinchey and O'Dair (2012) make a strong case for the value of intergenerational practice:

There is now a substantial and convincing body of evidence from education, psychology, child and youth work, gerontology, health and social care that illustrates the potential benefits of *good* intergenerational practice for individuals and societies: a greater understanding *of* and the ability to build relationships *with* others; improved self-confidence due to developed social skills; enhanced health and wellbeing, due to a greater sense of self-worth and reduced sense of isolation; and community cohesion and resilience through the developments of new networks and relationships between individuals and groups who would not ordinarily meet. (p.8)

The outcomes of this research echo that of Gerard Lemos (2011) who, in his report for City Bridge Trust, provides evidence that demonstrates why the arts can make a difference to people's lives. Writing in a broader context, Lemos points out that engaging in creative collaborative work can help to strengthen and transform a person's sense of self. He found that all the projects he examined had in common:

an emphasis on collaboratively working together and building relationships towards a shared group identity and a sense of belonging and community. They also all had in common an emphasis on learning and understanding creative processes, making artistic products and gaining recognition not just through involvement, but also through performance which brings acknowledgement from a wider audience and the larger community. (Lemos, 2011, p.9)

Through her long experience with Magic Me, Susan Langford has seen the impact intergenerational arts work has had on both young and older people in East London. She thinks it can make a big difference in those communities where many people feel isolated and alienated from society. She points out that:

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There are a lot of people in East London, where we work, who are very isolated. The geography and architecture of the place are quite challenging and it can be quite isolating the way it's designed. Also, because of the constant change in the community, there are a lot of people who come and go all the time, in a poor area of a big city. There's also change in terms of the different communities arriving through patterns of migration, incoming and outgoing migration. Because we do intergenerational projects, we see that in the oldest and younger generations. Working over 25 years in this area, it used to be almost exclusively white older people and some Jewish older people. Now we're meeting a lot more African Caribbean and African, Asian elders, as they've grown up. We have also done some work with Bangladeshi people....and we intend to do more with Bangladeshi elders in the future.

In conversation with Susan Langford she stressed that the interconnection between young and old strengthens the ways in which people see themselves both individually and collectively in their communities: "I think it deliberately tries to help people think, who am I in my community? Where do I fit in and what role do I have? And that sense that we all need everyone to be joining in to have a whole experience".

She also observes how engaging in arts activities together adds another important dimension to the shared experience.

You're making something that didn't exist before, and through that process you reveal something about yourself. Because there are older people there working with them, young people make something different to what they would do if it were just a young group. And the same for older people. They don't pursue the most likely way of doing something because they hear a different viewpoint and they hear a different story....

Because we're from different ages, we might have experienced the same thing but at a different time and place in history. So if we do 'your first day at school', that experience is the same in some ways, whether you did it in 1910 or 1950 or 2000. But it's also completely different because education is different, the uniform is different, the buses.... yeah, all of those things. And so it just brings more content into the room, more material, and a richness of material for people to bring into the art that they're making.

One of the benefits of intergenerational work is that it can shift the perceptions of older people towards young people. Susan Langford thinks it enables them to see that many children are very responsible and responsive to the world around them. This can be reassuring for them when they worry about what the future holds.

Are the young people going to take on the world and handle it well in the future when I've gone? Will things continue? And I think there is a sense of the future being safe in their hands. Those older people who worry that the future isn't safe with young people, once they've been engaged [in a project] see that actually there are some good, sensible, intelligent, creative young people and they're doing what I did when I was their age.

At the end of each project Magic Me is well aware that it has to try and sustain the sense of family, or network of relationships that has been built up by the artists and the young and older people. As Susan Langford acknowledges, "there's a risk that you make it worse for people, because when it [the project] finishes, they're more aware of what they're missing. So we're quite alert to that". Much is dependent on keeping the partnerships alive between Magic Me and its day centres, care homes, schools and artists. For example, Magic Me has set up Go and See, an informal group for older participants who want to keep meeting between intergenerational projects. Go and See runs monthly visits planned by the members, ranging from galleries and museums, to an Arsenal match and Kew Gardens. They also meet monthly at Rich Mix cinema to watch a film. These events all contribute to the sustainability of Magic Me's work.

2.7 Music and dementia

One of the most challenging areas of concern in society at the moment is the rapidly growing rate of dementia, which is compounded by the rising number of elderly people. If any condition throws up questions to do with isolation and dislocation it is dementia, as it gradually erodes people's sense of who they are, their self-esteem, their self-respect and any feeling of belonging.

The seriousness of this challenge inspired Linda Rose to found Music for Life in 1993 with the support of Jewish Care. In 2009 it transferred to Wigmore Hall Learning in partnership with Dementia UK (see Renshaw, 2010, pp.159-63; 220–26). One of the key people working with Music for Life is Padraic Garrett, who is the Service Manager for Disability and Dementia at Jewish Care. His role in the creative music projects is that of staff development practitioner, where he works closely with the musicians, as well as supporting the care staff and people with dementia.

When interviewing Padraic Garrett he speaks about how dementia can erode so many aspects of a person's life, from atrophy in the brain to being socially cut off. He points out that:

what you often see is that a person gets more and more isolated from the important relationships in their lives. And that's understandable, because if somebody is struggling to find words, struggling to remember what happened, and struggling with emotions like fear and paranoia, there's a lot to be dealt with there. The most palpable thing that I come across when I meet people with dementia, particularly living in care homes, is loneliness.

Reflecting on his considerable experience Padraic feels that one of the biggest difficulties of communicating with people with dementia is the unpredictability of their response, because customary social norms of engagement no longer apply. This can be extremely difficult for families and visitors, who either remove themselves from the situation or try to engage with it and come to terms with the complexity of what is happening. He says that:

Often when I go into these settings, there can be this feeling within myself that I don't know if I can break through. I don't know if I can make this connection. But when I do break through my own fears and my own inadequacies, and I actually sit and talk with people, or make connection, whether it's eye contact or whatever it is, I usually come away feeling very humbled by the experience. Because usually what I've found is that the person is actually so grateful to be noticed, to have a chance to talk, to give their opinions.

Padraic feels that when engaging with people with dementia the quality of rapport, the resonance of the connection being made is absolutely critical.

It's about having a way in. A lot of people are very bored because they've lost so much out of their lives. They've lost so many opportunities to do things that they could have done independently, but now they can't any longer. And the people around them may be very busy. If they have a family carer, that main carer is probably overworked, trying to look after everything. So the opportunities to go out, engage in the arts or whatever, get diminished. They get lost out of people's lives. So people can end up living very impoverished kinds of lives on many levels.

This capacity to be able to connect, to make sense of another person's world is fundamental to the musicians trying to draw someone with dementia into a musical activity – in the case of Music for Life, through engaging in a musical conversation through improvisation. It is hoped that this creative collaborative process, involving musicians, care staff and the staff

Addressing feelings of isolation and dislocation through the arts

development practitioner, can help the people with dementia to feel less isolated and more connected in themselves and with each other. In his observations of the creative music process, Padraic comments that:

What I see as powerful about musicians in Music for Life is that they communicate very strongly that wish to connect, and in a very sincere way. The amount of preparation they put in and the value they give to welcoming people into the circle [at the beginning of a session], and making each person feel wanted and welcomed, is really important. And I think that has given a real value in Music for Life. I think it's because they do that, it enables the music to happen later on in the group. And that enables the conversations to take place.

I think the body language is there from the very beginning. It's hard to describe how it expresses itself but I think myself that smiling, eye contact and touch are very important. The sound of your voice, the warmth that comes across...I'm not sure when that transfers into music but I think they're almost side by side. They go together because I think they then transfer into the kind of music that is played. I think that's the quality. I don't know how it happens or why it happens, but if a piece of music is played with love and compassion that is what is expressed.

Padraic thinks this is why artists want to be involved in working with people with dementia. The musicians themselves receive so much in return from engaging in this kind of shared musical conversation. In a sense the people with dementia are giving something special back to society.

It strips away layers that in a way are unnecessary. There's a kind of honesty about it and there is a level at which you can connect with people, which just really surprises you. Of course, music is a different language. It's a freer language I think than words. And in terms of dementia, that's the beauty of it, because most people that you'll be working with in dementia are really struggling with words. And so to express themselves with words is very difficult, whereas to express oneself through music is a lot easier.

For Padraic any musician working with people with dementia has to be 'in tune with the heart' – this is fundamental to the musical engagement. This theme is taken up by Julian West, one of the leading musicians in Music for Life. In our conversation Julian provides a moving example of how a person who had lost her use of verbal language responded to a musical and social process that helped to unlock her 'real' self and gave her a strong sense of who she is. The musicians created an environment which enabled her to express an important aspect of herself that had been lying dormant for some time. Julian describes what happened:

One lady on this project was a holocaust survivor. There was something extraordinary about her in that she – her identity was closely identified with being a holocaust survivor. She was always introduced as a holocaust survivor and was always seen within that frame. This experience is almost beyond anything that most of us can imagine. Obviously the way in which we were going to approach her was coloured by that account.

What emerged through the project was that she was someone who was full of fun and humour, with a desire to connect with other people. She had a sense of lightness and appreciation of other people. But she had no speech. The musicians were making a piece of music and focusing on another participant, when the 'holocaust' lady began to sing a bird call. She made an interjection like a cuckoo sound, which a musician responded to and drew her into the piece, which became about the two of them and the interplay between them.

Through her intervention in the piece in an incredibly light-hearted way, it became a birdsong with sounds associated with optimism and Spring. All of these things revealed a very different side to her. As she was doing it she was looking all round the group – her eyes were shining and there was acknowledgement when people saw what was going on.

Music for Life always aims at providing a context whereby the people they are working with can feel safe so that they can risk something of themselves, as in the above example of the holocaust survivor. Julian considers that:

the arts can offer a context where people feel safe to reveal, volunteer something of themselves. And the arts can do that in a way that is unspoken; it is subtle and can be done by degree. It can happen on the edges without the whole group seeing it. But a good facilitator will notice it and be able to acknowledge it. Then through this process the person makes their mark on the piece. I think it is that thing of 'mark-making'...People can see their impact on things and they can stand back and say 'they did that'.

In his discussion about the roles and responsibilities of the musicians in Music for Life Julian is keen to point out that although their work with people with dementia might be of therapeutic value, they are in no way acting as music therapists.

You are there as an artist to create work and to provide an artistic context for the work to happen. There is a danger of it becoming therapy and we absolutely shouldn't be going in that direction. If the work is successful there will be therapeutic benefits but this is different from therapy which is designed to change people – to change behaviour. Through working in participatory arts we are not seeking to change behaviour. People might change but that is not the aim. Those things happen through the context of making a piece of work together.

For Julian and the other musicians in Music for Life, their work is decidedly artistically driven.

It's about making art – it's about making work. And we know that Music for Life projects place the emphasis on the quality of the music. The projects falter if the musicians get side tracked by the 'social work' aspect of what is going on – that is, where there is disengagement from the people with dementia or from the staff. And when we come back to the music and the quality of the music-making, the integrity of that is when things come back on track – when we get people taking risks and people become part of an artistic process.

Both the integrity of the artistic engagement and the spirit of the human engagement make the work of Music for Life very special. The shared commitment of the musicians and care staff, supported by the insight of the staff development practitioner, manage to create a form of life that re-energises those people with dementia involved in a project. But for this to work, the musicians have to approach their music making with a quality of attention, listening, care and love – empathetic and totally non self-referential. Their care for the music will be mirrored in their care for the people they are working with. These qualities are central to the communication process if the musicians are going to reach people. In our conversation Padraic Garrett said that for him, "the most important thing about Music for Life is when the person with dementia suddenly realises that they have power again". This is a good example of where artistic, moral and social goals have to come together if this kind of work is to make a difference to the quality of people's lives.

2.8 Theatre in prisons

Another critical area in which the arts can play a major role is that of prisons: for example, using theatre, music, art and craft towards a process of rehabilitation with prisoners, ex-prisoners and young people at risk. At the cutting edge of this work is Synergy Theatre Project (2013), established in 1999 by its Artistic Director, Esther Baker. Its work is founded on the belief that “theatre can be transformative and challenges perceptions of both prisoners and society, building a more positive future. Synergy is committed to artistic excellence, believing it to be an integral part of achieving this purpose” (ibid.).

In conversation with Esther she stressed the transformative potential of theatre, especially through its collaborative ways of working.

What theatre does is that you have to work as a group. It requires investigation of characters, worlds and ideas; you have to embody that and you have to use your brain. A lot of people we work with in prison never think one will achieve the end result. When they realise it will happen and they see what can be achieved, that can be very validating.

It is important to work towards high artistic quality. Taking them as far as they can go is really important in terms of the kind of experience they have. I take them seriously as actors and tell them what I expect of them. We build a professional set and have professionals working on site.

For someone to invest that much in them can challenge them and excite them. It is tough – it isn’t instant gratification. This is really good for them as well. They also have responsibility which can add to the whole experience. And performing itself is exciting; it makes you feel good about yourself – performing to your peers, fellow prisoners, staff and families can make an impact. It is very validating.

One important aspect of Synergy is its commitment to sustaining its work with ex-prisoners whenever possible. It is concerned about the longer-term impact on their future sense of direction, so they might become employable.

Long-term intervention is very important, so we work with people in prison and then we’ll give them opportunities when they come out of prison. We have a training programme in Synergy studio where we train in acting, stage management, costume design, writing and in workshop facilitation. So we skill them up and then open up opportunities for them to work as performers, stage managers, designers and facilitators.

But there is more to this process of renewal than just preparing ex-prisoners for the workplace, as important as that is. This cumulative experience must be life-enhancing as it builds up self-esteem, self-confidence and self-respect, qualities that are central to the rehabilitation process. As Esther points out:

On the one hand we are giving people employment but on the other hand, for a lot of them it is about changing their perceptions of what they can do, of what is possible. We get lots of feedback from people saying that it was a really powerful experience, that they have found something out that they are good at – or they have found out other possibilities. Or people saying that as a result of being on a project that they want to stop drinking or taking drugs.

Although Esther believes strongly that engaging in the arts can radically change people's lives, she is also very realistic and pragmatic about what is possible or achievable.

The thing about working in the arts is that it is not superficial. The work gets through to you at a deeper level. I think that can have quite a profound impact. Having said that I don't think the arts can save the world. If other things aren't in place for people when they come out of prison....we are only part of something bigger. They need lots of support in different ways. You are combating so much negative experience – a lot of people in prison have been in care or kicked out of school or have had emotional trauma. Combating all these things obviously takes a long time. But what the arts can do is build people up.

One thread running through all the discussions feeding into this paper is the benefit gained from working together with others in a group. In arts projects this is certainly seen as a major way of building up people. Esther constantly refers to the regenerative power of theatre and she quotes from Timberlake Wertenbaker's play *Our Country's Good* – 'the theatre is like a small republic; it requires personal sacrifice for the good of the whole'. In other words, engaging in theatre can provide a transformational journey as a group, and together you are serving something that is greater than oneself. Esther then adds:

We work quite a lot with people who feel isolated. Some people have felt suicidal and it was only going to the writing group once a week that kept them going. We can't overestimate how depressed some of the people we work with are. It is amazing how much arts projects can mean to them.

On the other hand, one of the important issues confronting Synergy is its exit strategy and its legacy. Their former prisoners gain enormously from working in different groups and from attending various courses, but all these things inevitably come to an end and then, what next? Esther takes a pragmatic but responsible attitude to this challenge – "we mustn't be over-protective – they have to learn to manage their expectations". She says:

I see Synergy as a bridge. We don't have the funds to support people long term. People have to fly the nest in the end. We are now looking at how Synergy can build links with theatres and colleges so people can move on and have further experiences.

The impact of Synergy (2013) demonstrates that its theatre projects develop the participants' practical, psychological and social skills that are necessary for the release, rehabilitation and social integration of prisoners and ex-prisoners. But Esther, like Music for Life, claims that "artistically, the art must always be at the centre of this kind of work. It's about art: both the message and the process will be stronger if the art is central to the practice".

Then in addition to the art, the work of Synergy is about:

- Knowing the context
- Knowing about relationships and how to deal with people
- Knowing how to respect the environment you are working in
- Knowing how to get what you want from the environment you are in for the benefit of the participants
- Knowing how to manage the prisoners and ex-prisoners
- Knowing the limits and boundaries of what to put down

Over time certain guiding principles have evolved for Synergy:

- The centrality of artistic quality in all projects
- A moral imperative in their dealing with people, always aiming to empower the prisoners or ex-prisoners
- The importance of avoiding 'using' prisoners – they must never be 'objectified' for the benefit of an audience
- The importance of having a diverse audience for all performances

Synergy sees itself as a theatre company first and foremost but working in a specific context. Its values are modelled on good theatre practice and it works with partners who share similar values: for example, the Royal Court Theatre, Unicorn, and Liverpool and Birmingham Rep companies.

2.9 Accessibility and agency through theatre

Another theatre company that marries access and excellence is Punchdrunk, which was formed in 2000 and aims to create worlds that are "transformative for those who participate in their construction and presentation and those who experience them first hand as audience" (Punchdrunk, 2013). Punchdrunk is well known for curating installation-based storytelling projects, especially for children, in which a particular space (e.g., in a school) is physically transformed into a 'magical learning resource'. The space is used as a starting point for narrative and devising, non-verbal storytelling and audience interaction.

In discussion with Pete Higgin, Punchdrunk's Enrichment Director, he thinks that being part of one of their creative projects strengthens people's self-esteem, self-worth and self-respect. They can feel that they belong to something which they can be proud of, and it gives them a sense of agency for having helped to make something special happen. The underlying aim of Punchdrunk is 'to provide a special journey for all participants in terms of their own self-discovery'. The experience is transformative in terms of the environment, the atmosphere and the level of participation.

One of the core challenges of Punchdrunk is accessibility, as it crosses art forms, genres, visual arts, and installations, for example. Their work is seen as very democratic and anyone can engage in the experience at their own level. Pete Higgin discussed how this might manifest itself in a primary school.

We create beautiful installations in their school – we give the children agency and make them the most important people in an 'immersive narrative' that they implant in their school. The work they do tries to blur the line between fiction and reality: for example, creating a magical printing press, story balloonists, a magical bric-a-brac shop. Punchdrunk Enrichment creates an environment in which teachers and children are encouraged to make imaginative leaps and take risks. Children especially must be given permission to take risks and to fail – which is quite a challenge in the current target-driven climate. This immersive approach can make a significant impact on the practice of teachers.

For Pete, the approach to theatre adopted by Punchdrunk can create a notion of ‘home’ that fosters a sense of belonging.

Parents can get involved organically in the right kind of interactive projects – anyone can get drawn into the power of stories. Parents can experience the in-school ‘installation’ in the same way as children, who can act as a conduit for the arts by drawing their parents into a project as a shared experience. Schools can become a catalyst for recruiting a body of interesting people from the community to help on projects. Opportunities can be created for different levels of engagement: for example, performing, backstage, repairs, cleaning up after a show.

In order to sustain and further develop their transformative work Punchdrunk hopes to have its own creative community space – its own ‘village’ – which would grow organically and build up a volume of work from and for the people living in that community. Such a venture would not be labelled as an ‘arts project’ but it could start in a small way, almost ‘invisibly’ by creating a ‘shop’ that would serve as a focal point for generating activities with local residents of all ages. Participants would be given a voice and as their confidence grows, this would strengthen their sense of belonging and self-worth. Such an organic inclusive process would gradually act as a form of regeneration for the whole community, and Punchdrunk could feel they are leaving a legacy with social engagement at its heart.

2.10 Postscript

These examples have tried to capture the spirit, integrity and vision of several exemplary arts projects that are addressing some of the social, cultural and psychological challenges confronting society today. In no way could this be a comprehensive survey. It is more like a snapshot of what can be achieved when skilled and experienced artists in their different art forms harness their collective energy, commitment and imagination to make a difference. Much of the strength of their respective practices lies in their ability to connect – to others, to strangers, to colleagues; to different places and contexts; to different narratives, histories and traditions; to different ideas and perspectives. That is, ‘being in tune’ with oneself, with others, and with the world as it is and as it might be.

3 Social engagement and the arts: funding, policy and practice

This chapter aims to show how the ground breaking forms of creative practice discussed previously are dependent on those funding bodies, local authorities, trusts and foundations that share similar values and vision. The synergy between the seemingly disparate voices of funding, policy and arts practice is absolutely critical if the transformational potential of the arts is to be fully realised. The focus here is on London, especially on the City and East London, with financial support provided by the City of London Corporation, City Bridge Trust and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, each of whom has played a strategic role in funding major projects connected to the work of Creative Learning at the Barbican and the Guildhall School of Music & Drama.

3.1 The City of London Corporation

In January 2013 the City of London Corporation published a research report on *The Economic, Social and Cultural Impact of the City Arts and Culture Cluster* (BOP Consulting, 2013). The report explores the extent to which the arts and culture cluster contributes to the economic success of the City and it illustrates the way in which it is “a major net contributor to the economy” (p.2). But the perspective most relevant to this paper is the commitment the City demonstrates towards the social impact of the arts. It sees its cultural institutions as “centres of learning and community engagement” (p.26).

Collectively, they play a crucial role in allowing the city to reach out to the surrounding boroughs. They provide invaluable learning and volunteering opportunities for people of all ages, and through these activities, contribute to local communities’ overall well-being. As with their core cultural function, the learning and social activities of several of these institutions are nationally and internationally recognised and innovative – this applies equally to well established programmes and to newer initiatives. (BOP Consulting, 2013, p.26)

The report details the scope of educational and creative engagement by City arts and culture organisations during the period 2011–12.

- 89% of organisations worked with children and young people
- 72% worked with elderly people
- 67% worked with residents in specific geographical areas (predominantly the East London boroughs) (ibid., p.30)

It is clear that there is a strong commitment to working with children and young people, both in schools and in their neighbouring environment. The range of activities includes “cross-curricular school learning, all kinds and levels of tuition, creative workshops and projects, and even some elements of ‘co-creation’ of artistic and cultural activities” (ibid., p.30).

One of the key case studies in the report focuses on the Barbican as an international multi-art form centre that runs an increasingly strategic Creative Learning programme. The production of *Unleashed*, for example, would never have happened without the inspiration, initiative and financial support of the Barbican, along with Arts Council England and

City Bridge Trust. The case study shows how Creative Learning is increasingly opening up new avenues for young people to participate in a wide range of arts and cultural activities. It points out that:

Key to all these activities is the aim to create sustainable models. Focus is therefore placed on developing relationships with groups of young people, such as the Barbican Young Poets, Young Filmmakers or Young Programmes initiatives. Events are attracting an increasing proportion of attendees from neighbouring East London boroughs and in 2012, the Barbican received funding to further develop its community programme with East London as part of the Cultural Olympiad. Managing Director Sir Nicholas Kenyon stresses that “the Barbican’s arts programme and its Creative Learning activity are a key way in which the investment that is made by the City of London Corporation benefits the whole of London – audiences and students, young and old, are engaged in world-class arts and learning through the work of the Barbican Centre”. (ibid., p.46)

Funding, policy and practice are inextricably linked at the Barbican. The synergy between the three is seen as critical to its developmental role in the area of social engagement. In her interview, Catherine McGuinness, Chair of the Barbican Centre Board, expressed her firm belief in the value of what the Barbican, Guildhall School of Music & Drama and London Symphony Orchestra are bringing into the lives of young people. Our conversation took place soon after the performances of *Unleashed* and she spoke passionately about the importance of creating and sustaining opportunities for nurturing and developing the talent and creative energy that lay at the heart of its success. She feels that:

If you give people the tools, you discover talent. It might be a slightly rawer talent than someone who starts learning an instrument at an early age. But sometimes if a person is coached from a tender age, the talent can be constrained by the system. The other kind of talented young people have more of a free spirit that has been released. Their creative energy can be enormous but it might move in a different direction.

From her experience as a school governor in the London Borough of Hackney, Catherine McGuinness can see that one of the major strengths of children participating in the arts are the benefits gained from working together in groups: “It boosts people’s sense of who they are. This comes out strongly with kids who have been excluded and are especially challenged. For some children, engaging in the arts and succeeding are the absolute making of them. It’s a life-saver”. She believes that education and learning are very much about the development of the whole human being – not about meeting government targets – and that the arts must be given a key place both in and out of school. She considers it important that politicians and policy makers register the significance of what the arts can offer to society.

With *Unleashed* still at the forefront of her mind, Catherine McGuinness anticipated what could happen in the country if the government fails to respect and build on the transformational potential of the arts and the creative process. She commented that:

Unleashed gave young people the opportunity to share their fears with others. The riots were traumatic and *Unleashed* allowed the children to process their fears and feelings. Working collaboratively to produce *Unleashed* was a very powerful process, and if society takes that away at government level by failing to give proper support, it does so at its peril.

3.2 The City Bridge Trust

This statement by Catherine McGuinness reinforces the belief in the fundamental place of the arts in social engagement – a point of view also shared by Clare Thomas, the Chief Grants Officer of City Bridge Trust, which was one of the main funders of *Unleashed*. In our conversation she stated the aims of the Trust very clearly:

Our perspective as a funder is that we want organisations to deliver social outcomes. Our view is not to fund the arts for their own sake but as mechanisms for delivering improvements in wellbeing, in health, in community cohesion, depending on which of the programmes the arts are contributing to.

But although these social goals are paramount, Clare Thomas is a firm believer that the integrity and quality of the artistic work enhances the social outcomes. Commenting on the arts organisations who receive funding from City Bridge Trust, she considers that:

Many of these arts organisations were started and led by people with passion, conviction and quality. These inspirational leaders are passionate about their art in a way that is special. Passion for one's art is central to the success of projects – they do not go in as social workers. They bring a deeper sense of engagement.

Clare Thomas gave several examples funded by the Trust that she feels count as evidence of organisations delivering a social goal with work of artistic quality. She highlighted the work of Dance United with young offenders who, as an alternative to going into custody, are trained to participate in a group experience – to be disciplined, to learn a skill, to release their feelings in a supportive space, to put on a performance – and then to go and work in a school themselves. This kind of experience places a lot of trust in the young offenders and helps them to build up a sense of responsibility through engaging in the arts.

Another example from the area of the criminal justice system is Clean Break Theatre, which was established in 1979 by two female prisoners. As evidenced in the City Bridge Trust report, *The Arts Case* (Lemos, 2011):

Clean Break Theatre is recognised nationally as a leading arts education and training provider for female prisoners, ex-prisoners and ex-offenders. [It] is a theatre, education and new writing company which works through theatre for personal and political change, involving women whose lives have been affected by the criminal justice system. Its ethos is that engaging in theatre creates new opportunities for women with these histories, developing personal, social, artistic and professional skills. (p.4)

For people who feel marginalised, to be given the opportunity to collaborate with professional actors, to work creatively in teams leading up to a shared performance can only be life enhancing for everyone involved. Clare Thomas instanced an all-women performance of *Julius Caesar*, which included two actors from Clean Break and a cast of female prisoners. She commented that:

It brought a group of disparate people together to work on this production. They were 'on the same page' and got on well with each other – an unusual blend of experience and backgrounds that all together produced a first rate experience. It gave them a sense of belonging in that moment, but also opened up new vistas and new relationships – for people who felt in the margins but who were now being mainstreamed through a wonderful theatrical performance.

The critical social goal of City Bridge Trust resonates totally with Clean Break Theatre, who takes an active role in the community for women who have just left prison. They consider it vital for ex-prisoners to get involved with positive and

supportive activities immediately on leaving prison. Therefore, apart from doing workshops and productions, they have established an Education programme and a friendship network. People travel from all over London to Camden to be part of that experience. This helps to strengthen their sense of belonging and boosts their self-esteem, both of which are so important when people are trying to resettle back into the community. In its final comments on Clean Break, the City Bridge Trust report makes a realistic observation:

Their involvement with the arts, while not solving all their problems, was making their lives bigger, and thereby making their problems relatively smaller; a profound and unarguable benefit. (Lemos, 2011, p.4)

In our conversation Clare Thomas drew attention to the challenges arising from the mental health issues that are increasingly confronting many communities. She is convinced that engaging in different forms of creative and artistic experience can play a significant part in helping people to address these problems. She discussed the work of Core Arts, which was established in 1992, and offers workshops in painting, creative writing, music and singing for people with mental health problems living in Hackney. Core Arts, supported by City Bridge Trust, has a contract with Hackney Psychiatric Hospital to work both inside the hospital in secure wards and out in the community. The main aim of the workshops is on creating, making and producing art. Apart from the tangible artistic benefits for the people involved in these classes, they can also have a palpable therapeutic effect, which is good for their wellbeing and can divert them from their problems and anxieties. In the area of painting people are encouraged to exhibit their work in a number of venues. This is very validating for the people engaged in these activities.

A final example of a long-established theatre organisation funded by City Bridge Trust is Age Exchange, which is well known for its reminiscence work with older people, many of whom may be suffering from dementia. Through its workshops in the community and in residential care homes and hospitals, Age Exchange uses music and stories to help older people to reconnect with themselves and their past histories, thereby improving their quality of life. As observed by the Lemos report (2011), “loneliness, helplessness and boredom are the triangle of curses that afflict too many older people living in care homes and reminiscence work of the sort undertaken by Age Exchange is a welcome corrective” (p.3).

3.3 The Paul Hamlyn Foundation

The Paul Hamlyn Foundation has a long track record of supporting strategic learning and participation projects at the Barbican and Guildhall School of Music & Drama. Within the last decade this has included Guildhall Connect, which was part of the national project, Musical Futures. Most recently the focus has been on Creative Learning’s contribution to ArtWorks, which is a special Paul Hamlyn Foundation (2013a) initiative that “seeks to meet the developmental needs of artists working in participatory settings at different stages in their careers, from emerging artists embarking on training to experienced artists wishing to develop their practice”.

At the core of this initiative is the development and support of ‘pathfinder partnerships’, which comprise cross-artform collaborations between organisations based in different regions of the UK. The lead partners of ArtWorks London are the Barbican and the Guildhall, and this pathfinder aims:

To join up the best of existing provision and actively encourage new practice in the training and development of artists working in participatory settings. The Programme includes undergraduate and postgraduate provision, as well as the establishment of a community of practitioners. Each training programme is tailored across portfolio roles, artistic skills and reflective practice. (Paul Hamlyn Foundation, 2013b)

One of the key people at Paul Hamlyn Foundation driving its initiatives in participatory arts practice is its Head of Arts, Régis Cochefert. In our discussion we focused especially on the validity and place of evidence in the context of the arts and social engagement. Basically, does participating in the arts make a qualitative difference to people's lives?

No arts organisation can assume that its participatory activities necessarily make a difference, but with his long experience of initiating, observing and monitoring projects, Régis Cochefert thinks that there is a demonstrable body of evidence that has been measured and analysed about the changes that can accrue from involvement in the arts. There is an increased awareness of the need to measure and to think about things in a much more grounded way. The challenge now lies in getting clearer about the nature of the evidence and then what to do with it in relation to informing subsequent practice.

Régis Cochefert drew attention to the work of the Cultural Learning Alliance which emphasises the importance of evidence-based approaches to measuring the effect of the arts, especially on the lives of children and young people. In the Foreword to its recent document, *ImagineNation: The Case for Cultural Learning*, it states that:

The Cultural Learning Alliance believes that the arts and heritage have the power to transform young people's lives. This document sets out how, and why. In it we argue that the knowledge, skills and experience made possible by the performing and visual arts, by museums, libraries, archives, and by heritage organisations are essential to young people's development. This cultural learning takes place formally in schools and colleges, and informally in the wider world where the arts and heritage offer children and young people opportunities to express themselves and their ideas and values. They are encouraged to explore other cultures past and present, and are inspired to contribute to the arts and heritage that will be created and enjoyed in the future. Children and young people who have access to our cultural riches will be better equipped to contribute to our economic prosperity and social harmony....

Culture is the way we come to know the world, individually and collectively. It is as rich and diverse as the traditions that stand behind its making. It is the active engagement with the creation of our arts and heritage, and the expression of what and who we are as individuals, as communities, and as a nation. The quality of that culture is a measure of the way we live. At this time of social and economic stress, the case for cultural learning is stronger than ever. (Cultural Learning Alliance, 2013, p.3)

The voice of the Cultural Learning Alliance is critical in the current debate about government cuts and the reordering of priorities that could well undermine the substantial work that has been going on in the areas of the arts and culture for many years. The decline in cultural opportunities in schools, with the impending reform of the curriculum, could be especially devastating. The full force of this is put extremely well by Anna Cutler, Director of Learning at The Tate:

To limit cultural learning is to limit understanding and new ideas, suppress new ways of thinking, diminish personal development and inhibit social relations. How would this be of benefit – ever – but particularly at a time when these skills and capacities are crucial to our radically changing world? (ibid., p.5)

Evidence-based evaluation, then, is crucial in supporting the case for arts and culture in debates about funding and policy. But it is equally important when addressing the quality of arts practice in the context of social engagement. In his wide experience at the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Régis Cochefert has found that organisations whose aim it is to effect change tend to use effective tools of reflection and evaluation. Reflection is seen as intrinsic to both process and context. For them, all their practice is underpinned by research and development. Projects are conceived as a form of action research which reappraises the nature and quality of current practice and helps to move future practice forwards in an informed way (see section 4.4).

But this begs the question that many arts practitioners feel alienated by the language of reflection (see Renshaw, 2011, pp.63-7). ‘Why’ questions connected to motivation, purpose, meaning, values and identity can feel quite threatening to people whose job it is to be practical and deliver what is required as well as possible. Régis Cochefert feels there are two main types of artists engaged in participatory work. The first group are at the cutting edge of cultural change and for them the whole of their artistic life is dependent on shaping and producing participatory work with others. They cannot do it on their own. In general these creative leaders are very articulate about why they do what they do, and they are knowledgeable about what they are trying to do. Both the ‘why’ and the ‘what’ are central to their creative vision and ‘critical reflection’ is their bread and butter.

The second group of artists are those pursuing a ‘portfolio career’. For much of their life they might work as freelance artists in the open market, whilst the rest of the time they take on the role of creative leader, facilitator or animateur leading workshops in different community or educational settings. Dysfunction can well arise in this second area because the job is largely about delivery, making a living and being under a contract. There is little scope for critical reflection. The organisations they work for tend to be the commissioners, who are the ones that have to be clear about the nature and purpose of their projects. The arts practitioners do the job and then move on to their next assignment. But this is a negation of reflective practice and it seems to me that organisations have a responsibility to establish informal and formal ways of generating informed reflection for all practitioners involved in arts projects. Whatever procedures are adopted, critical reflection should be seen as a crucial aspect of evaluation – an aspect that has to be budgeted for when setting up a project in the first place.

The lifeline for artists engaged in participatory practice, whether they are musicians, choreographers, playwrights, engravers or painters, is that their work, whatever the context, should be artistically driven. But only too often funding imperatives geared to social, educational or political goals undermine the artistic thrust of a project, with the result that the artists can feel used and disconnected from the whole enterprise. This starkly utilitarian view of arts projects fails to do full justice to the transformative capacity of socially engaged arts practice. The integrity of this work is dependent on the synergy established between artistic and social goals. This should also help to shape learning and development programmes for arts practitioners engaged in participatory work – a challenge that will be examined in the next chapter.

3.4 A New Direction

One organisation whose job it is to act as a link between arts and culture and education, children and young people in London is A New Direction, which grew out of the reorganisation of the former Creative Partnerships. Although not a funding body, A New Direction, under its CEO Steve Moffitt, has a comprehensive overview of what is happening in the arts and education across London. The interconnection between artistic, educational and social goals is firmly embedded in its DNA and this helps to inform its views on current and future policy and practice.

In a recent Annual Report (A New Direction, 2012), Steve Moffitt outlines the challenge confronting arts and cultural education across London.

Over the last year A New Direction’s work and the context in which we operate has radically changed. We are living through a period of extraordinary challenge and uncertainty for arts and cultural education, both in terms of funding priorities, and policy changes. There have been and are likely to be more significant cuts to public sector funding, impacting on Local Authority spending on arts and culture for young people, alongside proposed widespread

curricular reform and changes in the status of arts in school. The concept of a national curriculum is changing, beside significant diversification of school management and delivery. We are experiencing a period of accelerated, unprecedented change.

Into this context we see our new role, as a Bridge organisation, connecting children, young people and schools with arts and culture, as extremely timely and useful for ensuring we sustain and grow the opportunities for young Londoners to experience an amazing creative childhood. (p.4)

In our conversation Steve Moffitt voiced his serious concern about the disconnectedness of young people in today's challenging world. He feels that at the moment the opportunities for children to be exposed to creative possibilities that might open new horizons are chancy. Often it just lies in the hands of an inspiring teacher who is committed to making a difference for his or her children. He also thinks that the arts and cultural opportunities available can be disconnected from young people. Too often the work is project-focused, reflecting the needs and agenda of the organisation rather than responding and connecting to the needs and progression of the children. There is little developmental thrust to the direction and flow of the work, thus resulting in fragmentation and isolation of projects.

For Steve Moffitt young people must be given the opportunity to become culturally literate. They need to be able to make choices informed by knowledge and experience. Schools, in collaboration with arts organisations, should act as a hub or catalyst to make things happen. He realises that there is a disconnection in current provision but feels that this reflects the disconnectedness in society in general. But he also firmly believes that the arts are in a position to address this challenge by helping young people to develop a sense of who they are – a sense of place and ownership; a sense of belonging to a community of interest that can be shared with others.

Yet a big question remains: how far are arts organisations sufficiently connected in themselves and to their communities to address this challenge? For Steve Moffitt this raises the thorny question of leadership. He considers that:

For me, it's about people knowing what the true inherent purpose of their organisation is and articulating clearly what they are trying to achieve and in what context. I think what's happened over the last 10–15 years, partly because there was such a massive resource in terms of labour, is that we got lost in terms of addressing need and being able to read the landscape as leaders. I think people have become protectionist over their art form and they have got defensive.

[As a performer, for example] you have to understand the context in which you're performing and be able to read it and go with it. And that means occasionally compromising and putting yourself in the place of a learner. A lot of people don't do this. They take positions, hide behind the rhetoric and hide behind their organisations....

I think the kinds of leadership models that are in place are all about maintaining the status quo. They're not about changing anything. Fundamentally it's about 'how do I prop up my organisation through a participatory programme that demonstrates what our core values are?' And it's like, actually, 'is your organisation relevant anymore?' And people do find that hard, you know.

Not only is Steve Moffitt concerned about arts organisations drowning in the rhetoric of 'participation'. He also questions the actual quality of participatory work and would like to see arts practitioners looking more critically at the depth, quality and progression of children's learning and to find ways of refining their practice. He quite rightly reminds us that "it goes back to why you're doing what you are doing".

For people at the forefront of change, having to deal daily with the Damoclean sword of government, it is easy to get sucked into a veil of cynicism. The big question for Steve Moffitt is how does he manage to keep his own flame, his own creative energy and commitment alive? Not surprisingly, his main catalyst lies in innovation and risk-taking, in responding to challenging contexts in ways that are qualitatively different – always keeping on the edge. He speaks enthusiastically about the importance of “newness – doing new things continually. It’s not about reinventing stuff, but feeling that something is new”.

Steve Moffitt illustrates this with an ambitious project initiated by A New Direction prior to the Olympics. He wanted to create something that would connect people across London. Although it was conceived around the Olympics, it wasn’t about the Olympics. It focused on the idea of being part of London at a particular moment, and how to connect children to a unique opportunity. Therefore the whole concept of the Olympics was reframed as a learning opportunity. It was described as ‘The Biggest Learning Opportunity on Earth’.

In Spring 2010 A New Direction began a Creative Partnerships Enquiry Schools programme called ‘The Biggest Learning Opportunity on Earth’ (BigLop). The aim of BigLop was to bring together 14 arts organisations and 140 schools across London to explore the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games in different ways. To explore the changing landscape of London and stories that make up the city. To explore its connections to the rest of the world and dream of better worlds and new possibilities.

The Biggest Learning Opportunity on Earth set out to:

- Develop young people’s understanding of creativity and its relationship to the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.
- Raise young people’s ambitions and potential to engage with the Olympic and Paralympic opportunity
- Harness London’s creative energy and cultural resources to work together around this opportunity
- Enable young people as producers of ideas and creative content
- Showcase young people’s work across the city and the world

Each partner organisation developed a project inspired by the 2012 Games and was based on one of five themes identified by A New Direction:

- *Connecting Countries* – schools making international links
- *My Family and Me* – exploring identity, personal history and family learning
- *Inspired by London* – the creative and cultural sector as a resource for young people
- *Leading the Way* – young people as leaders and student voice
- *My Future* – skills and enterprise development to support young people’s working future. (Wilmot, 2012, pp.4-5)

Reflecting on this BigLop project Steve Moffitt said that “the strongest thing that came from everybody was that we all felt that we were doing something new. I think what you’re doing is taking what you know and placing it in a different context and you’re pushing yourself”. He feels that at the moment things are very challenging for A New Direction because:

the landscape is shifting, the funding situation is shifting, priorities are shifting, everything is changing. So actually what we have to be is a constant space, getting whatever knowledge we can, sharing it, and going well, ok, let’s work together to find a solution. And the only way you can do that is by collaborating....The thing that collaboration does, rather than competition, is encourage learning. It’s about giving yourself a bit of space to go – ‘can we do it better?’ – yes we can. How do we do that? We look at other models. We listen to one another.

Steve Moffitt’s positive attitude to making new things happen as a response to social, cultural and educational change is very refreshing and there is no doubt that A New Direction is making a difference to practice in different arenas. It combines a pragmatic approach informed by a sharp critical perspective. This results in grounded practice that is edgy but also has integrity.

Our discussion concluded with some observations about the nature of the critical conversations arising from this provocation paper. Steve Moffitt thinks it is important to bring people together to talk about things they don’t know much about. As he said, “that’s when it becomes a bit exposing. Then I think it’s about people committing to trying to do something new and then all this can be revisited in another conversation a year later”.

I think there’s something about people committing to doing something new – either having their own conversation or finding someone in that room and going, right, I am going to commit to meet you or to see your work, to understand it in a different way and to do something, not necessarily about spending money, but actually finding out something new. The most interesting things happen when you’re uncomfortable – in a room with people who do things that you don’t know about. And then you ask, ‘what’s common here and what’s new, and where are we all going to learn from one another?’ You have to trust that if you are going to commit to something, then something will happen.

4 Synergy between social and artistic goals: the challenge for learning and development in the arts

4.1 Towards a new paradigm

During the research phase of this paper I was privileged to draw on the inspiration, imagination, and sheer energy and resilience of a number of artists and practitioners from various sectors committed to making a qualitative difference to people's lives. In all cases the going has been tough and challenging as individuals and organisations have had to keep modifying their practice in order to respond to constant change. Everything is in a state of flux, with priorities shifting and funding increasingly precarious. But what stands out as a constant thread is the strength of motivation and integrity of people who have a deep belief in what they do really matters. For them, addressing social issues through engaging in the arts is a *sine qua non*. There is no place for self-absorption. Inner strength, yes, but always focused on others – on strangers, on other communities, on other contexts. A dialogue between the inner and the outer, between the artist and his or her sensibility to social needs, is the motor that lies at the heart of socially engaged creative practice. But this dialogue can only flower in a cultural milieu, a learning environment that is in tune with the values and philosophy that drives socially oriented arts practitioners.

As was indicated in the introductory chapter, there has been a shift in attitude and practice in many higher arts education colleges and arts organisations towards the learning and development of artists who intend to pursue a more differentiated 'portfolio' career, including the kind of participatory work discussed in this paper. There is growing recognition that this work matters and that conservatoires and colleges, for example, now have a responsibility for providing appropriate learning opportunities in socially engaged creative practice.

The evidence discussed in this paper inevitably represents only a small sample of what is going on in many different sectors. Nevertheless they are strong examples of what is possible and what can be achieved given the will, the imagination, skill and resources to make something happen. But this raises a fundamental question:

In what ways can arts practitioners respond to the creative and social challenges arising from a cultural landscape in constant flux, and from educational, health and criminal justice systems undermined by constantly changing demands within a precarious funding climate?

This major question is increasingly being addressed by conservatoires, colleges and other training organisations as they seek new and more appropriate ways of preparing students and emerging artists for the wide-ranging demands of a workforce that is far more differentiated from that in the past. Are the old tried-and-tested models of professional preparation sufficiently flexible and responsive to meet changing needs?

Personally I think not and a similar critical point was made recently in a conversation between Daniel Barenboim and Alan Rusbridger (2013), Editor of the *Guardian* newspaper. Barenboim, taking music as his example, considers that the culture of contemporary classical music is trapped in an 'ivory tower' that has become far too specialised – a specialised audience

listening to specialised people play. “Therefore you get a community made up of artists and audience that is an ivory-tower community, because both have lost a great part of the connection between music and everything else” (Rusbridger, 2013, p.210). To Barenboim, this disconnection between music and the wider world is a serious indictment of the dominant voice in mainstream contemporary classical culture. For him, the value of music is that:

It gives us the tools to understand many things about ourselves, about the human being, about society, about how we live, what we live for, etc. (ibid., p.210)

It seems to me that this perspective on the responsibility of the arts in society must be at the forefront of the thinking underlying the learning and development of arts practitioners as they prepare to use their craft creatively in response to the many diverse social, educational and cultural needs. This has certainly informed my proposition that learning and development programmes in the arts need to be underpinned by a new paradigm that draws together five sets of interconnections:

- Between a social and artistic imperative
- Between access and quality
- Between context and excellence
- Between creativity, innovation and risk-taking
- Between research, personal, artistic and professional development

I will now sketch one way of viewing the different elements in this paradigm

4.2

The interconnection between the social and the artistic

The link between the social and the artistic underpins all the other interconnections in this proposed model of learning and development. Socially driven practice without an artistic core is mono-dimensional – it lacks the *raison d’être* of being an artist. Artists working in participatory settings have a distinctive role and unique contribution to make in society; they are not teachers, social workers, carers or therapists, for example. Of course, they have to have some of the qualities and attitudes of these other professionals in order to connect to different contexts, but the roles and responsibilities of the arts practitioner are necessarily different. All, whatever their role, will be concerned with integrity and the quality of practice and performance. Everyone interviewed in this research emphasised the place that artistic quality plays in the success of participatory arts projects. The challenge is to ensure that there is a synergy between the social and the artistic – a synergy that brings with it a sense of dynamism and a confidence in risk-taking.

The importance and subtlety of this relationship was picked up by Helen Nicholson, Professor of Theatre and Performance in the Department of Drama at Royal Holloway, University of London. For Helen, in any participatory project the artistic voice of the artist is critical but that has to connect in a meaningful way to the context in which the artist is working. When discussing what artists need to work in participatory settings she said:

I think they need to be good artists and confidently aware of what their art form is and how they’re using it...In terms of participatory arts I’d want the students to have a sense of their own work as artists, a kind of body of practice that they are developing. Ideally I think they need to be making some kind of work, as well as working in participatory

settings. It seems to me that one of the things that has emerged, certainly in applied theatre, are people developing a set of games and workshop skills that they then do very successfully in a particular way. But they just get repeated in different contexts. And that seems to me quite reductionist.

In the context of learning and development, Helen stresses the importance of establishing a connection between the artistic, personal and professional. Often the emphasis is on the professional (e.g., workshop skill training), but an artist's development is very much linked to nurturing both the personal and artistic aspects of their life – they are interdependent. Helen sees the relationship between these three aspects of development as fluid and “if the artists themselves have got a sense of their practice, then they're not just falling back on recipes or formulae”.

An integral part of an artist's personal development that informs their artistic practice is an awareness of ‘place’ and ‘identity’ – two critical elements in any meaningful interaction with others. Helen considers that:

The other thing I would like emerging artists to have is a deep understanding of place. And I say place rather than context or setting or community because I think it is more layered. So it might be the place as in the school or the hospital or the care setting or the prison. But it might also be the places that people are attached to in multiple different kinds of ways. So for example, I'd like them to think about the network of relationships, the ‘invisible relationships’ that aren't in the room that people are experiencing, whether that's people with dementia or people in prison or children in schools. Can they think a bit more deeply about the place and the places that these people are attached to, or are escaping from or whatever?

This level of understanding can only deepen the artist's response to the human context they are working in. It sensitises them to the unknown, to the unexpected, alerting to them to the vulnerabilities of others. In our conversation Helen makes a crucial observation:

There's something about knowing what you don't know, in order to be able to think about it and find it out. And what arts practice in participatory settings does best, is the artist has got a sense of what they know and what they bring, but also what they don't know about that place, so it leaves a kind of openness.

In a sense, this openness to place and to others is a necessary precondition to understanding the identity or multiple identities of the participants in any collective creative process. As Helen points out, “the link between place and identity, and multiple identities....stops emerging artists fixing people in a particular place”. Understanding individual identities and the collective identity of the group is fundamental to shaping the artistic language, the artistic voice, in the creative process. But this presupposes that the artist has to be clear and grounded within themselves to make sense of this complexity. Helen feels that:

You certainly need to know who you are in that space in that moment...There's a really interesting relationship between openness, warmth and empathy and the ability to be still in that space, and to be who you are in that space. One of the things I was picking up from your line of questioning is that there's an awful lot of mobility, you know, everybody is sort of rushing about, whether it's surfing the net or whatever it is – that sense of 21st century life.... being ‘on the move’. I think sometimes there's a place to allow the walls to be still for a bit.

Helen has identified something very important – the place of ‘stillness’ both within the artistic and social domains, but also in the organic relationship between the artistic and social. Paradoxically, within the state of stillness can lie the source

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of creative energy. This echoes the view of Giles Fraser (2013) writing in the *Guardian* newspaper about prayer, which he claims is like art as “it simply requires being attentive to that which is other”. In his discussion of prayer he goes on:

There is not much that you have to do other than make time for it. For Michael Ramsey [a former Archbishop of Canterbury] prayer was not the heaping up of pious chatter. It was not a peculiar way of getting things done in the world. Rather, it was about listening and waiting – being attentive to that which is beyond oneself, a form of concentration on that which is other....Prayer is like art, or rather prayer demands the sort of attention that art demands. It takes time. It requires silence. (16.02.13)

But what a challenge this is to the arts practitioner trying to chart a journey through the complexities of a creative process within a context of many unknown variables! In order to make some sense of this complexity and bring to the process a degree of order, clarity and coherence, it is a help to be together within one’s self, to know one’s self – or at least to be comfortable with the process of ‘coming to know’ one’s self. In a way, one carries this knowledge gently within oneself and it is learnt in many subtle ways. Helen agrees with this and feels that this process of learning is “entirely affective”:

It also goes back to what I was saying about place, because I think some places encourage stillness....It is interesting because I talk to the students about ‘holding the space’, not actually rushing people through lots and lots of stuff. You know, hold it, hold that space. And if there’s something you think is actually really moving or interesting, then just take time with it.

What stands out in Helen’s view of the arts is that whatever context one is in, “the arts invite you to pay attention”. The artist has the responsibility to “hold things long enough to pay attention”. This lies at the heart of the “aesthetic of living”.

This question of ‘stillness’, of ‘paying attention’ and of ‘holding the space’ was also highlighted by Padraic Garrett in our discussion of music and dementia. Although Padraic is a firm believer in the importance of the musicians and care staff reflecting on the outcomes of the creative process, he also thinks that too much analysis can lead to disengagement from the felt experience. He says to the people he is working with:

Let’s try and get a bit of time where people can just be quiet and let it soak in. And by all means, let us then talk about different individuals and so on, but let it soak in. Then whatever has soaked into you, maybe express a little bit about that. I think that’s quite a fine art or skill....I think a lot of people find it very hard to believe in the value of that because if you go back to staff, they are very task focused. I know that I’m also very task focused but I strongly believe in being able to just have time. And if you give yourself that time, then it will make a difference.

Both Padraic and Helen Nicholson are drawing attention to something very important not just in their respective fields, but also in the life of artists. That is, giving oneself permission, allowing oneself to pause, to be and to reflect: giving oneself time and space to ‘soak in’ before reflecting on a process one has just experienced. But in some instances this can feel threatening because one has to be ‘in tune’ with oneself, be secure enough in oneself to be able to meet this personal challenge. Padraic adds that:

The more secure someone is in themselves as a person, the better able they are to connect with someone with dementia, and particularly with someone who is suffering. There is a lot of suffering around and I think staff carry that. So I mean, you could talk about healing. And I think that would be a very important theme, about music and healing. Because I think that’s what it is really. You’re talking about healing at an emotional, psychological level in particular but probably also at a physical level.

In our conversation Padraic also identifies some of the qualities he feels that artists need when engaging with people with dementia. For him, warmth of personality is number one.

I think warmth communicates itself. And I don't think there's any particular personality type that radiates warmth, because I think you have some very quiet, shy people who radiate it, whilst other people express it in a very outgoing way. But I think warmth communicates itself very strongly and people with dementia pick up on it very strongly.

Others include openness, generosity of spirit, being able to share one's own vulnerability – qualities that presuppose one is comfortable within oneself. Padraic thinks that for anyone working in the area of dementia it is necessary to feel settled in oneself, otherwise the emotional challenges could be too great. Similarly, the musicians have to have a good rapport between themselves to work effectively as a team, but within a care environment they also need a respectful and non-judgemental attitude towards the care staff.

What began to emerge in my discussion with Padraic is the need to acknowledge the importance of a reciprocal relationship between the social and artistic elements in any human transaction involving artists and other people. In the context of Music for Life the musicians have to be highly skilled intuitive people who not only have something to say artistically but who can say it in a way that speaks to the people with dementia in a care environment. The integrity of their artistic engagement embodies the qualities of listening, care and love. But these same qualities are equally embedded in their human engagement. For me, this is a prime example of the synergy between the social and the artistic.

There is no doubt that working with people with dementia brings one up starkly with questions concerning the human condition and what it means to be human. As Padraic says:

What is it to be human when you know there are parts of my brain that are no longer functioning? So what is that? What is it to be human? I think what happens in Music for Life is that you can really see the person, in spite of the dementia. You know, the personality, the person comes out.

This illustrates the connectedness between art and understanding what it is to be human. It strengthens the view that artistic and social engagement can feed each other.

Echoing this, Julian West, a musician working for Music for Life, commented that "there must be a fundamental interest in your art form and a desire to be creative within it. And there has to be a fascination with other people – wanting to know and find out about other people". The connection between the two is critical in this kind of creative engagement.

This discussion clearly demonstrates the link between the social and the artistic. Basically, creative engagement in social settings becomes a pale shadow of what is possible if it is not driven by an artistic voice that is appropriately nuanced in its response to the particular human context. But I would also maintain that even if an artist is not especially interested in working in the wider community, their artistic life, their artistic insight would benefit from experiencing some sort of social engagement during their initial period of training in a conservatoire or other higher arts education college. This broader experience can only expand their horizons and open new doors of awareness. It can help to place their artistic voice in a wider human context and deepen their understanding of what it is to be an artist in society. Artists of any kind must feel that they have something to say, otherwise what is the point of doing what they do? It is my contention that in the most creative practice in participatory settings, there is a symbiotic relationship between social and artistic engagement. This serves as the primary guiding principle underpinning learning and development in the arts.

4.3 The interconnection between access and quality

For some years now there has been a debate raging about strengthening the link between access and quality. On the one hand, it has been felt by professional arts and education, along with funding bodies, that opportunities should be open for all people, especially young people, to have access to quality experience in the arts. On the other, all children should be entitled to an education in the arts, irrespective of background. Basically the debate has focused on access to both arts experience and learning in the arts, neither of which should be dependent on parental income or social circumstances.

At first the pressure was on widening opportunities so that all children, irrespective of social and economic background, have access to arts education. More recently the emphasis has shifted towards providing access to experiences of artistic quality, rather than just opening up access. In other words, another manifestation of the link between social and artistic engagement. Although budgetary constraints are making it increasingly difficult to deliver this ideal, the debate about access and quality remains high on the educational and cultural agenda.

I now want to flag up the importance of this issue in the context of exploring some possible pathways into high-level training in conservatoires and higher arts education institutions that have a different trajectory from the norm. What is customary at the moment in music for example, especially in the classical music tradition, is that those parents who have certain aspirations for their children, along with the money to support them, tend to pursue a conventional route into conservatoires. This might involve private instrumental teaching, a place at a local music school, or a junior conservatoire or a centre for young musicians, supplemented in some cases by playing in an orchestra like the London Schools Symphony Orchestra or the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain. There are other children who have the talent and opportunity to enter conservatoires via the route of specialist music schools.

But in addition to this conventional pathway some recent initiatives that are both socially engaged and artistically driven have opened the doors to a much wider group of young people. They are all concerned with marrying social and artistic aims without sacrificing quality. The first example is Sistema Scotland (2013). Based in Raploch, Stirling and Govanhill, Glasgow, this model was set up in the belief that children can gain huge social benefits from playing in an orchestra. These challenging neighbourhoods in Scotland are in the process of being transformed by the lives of young people engaged in music-making. Although at one level Sistema Scotland is about the discipline of learning an instrument and playing as well as possible in a group, it is also very much focusing on social change and changing civic society. Through its intensive programme of learning, making and playing, Sistema Scotland is creating another reality for the children involved, their families and their wider community. This is quite deliberately aiming at achieving a transformative experience for whole communities.

Another closely related example is In Harmony Liverpool (2013) – a project led by members of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic in initially one primary school. Again this is a powerful inclusive model designed to support every child achieving their full potential through music making, but also recognising how this experience can change people's lives and aspirations in their communities. This work in Liverpool forms part of the national project, In Harmony Sistema England (2013), which seeks to transform the lives of young people and their communities through making music together. The principles and values underpinning its work are drawn from those developed by El Sistema in Venezuela. They include two principles that are particularly relevant to this paper:

- **Music as a joyful agent of social change**

El Sistema is a social improvement and youth development programme that uses playing music together as its vehicle. Students are encouraged to feel an ownership of the music making process as an aid to their social development, taking responsibility for both individual and group improvement.

- **Access and excellence**

El Sistema includes as many children as it can, bringing young people into its community whenever possible.... whatever their background or abilities. As El Sistema strives single-mindedly toward musical excellence for all students, it also provides intensive training for the most committed and gifted, preparing them for the highest-level national orchestras and cultivating them as leaders in their own communities. In this way and others, the ideals of access and excellence are maintained in a productive balance that aims to maximise both the fullest success and highest accomplishment for all. (In Harmony Sistema England, 2013)

In London, LSO On Track, working in partnership with the music services of ten East London boroughs, is breaking new ground providing enriching programmes in music making and performance. Launched in 2008, LSO On Track offers a wide range of musical opportunities for young instrumentalists, from absolute beginners through to advanced musicians, plus an intensive continuing professional development scheme for primary school teachers. Its aims include:

- To develop a strong and strategic music partnership in London which harnesses the skills and expertise of world-class arts organisations and local authority music education practitioners
- To offer a range of projects for 8- to 18-year-olds, which add value to the core activities of the borough Music Services, provide pathways for young musicians to develop their music making, and encourage excellence throughout
- To offer inspiring, innovative and high-quality projects and performance opportunities which bring young instrumentalists of all ages and abilities into contact with professional artists and world-class venues
- To bring together communities in creative activities encouraging young people to meet other young musicians, and progress socially and personally, as well as musically
- To offer school teachers, instrumental tutors, HE students and LSO musicians a variety of ways to develop their skills and confidence in music, education and leadership. (Barbican Centre and Guildhall School of Music & Drama, 2013, p.17)

One of the things that stand out with many young people today is their passion for creating and playing their own music in groups. Creative engagement is seen as an important way of enabling their voice to be heard. With this principle in mind, the national youth music organisation, Music for Youth (supported by the Vivendi Create Joy Fund) has just launched a new Young Artist Development Programme for young musicians who write their own material, between the ages of 14–21.

Music for Youth (2013) is particularly interested in musicians working with jazz, traditional, world, rock, pop and urban genres. The 10-month long programme provides an opportunity to develop a person's writing style through collaborations with other young performers, working with and supported by a mentor and experienced professional musicians. The work produced will be performed in public on a national stage.

One important aspect of this programme is the responsibility it gives to the young musicians to draw up their own development plan, which is expected to include the following components:

- Specialist mentoring from professional artist(s) that is appropriate to the young person's music and learning style
- Attendance at composition-based workshops by professional composers
- Collaboration with a young performing group, supported and facilitated by the mentor
- Public performance of the music by the identified performing group
- Access to events that support the person's development over the course of the year

This programme is in its pilot phase but it provides an imaginative opportunity for opening doors and developing the creative and performing talent of young musicians.

My final example of organisations opening access to quality music making is Aldeburgh Young Musicians (2013), who are seeking to shape the young musicians of tomorrow by pushing the boundaries of what can be achieved. It brings together like-minded young musicians to rehearse, perform and exchange creative ideas. It has a close link with the Leadership programme at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama.

Remaining in the domain of music, the challenge now is to find appropriate destinations for those young musicians who wish to move on into higher levels of training but who have pursued different pathways from the normal conventional route into a conservatoire, for example. The wide-ranging artistic experience embedded in bodies like LSO On Track, Sistema Scotland, In Harmony Liverpool, Barbican Drum Works, Future Band, Aldeburgh Young Musicians and Music for Youth Young Artists Development Programme are producing young musicians with an eclectic artistic palette and broad cultural outlook that will need deepening and extending at the next stage of their development in higher education. Are they likely to feel comfortable within the current conservatoire culture? How might they respond to a selection process that is not necessarily geared to making judgements about young musicians coming from very different artistic, social and cultural backgrounds? How far are conservatoires fit for purpose in a contemporary world that is challenging them to redefine who they are in a rapidly changing cultural landscape?

These are fundamental questions that are beginning to be addressed by some people in some conservatoires. There is a growing recognition that change is necessary and that all higher arts education institutions should become more socially engaged. Technical virtuosity alone within a 'cult of precision' (Rusbridger, 2013, p.163) is seen for what it is – meaningless and musically irresponsible. Artists have to have something to say and one way of feeding this is by engaging with the wider world.

As an example of responsiveness to the challenges being encountered through these new pathways I will take the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, which has a long track record of working in community settings, but whose work in this area has tended to remain in the margins of the institution. Nevertheless, more recently there has been a significant shift in thinking, so much so that proposals are now being discussed about starting a new BA programme, focusing on theatre and music (Guildhall School of Music & Drama, 2013a, p.3).

This BA degree is being designed to meet the needs of musicians and actors who have come via different pathways into higher arts education and who want to develop portfolio careers as creative leaders, collaborators, devisers, workshop leaders, project managers, arts administrators, teachers and performers. In the context of this discussion about access and quality, the Guildhall proposes to develop strategies that will recruit talented young people from hard-to-reach backgrounds. It is intended to attract dynamic, diverse, creative young people who are not currently being recruited into more traditional conservatoire training, but recruitment will depend very much on the help and support of several key partners. For example:

- Barbican and Guildhall School East London and City Cultural Partnership, comprising six Music Education Hubs representing eight East London boroughs and the City
- National Skills Academy, connected to London's Further Education networks and apprenticeships
- A new Barbican Guildhall Young Artists Academy, a development of the Connect/Creative Learning young ensembles – e.g., Future Band, Drumheads, Impossibilities, East London Creative Jazz Orchestra, Barbican Young Poets
- The Guildhall School's Young Artists Division
- Paul Hamlyn Foundation ArtWorks networks, a nationwide initiative to develop artists working in participatory settings
- Nationwide arts organisations: e.g., Youth Music, Music for Youth, LSO Discovery, Spitalfields Music Festival, Generation Arts, Ideas Tap, Young Vic Taking Part, Lyric Young Company, National Theatre Connections, Old Vic New Voices, Hi8us, Islington Community Theatre
- Summer schools and CPD training projects
- Strategic taster sessions led by core tutors, delivered in partnership with pupil referral units, schools, youth and community services

This ground-breaking initiative comes at a critical time in the development of the Guildhall School. By creating a more open and responsive culture, the institution is strengthening its sense of social responsibility and continuing to act as a catalyst for change. It would be hoped that initiatives like this will become pivotal in the strategic debate about access and quality.

4.4

The interconnection between context and excellence

In chapter two the discussion focused on the work of several distinctive arts organisations and creative ensembles – Boy Blue Entertainment, Barbican Drum Works, Future Band, The Messengers, Magic Me, Music for Life, Synergy Theatre and Punchdrunk. In the previous section examples were taken to illustrate issues arising from the debate about access and quality – Sistema Scotland, In Harmony Liverpool, LSO On Track, Aldeburgh Young Musicians and Music for Youth Young Artist Development Programme. If questioned they would all say that they are striving for excellence within the parameters of the context they are working in. It is critical that any judgements made about the quality of both the process and product in each case have to take into account the various elements of that particular context. As was observed in *Creating a Land with Music*, a report for Youth Music (2002):

It is increasingly recognised in the professional arts community that no single immutable standard of excellence can exist. Any valid view of excellence has to be defined in relation to context and fitness for purpose. All musical activities must strive for excellence, but the criteria used to judge this will vary depending on the aim and context.

An urgent task, therefore, is to produce a common framework for evaluating and assessing quality that accords with diversity of need and purpose across all music genres. (p.11)

For example, music activities can only be judged fairly by the appropriateness of their aims and the way in which they make meaningful connections to their particular context. In the following cases, for instance, it would be wholly valid to make qualitatively different judgements according to a wide spectrum of criteria:

- A music therapist working with an autistic child in a special language unit
- A violinist performing a concerto in a concert hall
- A master drummer leading a drumming workshop in a community context
- A collaborative arts workshop in a young offenders' unit
- An open-access ensemble performing a genre-free collaborative composition in a club for young people
- The experimental work of a sound and image lab for young musicians, visual artists, singers, DJs and programmers. (Renshaw, 2007, pp.37-8)

Although there are similarities when judging quality at the level of the form of various artistic experiences, significant differences have to be taken into account when regarding the aim, content and context of any particular activity. For instance, the criteria used for evaluating a creative project in a non-formal setting are determined as much by the workshop/performance context (e.g., school classroom, hospital ward, prison, youth club, neighbourhood) as by the shared values and expectations of the participants and their leader (see Renshaw, 2010, p.61).

For the purpose of this analysis of excellence and quality, a distinction can be drawn between:

- Generic criteria that apply to judging quality across all forms of music experience and
- Specific criteria that apply to quality music making (including process, project and performance) in particular contexts

Generic criteria

Examples of the criteria that might be used for judging quality across all forms of music experience would include:

- Focused listening to the music, to oneself and to the other musicians in the group
- Openness to the spirit of the music and the performance
- Capturing an authenticity of sound, where the sound reflects the connection between a person's inner listening, musical intention and past musical experience
- Conveying the meaning of the music by showing an understanding of its inner construction (this is relevant to both interpreting and creating music)
- Demonstrating strength of conviction, inner confidence, engagement, risk-taking and an independent spirit in performance
- Displaying an approach to music making that reveals curiosity, integrity, honesty, humility and a clear musical intention

Specific criteria

In a conservatoire, for example, where the emphasis is on striving for excellence in the context of performance within the Western classical tradition, judgements regarding quality would refer to the above generic criteria, but they would also

include the following specific criteria that are especially pertinent to assessing high level instrumental performance. For example:

- Mastery of the instrument, achieving a balance between technical and interpretative skill
- Technical control of the instrument and medium in order to convey the expressive elements, emotional content, power and passion of the music to an audience (e.g., balance and focus of sound production, intonation, dynamics, tautness of rhythm and groove)
- Having something to say and having the technical ability to sustain freedom of expression and a creative response to the music
- Accepting personal responsibility for one's artistic position

This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it is clear that these specific criteria make sense in certain performance contexts rather than in others.

On the other hand, in non-formal participatory learning settings, in addition to the generic criteria, different specific criteria need to be adhered to when judging quality music making. Also, any framework for making judgements has to make a distinction between the work of the participants and that of the music leaders. For the purpose of illustration, the following frame of reference applies to judging quality in the area of collaborative creative workshop practice.

Participants

- Demonstrating a practical understanding of the knowledge and skills entailed in being a resourceful musician through improvising, composing and performing
- Communicating the 'feel' of the music by demonstrating an understanding of how its structures and layers work through the direct experience of making the piece
- Presenting a strong convincing performance that conveys an engagement in the music due to an aural, physical and emotional understanding of the creative process
- Displaying a sense of individual and collective ownership in which the voices of the participants are heard and acknowledged

Music leaders

- The effectiveness of the leader in managing and understanding the variables arising from the profile of the participants (e.g., age, numbers, experience, range of instruments, materials generated) and from the social and cultural context
- The effectiveness of the leader in planning, structuring and providing the artistic leadership in all the interconnected elements of a creative workshop – i.e., warm-ups, interpretation, instrumental skills, composition, arranging, improvisation, performance, listening, evaluation
- The effectiveness of the leader in having a broad, informed social, cultural and musical perspective and in being able to speak a number of musical 'languages' simultaneously
- The effectiveness of the leader in being able to perform the diverse roles of composer, arranger, facilitator, improviser, performer, conductor, teacher and catalyst

- The effectiveness of the leader in being able to demonstrate the generic and artistic leadership skills referred to previously

Again, this frame of reference is not exhaustive. What the analysis indicates is that if all these generic and specific criteria are adhered to, high quality creative workshop practice is a complex artistic activity that can hardly be accused of ‘dumbing down’ traditional views of musical excellence. It is just qualitatively different. Basically, ‘like has to be compared with like’ (Renshaw, 2007, pp.38-40).

4.5

The interconnection between creativity, innovation and risk-taking

The synergy between creativity, innovation and risk-taking lies at the core of this new paradigm and in many ways it serves as a motor for future change and development. It is also the backbone of a learning environment that nurtures different forms of collaboration as a response to the challenges raised in this paper regarding isolation and dislocation in society. As indicated at the end of chapter one, organisations responsible for the training of arts practitioners have to create a cultural milieu in which taking risks, seeing new possibilities, seizing opportunities and challenging established boundaries are seen as central to the learning process. This philosophy should underpin every aspect of practice in a conservatoire or higher arts education organisation – from leadership to learning, teaching, creating, devising and performing.

Whether it is in the performing arts or the visual arts and digital technology, creative innovative practice can only flourish in an enabling environment that encourages collaboration and risk-taking. In a recent book examining collaborative learning in higher music education, Helena Gaunt and Heidi Westerlund (2013) identify four key elements that are fundamental to learning and development across the arts:

- Collaborative learning is central to transforming the master–apprentice transmission model of teaching, and to re-examining ways of learning in music education (*and in arts education in general*) so that they reflect more closely the fundamentally collaborative nature of the art form itself
- Collaborative learning is critical to developing, deepening and transforming shared expertise and understanding
- Collaborative learning is a powerful means of liberating creativity, bridging social and cultural divides, and meeting the challenges of the 21st century in the arts, education and in the wider society
- Collaborative learning is a fundamental skill for contemporary practitioners in the arts. (p.237)

In terms of this provocation paper, the success of each case study discussed in chapter two is partly dependent on the ability of the participants to make connections and to engage in collaborative learning within whichever context they are working. This is fundamental to the culture of each organisation or ensemble of artists. I believe that:

Within an organisation a culture that respects ‘conversation’ and shared critical reflection is likely to encourage the process of making inter-connections, of cross-fertilisation of ideas and practices, of exploring collaborative ways of learning in order to promote creativity and innovation. This is not achieved in isolation, in a silo of convention and predictability, but by people choosing to work together, celebrating how their different talents, perspectives and insights can create something that transforms their practice and ways of seeing the world. It is through interaction, with its unique chemistry, that creative ideas and leaps of imagination begin to fly. Creative challenges emerge from the group responding to the unexpected. Nothing will ever seem quite the same again. New knowledge is ‘co-

constructed' through dialogue, risk-taking and the shared exploration of ideas and meaning within the group. This is the nub of collaborative learning, with 'conversation' being the engine driving the creative collaborative process....

[It is also important] to acknowledge the complex emotional dynamics of collaboration. If creative conversation is to flow, this process necessarily has to draw on both cognitive and affective support from within the group – and ideally from across the whole organisation. The emotional connectedness that helps to bind a group together can be characterised by a sense of shared motivation, shared purpose, solidarity based on shared values and a reassurance knowing that feelings of fear, vulnerability, self-doubt and marginality can also be shared (John-Steiner, 2006, p.124). There is little doubt that collaborative learning best flows and thrives in an environment that is emotionally supportive and understands what makes collaborative processes work. The synergy and connectedness arising from a supportive context, one which is sensitive to the place of physical and psychological space, can help to unlock the creative capacity of a group as well as impacting on the development of an organisation. (Renshaw, 2013, pp.238-9)

One example of a conservatoire creating a learning environment that enables connections to be made and collaborative learning to take place is the Guildhall School of Music & Drama (2013a). At the forefront of its Teaching and Learning Strategy for 2013–17 is a commitment to building up a reflective learning environment that is responsive to the challenges of the outside world and fosters a positive attitude towards creativity, innovation and risk-taking. Its vision for its graduates is for them to be:

masters of their craft, alive both to inner voice and outside world, confident in risk-taking, driven by shared passion to enhance our understanding of what it is to be human. (Guildhall School of Music & Drama, 2013a, p.1)

In addition, the learning environment of the School is underpinned by the following principles:

- Setting clear standards and seeking to raise expectations of what can be achieved artistically and professionally;
- Valuing intrinsic motivation and deep learning over extrinsic motivation and surface approaches to learning;
- Providing regular and timely high quality feedback (between peers and between students and staff) that informs further development;
- Providing opportunities to engage across departments and divisions, to create new contexts for work, to learn from and with peers, and to develop entrepreneurship;
- Stimulating curiosity, creativity and a research attitude; providing a safe space with opportunities to experiment and learn from mistakes;
- Opening doors to a variety of professional pathways; encouraging students to seize relevant opportunities and develop sustainable careers;
- Fostering self-awareness and the ability to reflect; fostering energy, well-being and resilience including a balance between individual self-reliance and mature interdependency;
- Championing open-mindedness, emotional engagement, mutual respect and interest in others, and the ability to communicate both on and off the stage. (ibid., p.2)

These principles of learning are gradually being embedded in the culture of the Guildhall School and they have helped to inform the recently formulated assessment criteria in Music, Acting and Technical Theatre Arts (Guildhall School of Music & Drama, 2013b). As an example, the School-wide undergraduate assessment criteria are as follows:

Technique and knowledge

- Command of craft
- Embodiment of learning
- Accuracy of skills
- Breadth and depth of understanding and reference points

Performance and/or creative output

- Imagination and insight
- Response to context
- Expression with range and artistic instinct
- Choice of material or repertoire

Communication and artistic values

- Commitment to artistic exploration through technical, intellectual, creative and emotional processes
- Connection with presence to audience
- Resilience and courage to take risks, improvise and problem solve
- Openness and empathy in working with others

Professional protocols

- Preparation
- Punctuality, attendance and personal organisation
- Attention to communication styles including performance and rehearsal etiquette, and academic conventions
- Ethics in respect of equality and rights (Guildhall School of Music & Drama, 2013b, p.2)

What stands out in this discussion is the measure of coherence between the principles of learning and assessment criteria now adopted by the Guildhall School and the philosophy of socially engaged creative practice being articulated in this paper. Coherence and interconnectedness, problem-solving and risk-taking, contextual responsiveness and collaborative learning – all are central to the learning and development of arts practitioners as they strengthen and deepen their creative role in society.

4.6 The interconnection between research, personal, artistic and professional development

As can be seen from the previous section, establishing an appropriately responsive, open and interconnected learning environment is fundamental to the development of any higher arts education organisation. Being in the vanguard of creative and performance practice necessarily presupposes a commitment to fostering programmes of personal, artistic and professional development, underpinned by action and artistic research. Over the last decade serious steps have been taken to extend and deepen a culture of critical reflection in many conservatoires, colleges and training organisations, but it is not surprising that at times the pressure of immediate pragmatic demands prevents some staff and students from developing their practice in a more reflective way. This can result in a certain intransigence regarding exploring new territory and new directions, both artistically and professionally, but especially in those areas concerned with addressing wider diverse social, educational and cultural needs. In the current political and economic climate though, a college would have to be blind not to take its social responsibility seriously.

I would now like to return to the fundamental question raised in section 4.1 – a question that invites us to search for a new paradigm of learning and development in the arts:

In what ways can arts practitioners respond to the creative and social challenges arising from a cultural landscape in constant flux, and from educational, health and criminal justice systems undermined by constantly changing demands within a precarious funding climate?

In many ways this is not a new question. Arts organisations, arts councils, funding bodies, researchers, educational and community leaders have been addressing the issues arising from this question for at least 30 years. But in the current climate of accountability and uncertainty it has a sharper edge to it, especially as the quality of work is increasingly under critical scrutiny.

The onus is now on those organisations responsible for the training of arts practitioners for socially engaged creative practice to re-examine the nature and quality of their respective learning and development programmes. As the contexts in which people work become more challenging and unpredictable, it is necessary to revisit the changing needs of practitioners. What would enable them to raise the quality of their practice? What further insights, knowledge and skills are necessary in order to make a qualitative difference? Each organisation will have its own views on what is needed and where priorities should lie. My own perspective draws partly on research conducted for the Paul Hamlyn Foundation on the Guildhall Connect creative ensembles (see Renshaw, 2005, pp.11–15; Renshaw, 2010, pp.66-80; Smilde, 2009, Chapter 4). But for this paper I present an embryonic framework arising from observations made by the people interviewed for this research. It pays specific attention to the qualities, skills and attitudes perceived as central to effective creative practice in participatory settings.

Artistic qualities

- A high level of craft and artistic skill: creating and performing with confidence to a high standard so that it communicates to audiences in diverse settings and is a source of inspiration to participants
- Artistic integrity and awareness of intrinsic artistic standards
- A passion for one's art and for communicating this to people in a wide range of contexts

- A commitment to one's specialism but also having an openness and generosity towards a broad artistic palette (e.g., in music, having a respect for all genres)

Interpersonal skills

- Having the ability to connect to the context in which one is working: knowing where the participants are coming from
- High level interpersonal skills: warmth, empathy, openness, spontaneity, flexibility, respecting, trusting, caring, listening to people's voices, absorbing different perspectives and understanding other people's worlds
- Having a sense of presence: being connected and at one with what is happening – this feeling can be caught by participants
- Having a strong inner confidence and sense of security enabling one to be interactive and collaborative in challenging circumstances
- Having a mature self-awareness but not self-absorbed. Artists have to be 'together' in themselves in order to communicate to others
- Being hyper-aware of what is going on in a space at any given time: noticing and responding to cues, valuing and celebrating other people's contributions
- Having finely honed relationship-building skills as a way of getting people to work together

Creative skills

- Having strong creative skills (e.g., in improvising, composing, arranging, writing, devising, designing, making and building sets)
- Creative responsiveness: openness, flexibility and spontaneity within the creative process; seeing and adapting to the ways different participants are learning at any one time; responding creatively to their ideas
- Having the skill to get young musicians, actors and dancers to improvise and create a piece that can be critically engaged with by the group. This participatory, creative process enables each person to connect to their own emotional voice and artistic identity
- Having the ability to produce cutting-edge work that resonates with the participants
- Having the ability to set individual goals for participants and to support work that allows them to progress and achieve their goals
- Having an informed awareness of quality but being non-judgemental in one's approach to people and their work
- Having the confidence and experience to trust one's judgement and responses to the flow of ideas and information within a workshop context

Communication skills

- Building up a sense of intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy in young people: helping them to understand and master their own abilities; validating their creative output and supporting them to develop their skills and raise their expectations
- Developing the self-esteem, self-confidence and positive self-image of all participants in which each person recognises the value of what they are able to do and gains the self-respect of being accepted and acknowledged by the group
- Being able to draw on a range of leadership styles: e.g., directive, non-directive, facilitatory, shared leadership
- As a leader and an inspirer the arts practitioner has to be able to be centre stage, yet knowing their main responsibility is to facilitate others in their making, creating, devising and performing
- Maintaining a subtle balance between offering their talent and skill, but in a way that it is there for the participants to take but not to have forced on them
- Having the confidence, understanding and skill to take risks in challenging environments
- Always remaining open and receptive to new ideas and experiences, recognising that you don't have to know everything and that you are always continuing to learn

Attitudes

- Key attitudes include: openness, respect, integrity, generosity of spirit, personal responsibility, authenticity and high aspirations
- Understanding and respecting the broad social and cultural background of all participants, especially of young people
- Valuing the voices and perspectives of all participants
- Having the confidence and skill to reflect on one's practice. Being able to shift from what, how, when and where questions to more reflective 'why' questions
- Understanding the pivotal place of reflection in the creative process. Generating a learning environment in which all practice is underpinned by critical reflection. Participants can catch this reflective attitude from the arts practitioners
- Building reflection into the DNA of all partner organisations

Arts organisations and higher arts education institutions have reached a critical stage in their development as they begin to build up a more reflective culture that is underpinned by research. Although research is fundamental to the life of a university, it is only comparatively recently that colleges in music, drama and dance, for instance, have begun to embed a research attitude into their work. Much of the momentum for this has come from major research organisations and funding bodies with an interest in supporting and enquiring into the nature, scope and quality of arts practice.

The following organisations, for example, are active in supporting and engaging in practice-based research in the arts. Increasingly this is of a collaborative nature which is breaking new ground and creating new forms of arts practice.

National funding bodies and research organisations

- Arts Council England
- Arts and Humanities Research Council
- Centre for Music Performance as Creative Practice
- Creative and Cultural Skills Council
- Creativeworks London
- Cultural Learning Alliance
- National Foundation for Educational Research
- Paul Hamlyn Foundation – ArtWorks
- Society for Education, Music & Psychology Research
- The Culture Capital Exchange
- Youth Music

London-based higher arts education institutions

- Centre for Creative Collaboration, University of London
- City University
- Goldsmiths, University of London
- Guildhall School of Music & Drama
- Institute of Education, University of London
- King's College, University of London
- Queen Mary, University of London
- Royal Academy of Music
- Royal Central School of Speech & Drama
- Royal College of Art
- Royal College of Music
- Royal Holloway, University of London
- Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance
- University of the Arts

Despite a proliferation of research activity, it understandably takes time for a research culture to take root in those institutions with little history in this area. Nevertheless, the 3rd International Reflective Conservatoire Conference, *Performing at the Heart of Knowledge*, hosted by the Guildhall School of Music & Drama in March 2012, demonstrates the shift in attitude towards research in the conservatoire sector. A rapidly growing international community of research practice is strengthening all the time and this must bode well for individual institutions and for the profession as a whole.

As arts practice is increasingly informed by different forms of research, this adds an important dimension to the work of conservatoires and colleges of higher arts education. The challenge now is gradually to embed research into each institution so that it begins to inform the work of those artists responsible for teaching their craft. In the context of this paper, research should play a major role in furthering knowledge and understanding in the five interconnected elements of the proposed new paradigm for learning and development in socially engaged creative practice: the interconnections between the social and the artistic; between access and quality; between context and excellence; between creativity, innovation and risk-taking; and between personal, artistic and professional development.

Research in these key areas will have greatest resonance if it is operating in a culture of critical reflection. In a sense, research and reflection go hand in hand, but as we have seen earlier in this paper, reflection is challenging and many people are fearful of changing their practice and moving into the unknown. This can have major implications for the personal and professional development of teachers in conservatoires and colleges. In the hurly-burly of the workplace, with its pressing demands and uncertainties, it is only too easy to avoid reflecting on one's practice. Yet in the spirit of this paper, all teachers should be given the space and time for building up a sense of connectedness – a sense of 'being in tune' with themselves and others. This is the bedrock of reflection and is as important for artists as it is for the people they may be engaging with in the wider community.

5 Coda

The aim of this Provocation has been to stimulate discussion and debate about fundamental issues arising from socially engaged creative practice, especially regarding the implications for learning and development in the arts. The paper is intended to act as a catalyst for a number of future critical conversations drawing on the experience of leaders and practitioners in their respective fields.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the main thrust of the paper should provoke further discussion between strategically targeted organisations, focusing particularly on three key questions:

1. To what extent should learning and development programmes in the arts be underpinned by the proposed paradigm that draws together five sets of interconnections between:
 - A social and artistic imperative;
 - Access and quality;
 - Context and excellence;
 - Creativity, innovation and risk-taking;
 - Research, personal, artistic and professional development?
2. In what ways can arts practitioners respond to the creative and social challenges arising from a cultural landscape in constant flux, and from educational, health and criminal justice systems undermined by constantly changing demands within a precarious funding climate?
3. How can current structures, both formal and non-formal, in the arts and education become more resilient, flexible and responsive to meet the challenges arising from the proposed paradigm?

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Biography

Peter Renshaw is a writer and researcher for the Barbican Centre and Guildhall School of Music & Drama. In 2001 he retired from the Guildhall School as Head of Research and Development, where he pioneered the innovative programme in performance and communication skills (1984-2001) and was Gresham Professor of Music (1986-93). Formerly he was Lecturer in Philosophy of Education at the University of Leeds Institute of Education (1970-75) and Principal of the Yehudi Menuhin School (1975-84).

He is especially interested in the learning and development of professional artists. Most recently he has led mentoring development programmes at the Guildhall School, the Barbican Centre, Prince Claus Conservatoire Groningen, the Royal Conservatoire The Hague, the National Institute of Creative Arts & Industries, University of Auckland, the University for the Arts, London, The Sage Gateshead and Youth Music. Consultancies have included Banff Centre for the Arts, Sydney Conservatorium, Queensland Conservatorium, Royal Scottish Academy of Music & Drama, the Irish Government (developing an Irish Academy for the Performing Arts), International Yehudi Menuhin Foundation, Brussels and the London Borough of Newham.

From 2001-02 he was Chair of the Steering Group for Youth Music's *Creating a Land of Music* and from 2001-03 he was Moderator of the EU Socrates project, *Sound Links*, on cultural diversity in music education. In 2005, as part of *Musical Futures*, The Paul Hamlyn Foundation published his research report on Guildhall Connect, titled *Simply Connect: 'Next Practice' in Group Music Making and Musical Leadership*. His report *Lifelong Learning for Musicians: the Place of Mentoring* was published in 2006 by the Lectorate Lifelong Learning in Music at Prince Claus Conservatoire Groningen and Royal Conservatoire The Hague. In 2008 The Sage Gateshead published his evaluation report on REFLECT, the Creative Partnerships National Co-mentoring Programme. His book, *Engaged Passions: Searches for Quality in Community Contexts* was published in 2010 under the auspices of the Research Group in Lifelong Learning in Music & the Arts at Hanze University of Applied Sciences, Groningen and the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Design, Music & Dance, The Hague. In 2011 the Barbican and Guildhall School of Music & Drama published his *Working Together: An enquiry into creative collaborative learning across the Barbican-Guildhall Campus*.



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