



It takes a village to raise a child



An open collection
of thoughts

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This edition of articles comprises texts from presentations delivered at two significant symposia that took place in 2014:

The Children's Cultural Citizenship International Symposium was a feature within the Small size, big Festival in February in Newry, Northern Ireland. The symposium provided a spectrum of different views in relation to the current cultural rights afforded young children in our global society.

The International Symposium Small size, Performing Arts for Early Years took place as part of the 18th Assitej International World Congress in Warsaw. Speakers here provided a global snapshot covering issues of governance for cultural participation, observations on young children as an audience and the impact of artistic research and theoretical methodology of theatrical research in practice.

€ 5,00

Artistic International Association

small size

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An open collection of thoughts

editing by Jo Belloli, Antonella Dalla Rosa, Lali Morris and Anna Sacchetti

graphic project by Francesca Nerattini

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This publication has been supported by
Small size, performing arts for Early Years



Co-funded by the
Creative Europe Programme
of the European Union

WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE CREATIVE EUROPE PROGRAMME OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

www.smallsize.org/association.asp
info@smallsize.org

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Introduction

by Jo Belloli

Associate Producer and Early Years Programmer Polka Theatre, UK
member of Small size, big citizens

This edition of articles comprises texts from presentations delivered at two significant symposia that took place in 2014.

The Children's Cultural Citizenship International Symposium was a feature within the Small size, big Festival in February in Newry, Northern Ireland. The symposium provided a spectrum of reflective, affirmative, provocative and informative views in relation to the current cultural rights afforded young children in our global society, a theme that had underpinned the Small size, big citizens project 2009-2014. With common themes and cross-references resonating throughout, the presentations brought individual observations, experiences and examples from local, national and international perspectives combining academic, literary, poetic and conversationally anecdotal thoughts with concrete and powerful examples of local municipal and broader governmental policy and practice; highlighting and championing successes achieved and challenges still being faced.

The International Symposium Small size, Performing Arts for Early Years took place three months later, as part of the 18th Assitej International World Congress in Warsaw. Speakers here provided a global snapshot covering issues of governance for cultural participation, observations on young children as an audience and the impact of artistic research and theoretical methodology of theatrical research in practice. Alongside this came reports on uplifting developments taking place in Poland and striking insight into sparks of activity giving impetus to the situation within the very particular context of South Africa, host nation of the next Assitej World Congress in 2017.

With the exception of some graphics in Yvette Hardie's paper "New Frontiers in theatre for early years in Africa – possibilities within a parched landscape", this collection offers text-only versions of the presentations delivered. Although without the visual dimension afforded the audiences at these two events there is a richness of argument, conviction and insight through which you will hear the contrasting voices of the authors as speakers.

The Children's Cultural Citizenship

International Symposium

Small Size, Big Festival

(Newry - 2014)





Welcoming remarks

Grainne Powell

Chief Executive of Sticky Finger Arts, Northern Ireland

Welcome to the Small size, big festival and welcome to Newry, Northern Ireland and home to Sticky Fingers.

We are honoured to have been chosen to host this very special event, an event that will inspire and engage each of us in a whole new world of opportunity and creative possibility.

We welcome friends and colleagues from all around the world to this small region and to Newry a very small city with a population of less than 30,000; but although we are small in size, we are big in many ways and we recognise the value of the imagination and creativity of our children.

In Northern Ireland some of us believe that we are British and are proud to be part of the UK and follow very British traditions, and some of us are equally proud to be Irish and our traditions are very firmly rooted within Irish culture.

However each one of us agrees that we want the best for our children and to provide them with a future full of hope and adventure and to move forward where the past no longer directs the future and each day is full of new and exciting opportunities.

Through Small size we have learned new ways to work, to build strong relationships celebrating the many different cultures and traditions that exist in Europe, the UK and Ireland.

Through Small size we have learnt how to play, play is central to children's lives and an essential ingredient of a happy childhood, through play our most talented artists, musicians and performers take the first steps in developing their skills, their vision, and their art.

In Newry we strive to promote access to a rich, varied and inclusive cultural life for our children, our teachers, and our communities. Our culture is understood as a way of life, encompassing values, traditions, and beliefs and sadly in Northern Ireland it also involves conflict.

But today we celebrate these cultural differences by recognising the voice and rights of our children to have a different future where their traditions and cultures are part of who we are and that these experiences can and should secure children's rightful place in the wider social and cultural sphere.

Today we welcome theatre companies from different countries to inspire and enchant our children through their story, song and dance. In Newry we do not have theatres or buildings to house the arts, we don't have a stage to perform on

or encourage performance to be created freely, but what we have in abundance is an audience and we have children who are encouraged to create and engage in the wonderful experience of the arts through their community, their school and their home.

In Newry we have a long tradition of a theatre of telling stories inspired by the past and optimistic about the future. We have a very long tradition of welcoming friends from home and from abroad and over the next few days we hope to show you our city, tell stories that will make you laugh and make you cry and we will show you a very special place that I am sure will remain in your hearts.

Welcome to the Small size, big festival and welcome to Newry and I hope that your stay will be filled with magical possibility and creative adventure that will follow each and every one of you back home.



Action for Children's Arts

Vicky Ireland

Vice Chair of Action for Children's Arts, UK

Thank you so much for inviting me to have a short platform this morning. It's wonderful to be in Newry, such a genuinely child-friendly city and to be the guest of Small size and Sticky Fingers, two organisations both of whom I admire greatly. I'm here to speak as an individual voice, but also as a representative of the UK charity, Action for Children's Arts, which is made up of individuals who share a passion about the value of the arts in the lives of children- 0-12yrs.

"ACA is the voice of children's arts in the UK. We aim to improve the cultural well-being of children by focusing attention on and encouraging support for children's arts, and by celebrating and sharing the achievements of our practitioners."

www.childrensarts.org.uk

We believe the arts have a vital role to play in the development of emotional intelligence; in stretching the imagination and in helping children to find their place and voice within society, allowing them to become sensitive and caring individuals.

Please join us and make our collective voice stronger. We work on a voluntary basis to connect artists, to campaign and to celebrate best practice. Every penny we receive helps us to make the case of, "Putting Children First".

ACA believes that children should be placed in the centre of our lives and that if we give them the best we have to give in a robust and sensible way, we are creating what the poet T.S.Eliot described as, "the good person in the good society".

Surely something to aspire to.

So why doesn't it happen?

What can we do?

Here are some thoughts.

1. The Challenge:

We need a total rethink of society's goals and shape.

Children up to twelve years of age make up 15% of the UK population, but Freedom of Information requests made by Action for Children's Arts revealed that only 1% of public funding for the arts supports work for children.

Action:

The arts are as important for children as they are for adults – and deserve a fair share of the funding.

Action for Children's Arts has created an Arts Manifesto for Children.
Let's all live up to it (<http://www.childrensarts.org.uk/what-we-do/manifesto>).

2. Childhood:

It is really important to let children be children. They need to play and socialise with other young children as well as starting to learn. There has to be balance. In the UK, a worrying amount of children are under treatment for stress, anxiety or depression, which is a sad indication of the society we live in and the pressures children face.

Action:

Let's try to get decision makers to understand better the state of Childhood and the role that the arts and play have as crucial ingredients in allowing the release of stress and in encouraging expressions of delight, curiosity and wonder.

3. Culture for Life:

For a culturally rewarding and meaningful life, start at the beginning. The first three years are crucial. Early experiences set our emotional thermostat. The effects are on the patterns of electrical brainwaves and chemistry, establishing a template with which we interpret the world.

Action:

We need an holistic approach, tactics and planning which will provide opportunities right from the start of a person's life, so the arts aren't an add-on, but the oxygen of the spirit and part of everyday existence.

Get parents on board - involve them from the beginning. One example, in 2004 Birmingham Theatre launched their "Rep's Child" project - giving babies born at City and Sandwell Hospitals free theatre experiences for them and their families for the first 10 years of their lives.

3. Play:

Children learn to be artists through play. Once you lose the ability to play you lose the ability to learn. Babies in the habit of playing become creative and imaginative children, thoughtful and inspired teenagers.

Action:

Subtle skills and support are needed so let's learn them, teach them, and share them.

Let's help parents to play with their children - many are inhibited or don't know how to.

Let's create environments where children can play safely and learn to take risks. Let's teach children to become light-footed in order to help them bounce back, no matter what life throws at them.

Let's help children to become more resilient early on in their lives in order to help build their confidence.

4. The right to be creative:

Every child is born a potential genius, yet we are instructed to, "Find your talent". But why is it lost in the first place? We are told, "We must unlock the creative potential in all of us". But why and how is it locked in?

Because at an early point we have been told, "You're no good at this; you can't do it well enough". So we become ashamed. We deem ourselves failures. We stop or we don't even start. We lose our potential genius. We lock up our talent.

Action:

Alongside rigorous training to become skilled artists and to pass exams, allow us also to enjoy creativity without monitoring success.

Let passion, joy and humour rule.

5. Communication:

We adults must start to communicate more, to join up the age ranges so we talk, respect and empathise with our young, so they in turn will engage with us.

Action:

We need to learn to listen to children and to respect their voices.

We need to help children to listen to each other and to the world around them.

We need to affirm their right to their own hopes, dreams and fears.

We need to talk to children, to help them develop the vocabulary to communicate, the confidence to conduct meaningful conversations and to share ideas.

Encourage the "Young Mayors" scheme, initiated by the British Youth Council so wherever Mayors are present, we have Young Mayors alongside.

(ymn@byc.org.uk)

Set up Children's Parliaments in all regions of the UK, like the one in Scotland. (info@childrensparliament.org.uk)

Create places and spaces where children and teenagers can meet, talk, play and help to shape the future.

6. Training:

Let's stop being afraid of children. They are no different or worse than they have ever been.

"Children today are tyrants. They contradict their parents, gobble their food and tyrannize their teachers". - Socrates.

Action:

Train mentors to work alongside young people

Train artists to work with children.

Create a degree in "Arts for Children".

7. Join forces:

There is strength in numbers.

Action:

Politicians know all the arguments but do nothing. Children do not vote, earn or have power.

They should not be thought of as the audience of Tomorrow but more importantly, as the audience of Today.

Let's share ideas and find a courageous and imaginative voice to appeal to the person in the street; the voters who in turn will affect the media and finally the politicians, the movers and shakers for change.

Our message is children need the arts in their lives and deserve better.

Thank you Small size.

Thank you Grainne and Sticky Fingers.

Cultural Citizenship for Children

Yvette Hardie

President of ASSITEJ International, South Africa

Nelson Mandela famously said, *"We understand and promote the notion that while children need to be guided, they also have an entrenched right to be whatever they want to be and that they can achieve this only if they are given the space to dream and live out their dreams."*

What better way to be given space to dream and to live out dreams than through arts and culture experiences? It is here that we are able to offset our everyday, mundane world by feeling most fully alive. In *Art as Experience*, John Dewey wrote of how the arts "break through the crust of conventionalized and routine consciousness." Artists, he felt, "have always been the real purveyors of news, for it is not the outward happening in itself which is new, but the kindling by it of emotion, perception and appreciation." When we begin to create and engage with the arts ourselves, we kindle the fires of emotion, perception and appreciation. We release our imaginations, allowing space to dream and live out our dreams... allowing for new possibilities and ways of seeing the world.

I know that for the majority of people sitting in this room, they need no convincing of this notion. In fact it is why we are here and it has served as the basis for the building of companies, theatres, festivals, exchanges, projects, programmes and networks, such as Small Size, which has now become a full member of ASSITEJ – the international association of theatre for children and young people. We all believe in the intrinsic value of the arts to illuminate the world around us, and to make each one of us feel more fully alive.

As Charles Fowler says, "Quite simply, the arts are the ways we human beings "talk" to ourselves and to each other. They are the language of civilization through which we express our fears, our anxieties, our curiosities, our hungers, our discoveries, and our hopes. They are the universal ways by which we humans still play make-believe, conjuring up worlds that explain the ceremonies of our lives. The arts are not just important; they are a central force in human existence. Every child should have sufficient opportunity to acquire familiarity with these languages that so assist us in our fumbling, bumbling, and all-too-rarely brilliant navigation through this world. Because of this, the arts should be granted major status in every child's schooling."

We know too then that arts and culture experiences are not just important for every human being, but they are also specifically particularly important for the growing child as they help to create connections between different types of intelligence and ways of experiencing, thus supporting the development of com-

plex and integrated brain-functioning.

A renowned Japanese master mathematics teacher, who taught nearly 2 million students with amazing results, was asked “What is the most effective way of heightening children’s mental ability at the earliest possible stages?” His response: “The finest start for infants is to sing songs. This helps to elevate their powers of understanding, and they register astounding speed in learning math and languages.” So there have been numerous studies and statements, which indicate how access to arts and culture practices from the earliest age can increase capacity in seemingly unrelated areas, through the improvement of overall brain functioning.

But the notion behind this symposium goes even deeper than wanting the arts to be core to every child’s learning and development. It suggests that children have a right to full cultural citizenship, and this notion has been beautifully articulated through La Baracca’s initiative: the Charter of Children’s Rights to the Arts which expresses through 18 principles the rights of all children everywhere in the world to enjoy arts and culture, in their homes, schools, communities and cities.

To view children as cultural citizens may challenge perceptions of childhood somewhat.

What does it mean to be invested with the rights, privileges and duties of a citizen?

Firstly it means to be valued within the context of the state and the community. It means to inherit by virtue of this citizenship all the social, economic and cultural rights belonging to a citizen. This puts the onus first and foremost on the state to ensure that these rights may be fulfilled, and that any obstacles towards these rights being fulfilled are removed. It means that these rights must be supported and protected by the state. However we must also acknowledge that many states may not have the resources to fulfill all these rights immediately. However, this does not excuse states from doing nothing – rather a state has to ensure a programme of action, starting with minimum core obligations.

As activists for cultural citizenship for children, and for access for them to enjoy and participate in arts and culture, what are the minimum core obligations that we should be insisting upon in our respective contexts?

In the context from which I come, South Africa, and more broadly Africa, it is often difficult to convince the powers that be that rights to arts and culture are indivisible from and equal to all other rights. When children are starving, homeless, parentless, subject to abuse, infection or to any number of at times horrific realities, which all conspire to rob them of their childhood, what role should the arts be playing? Does it have a place at all? I believe it does – that our approach to rights has to be an integrated one, not hierarchical. Cultural rights need to be integrated with all other human rights. If children are to survive the at times difficult circumstances in which many of them find themselves, they need, even more acutely, the tools to do this. And the arts may be able to provide these tools

when other routes are failing...

Further, seeing children as cultural citizens requires seeing them as active, autonomous and contributing members of society. Their value is not simply in being citizens in the making, dependents requiring a particular kind of support and protection, but rather in their unique essence and contribution as children. What is the unique contribution of a child to society?

In adulthood, being a good citizen generally means an active engagement with state and community, through economic participation in society, and active participation in community building. In ancient times in Greece, men (and it was just men) were measured according to how deeply they were committed to their community and how much they gave back – participation and service was the hallmark of being a good citizen. What is it that we can expect from a child?

I think one of the things we can expect is for a child to do the work of a child... which according to Maria Montessori and many other childhood development specialists, is “play”. Play is responsible for much early brain development, influencing the development of fine and gross motor skills, language, socialisation, personal awareness, emotional well-being, creativity, problem-solving and learning ability. In my opinion then, it is the duty of a child as citizen to BE a child, and to engage with the world around them through the medium most natural to children, which is play.

Play of course exists on a continuum, which reaches out towards and encompasses the making of all arts, and moves beyond this. Maslow said that almost all creativity involves purposeful play, and it has been argued that people like Einstein, considered geniuses, are those who have not forgotten how to play... Children, when allowed to be children, can also provide a powerful example for adults – as Cathy Nutbrown says, whether “Pausing to listen to an airplane in the sky, stooping to watch a ladybird on a plant; sitting on a rock to watch the waves crash over the quayside – children have their own agendas and time scales. As they find out more about their world and their place in it, they work hard not to let adults hurry them. We need to hear their voices.”

Childhood itself then is an expression of cultural diversity. It has its unique time, its unique priorities, and its unique expressions.

However, children do not only operate within the culture of childhood. Like adults, they have many intersecting identities, and one of these is the cultural identity as bestowed by and developed within the family and broader community.

A balance needs to be found for the expression of cultural identity and diversity, and the building of social inclusion. The tension between globalisation and identity needs to be acknowledged, and we need to explore how to embrace both while building an environment of respect and tolerance within which children can play freely.

We also need to acknowledge those practices within cultures, which may conflict with the human rights of the child, and ensure that while traditional cultures

are celebrated, respected and retained through collective memory, simultaneously that those practices which might be in opposition to other human rights are questioned and where necessary, changed or abandoned. There needs to be a commitment to the management of cultural diversity, and to creating and enhancing a culture of respect for both human and cultural rights. To this end, arts and culture practices which engage with not just the child as audience or participant, but also reach into the school, the family and the community, are particularly important in contributing to the creation of this culture of respect and an understanding of diversity.

This issue of identity may also have repercussions in terms of participation. If we want children to be and become proactive cultural citizens, then participation should be a value around which we build arts and culture practices. Children should be active participants in creative processes, having a say in the way these are designed, and given an opportunity to express their opinions and responses. Their presence in the creative act should be respected and considered as vital. They should be made comfortable with expressing their views and participating in decision-making in their families, schools and communities, and this process can be greatly supported through arts and culture based activity. Further, cultural citizens are allowed to contribute to the cultural life of society through their own unique expressions of culture and the arts, and so with children it is important that these are nurtured, valued and recognized.

What do we have to do in order to achieve this goal of children being cultural citizens? Is it a matter of waiting for the state to grant and enact this citizenship? I don't believe it is.

We have a Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is 25 years old this year. It's the most complete statement of children's rights ever produced and the most widely-ratified international human rights treaty in history, with only two countries (the USA and Somalia) not approving the convention. And yet, while many states may have signed the convention, how many of them truly take these rights seriously? And how many of them understand the implications of Article 31, the right to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts? How many of them enact these implications?

In South Africa, for example, we have an educational policy which insists that every child from Grade R to 9 has access to Creative Arts, as part of the compulsory school curriculum. However, teachers are not trained to deliver this curriculum, and in some provinces in South Africa, outside service providers (read artists, for example) are prevented from accessing schools. Learning is not seen to be happening – even in the Creative Arts – if children are not engaging through the modalities of reading, writing and numeracy, which in effect denies children access to arts and culture through the most appropriate modalities of experiencing, participating and creating.

It is not enough to say that citizenship is bestowed by the state and that therefore the cultural citizenship of children can be left to the state to achieve. One

of the important things that we all need to do, wherever we may come from, is align our activities with like-minded others from across the spectrum in order to lobby governments to not just speak the rhetoric, but to walk the talk... we need to explore synergies and increase cultural exchange, dialogue and learning in order to ensure that together we work towards embedding these rights in practice.

We need to bring together all sectors in making action happen. We need to engage the artistic community, teaching community, communities of parents and extended family members, public, private and non-profit organisations in working together to create where possible best practice models, which can be used to demonstrate our arguments. We need to foster alliances and synergies wherever possible in order to achieve this goal.

I believe that networks such as ASSITEJ and Small size can and do play a key role in advocating for this to happen, and in sharing information and knowledge which provides a basis for the development of policies, of implementable programmes, and their evaluation.

There is an African proverb which has been translated as "it takes a village to raise a child". I believe that if we are to be effective in ensuring change and access to arts and culture for all children from the earliest possible age, then we need to act as a village, on national and global levels, working harmoniously and supporting one another's efforts.

In doing this we need to respect and practise inclusivity in our approach. There is a continuum of artistic practices that extends from the child practicing her own explorations of the arts, spontaneously and without guidance, to supported experiences, which happen in homes, schools and community spaces with adults present and participating alongside children, to mediated experiences of the arts, to encountering the arts directly in a profound, catalytic moment, where the measurable impact may be more difficult to predict. It is important that we value the contributions that all of these can make towards building and finding expression for the cultural citizenship of children.

So to return to the Mandela quote with which we started: which speaks to the heart of this notion of cultural citizenship for children. First we all have a responsibility towards children, to nurture them and to create the environment in which they can practise cultural citizenship; secondly we must acknowledge their entrenched rights, one of which is to have autonomy of choice; and thirdly, the best way to give them the opportunity to achieve their destiny as cultural citizens is to give them dreaming space.

As Mandela has said, "There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children... History will judge us by the difference we make in the everyday lives of children."

The right of children to a full cultural citizenship

Roberto Frabetti

Administrative Chief of La Baracca - Testoni Ragazzi (Bologna - Italy)
and Project Manager of Small size, big citizens

The idea of “children as citizens” inspired Small size, big citizens, because we think that very young children are “big” citizens and, as such, subjects of rights

Amongst these rights, there is the right to enjoy Art and Culture, as states the **Convention on the Rights of the Child** adopted by the United Nations in 1989. In Article 31 it states that:

“States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life...”

And the European Charter of the Rights of the Child (1992) confirms, “every child (...) has the right to participate in social, cultural and artistic activities”.

These are important words...

Children, including the very young, have the right to experience and enjoy the physical and mental spaces that art and culture can offer, sharing with adults a condition of closeness and belonging.

Art and culture mean creation, but they also mean sharing knowledge. Thanks to art, children can perceive the richness of every human being and their uniqueness.

The children have rights, but are they considered citizens?

When do we become citizens?

Citizens of our community, town, country, or of the world...

Is it today? When we are born, or tomorrow? When we reach the age of “full mental capacity”?

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN General Assembly, 1989) and the European Charter on the Rights of the Child (European Parliament, 1992) clearly and completely express the concept of care, asking the “adult society” to take childhood on board itself in order to favour its physical, intellectual and emotional development.

But everyone knows that stating a principle is not enough for it to be put into practice every day.

And there is no law or legislation – however “high” or fundamental – that can answer all the open questions of our society.

In my opinion, among the many unresolved contradictions there is one that stands out.

When are children finally considered “citizens” and “complete human beings”, and not “citizens of the future” or “human becomings”?

I think that the concept of complete citizenship can never be separated from the concept of human being. And children gain both acknowledgements when they born.

We have to ensure that the time needed to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to have their “full mental capacity” recognised does not become a reason to limit the consideration of their status.

The learning process of human beings is constant and continuous, and children have the right to care and protection because they are “weak” subjects, but this does not need to affect the right of children to be considered complete citizens and human beings of today and not of tomorrow.

Unfortunately, this is not so often taken for granted.

On the contrary, we could just mention the thousands of architectural barriers that children find in our cities, thus turning them, too often, into inaccessible urban spaces.

Or the shortage of cultural offer specifically and continually addressed to children, and for them there is only the “ghetto” of the entertainment.

Actually, the topic of **cultural expenses** is enlightening.

Children are just “spectators of the future”, so they “have to” be satisfied with the crumbs of an offer that should be equal for all. 100 € for 2 citizens means 50 € each, not 90 for the adult and 10 for the child.

Do children have 10 times less rights to knowledge and enjoyment?

I do not think that there is any justification for the fact that, for a child-citizen, it is OK to spend 20-30-50 times less on culture than the amount spent for an adult. This is deeply unfair. And the fact that it is natural, taken for granted, obvious... is even more unfair.

I would like to give a very concrete example with regard to my town and my experience. To understand its implications and meaning, we need to start from the following statement: the Municipality of Bologna has always paid special attention to childhood, for both what is offered in schools and what is offered at a cultural level.

It has created a network of municipal public schools for early years and it has been among the first – if not the first ever – in Italy in terms of quality and quantity. And it has supported the creation and development of a number of top-level cultural agencies whose work is addressed to children, and that operate professionally in different fields: visual arts, children’s literature, music, cinema, theatre and so on.

The Municipality of Bologna was the first municipality in Italy to politically and economically support a theatre for children and young people. In 1982, with La Baracca, it entered into the first national convention for the creation of a Theatre Centre for Children and Young People.

Therefore, the context is that of a municipality and a town that are very enlight-

ened, at least as far the right of children to art and culture is concerned.

This, however, does not mean that in Bologna children have the same **cultural citizenship** and the **same opportunities as adults in relation to the cultural expense and offer**.

And the following example shows the paradox, and I hope it is clear that it is not a complaint or a recrimination.

From 1982 to 1995, prior to Teatro Testoni Ragazzi, we were lucky to have the opportunity to establish, manage and develop Teatro Sanleonardo, the first subsidised “Teatro stabile” for Children in Italy.

The funds provided by the municipality grew over the years reaching, in 1994/95, 90 million Italian lire per year, which was definitely a very high amount for theatre for children and young people.

In that period, about 27,000 children every year attended performances at Teatro Sanleonardo.

And when, in 1995, the Municipality of Bologna decided to create a new system to support theatres, we had our big chance to move to Testoni Ragazzi. That was a great opportunity, and over time, it has revealed all its true potential.

At the same time, Teatro Sanleonardo was assigned to the company of a great experimental artist, Leo de Berardinis, who, that year, programmed a theatrical season for 3,000 spectators and received 180 million lire as a contribution from the municipality.

He was a great artist, so for the public body 180 million lire was a reasonable amount to pay for 3,000 adult spectators, since it had supplied 90 million lire for 27,000 children. The proportion is about 1 to 18.

Now, why would the community value a child-spectator 18, and I say 18, times less than an adult-spectator?

Perhaps because children (10 months or 10 years...) are not spectators of today but, according to popular belief, spectators of tomorrow.

So I keep wondering why an enlightened municipality like the municipality of Bologna, that has supported and promoted a Centre of theatre for children over 30 years, considered reasonable, natural, obvious... this unequal way of supporting theatres, basing the choices upon the age of the spectators.

Leaving aside the Bologna of 1995, let us now see what happens to the theatre circuits in Italy today, in a time of crisis and cut of resources.

If a theatrical circuit needs to cut 15,000 €, why does it decide to cancel 15/20 shows for 3,000 children, rather than cancelling 1 for 600 adults?

Perhaps the right to equal opportunities in the cultural expense is measured in centimetres or kilos. Perhaps.

I could have only polemic – therefore useless – answers, so I prefer to leave the questions just where they are.

However, what I am sure about is that young boys and girls are able to observe and listen to the world that surrounds them.

They are able to look at the world, with their eyes wide open, to be surprised

and take in every detail of it.

And they actually take in everything that the adult world, too often unconsciously, produces for them.

To learn, children watch and listen.

If we want the world of tomorrow to offer equal opportunities to every human being, maybe we could start to offer them to boys and girls from the very beginning, from birth, in order for them to grow up in the naturalness of a full and complete citizenship.

It is probably an impossible goal, but I dream, why not?

Children are actual citizens of a near future; they are citizens of the here and now.

They are citizens of the world, today.

**“We are guilty of many errors and many faults,
but our worst crime is abandoning the children,
neglecting the fountain of life.**

Many of the things we need can wait. The child cannot.

**This is the time his bones are being formed,
his blood is being made, and his mind is being developed.**

To him, we cannot say ‘tomorrow’, his name is ‘today’.”

(Gabriela Mistral)

There Was A Child Went Forth...

Martin Drury

Strategic Development Director, The Arts Council Ireland

Introduction

To be both playful and provocative, I am going to explore this important topic of children's cultural citizenship through three lenses: mathematics; poetry; and politics.

Mathematics

As I have often said on occasions like this, a 5-year old is not a third of a 15-year old, or a quarter of a 20-year old, or a seventh of a 35-year old. Being five is not a fractional experience, but is a very complete state. You only get 365 days to be 5, so it is really urgent that being 5 is as rich and as comprehensive an experience as possible. The arts are critical components of that richness and completeness.

Understanding the arts as a unique and fundamental set of human symbol systems makes clear that engagement in high-quality and age-appropriate arts experiences in a sustained, sequenced and cumulative way is critical to child development. It is not something that is arbitrary or discretionary or that can be postponed until adolescence or adulthood. And superficial engagement is also to be avoided, by which I mean uncreative arts activity - which is widespread - or occasional outbursts of arts activity with no sequence or developmental sensitivity. Also objectionable is poorly resourced arts activity in terms of space, equipment or materials. If the arts are unique and complex languages, universal to humanity and with dialects distinctive to particular cultures (for example, in our case, Irish), then low-quality provision is akin to insisting that children only use one and two-syllable words when communicating. Imagine the linguistic deficit and the consequent cognitive, emotional and social dysfunction that would arise if that were official policy.

Poetry

Let me now use the lens of poetry to explore our theme and allow me invoke Walt Whitman's poem 'There Was a Child Went Forth'. The poem begins:

*There was a child went forth every day,
And the first object he looked upon and received with wonder or pity or love or
dread, that object he became,
And that object became part of him for the day or a certain part of the day
or for many years or stretching cycles of years.*

I will draw your attention to six distinct if overlapping features of the experience that is represented and celebrated here.

1. The openness to experience

The first feature of the experience I underline is the 'going forth': *There was a child went forth...* This suggests a vital openness to experience. Good art or enriching arts experiences are full of meaning. At their best the arts are the reservoirs and wells from which we draw meaning and make sense of human experience. But experience is not 'out there'; it requires an openness 'in here', a capacity to 'go forth'. In somewhat old-fashioned terms we might say that little learning occurs in the absence of curiosity. Natural curiosity of course must be fostered by the creation of opportunity by the responsible adults.

2. The accumulation of experience.

The second feature of experience as set out in Whitman's poem is that the child did not go out occasionally but rather *every day*. The experience referenced in the poem might be characterised as 'proto-aesthetic', or as a pre-figuring of a more formal aesthetic experience. But, however intense and absorbing, intensity is not a substitute for regularity. This observation has implications for the provision of arts experiences for children in and out of school. The 'once-off' experience, however wonderful, has the characteristic of a fireworks display, leading to short bursts of light that engender awe, but with little heat created. Hence the need for regularity. Children need to 'go forth' every day.

3. The nature of the engagement

A third notable feature of the experience represented and celebrated is that the child *looked upon and received*. Good art is not the expression in artistic forms of pre-existing meanings; rather art is a primary form of meaning-making. So despite the dominance of the pedagogical and critical paradigm that insistently enquires: what is the poem about? / what was the play about?, it is important to assert in response that art is not about anything. A poem is a poem; a dance is a dance; a painting is a painting. Painters have ideas in paint, poets have ideas in poetry. Meaning in works of art is relative and diverse because it exists in the space between the work and the spectator / reader / listener. As well as the observer unlocking the meaning in the artwork, the work of art unlocks the meaning in the observer. There is a complex dynamic in 'looking upon and receiving' by which meaning is engendered.

4. The reflective and affective qualities of the engagement

The fourth feature of the experience is that the child in the poem looks and responds *with wonder or pity or love or dread*. The crucial object of absorption is not necessarily the first object seen or looked at but rather the first one that

is so looked at and received with feeling, in a way that engages the emotional self (*wonder or pity or love or dread*). To know the meaning of elation, love, loss, ambition, or despair, whether on an epic / mythological scale, on the public / community scale, on the domestic / family scale, or on the intimate / private scale, we often go to music, drama, art, film, and literature. From private celebrations to public ceremonies we recognise the arts as reservoirs of images, rituals, music and words that allow us to make sense of and articulate that which otherwise would elude our powers of expression.

5. The symbiosis of self and experience.

The fifth feature I wish to focus on is that the experience was not passive or disinterested for the child who, in looking at the object with emotional intensity, *that object he became/ and that object became part of him*. Call up in your mind's eye a young child engaged in play or in dancing freely or in listening to music or handling clay. Attend to the state of 'absorption'. I offer a definition of 'absorption' as the state of connection between the self and the activity or the materials of the activity such as that it is hard to differentiate where the child begins and the activity ends. When we make art, we make ourselves and when we understand art, we understand ourselves. If the arts are absent or if they are scarcely or poorly present in children's lives, then the consequences are not the loss of some social skill or cultural patina but rather they are developmental: certain layers of the mind are inert, certain chambers of the heart remain closed.

6. The correlation between the intensity of the experience and its lasting value.

The sixth and final feature of the experience I want to highlight is that captured in the phrase *for a day or a certain part of the day or for many years or stretching cycles of years*. We know this anecdotally or from within our own personal experience: years and perhaps decades after an intense experience a part of it remains with us to the point of being part of us. Because of all the foregoing features of aesthetic experience this is not universally true for all people about all arts experience, but there does seem to be some law of proportions operating between the intensity of an artistic experiences and the duration of its effects: for a part of the day, or a day, or a year, many years, or cycles of years.

The Political

Let me now change lens again and leave down the poetic and take up the political. In this section I want to address children and the (publicly funded) arts and their particular claim on public subsidy. Let me propose a new 3D approach to this issue. Here are the 3 key Ds by which this topic is best viewed: Demography, Development, and Dependence.

1. Demography: the sheer number of children in our population (Ireland)

There are about 60,000 citizens in every year band which means that if we

take 'early years' as being 0-6 years, there are well over one third of a million 'early years citizens'; if we take primary school as our 'cut-off' point, then we are talking of nearly three quarters of a million people aged 12 or younger; and if we take the voting age of 18 as the cut off point, we are talking of over one million citizens of this country whose entitlement to the arts and culture is enshrined in policies, declarations and strategies that are national, European and United Nations in their provenance.

2. Development: the inherently developmental nature of childhood

Of the many things that could be said in this shared space between 'the arts' and 'child development', one is around the 'presentness' of childhood and the need to provide (and not merely to allow) for all two-year olds, three-year olds, four-year olds, and five-year olds to make and tell the stories of being 2, 3, 4, and 5; and for them to sing the songs, dance the dances, create and enact the dramas, and make the images of the concerns, hopes, fears, dilemmas, dreams, fantasies of being 2, 3, 4, and 5. As indicated earlier there is only one year in which you are 5 and it is nonsense to provide for critical aspects of child development on the basis of their deferral to later years.

3. Dependence: economic dependence

Adults are the key decision-makers in the arts and with few exceptions, they have exploited the political impotence and muteness of children to create a cultural landscape that is not, in the profoundest sense of the term, child-friendly. I am not ascribing deliberate intention, but I am drawing attention to a cultural reality. I do not hold at all with the notion that children and young people are the audiences of the future, for that is to diminish the 'presentness' of childhood and the immediacy of their democratic entitlement.

The reality of our adult-oriented arts provision sits uncomfortably with the expressed wishes of the general population. Asked a few years ago in the national survey of behaviour and attitudes to the arts, to nominate their preferences for public spending on the arts, from nine different options offered, the clear first preference was '*Arts programmes and facilities dedicated to working for and with children and young people*'. 54% of people chose this as either their first or second priority for public spending on the arts, significantly ahead of any of the other seven options offered. Compared with the previous such study in 1994, this represents a significant increase on a figure that was already high. While it might be argued that 'children and young people' will always attract an automatic weighting of public preference, it is worth underlining that this 54% preference was realised without asking those who would be most likely to benefit from such an orientation in public expenditure on the arts, as no one under the age of 15 was included within the survey sample.

Conclusion

In Ireland we had thought that after thirty years of pilot projects, action research, case studies, and exemplary practice, we might be ready for strategic, systemic provision. And while we are in a better place than 30 years ago – largely due to you the activists and practitioners - the big idea, the over-arching, governing support structure remains elusive.

Parallel to continuing to act locally, you might think globally, by which I mean in this context that you make common cause with those who have the well-being and common cause, your common cause, our common cause, strengthened by the public mandate of various surveys and reports, but most of all by the mandate of the million or so Irish citizens who rely on us to speak and act on their behalf.

A person's a person, no matter how small

Patricia Lewsley

Mooney, Children's Commissioner for Northern Ireland

Good morning distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, and thank you for the invitation to speak today.

That the EU has placed such importance on culture through the Commission is a reflection of my personal belief – and I am sure yours also - that play, leisure and creative activities are vital for the development of each and every child.

When I first came into post I asked Northern Ireland's children and young people what was their priority. They highlighted play and leisure as one of the things that mattered most to them.

I also wanted to commend the title of this conference. It reflects the quotation from children's author Dr Seuss when he said:

“A person's a person, no matter how small.”

They are citizens as well as rights holders and government must behave as the duty bearers for those rights.

When considering the best way to present to you all today I thought it best to begin with a story. It's a story about a boy named John based on real circumstances.

John has a learning disability. It makes it difficult for him to mix easily with other children. But he is determined to try, having achieved a lot in school.

His mother worries about other children bullying John, or picking on him. He has also gotten into trouble before by doing things to please other children.

Where John lives there is not a lot for young people his age to do. There is a playground, but he is too old for that now.

John now barely goes out to play or even hang around with other young people. As soon as he gets home from school he just watches television or plays on his games console because his parents prefer to have him at home now he is a teenager, and in the words of his father “he can be easily led by others”.

Thanks to his father John enjoys trips to the theatre and art, but the opportunities are few and far between.

We'll return to John's story later, but the point I wanted to make is that access to the arts, play and leisure opportunities are not black and white issues where you either “have play” or “don't have play”.

When we look at what can be done – what needs to be done to support the provision of play, culture and leisure facilities in line with Article 31 of the UN Convention and General Comment 17 from the Committee, we must acknowledge the views of the ‘experts’ – and the real experts are our Children and Young

People - as well as listening to Parents and policy makers.

We must however, not try to produce a 'one-size fits all' strategy.

As we all know children and young people come in all shapes and sizes. As a mother and grandmother I know this all too well. And, I know that what I consider play and leisure is a long way short of what my children and grandchildren think is play and leisure.

And in this, the second decade of the 21st Century, creative arts often relate as much to graphic design, computer coding and creating 'apps' as they do to more traditional forms of creative arts.

Before continuing I'd like to take a moment to remind you all of what my 'job' entails.

When the Office of Commissioner for Children and Young People was created the legislation set out the function of the office which was to:

"Safeguard and promote the rights and best interests of children and young people".

In doing so, the legislation says that I must "have due regard to any relevant provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child".

Today's theme is Cultural Citizenship - that is - a child's right to engage in the arts and culture. It is vital that this is recognised by our NI Government and more importantly that every child living in Northern Ireland has this right. Article 12 of the Convention reminds us that we must listen to the 'voice' of our Children and Young People:

"States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child".

I have been actively promoting that since coming into office. A duty in my legislation is that I must listen to the views of children and young people in how I carry out my work.

I am currently standing in a room of adults. No doubt we are all working in the best interests of children and young people, and no doubt we all want to do our best to protect those young people's rights.

But are we doing enough?

Are we developing the capacity of children and young people to truly participate in decisions, including those on access to the arts, play and leisure?

Are we supporting them, when they seek to influence decisions?

Are we listening to what they say? Are we acting on what they say?

Will we change our plans and policies as a result of what they say?

Many of you are already doing that, involving children and young people, but a challenge we all face is to answer the question: "Could we do more?"

I'd also like to draw your attention to Articles 28 and 29 of the UN Convention. Article 28 concerns the rights of children to an effective education, and it is vital that we ensure that creativity, play and the arts are included in the curriculum

from the earliest age through to when a child leaves secondary level education. Article 29 is very specific in terms of how education should be directed towards: **"The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential".**

Talents - In the current climate policy makers sometimes focus on academic and vocational outputs in education and forget that talent can be expressed in many ways e.g. through the physical performing arts, creative arts through painting, writing, computer games design etc...

I could go on, but I want you all to focus on the aspirations underpinning that article of the Convention - i.e. to develop each child's personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities.

I have a Youth Panel of almost 60 young people who have formed opinions as to what way they'd like to see the world, in which they live, change. I would commend to you establishing ways to get the direct views of children and young people working for them and on their behalf.

As part of my work I actively promote participation, as the logical outworking of Article 12. I have done this through a variety of means, including asking government departments and local authorities to make a commitment to making the participation of young people a policy position.

So far, 11 of the 12 government departments and a majority of local councils have signed up to my Participation Policy Statement of Intent. Later this year I will publish the results of research aimed at establishing what changes have been made as a result.

If we begin to answer these questions posed earlier with positive action we can help develop the young person as an 'active citizen'. That young person will have, through their participation, developed important skills that they can take forward.

These include: communication skills, negotiation, debating, public speaking, team work and many others.

I have seen for myself in past members of my youth panel how they have been able to develop a set of what human resources staff refer to as 'transferable skills'.

When considering these transferable skills in the context of arts, play, leisure and cultural development we will have managed to not only equip our children and young people with a set of skills employers will look for, we will have enhanced and enriched their life experience.

Policy development in relation to accessing the arts, play and leisure - with children's and young people's participation - can mean so much more. It can promote an understanding of children and young people's feeling of place and belonging.

Culture, Arts and Leisure also allow for an appreciation of a wider range of experiences. To make these experiences real, we must make sure that Government acts in a co-ordinated and thoughtful way.

Arts, Culture, Play and Leisure for children and young people is not the sole responsibility of one department. It is not the responsibility of even two – it should be the responsibility for all.

- The Office of First Minister and deputy First Minister has responsibility for children and young people.
- The Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure's responsibilities are self-evident.
- The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development has responsibility for the quality of the rural environment children and young people can experience.
- The Department of the Environment has responsibility for planning in a manner sympathetic to children and young people's needs and ensuring councils have adequate provision for play and leisure.
- The Department for Finance and Personnel has responsibility for making sure there is adequate funding and resourcing.
- The Department for Health, Social Services and Public Safety has responsibility for ensuring children and young people live active, healthy and well lives.
- The Department for Education has responsibility for ensuring play and leisure is integrated into the curriculum.
- The Department for Regional Development has responsibility for the built environment and to enable children and young people to travel safely and easily.
- The Department for Social Development has responsibility for community and town development and volunteering.

All these departments touch and impact upon the lives of children and young people.

All these departments must act together in the interests of our children and young people.

All these departments should consider how best to co-operate based on listening to the views of children and young people.

And, all these departments can, if they really want to, take an active role in working for, and on behalf of children and young people to help them grow up in a society that values and encourages all aspects of a child's life, not least the child's ability to enjoy the rights embodied in Article 31 of the UN Convention.

With the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child publishing its General Comment 17 on Article 31 we have a framework that is designed to "enhance understanding of the importance of Article 31 for children's well-being and development..."

It also provides the necessary "interpretation" of government's obligations stat-

ing that government must take the:

"legislative, judicial, administrative, social and educational measures necessary to ensure its implementation for all children without discrimination and on the basis of equality of opportunity".

The obligations accepted by government are clear in the Convention. As well as Articles 12, 28, 29 and 31 there are clear obligations on government, as to how it must support creativity and how education must provide for the development of the 'whole' child.

Achieving these objectives must not just be an aspiration for government. **This must** be an objective that is realised.

An African proverb says:

"It takes a village to raise a child."

In Northern Ireland, and indeed in all countries, the adults in positions of power and influence must act like the villagers helping to raise each child to ensure they can realise all their rights.

The American author and human rights activist Bryant H. McGill, reminded us all of the importance of creativity when he said:

"Creativity is the greatest expression of liberty."

That is the liberty we must also achieve for our children.

In the story I related at the outset John struggled to find the opportunities to play and express himself. For every child and young person like John we must meet that need and fulfil that right.

He must have the equality of opportunity to explore his creativity through art, through play, through enjoying the art of others and through the right support/services provided at the right time.

He must have the support of **all arms of government** and the public sector to have the opportunity for purposeful and enjoyable opportunities.

He must be supported and protected when he expresses himself or plays, so he will not be "led" by those who do not have his best interests at heart.

John can be supported, John can be protected, John can enjoy a full range of play, creative and leisure activities and we can all help every child including John. That is, if we want to...

Thank you for your time and best wishes for the rest of the day.

Meaningful spaces

Jo Belloli

Associate Producer and Early Years Programmer Polka Theatre, UK
member of Small size, big citizens

I have something to admit. I have an outrageously large collection of shoes. My interest in shoes may have been that of any normal young child, delighting in the pleasure of having “new shoes” and wanting to tell everyone about this. But, on reflection, I think I was privileged in having, mostly, very happy and fun-filled shoe-shopping expeditions. And I wonder what impact this had on me. I say mostly, as there were, in my life as a three to six year-old, two memorable shoe shops. One was small, dark, musty-smelling box-filled place run by two, I thought, very elderly women and an old man. It was what we’d call “old- fashioned” even then. And this was where I was taken to be bought my “sensible” shoes and wellington boots for nursery, and then later, school. I remember complaining sometimes... I wasn’t always so very happy with the outcome. The other shop, however, was a different matter all together. It was where I went to get my special shoes. My party shoes. *Lilley and Skinner* in Ealing Broadway, west London. But it wasn’t just the excitement of getting special new shoes that made this place, and the experience, so memorable... ...It was the merry-go-round roundabout in the middle of the shop floor – the floor dedicated to children’s shoes – that made this shop my absolute favourite (better even than the local toy shop or sweet shop). A merry-go-round in a shoe shop, for the 1960s, was a pretty innovative idea. In reality, that merry -go-round was probably rather small, possibly rather tacky and cheap – but to me, it was extraordinary. And fun. And I’m sure a very smart marketing move by whoever dreamt it up. Whether or not the person, or people, behind the merry- go- round ever talked about their idea to their own, or other, children – or whether it was rather, their own grown-up idea, I don’t know... but I wonder whether my wardrobe full of shoes might partly be attributed to this? It would not seem so very unusual now, nearly 50 years on. Time has moved on, of course. In England, a generation-plus later, our society is a lot more child-conscious. Child-friendly. Socially, politically, economically, children have a more significant role in our society. And legislatively, thanks to the 1989 Children’s Act, their needs and interests are now at the very centre of any jurisdiction. Their safety and interests predominates, essentially, over parental preferences or choices. Within our particular industry, we have a clear remit for advocating children’s rights to the arts. Reflecting on this more widely, in terms of children’s attitudes to their environment, their places of security, learning and recreation, and to

the growing awareness and concern children have about today's environment which they are particularly attuned to, this too finds some means to be safeguarded, or at the very least recognised, through the Act.

UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, Article 12

Recognition of the child's point of view is further supported through the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which the British government ratified in 1991. Article 12 states that

"Children have the right to express their views and have them given due weight in decisions affecting them, in accordance with their age and maturity"

Consultation with children

The right to express views suggests an element of consultation.

I'd like to talk a little now about consultation with children with regard to their environment, and more specifically, about Discover, in East London, a venue (not in isolation, but merely offered as an example) that has engaged with children in order to respond to their point of view.

But what of consultation? What's the difference between a child's perception and reaction to what they like, engage or identify with and the adult perception of what they believe or understand that the child likes, engages or identifies with? It's one thing to engage with children, ask a few questions, respond by reflecting these back, respectfully... and another to really listen, find out, and as necessary, facilitate ways to acknowledge and address their views (some may, absolutely, have to be compromised though still acknowledged) and then transfer into an adult agenda, an adult planning process – an adult way not only of thought, but of action.

Discover children's story centre, Stratford, London

(www.discover.org.uk)

Opening in June 2003, Discover was the UK's first "hands-on" interactive story centre for children aged 0 – 11 years, focusing on creativity through projects, exhibitions and activities exploring words, language and imagination. It offers many children their first opportunity to work alongside professional artists, in a centre designed specifically for them.

From its inception, Discover's extensive programme of activities engaged children in decision-making, valuing them as the key stake-holders. *The Discover Children's Forum* was set up back in 2000 (so, three years in advance of opening) and involved local children aged 5 – 11 in all aspects of the organisations development and strategic direction. Children worked with artists, architects and planners to assist with the design of the "Story Trail" – the indoor interactive journey through different locations around the building, the outdoor Sensory Garden and playground, and contributed to the exhibitions and developing programme of activities around the site.

Listening to Learn was an extension of the Forum following on in the middle of

the decade, a project with Discover that involved a new approach to children's participation in local town regeneration in Stratford, east London. By this time, Discover were working alongside Stratford City Development Partnership. *Listening to Learn* investigated a wide range of models in relation to consulting with children. The project explored aspects of children's engagement with the arts and the impact on their learning. It looked at multi-lingualism and learning intelligences, community support of learning and also, significantly, "how developers and architects can be encouraged to give value to children's views and opinions – particularly in an urban area undergoing major physical transformation".

The project had an impact on the developers view of the children's abilities to express themselves, and of the value of their contributions – it acknowledged the benefits of listening to children.

By 2008, Discover was further involved in a very specific three-year project *Building the Future* supported by Westfield and the London Development Agency, directly influenced by the work undertaken by the children through *Listening to Learn*.

"Building the Future" was a large-scale urban transformation of Stratford City (the central location in London for the 2012 Olympic Games) and, through Discover, involved 20 x 7 – 11 year-olds as Young Consultants working with artists and town planners to explore creative solutions to design issues such as signage, street furniture, pedestrian routes and public art. The children's views and opinions have been addressed. They voiced concerns shared by their generation, of safety and the value of the environment. Green – both visually, and conceptually, is very important to them. They highlighted the need for benches, lots of them, for sitting on (particularly for tired grown-ups) and for climbing on, crawling under and hiding inside. But, yes, they had to reach a compromise in accepting that the chocolate fountain would prove a little too difficult for the city developers. The massive interactive fountain water feature for the main public square, can, however, be attributed to their thinking – it may not taste as good as chocolate, or be as messy, but it's still fun.

As a culmination of the project, the Young Consultants produced two editions of "Guide the Way", one about the city centre and what the local area around Stratford has to offer visitors, the other a cartoon-based futuristic guide to the Westfield Centre.

The Children's Forum is still thriving, with its members currently involved in an artist-led project gathering stories from the local community about their impressions of the build-up, experience and outcomes of the 2012 Games, and designing hoardings that will go up in the Park around the building and redevelopment that is happening there right now.

They continue to meet on a monthly basis, and during school holidays. As part of Discover's recent Capital Consultation, they have undertaken a review of the Story Trail and Sensory Garden, evaluating how children engage and interact in these spaces – considering and readdressing issues such as how 8 year-olds

can play alongside toddlers and addressing practical matters such as access and storage for buggies and, very important, refurbishing toilets. With the venue's opportunity to expand and develop new spaces within the building, they drew up plans and created models, presenting their priorities to the architects, in advance of the adults working alongside them.

Through the Children's Forum it is clear that young people are as integral now to the strategic organisation of Discover, both in their presence and ownership of the building and grounds and in their activities within the community, as they were when the centre was first being developed.

I really don't know whether children were consulted by *Lilley and Skinner* for the shoe shop, in the 1960's, but at least there was some vision. How much more, now though, in actively and respectfully involving children, can we say that we have moved forward. And more, still, can be learned.

Stratford's regeneration has been impressive. Central to this, alongside the Olympic park, has been Westfield. Of course. Though I did go to the Olympic Park in the summer of 2012, and regularly go to Stratford - alongside Discover is another venue, Stratford Circus, doing great things supporting theatre for young audiences - I can honestly say (a little to my surprise) that I haven't visited Westfield or the main city centre. If I were to, I would see some of the features resulting from the consultation. And I'd look out for the fountain. Would my inner-child want to go in and play in the water? Possibly yes - though I suspect I probably wouldn't, as I wouldn't be wearing "appropriate" shoes.



**Small size,
Performing arts for Early Years**
International Symposium
on the occasion of
Assitejinternational's 18th World Congress
(Warsaw - 2014)



Good Governance for Cultural Participation. How to realize the Human Right to take part in the arts

Wolfgang Schneider

UNESCO Chair for Cultural Policy, Germany

What is the role of art and artists in the social transformation of society? What impact can Cultural Policy have on the change of government structures? So it is not primarily about money, but social relevance; it is not about representation, but intervention.

It is no longer just about local art organisation, regional support of structures for culture or national programmes for arts education, now it's also about the international exchange of artists, about culture as a development factor and about a comparative analysis of cultural management.

Culture is seen as a source for the development of society. The task of cultural policy is therefore to create and support structures that promote mobilisation of creativity of the people and thus ensure welfare, innovation and pluralism. Such relationships have been discussed at the level of UNESCO for decades.

Now we should ask where academic “deep drilling” is needed. In this respect this colloquium is also to be seen as a forum for continued international research and the completion of academic curricula to culture-political discourses; and in this sense, be involved in shaping the education of future artists and cultural managers within the discussion on Good Governance.

The debate about Good Governance comprises the examination of control mechanisms with regard to aspired objectives and the functioning of institutions, principles and structures. Concepts of Good Governance for Cultural Policy had been given little attention so far. Thus it is to question what transparency and participation, efficiency, accountability, market economy, rule of law and justice mean within and for cultural political action and within democratic transformation processes. Essentially in this, is the question of the role of the arts and of individual artists in the development of society, and the role of business enterprises within the framework of corporate social and cultural responsibility. It also requires further clarification, what freedom and what context the arts need within social development and what role arts education takes in this context.

Also to be discussed is the connection between the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions with the role of the arts in the development of society, which links with the creative industries promoting the role of the arts in social development.

It is debatable which structures of Cultural Policy are needed to grant the social role and function of the arts, and how to this respect Cultural Policy must be reviewed.

It is also necessary to clarify which forms of cooperation and exchange are needed in this context, and what demand currently exists in the training of artists and cultural managers in developing countries. Basically there remains a discussion on sustainability that is oriented in the field of the arts and the integration of Cultural Policy Action in the special challenges of the 21st Century.

The Role of Arts and Artists in the Society

For if someone discusses and claims freedom and dignity of every individual, presents this in contradiction, offers the symbolic forms in which they can be thought and particularly lived, then this substantially happens in the medium of the arts. Individuality and social bondage are specified through the arts. Herewith the arts take effect far over the sphere of artificial communication in the society and form their human determination of aims. And therefore we need a cultural policy which understands as social policy that allows, defends and organises art and culture.

Mind the Gap: Participation as Intervention

The Interest of Relevance in Theatre Repertoire

The Freedom of Theatre Arts

The Access to the Theatre System

The Chance to take part as Theatre Policy

The Role of Audience Development as Cultural Management

Arts Education needs Cultural Policies

- Arts education contributes to securing the human right to cultural participation
- Arts education requires a sensitive approach to researching society in order to make possible new cultures, new audiences and new concepts
- Arts education is a public task for local authority institutions
- Arts education is the basis of cultural diversity
- Arts education requires educational policies!

Good Governance for Cultural Policy

- Agenda Setting with the Arts
- Sustainability through the Arts
- Capacity Building in the Arts
- Education for the Arts
- Research by the Arts

The Arts as a Mission

“At all times it has been one of the most important tasks of the art to make an inquiry, but up to now the hour of full satisfaction has not yet come.”

Walter Benjamin

Small size, Performing Arts for the future

Roberto Frabetti

Administrative Chief of La Baracca - Testoni Ragazzi (Bologna - Italy)
and Project Manager of Small size, big citizens

*From earliest infancy the mind is trained to regard size as value.
Respect and admiration goes to what is big, what takes up more room.
Small stands for common and uninteresting.
Little people - little wants, little joys, little sorrows.
Impressive - a big city, high mountains, a tall tree.
We say: ‘A great deed, a great man’.
A small child is light, there is less of him.
We must bend down, reach down to him.
Even worse - he is weak.
(Janusz Korczak)*

The Italian language is full of superlatives and terms of affection.

But defining children from 0 to 3 as “piccolissimi” - the very, very small, allows me to picture them as characters of a Swift book, as the inhabitants of Lilliput. Just like the Lilliputians, the “very small” are wise; they are scientists and explorers. They are able to stop and then welcome the giant/adult Gulliver. They are fragile, but able to resist, and they can welcome and offer hospitality. They are complex and surprising.

The history of the theatre for the very young is still young. It is rooted in the Scandinavian, French and Italian experiences, and it developed mostly during the last 15 years.

It is a young history that has been led by an urgent need to establish contact with childhood, with the “other from self”.

The many shows that have been produced can be considered, in their diversity, a small heritage.

And they made it clear that there is no such thing as a “model of theatre for the very young”.

They are a set of thoughts, artistic insights and pedagogical visions that are especially dedicated to early years and that share the basic idea that “small” is not less important than “big”.

So, I started to write and produce theatre shows for very young children in 1987, but the magical encounter took place one year before, almost by chance.

The first time I saw very young children at the theatre was on one morning in 1986. I entered the theatre hall to watch the show and observe the two hundred kindergarten children (3-5 years old) ready to play their role as audience.

I liked to see them sitting on the theatre seats. But I didn't expect some of them to be so little. They were so small that they were sitting "in twos" on the seats, otherwise they would have turned into sandwiches.

The youngest ones were not from the kindergarten: they came from their crèche to the show by taxi.

That morning, I didn't watch the show, but I lost myself watching those kids, sitting in twos on the chairs.

At the end of the show, I stopped and talked with the teachers for a long while. We talked about those kids and that's how the journey started.

Many times, through this journey, I acted before I thought; I built theories out of the experiences I had already-lived, and not the ones yet to be lived.

And in devising the project, I tried to include both rationality and visions.

You need visions if you want to be with the kids.

I am lucky, because thanks to my job, I can find myself in front of a 2-year-old in the morning, and work with an 18-year-old in the afternoon. Then, the next morning, I'm likely to be with an adolescent or a kid aged 4, 7 or 10.

Between the youngest and the oldest, there are not just years; it's clear that they are light years apart.

Each age is like a big planet with specific and unique morphological features.

And every planet has visible and concealed parts.

Some of them have been explored, others are virgin forests, unexplored and perhaps unexplorable.

They are mazes in which the adults-explorers have often got lost.

Of all these planets, the planet of the very young is perhaps the "keeper of the origin". It is the one planet where the "just-happened" feeling is kept, the "revolutionary", critical moment, in which something unique takes place, a turning point, a radical change.

This is what happened a few years ago, one morning, in a crèche. There were about 40 children from 12 to 36 months.

While telling my story, I could see in front of me, in the middle of my audience, a young boy who, as often happens, was watching the show standing on his feet, hardly keeping his balance leaning on the knee of his teacher.

At the end of the show, he came to me, finding support where he could and walking the last bit without help. Then he stroked me gently with the back of his hand.

While he was doing this, the teacher told me: "He started to walk yesterday".

Not "some time ago", not "a few days ago", he had started "yesterday".

I experienced a very strong feeling and I felt I was witnessing something extraordinary.

To start walking is just one of the many revolutions a child experiences during their first 36 months: it is the **"age of the great learning"**.

First of all, they are born and being born is a heroic challenge, because after months of darkness they finally see the light.

After a month, they can lift their head. And when do they start to see colours? Maybe they see them from the beginning, or...

And when do they start to perceive their hands and the distance between hands and eyes? When do they start manipulating things?

After 3 months, they start to play with syllables.

After 4 they can sit, but they need a support.

After 7 months, they do it without any support.

Of course, the months here are just for reference.

After 6/8 months, children start to move and explore the surrounding space.

After twelve months, they start to utter the first words-phrases and they also start to walk.

But before that, after 8 or 9 months, they already understand that an object they do not see can be there anyway, so they look for hidden toys.

This is maybe one of the most important revolutions of cognitive development.

Do you know the peek-a-boo game?

In front of an object or a person that appears and disappears, children show great excitement. When they do not see it, they know they will see it again, because it exists; so when they see it again they are happy because the object is visible again.

But revolutions keep happening and the verbalisation process goes on.

After about 18 months, children have a richer vocabulary, and at the age of 24 months they are able to utter increasingly complex phrases.

During the same period, their motor ability becomes stable and they are able to lift a leg without falling.

At the age of 36 months, children have achieved very good motor and linguistic skills and they are aware of their identity.

All this takes place thanks to the observation of the world of the grown-ups, its acts and rituals.

When we work with children, I think we should always be aware of our educational role, even when we are with them for a short time, for example, during a theatre performance.

Establishing artistic relationships with early years offers to those working in theatre for children a big opportunity: to go further into one's own artistic research and to deepen the knowledge of children. It allows to open innumerable windows onto the different emotional and communicative steps that children go through during their growth.

It is a large set of observations and suggestions that can be extremely useful for interpreting the behaviours and reactions of older children - in particular, of teenagers, providing valuable instruments, in terms both of sensibility and rationality, for understanding the individual and social masks that kids create and wear.

This happens because this age group is so special, but also because shows for young children involve a real, physical closeness. These shows are always for

a limited number of audience.

Because of this, many theatres often consider theatre for the very young economically unsustainable, and they simply give up.

But what if - in order to "value it economically" - we framed theatre for the very young as a field **of research and development**? It is a provocation, but I think it deserves to be taken into account.

Experiencing theatre with the little ones is something highly educational for an actor, because in order to establish a contact with a very young child, actors, who are always trying to find a balance between telling and listening, have to privilege the listening aspect.

They need to look inside themselves and find the pleasure to listen with all their senses, and convey this back to the children.

To approach them, adults need to undertake a learning process, through which artists can develop specific methods and skills, and teachers can understand the fineness of composition, the importance of pauses and silences; a process in which to share research on rituals and spaces, meaning the space of the story and the actual, physical space: the hall, how to enter, how to sit, how to attend.

A learning process that allows everyone to perceive to what extent empathy can transform a relationship, turning it into something necessary.

If imagining, expressing and creating are ancient and deeply human needs, art is the highest and most complete instrument through which these needs can be responded to.

That is why art has to be as close to young children as possible in a time when they are collecting and selecting all the elements that will form their personality.

Because all children, starting from their earliest years, have the right to fully experience and be involved in the physical and mental spaces that art and culture can offer them, and to share them with the adults: parents, teachers and artists.

Thinking about the children, thinking about the future.

Thinking about art as a means for creating relationships and bonds: among countries, citizens and generations.

Thinking about the children's right to be acknowledged a full "cultural citizenship".

Thinking about the adult's duty to firmly pursue this aim.

Thinking about the children's right to take part in high-quality artistic and cultural events since their earliest years on a regular basis and not just occasionally.

Because:

"Children are not a casual encounter to be hurriedly passed by with a smile and a light word of greeting.

Children account for a large percentage of mankind, population, nation, people, fellow citizens - they are our faithful friends.

Are, were and will be. Is there a life that exists as some joke?

No, childhood years are long and important ones in the life of a man".

(Janusz Korczak)

Aspects of theatrical research in Theatre for Early Years

Gerd Taube

Director of Kinder- und Jugendtheaterzentrum
in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Germany

There exists a lot of scientific research in the field of early childhood by psychologists, psychoanalysts, neurologists, speech therapists, pediatricians, nursery nurses, educationalists and other experts. And there is a growing specialist literature about the Theatre for Early Years that offers beside reports and reflections about the artistic practice of the TEY plenty of texts by such experts. Reading those texts, one can collect a lot of knowledge about babyhood for individual artistic approaches to the audience. In the framework of "Small size" the artistic directors of the participating theatres, throughout a series of workshops, found proven artistic methods of reflecting about early childhood and an appropriate theatre for that age group.

Since 2010 I led 4 such workshops and I would like to discuss in my keynote some aspects of theatrical research in Theatre for Early Years done by the artists themselves in the processes of rehearsal, performance and artistic reflection. I will discuss the principle of artistic research in general. I will describe the method of artistic research by artists done in those workshops. And I will reflect on those methods on the basis of my practical experiences from the "Small size" workshops.

1. What is artistic Research?

Artistic Research is a kind of practice-based research in Art. Artistic Research can be research about the art, for the art or through the art.¹ Artistic Research has two perspectives: The creative processes of rehearsal, performance and artistic reflection are considered to be processes of research and the object of research itself. To research means, that you do not have a certain knowledge yet. And doing research is an expression of your desire for knowledge.

Accordingly the motivation of research is to find out news about something which we do not know yet. Regarding research interests in Art we have to consider that Art without research is lacking an essential foundation. Art as a cultural phenomenon lives on the balance between tradition and innovation. "Tradition without research would be blind takeover, and innovation without research would be pure intuition"².

1 »Research about / for / through Art | Art about / for / through Research.« (Dombois 2009)
F. Dombois: „0-1-1-2-3-5-8-. Zur Forschung an der Hochschule der Künste Bern“, in: Hochschule der Künste Bern (Hg.): Forschung. Jahrbuch Nr. 4/2009. Bern 2009, S. 11-22

2 Julian Klein: What is Artistic Research?, in: Stock, Günter (Hrsg.): *Gegenworte* 23, Wissenschaft trifft

Now you could ask: What is wrong with intuition? Intuition is an important skill for artists, isn't it? But it seems to be not enough to work in artistic processes exclusively based on intuition. Especially in Theatre for Young Audiences artists are facing the audience with their artistic work. Pure intuition would not work in either Theatre for Young Audiences in general, or in Theatre for Early Years in particular. But what does it mean to hold the balance between tradition and innovation in artistic work?

In artistic processes, to keep tradition and innovation in balance means to be always aware of all your artistic knowledge and be ready to reflect on it.

The aesthetic experiences you make in a certain artistic process – as actor, director or other theatre artist – are the foundation for your recognitions and findings. And if the setting of your artistic research and the chosen methods work you will find out something new. Innovation in that sense doesn't mean to invent something which is new for the whole mankind, but to find out something, you didn't know before. This is, roughly speaking, the definition of artistic research.

2. Artistic Research in Theatre for Early Years

With this knowledge about the character of artistic research in general, we can ask about the characteristic of theatrical research in the field of TEY. What could we explore? What could be our interest? What do we not know yet? Where does our desire of knowledge lead us?

I was asking myself such questions when I prepared the workshop of the first "Small size" artistic directors meeting in Hamm in Germany. Its subject was: "The performer's relationship to the audience. The interplay of performer and spectator from the performer's point of view". In the following I will focus on methods based on the principle of dialogue.

As theatre work is mostly teamwork, communication in artistic processes like rehearsals is essential for the success of the common work. But not only is the production of art based on communication, also the reflection about the aesthetic experiences in rehearsals and performances are acts of communication. The challenge is to transform the individual and single aesthetic experiences in spoken language.

This was the starting point for our artistic research in the first workshop on the performers relationship to the audience. The task was, to find a setting for aesthetic experiences and dialogues about those experiences, without competition between the various artistic directors. The purpose of our artistic investigation, an analysis, was to work on the knowledge of directors about staging performances for very young children.

The main perspective of reflecting on theatre work for very young children was, in this case, the monitoring of bodily activity and behaviour of the very young audience as an individual expression of their aesthetic experience. In our workshop we changed the perspective and we took notice of the performer's activity, behaviour and attitude on stage. We were going to make note of the moments

of interplay between performer and spectator.

The task was to pay attention to situations of communication by the performer with the audience in which the interplay between performer and spectator happened or was intended by the performer. The participants were asked to pay attention to certain characteristic moments in which the performers notice the audience in a special way or make contact with them to initiate the interplay between them.

As we wanted to have as many individual experiences to reflect on as possible, we decided to watch recordings of recent performances of the participants. With two effects, we had a lot of experiences as material from our descriptions, and the participants noticed the artistic work of each other. And by describing the work and their own experiences, they appreciated those works.

3. Watching, describing and reviewing – Method of support for the own artistic practice

The method of analysing a live event like a theatre performance, by watching a recorded performance as we had applied, can be also used as a method of rehearsal work. We do not only have to use our memories of the performance, we can proof our memories and objectify them in a certain mode. Watching, describing and reviewing are the basic analysing methods for the artistic supervision of a rehearsal process.

By describing images, associations and emotions you had while perceiving a performance, you can make your individual experiences debatable. Reviewing those individual experiences means not to judge, but to pick up, to circulate, to pass on and to update the practical knowledge from the artistic process. Dialogue methods play back findings, knowledge, questions and valuation into the practical work. Dialogue methods make experiences of success and failure usable and useful for yourself and for others. They are methods of direct support for developing one's own artistic practice.

4. Three perspectives of further artistic research in TEY

4.1 Artistic Research through the Art of Theatre for Early Years

To make artistic research through the Art of Theatre happen, you need a certain research setting or research framework. This can be a certain theatre production or a performative arts project, but as well a whole theatre.

My example for a theatre house as an artistic research laboratory is the independent Company HELIOS Theater from Hamm in Germany. Barbara Kölling and Michael Lurse, the two artistic directors of HELIOS have, in the last 10 years, built up the theatre house of the company as a place for artistic investigation and production and a place well suited to very young audiences. In addition, the needs of a very young audience within a theatre were explored through artistic approaches, such as a short film about young children's visual perspective on the world around them. I will give one example of some particular research

that happened in artistic research lab of HELIOS Theater:

Between 2006 and 2008 HELIOS Theater was a partner of a project of our Children's and Young Peoples' Theatre Centre in the Federal Republic Germany, which was called "Theatre from the early beginning!" Within the framework of this project, HELIOS produced their piece "Holzklopfen" (Woodbeat). And they opened up the rehearsal process for a special form of artistic research, to investigate the concept of interplay between performers and young children during a performance. The experimental field of theatre rehearsals was at the same time the research field of a theatre academic (Geesche Wartemann) and an ethnologist (Bina Elisabeth Mohn), who observed the audience during the rehearsals with a video camera. The rehearsal became a space for observation and reflection on the recorded moments of audience behaviour, motion and emotion. Together with the producing artists they investigated, through common reflections on their observations, the interplay between the playing performer and the interplaying spectator on one hand, and between the children and their adults on the other hand.

This is just one example of an approach to artistic research into theatre for early years as well as being an example of artistic research through theatre – and which was eventually, also, research for the theatre.

4.2 Artistic Research for the Art of Theatre for Early Years

The growing specialist literature about Early Years offers a lot of knowledge about babyhood. But this knowledge is mostly scientific knowledge and you have to transform it into your individual artistic approaches.

Artistic research in TEY has to ask a lot of questions: How do we investigate the social and cultural environment of our special audience in an artistic way? And how do we use this knowledge in our further work? How much does it influence artistic decisions during the phase of conception, the rehearsal process and the performance practice? How do we find our personal artistic approach to the very young audience?

4.3 Artistic Research about the Art of Theatre

In the workshop in Budapest we focused on the artistic means of expression in TEY. Based on artistic experiments with words and stories we analysed and reflected on the relationship of the different artistic means of expression in the theatre for the very young. Within the context of the workshop in Ljubljana, about artistic approaches to the very young audience, the question arose about the different characteristics of artistic strategies. And I improvised a systemisation of different artistic approaches in TEY. This draft of a systemisation of artistic approaches to the very young spectator could be another starting point for new questions about TEY.

Draft of a Systemisation of Artistic Approaches to the Very Young Spectator in Theatre for Early Years

Drama

- performance is based on a dramatic text with dialogues
- performers are acting (playing characters)
- establishing a kind of symbolic reality in which the actor and the spectator act apparently on an equal level - even if the actors and the written text are the moving forces
- taking the baby as an alter ego and a partner (as an individual) - showing this by speaking with them and to them personally and directly (individual human persons)
- base of communication: the spectator and the actor are mutually concentrated and focused on each other
- artistic approach to the spectator: communication - several artistic ways of communication
- verbal language in dialogues and songs
- Glances, Gestures, Touching, Moving Bodies
- Sounds made by the actors
- Masks
- Clowns
- final purpose: develop the ability for empathy
- the story is a vehicle to reach the spectator more directly

Performance

- establishing a kind of reality in which the performer discovers the world substitutionally for the spectator to develop the ability of imagination
- playing with the special quality of certain materials or objects (their sound, taste, smell, consistence)
- playing with certain principles of natural law (like gravity)
- the performer adopts the curiosity of the children and mixes it up with his own curiosity
- by playing with materials, objects and principles the actor creates a more or less poetical atmosphere as the base of communication
- the story is not the starting point - but maybe a result
- final purpose - create a universal space in which children can exercise their curiosity
- communication focuses on visual and auditory sensations

Story Telling

- showing and telling
- the story is the starting point
- establishing a kind of reality in which the actor (storyteller) is the all-k-

- knowing narrator and how this keeps the story alive
- leading the audience through a story by telling (verbal, songs, sounds, gestures etc.) and showing (partly acting, using objects, puppets, costumes, masks)
- the narrator has the space and the time at his disposal and he has influence on every character in his story (if he appears on stage or is even only told)
- lead the attention of the audience by using the technique of suspense (until the end of the story no one thing is enough in itself, every part of the story needs a complement to satisfy the curiosity of the spectator)

Dance

- To be continued

5. Proposal of one subject and method of the future ASSITEJ Artistic Academies:

Artistic Research could be one principle and subject for the programme of a future ASSITEJ Artistic Academy. As the General Assembly of the ASSITEJ decided in Warsaw, the ASSITEJ Artistic Academy shall be a network of workshops and master classes to develop the art of Theatre for Young Audiences. As I showed in this keynote, artistic research can be a principle mode of artistic work in TYA and it needs special skills and a certain awareness of its methods. Especially as the dialogue-based methods are the basis of international exchange in arts. Because the subjects of a dialogue-based artistic exchange has to be concrete and not general, the methods of artistic research give a guideline for a relevant artistic exchange which provokes impulses for the individual artistic work of each participant.

The experiences from the Small size Network could be a good background to advance the idea of a global ASSITEJ Artistic Academy, which acts regionally. The research about, for and through Theatre for Early Years can develop the Theatre for Young Audiences in general.

This text is based on a lecture by the author, held on 30th May, 2014 in Warsaw during the 18th World Congress of ASSITEJ in the framework of the presentation of the Artistic International Association Small Size.

Early Years Theatre in Poland review and perspectives

Barbara Małecka

expert in Theatre Studies, producer and curator of artistic events, Poland

How it began?

Early Years Theatre began in Poland just 8 years ago. In November 2006, the Children's Art Centre in Poznań organised the first theatre festival for children aged 0 to 3s, along with a seminar. We invited, amongst others, the La Baracca Testoni Ragazzi Theatre from Bologna with their two fabulous shows and Roberto Frabetti, an author, actor and director, who began working for the youngest children over 25 years ago, whose passion, insights and joy – the likes of which he declared to have never experienced before any other audience – was spreading among others. Inspired by the Children's Art Centre two performances, considered pioneering, were created and presented: „Co to?” (“What is it?”) by the Theatre Studio BLUM and „Plumplumdzyńdzyńbum...” prepared by Irena Lipczyńska and Beata Bąblińska – independent artists from Poznań.

Much has changed in Poland since then, a lot of shows have been created and performed in Poland and abroad, but one thing remained unaltered: Early Years Theatre is an extraordinary challenge and a great opportunity.

How it worked out?

After eight years, art for toddlers has permanently established itself in the theatre and culture of Poland. On the one hand, it happened due to the dynamics of the trend, and on the other because of the intense interest amongst the parents themselves. Within eight years more than sixty new shows were created, which, however, does not meet the demand of the audience for shows dedicated only to this age group. Those who first believed in Early Years Theatre included independent, individual artists, whose both professional and private experience led them to the theatre where children sit on the edge of the stage and, though not all are able to walk and talk, absorb the theatre with all their senses. The independent theatre groups (like Atofri Theatre and Poddańczy Theatre) and individual artists (just to mention - Honorata Mierzejewska-Mikosza and Alicja Morawska-Rubczak) continue to be the most resolute and pursue their projects in various theatres. The exclusive focus on this type of art and a peculiar courage makes their productions innovative, often experimental and moving towards the search for new forms, including through international cooperation. The dynamic activity of independent groups made the expectations of the audience grow and also led them to be noticed by institutional theatres. The need demonstrated by the parents was so strong that theatre directors began to ap-

proach the issue with greater confidence and more often made decisions about including performances for children from zero to five years in their repertoire. A lot of wonderful shows have been made across the country. Some theatres already have their recognisable style – like Baj Theatre (Warsaw) or Pinokio Theatre (Łódź). Although the trend to spread the idea all over the country is interesting and needed, nevertheless the manner of its implementation, in some cases, still leaves much to be desired. Often, very little time is devoted to the shows for the very young; the productions are treated as secondary to performances for older audiences, which often results in unsatisfactory quality of the end product. There is almost no cooperation between theatres, no exchange or learning based on the experience of others. The initial productions in subsequent institutional theatres are often prepared in isolation from the others' knowledge. This does not mean that the situation is alarming. We are happy that the idea of opening theatres for the little ones reached such an enthusiastic reception, but we also feel that now we really have to focus on the quality of the work we do.

The growing awareness of the parents is certainly the primary factor contributing to the popularity of trend. The majority of the audience are mature parents seeking developmental activity, deeming creativity to be one of the essential values reinforcing the cognitive and emotional development of a child. They are the people who often had the child as a planned and long-awaited choice. They believe parenting to be an investment where creativity is understood as an investment for the future. Such parents are a critical audience. They raise the bar for artists, forcing them to continuously improve and propose new quality.

What comes next?

As nowadays the majority of Polish theatres dedicated to young audiences include productions for the youngest in their repertoire, such theatre is no longer a mere curiosity, but has become an important part of the repertoire. The first challenge faced by the Polish theatre – introducing performances for the youngest audience to the repertoire, has been fulfilled. Thus we stand before the next one – raising awareness of both artists and theatre managers. Hence the need for collaboration, especially an international one, as well as a search for new forms based primarily on the detachment from underestimating the spectators, and on finding interlocutors in them.

The introduction and development of interactive activities is yet another challenge. The first attempts have already been made in the performances of the Atofri Theatre, Teatr Lalki i Aktora (The Puppet and Actor Theatre) in Wałbrzych and the Poddąńczy Theatre. It seems that they have been wonderfully accepted by the audience. These activities, while remaining purely artistic, engage the audience in their structure. It should be emphasised that these events are not educational – their focus is on a deepened participation in an artistic event. In the case of the youngest children it means art realised more fully thanks to the physical and emotional involvement of the audience.

What do we do?

The enthusiastic reception of the Early Years Theatre trend and its dynamic development in the Polish theatres, naturally gave rise to an event which gathers the experiences of Polish artists and confronts them with projects from abroad. Produced by Children's Art Centre in Poznań, SZTUKA SZUKA MALUCHA (ART SEEKS THE TODDLER) is the only international arts festival in Poland for the youngest of young viewers, children from zero to five and their caretakers. It is an interdisciplinary project whose aim is to present a variety of artistic phenomena and to begin an artistic dialogue with a toddler during interactive activities.

We believe that a reciprocal creative exchange of experiences and a creative way to spend time together are important for families not only as an element in the process of raising a child, but above all as a way of building and strengthening the relationship between the child and the caretakers. Each performance is a time for a meeting of children and adults, a shared time, important and inspiring. It is a time when generations can meet again, find common grounds where creativity, essential for the harmonious development of a child, could germinate. The festival programme consists of the most interesting shows from Poland and inspiring, innovative performances from Europe. When compiling a programme, we look for such artistic events which explore diverse means of communication with the tiny recipient. The interactive events play an important role – workshops and installations whose task is to stimulate the creativity of the children and the parents. Although theatre is the basis of all our actions, we constantly look for other means of communication with a child.

We believe that a child needs art. A child has the right to art. Art is a medium for children – thanks to it they can discover the world, through it they express their emotions. When we do not lose the connection with art, we do not lose the magic of childhood. Discovering the world of art and the world through art is an adventure, and we place particular care on enabling children to begin the adventure as early as possible. We hope that our work can be inspiring for artists and theatres that are not yet fully convinced that the art for toddlers is essential, basic and simply important.

SZTUKA SZUKA MALUCHA (ART SEEKS THE TODDLER) is a family festival. The organizers feel that it is most important to ensure the participation of children and adults – caretakers, parents and grandparents. Each festival event is created with a view to specific perceptual capabilities of the youngest recipients of art, that is children from 0 to 5 years old. We cooperate with artists with a sensibility similar to ours. We look for open-minded performers who respect their audience.

Thinking ahead.

During last eight years, we have been trying to learn from the best colleagues around. And over the years they have also become our friends. There is a

strong group of people involved in the Early Years Theatre dispersed not only throughout Europe but also throughout the world. The group is truly strong and wise. The Small size project showed how important the idea of linking, exchanging and connecting is in order to grow, improve - and in the end – give the best that can be given to children. The work that has been done across Europe is admirable. We hope that Poland has gathered so many experiences that we are ready for new challenges. That's why we're looking forward so much to the new Small size project. Because having a chance to share and learn is priceless and seems to be the best way to develop.

Ripples of hope - possibilities within a parched landscape. New Frontiers in theatre for early years in Africa

Yvette Hardie

President of ASSITEJ International, South Africa

Theatre for the early years is a relatively new phenomenon in Africa. While we have had theatre for children and young people and some of it relatively highly developed, theatre for children of 4 and younger has been rare and when it has happened, it has been largely ignored as unimportant.

However, due to recent developments, this is beginning to change. While the first attempts are modest, I see them like pebbles dropped into a pond creating ripples, which I believe have the potential to have a powerful impact not only on the theatre scene, but on children in our context. It was Robert F Kennedy's powerful description of how social change occurs, which inspired this image of ripples of hope:

"Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance." Robert F. Kennedy

Before we begin to explore what these ripples may comprise in Africa, and in South Africa particularly, I'd like to explore some of the principles behind ripples. Drop a pebble in a still pond and watch the ripple travel out in an ever-expanding ring. *Wave Theory* teaches us that a wave will continue to travel outwards, never changing its initial shape or frequency. It also teaches us that when two waves intersect one another, the height of the effect is the sum of the heights of the two individual waves. And then there is one more principle which I think is pertinent to my metaphor. *Entrainment* is the tendency for two vibrating bodies to lock into phase so that they vibrate in harmony, a very important principle within the science of ripples.

To turn now to the landscape of South Africa. We see incredible need because of the stark inequalities and contrasts within our society. Here are some of the statistics around poverty and inequality as we experience it in South Africa:

- 41% of children live in the poorest 20% of households, while only 8% of children live in the richest 20% of households
- 35% live in households with no working adults
- 82% of children aged 0-13 are eligible for child support grants
- 39% households are headed by single women
- 1 in 10 children are severely malnourished¹

¹ These statistics are taken from the Child Gauge Index which is brought out annually by the South African Children's Institute.

How is education responding to these needs? At the moment, the honest answer must be “badly”. Early Childhood Development centres are failing to reach children in the 0-6 age bracket with 84% having NO access to formal early childhood development environments. It is not surprising then that 60% of children did not achieve the reading and numeracy levels set out in the national curriculum for Grades 3, 6 and 9. While there are many informal situations offering day care, these are usually with day mothers or “gogos” (grandmothers) as they are often called in South Africa, who have no formal training in education.

While Grade R (a reception year prior to the first formal year of schooling) has been made compulsory and the number of children taking this year has tripled, a recent report has shown that in the poorest schools, there is virtually no measurable impact to this initiative at all. This is because the quality of teaching and teaching support is so poor in these schools. In fact the report finds that weak provision of Grade R can foster worrying outcomes such as aggressive behaviour and poor language development instead of providing a sound base for development².

As for formal access to theatre there is very little for children and young people, particularly for children coming from the poorest of homes. Given that basic needs such as employment, housing, health care, sanitation and access to clean water are still top priorities for government, the emotional and creative lives of South African children are most often neglected. Most children grow up in environments without books or educational toys.

So where is the hope in this situation? I would like to draw your attention to several initiatives, which I see as providing ripples of hope in an otherwise very bleak landscape. Each illustrates how a single pebble dropped into a pond can have a ripple effect, which goes far beyond the immediate or obvious result.

The first ripple, is the production of “Patchwork”, which started through our South African programme called “Inspiring a Generation”, which works to give emerging South African artists access to international experiences and to mentor them in the development of new work. As a result of Joanna Evans travelling to Cameroon to attend the FATEJ festival and to engage in workshops with other African artists, she was exposed to a piece for babies from Sweden, called “Hello Baby”.

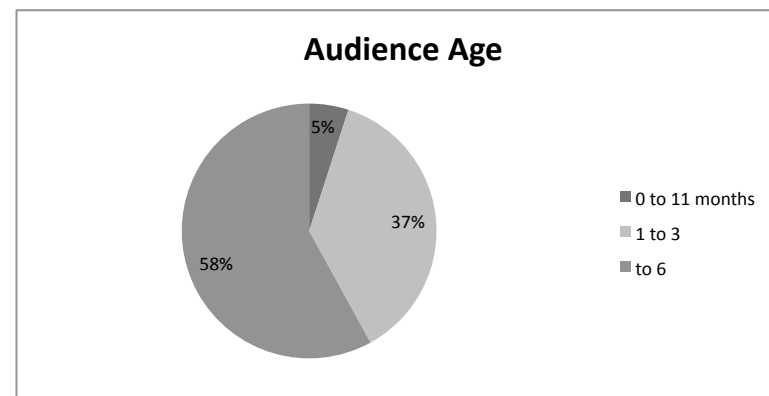
This sparked a desire in her to create a piece for babies herself, and when the Small size Project advertised for participation from outside of Europe, she was quick to respond. The proposal was successful, and she and her company (Pillowfort Productions), comprising two puppeteers in the roles of designer and puppet director, worked with actor-puppeteer, Asanda Rilityana and musician-storyteller Pedro Espi-Sanchez, to create “Patchwork”. They did this through extensive researching, testing and experimentation with children in crèches and in family showcases in order to determine what might work.

² The research was commissioned by the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation in the Presidency, and the Department of Basic Education, measured the effect of the introduction of Grade R on a child’s learning later on in life. It was conducted by the Research on Socio-Economic Policy (ReSEP) unit at Stellenbosch University, and the full report was released on to the ReSEP website.

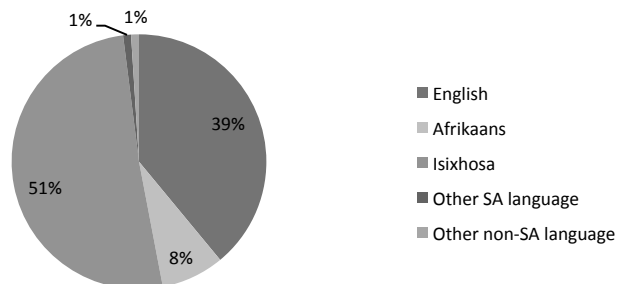
Meanwhile, the second pebble was dropped into the pond. Roberto Frabetti was invited by ASSITEJ SA to come to South Africa to work with the trainees from Magnet Theatre. During the period of his residency, he invited South African artists, ECD researchers, child psychologists, educators and funders to discuss the work in Europe, he gave workshops, and this built interest and curiosity in the possibilities that exist for South Africa. Joanna Evans was appointed as the administrator on the project and thus was able to work with Roberto directly and witness his work with the trainees. It was an opportunity for Joanna to learn from Roberto directly, and to engage with crèches and kindergartens in preparation for her own project, which started later in the year.

Roberto worked with 20 trainees from Magnet Theatre between the 4-9 of March 2013, and this process kick-started them in a project, which resulted in the creation of a multi-lingual 30 minute production, which was taken to crèches by 4 teams of actors. The play was known as “Tree / Boom / Umthi” and used Magnet Theatre’s signature style of physical and visual theatre. Very few words were used, and the language shifted between English, Afrikaans and Xhosa, depending on the audience to which the piece was playing. The four teams of actors were able to reach 83 crèches, 171 teachers and 2100 children under the age of 7. The play was toured in impoverished and under-resourced townships, such as Gugulethu, Khayelitsha, Bloekombos, Langa, Nyanga, Vrygrond, Ocean View, Capricorn Park, Mitchells Plain, Kraaifontien, and Imizamo Yethu, all in the Western Cape. As Magnet theatre director, Jennie Reznick explained, one of the focuses of the performance was to induce kinaesthetic empathy in the children. Immediately after the performance, the performers engaged with the audience for 15-20 minutes in playing with the props used in the play and re-experiencing for themselves some of the states of being they had witnessed.

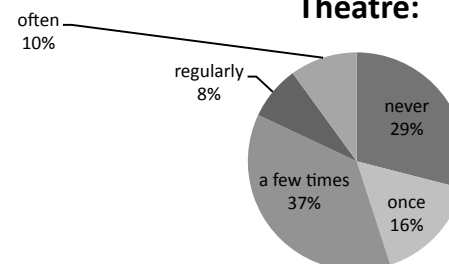
ASSITEJ SA conducted research with all the audiences of the production, and with teachers and the directors of the 4 teams. Here are some of the research findings:



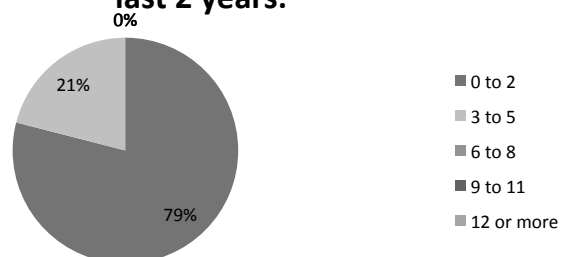
Audience Home Language



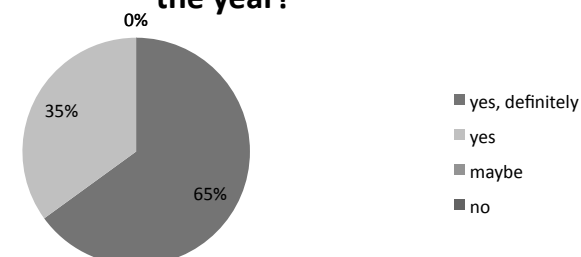
Frequency that Educator watched Theatre:



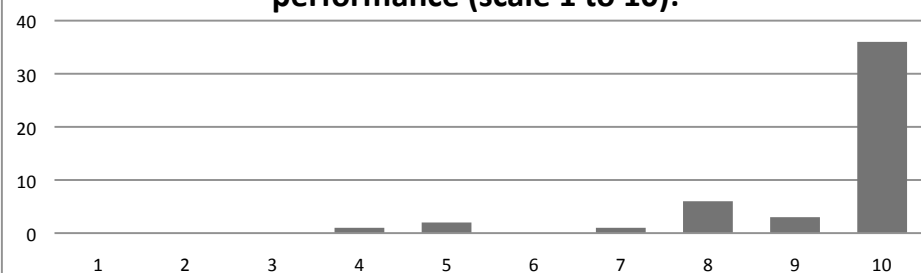
Number of plays performed at school in last 2 years:



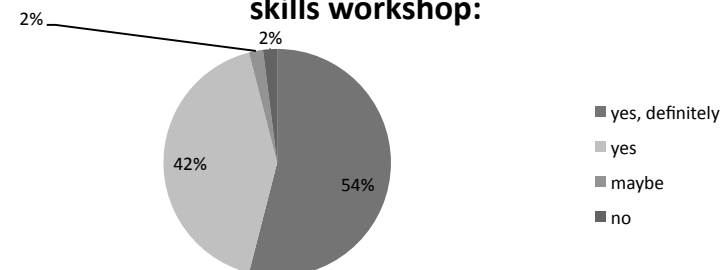
Interest in receiving more plays during the year?



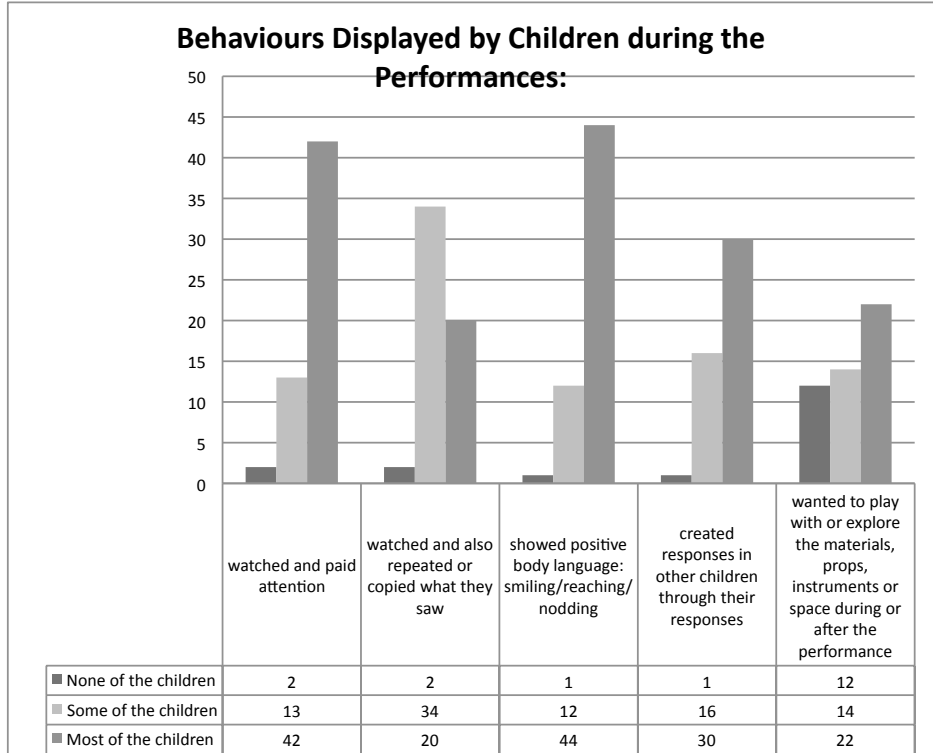
How educators rated the performance (scale 1 to 10):



Interest in taking a theatre making/arts skills workshop:



The most significant evidence of the project impact rests with the behaviour, which educators reported that children displayed during the performances they were watching. The post-performance teachers' questionnaire presented educators with a range of behavioural options to respond to. The table below provides an overview of this feedback:



When asked if the performances were accessible to the children, educators responded with following statements:

- Yes (it is) for all age groups
- It was interesting, but learners were scared as it was their first time being exposed to theatre
- It's interesting because they learned a lot and it fit our learning programs also
- They are learning a lot
- They were very excited and amazed
- Yes - Seasons are always taught in the school and they loved the animals
- Yes there was indeed a connection

- Yes the children showed excitement and was very interested in the play
- Yes it was, they could relate the play
- They were very interactive
- Concentration and they learnt

Some anecdotal comments from Educators regarding what most surprised them about the children's responses to the performances included the following:

- It was not a waste of time to them, because they had so much joy watching. They enjoyed it.
- It grows their listening capabilities
- Listened attentively throughout and were captivated. Surprises out of pockets!
- They were all happy, interested and engaged very well with what was happening
- They could relate to the different sounds
- They loved the performance as I've noticed no noise, every child was amazed
- Very interesting as to how they were in tune with the presentation of the show
- The children enjoyed the singing and also enjoyed the story. They could identify with the different animals and enjoyed seeing the actors use their bodies
- ...they were paying attention; they also enjoy watching the play
- They were very quiet and some of them laughed
- They were participating and were very focused
- They had a positive response; they laughed and they sang along. They clapped hands while performances was done

Supported by the director feedback on each performance (not included here), there were strong indications that most of the children demonstrated behaviour, which indicated that learning was taking place. They were for the most part concentrated and focused during the performance and listened attentively to the story. Several teachers commented on the fact that this went beyond their expectations of the children's behaviour. The children were also able to respond both verbally and non-verbally to the performance, integrating the knowledge into their own play and into their interaction with the actors after the show and with one another. There was an understanding of visual, aural, musical and kinaesthetic signals, and the children engaged using all these different modalities. The experience of the performance led to more purposeful play and to the children wanting to engage with aspects of what they had seen.

It should also be noted that the word "joy" came up a great deal in response to the performance. It seemed that the children had experienced something which was valuable and memorable, and which through the deep pleasure it provided, was a substantial tool for learning.

As the ripples of both these productions moved further away from their source, the performance of Patchwork showcased at the Baxter theatre where it sold out, indicating a commercial as well as a social possibility for baby theatre. A similar experience was had when Magnet theatre produced their play at the

Artscape theatre for paying audiences. Both plays then travelled to Bologna, (Magnet theatre sending only one of the teams of 4 actors) where the ripples of the work could collide with the ripples coming towards them from productions from across Europe, providing ever-more energy for the project.

The third source of ripples in South Africa was that from the Magnet-trained actors that had to remain behind and not experience the festival in Bologna. They decided to work on a new play and formed a company to do this. UKAO Arts created a two-hander called “Pushmi Pullyu”, based on ideas around inter-dependence and co-operation. This piece was showcased at the ASSITEJ SA Family Season in March 2014.

ASSITEJ SA was at the same time awarded funding from the UNESCO International Fund for Cultural Diversity, with the purpose of mentoring and supporting 10 emerging theatre companies nationally to produce work for young audiences. One of the companies accepted for the mentorship is UKAO Arts, the ex-Magnet trainees who did not go to Bologna and we are continuing to support them as they develop “Pushmi Pullyu” for creches and schools. Pillowfort Productions is another of these mentee companies, allowing us to continue to support and push the work for babies going forward.

The fourth source of ripples is a programme by one of our member-companies, which is theatre with caregivers and children. Clowns Without Borders SA has created the Sinovuyo Caring Families Programme, which is a parenting intervention. The focus of the programme is on: “reducing the risk of child maltreatment in vulnerable families, where the stresses of their health problems, of caring for multiple orphaned children and of their own childhood experiences can make parenting more difficult (Cluver, Orkin et al. 2011)”.

The programme includes 10 weekly group sessions with 15 caregivers in each session, and home visits to support the skills learnt in the home environment. Using participatory artistic and social learning activities, caregivers develop skills in positive parenting, non-violent discipline and protecting their children from abuse outside the home. This programme is also putting focus on the value of theatre for the very early years.

As the momentum of these various ripples grows, so there are challenges to be confronted.

The cost of making theatre is relatively high for baby theatre (given the size of the potential audience for any one performance), particularly if it is going to be accessible beyond the middle/upper classes, to the children who really need the intervention. There is also a challenge around the spaces that are available for performance for the early years – both in theatres and in crèches, given the need for intimacy and a different scale of production. The limitation of the contexts in which children receive their day-care or early education is also a potential barrier to access, with some teachers who are uncomprehending or disinterested. There is also a lack of research into the benefits of theatre for the early years which is specific to South Africa – ASSITEJ SA and its members are breaking a new path, which is always challenging.

So what do we need to make these ripples more powerful?

We have seen that partnerships are vital: from the macro to the micro levels. We need inter-governmental partnerships; partnerships with education; partnerships with the CSI programmes of corporates; partnering with NGOS working in early childhood development and related fields such as literacy development, and on the micro-level, we found connections to a nanny circle brought in good audiences for babies and their care-givers during our Family Season Festival. In the productions themselves, we need to ensure that there is always a demonstration of excellence. High quality theatre for the early years engages even the adults that accompany their children and excites them about its possibilities. We need more research, and this means continuing to do the kind of monitoring and evaluation that was done on Tree/Boom/Umti on all touring productions. And we need to advocate for the importance of the rights of children to arts from the earliest ages to all those we can get to listen.

If we are able to do the above, I believe that we will start to see ripples and more ripples and more ripples, vibrating in harmony, combining their strength to create waves of change which will reach even the furthest corners of our country, and perhaps beyond to the rest of the continent. ASSITEJ SA is committed to making this vision a reality.

Afterword

Is Small size a dreaming space for artist and young children or a European village to raise a child?

by Karel Van Ransbeeck

Artistic Director of Theater De Spiegel, Belgium

Nelson Mandela said *“We understand and promote the notion that while children need to be guided, they also have an entrenched right to be whatever they want to be and that they can achieve this only if they are given the space to dream and live out their dreams”*

I met some of the Small size partners for the first time in 2005 in Berlin (Augenblick Mal), when the German Theater Institute was doing a conference on young audiences.

Whilst there, I came across some older work that I saw in puppetry, five or ten years earlier. Work which inspired me a lot, like Laurent Dupont working with Tamteatro Musica on animals and music, Francesca Sorgato's Griboulli, work from Brigitte La Maisonneuve from Athénor company which I saw in 1993 in the Antwerp Cultural Capital, and Uccellini from Skappa - all of which were already legendary at that time. But there, in Berlin, I met Roberto Frabetti from La Baracca in Italy. Germany was presenting some work for young children written by Roberto.

European efforts had already resulted in some Scandinavian projects, such as Klangflugel 1998-2002; and later on, Glitterbird 2003-2006, from the University of Stockholm, where other countries, namely Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Hungary and France, were involved. Then, in 2002, HELIOS Teater in Germany initiated the festival 'First Steps'. Alongside this, in France, the Meli Mômes festival in Reims, set up in 1989 and led by Joel Simon, immediately began programming work for early years along with company Acta, Agnes Desfosses, who started a biennial Premieres Rencontres in Val de l'Oise 2004.

But it was one specific grey May evening in 2005, in Charleroi, Belgium that the four co-founders Italy, Belgium, Spain and Slovenia heard news of their application for the first Small size European project. This was then renewed the year after, for 2006 – 2009, when partners from UK, Romania and Germany joined. In 2009, the five-year project “Small size, big citizens” further embraced Ireland, Hungary, Austria, Finland and France.

Thanks to some smaller projects in other parts of Europe and beyond, namely 'Von anfang An' and the research of Dr Wolfgang Schneider and Dr Gerd Taube - the inter-francophone project between France: Reims, Quebec: Montreal and Belgium: Brussels and Charleroi; the Grundtvig project between France, Holland, Czech Republic and combinations of micronetworks within UK, Scotland and Ireland - 'Art for the Youngest' gained more and more appreciation within

International Youth theatre contexts.

Thanks to the efforts and exchanges of productions and know-how of all Small size partners and their festivals, Europe has become a fertile ground for art and the flourishing culture of performing arts for the babies and toddlers.

What first started as an export network to tour some productions from different companies developed into a widening worldwide exchange of information, know-how, support and sustaining efforts, to increase the performing arts for such a young public and their astonished parents and child-carers.

Theatre for the very young could be framed as a **field of research and development**. The many shows that have been produced can be considered, in their diversity, a small heritage. And they made it clear that there is no such thing as a “model of theatre for the very young” and shared the basic idea that “small” is no less important than “big”.

Each age is like a big planet with specific and unique morphological features. And every planet has visible and concealed parts. Some of them have been explored, others are virgin forests, unexplored and perhaps unexplorable.

Of all these planets, the planet of the very young is perhaps the “keeper of the origin”.

The “just-happened” feeling is kept, the “revolutionary”, critical moment, in which something unique takes place, a turning point, a radical change.

Establishing artistic relationships with early years offers enormous opportunity to those working in theatre for children: to go further into one's own artistic research and to deepen the knowledge of children. Experiencing theatre with little ones is highly educational for an actor, because in order to establish a contact with a very young child, actors, who are always trying to find a balance between telling and listening, are privileged in having to respect the aspect of listening. If imagining, expressing and creating are ancient and deeply human needs, art is the highest and most complete instrument through which these needs can be responded to. That is why we should train artists to work with children, and create a degree in “Arts for Children”.

In order to do that, La Baracca -Testoni Ragazzi, the lead company of Small size, invited people from all over Europe and, indeed, the world, to their big annual festival ‘Visioni di futuro, visioni di teatro’ in Bologna, to share their experiences from each country and company in conferences, workshops or performances.

Furthermore, by introducing a ‘Seeding Fund’ to help young artists or companies to create work for this audiences for the first time, and to inspire other countries, the Small size Network has become an open, worldwide window to explore all skills and experiments on all kind of arts.

For instance, within the network countries such as France, Belgium, UK and Finland were inspired to work on the textile/sculptural “plastic arts” within museums. Music and musicians are becoming more interested in a focus on very young ones.

After 9 years of European funding, the project hopes to expand further. Already a full “network” member within ASSITEJ, we hope to enlarge this to other continents beyond Europe. Examples of this are the wonderful experiences which have already been set up between ASSITEJ South Africa and Small size, and the developing contacts between Belgium, France and Canada – Quebec, Germany and India, and Belgium with Burkina Faso.

Over the last few years, I have seen the discussions and conferences widening from the arts, artistic boundaries and an art-centred technical vocabulary for the very young ones, to questions of wider relevance and social value: Small Size, Big CITIZENS? Is it good to sustain and support this movement towards arts for babies? Have babies and toddlers any economic relevance to our society today?

We can of course see this in a much larger worldwide perspective of functioning global society. Today everything is measured and placed within the context of the commercial balance between functionality and rentability.

Revealing the meanings of the values of childhood and the importance of children is not as great an issue anymore as it was in the 70s. We see minority groups, those without their own voice, being disregarded given the excuse of economic crises and rentability. Today it is a political statement to say: “Children are not welcome anymore and looked upon as an increasingly heavier load for society; children do not vote, earn or have power. Children are useless”. When are children finally considered “citizens” and “complete human beings”, and not “citizens of the future” or “human becomings”?

Children have the right “to express their views and have them given due weight in decisions affecting them, in accordance with their age and maturity”. The right to the learning process of human beings is constant and continuous, but how many of us truly take these rights seriously? And how many of us understand the implications of Article 31, the right to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts? How many of us enact these implications?

Do we give children and young people the capacity to truly participate in decisions? Are we supporting them, to influence decisions? Are we listening to what they say? Are we acting on what they say? Will we change our plans and policies as a result of what they say? **“Could we do more?”** Culture is seen as a source for the development of society. The task of cultural policy is therefore to create and support structures that promote mobilisation of creativity amongst people and thus ensure welfare, innovation and pluralism. In the current climate policy makers sometimes focus on academic and vocational outputs in education, and forget that talent can be expressed in the physical performing arts, and in creative arts through painting, writing, design and digital technology.

Arts education requires a sensitive approach to researching society in order to make new cultures, new audiences and new concepts possible. Arts education is the basis of cultural diversity. But how to realise the Human Right to take part in the arts?

Arts, culture, play and leisure for children and young people are not the sole responsibility of one department, or even two – it should be the responsibility for all. Legislative, judicial, administrative, social and educational measures are necessary to ensure its implementation for all children without discrimination and on the basis of equality of opportunity.

Because all children, from their earliest years, have the right to fully experience and be involved in the physical and mental spaces that art and culture can offer them, and to share them with the adults: parents, teachers and artists.

Within the texts of this publication we have found enough arguments to define this.

We believe the arts have a vital role to play in the development of emotional intelligence; in stretching the imagination and in helping children to find their place and voice within society. The arts aren't an add-on, but the oxygen of the spirit and part of everyday existence; children 'making their selves' which is almost their sole purpose, in the early years. In this shared space between 'the arts' and 'child development', we are around the 'presentness' of childhood. The arts are fundamental to that richness and completeness. Low-quality provision is a bit like insisting that children only use one and two-syllable words when communicating, or three notes to a simple song.

We should give each person, citizen or not, young or not, the right to rediscover sources, time and space for creativity, the exploration time, and the poetical meaningfulness of life.

Shorter said: We should give time, space and possibility to PLAY as it is the duty of a child as a citizen, just to BE a child.

Play is responsible for much early brain development, influencing the development of fine and gross motor skills, language, socialisation, personal awareness, emotional well-being, creativity, problem-solving and learning ability. Babies with the habit of playing become creative and imaginative children. So let's help parents and adults to play with their children; many are inhibited or don't know how to. The right to be creative: "Find your talent". But why is it lost in the first place? We are told, "We must unlock the creative potential in all of us". Let's enjoy creativity without monitoring success. Let's stop being afraid of children.

We haven't learnt how to play; play is central to children's lives and an essential ingredient of a happy childhood, through play our most talented artists, musicians and performers take the first steps in developing their skills, their vision, and their art.

Without rewinding or fast forwarding the paybacks or profits of playing, but just offer the free moment to play (or not to play)... as that should be the question - like Shakespeare proposed. However, access to the arts, play and leisure opportunities are not black and white issues where you either "have to play" or "don't have to play".

Today this value of playing and dreaming is more necessary than medicine, food, peace or wealth. When children are starving, homeless, parentless, sub-

ject to abuse, infection or to any number of horrific realities, which all conspire to rob them of their childhood, what role should the arts be playing? Does it have a place at all?

Yes. It has an integrated, not hierarchical, one. Cultural rights need to be integrated with all other human rights. At times difficult circumstances in which many of them find themselves, they need, even more acutely, the tools to do this. And the arts may be able to provide these tools when other routes are failing. Seeing children as cultural citizens requires seeing them as active, autonomous and contributing members of society. Since **"It takes a village to raise a child"**, then we need to act as a village, on national and global levels, working harmoniously and supporting one another's efforts, to reach into the schools, the family and the community; this is important in contributing to the creation of this culture of respect and an understanding of diversity. "A person's a person, no matter how small".

But let's see it hopefully, like Joel Simon from Nova Villa said in 1990 when people asked him why he should programme for very young children: "I just wanted to let my child, aged one and a half, see some nice things, things to dream about!".

The Small size Artistic International Association was founded in 2007 within the framework of the project “Small size, the net”, financed by the Culture Programme of the European Commission.

Today the association's network extends over three continents and includes 40 theatres, art institutions and organisations. The main objective and activity of the Association is to promote and spread performing arts for early years (0-6 years) and, more generally, to support and give value to culture for the same age group.

LIST OF THE ASSOCIATES



ACCIÓN EDUCATIVA, Spain

Acción Educativa is based in Madrid and organises the “Semanas internacionales de teatro para niñas y niños”, an annual theatre season programmed for children and young people.

www.accioneducativa-mrp.org



ARTHOUSE LITTLE AURORA, Finland

One of the Cultural Services of the City of Espoo, Little Aurora offers children 0–6 years and their families arts and culture, such as theatre performances and workshops.

www.pikkuaurora.fi



BABORÓ International Arts Festival for Children, Ireland

Baboró is now the flagship children's arts festival in Ireland. Based in Galway, it is an annual multi-arts festival for children from 0 to 13 years.

www.baboro.ie



CENTRUM SZTUKI DZIECKA W POZNANIU/CHILDREN'S ART CENTRE, Poland

Centrum Sztuki Dziecka w Poznaniu organizes several big events for children and young people: Biennial of Art for Children, International Young Audience Film Festival Ale Kino!, Art Seeks the Toddler. Its activity is aimed at inspiring professional production, propagating new phenomena in art and documenting about artistic events

www.csdpoznan.pl - www.sztukaszukamalucha.pl



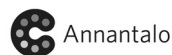
BRANKO CHILDREN'S THEATRE, Croatia

Children's Theatre Branko Mihaljević in Osijek began working in 1950. Its performances have been presented in Croatia and abroad.

www.djecje-kazaliste.hr

**CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY, USA**

Born in 1961 as a small company, today Children's Theatre Company is recognized as North America's flagship theatre for young people. Through its Early Childhood Initiative it creates theatre experiences dedicated to audience members aged 2 - 5.
www.childrenstheatre.org

**City of Helsinki Cultural Office ANNANTALO ARTS CENTRE, Finland**

Annantalo co-operates with performing arts festivals for children such as the "Bravo!", "Hurraa!" and "Ruutia!". The Arts Centre produces and invites performances for the very young, and runs a workshop programme for parents and children aged 2-6 years.
www.annantalo.fi

**CITY OF LIMOGES Centres Culturels Municipaux, France**

The Municipal Cultural Centres and the Management of Childhood (Children's Services) organises the biannual festival "Kaolin & Barbotine" in Limoges.
www.ville-limoges.fr

CLIODHNA NOONAN, Ireland

cliodhnanoonan@gmail.com

**COMPAGNIA IL MELARANCIO, Italy**

Il Melarancio produces shows for different age groups, specialising in young audiences, and programmes theatre performances and other events.
www.melarancio.com

**COMPañIA TEATRO AL VACIO, Mexico**

Teatro al Vacío is a company dedicated to providing meaningful artistic experiences and committed to creating projects for early childhood public. <http://teatroalvacio.blogspot.com/>

**DA.TE DANZA, Spain**

A dance company that produces shows for different age groups, specialising in dance shows for the very young.
www.datedanza.es

**DANCE THEATRE AURACO, Finland**

Dance Theatre Auraco produces performances for all ages and has a long experience in working with and for babies and toddlers under 3 years of age as well as the children under 6 years of age. Audience development and community dance projects are an essential part of Auraco's work.
www.auraco.fi

**DRAMMATICO VEGETALE - RAVENNA TEATRO, Italy**

Drammatico Vegetale produces shows for children of different ages and since 2008 has organised the "Artebebè" festival in Ravenna and its Province.
www.drammaticovegetale.com

**HELIOS THEATER, Germany**

Helios produces shows for different age groups. They organise the biennial festival for young audiences "hellwach" in Hamm and regularly host conferences and symposia.
www.helios-theater.de

JOYFUL THEATRE, South Korea

Joyful Theatre creates original children performances, which are open and approachable through easy languages that convey unique ideas towards life, soul and nature. We also organize diverse art programs in the community for kids, housewives, adolescents, and the elderly.
www.joyfultheatre.co.kr

**KABÓCA PUPPET THEATRE, Hungary**

Kabóca is a professional theatre group located in Veszprém, operating the Kabóca Cottage, a playhouse for babies, and organizing the Kabóciádé Family Festival every June.
www.kabocababszinhaz.hu

**KOLIBRI Theatre for Children and Youth, Hungary**

Kolibri manages 3 performance venues in Budapest, where they present shows for different age groups. They produce for children and young people and organise the "Biennial of theatre for children and young people" in Kaposvár.
www.kolibriszinhaz.hu

**LA BARACCA - TESTONI RAGAZZI, Italy**

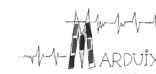
La Baracca produces shows for different age groups and organises the festival for very young children "Visioni di futuro, visioni di teatro..." in Bologna.
www.testoniragazzi.it

**LA PICCIONAIA/I CARRARA, Italy**

La Piccionaia/I Carrara produces shows for children of different ages and programmes theatre performances in Vicenza, Mira (Venice) and Padua.
www.piccionaia.it

**LGL - Lutkovno gledališče Ljubljana, Slovenia**

LGL produces shows for different age groups. They organise two festivals in Ljubljana: "Golden Stick", International Biennial Festival of Live Actor Performances for Children and Youth, and the "LUTKE" International Puppets Festival.
www.lgl.si

**MARDUIX, Spain**

Marduix produces shows for various age groups, based on a research on materials, tales, literature and music.
www.marduix.cat

**POLKA THEATRE, UK**

Polka Theatre is a producing and receiving venue dedicated to children aged 0-13. They coordinate the Small size UK micro network.
www.polkatheatre.com

**Rialles Espectacles LASALA, Spain**

La Sala Miguel Hernandez is a theatre located in Sabadell (Barcelona-Spain) dedicated exclusively to children, with a programme open to all genres and disciplines.
www.lasalateatre.cat

STARCATCHERS**STARCATCHERS, Scotland - UK**

Starcatchers creates performances for babies and toddlers in Scotland. Its aim is to support productions, artist development and educator training.
www.starcatchers.org.uk

**STICKY FINGERS EARLY YEARS ARTS, Northern Ireland - UK**

Sticky Fingers promotes artistic and cultural programmes for very young children (0-8) and organises the "International early years arts festival" in Newry, Northern Ireland.
www.stickyfingersarts.co.uk

TEATERTR3**TEATER TRE, Sweden**

Teater Tre was founded in 1979 as a mime based theatre where text, movement and music unite into visual performances. Since 2002 it is specialized on theatre for children's early ages.
www.teatertre.se

**MADAM BACH, Denmark**

Theatre Madam Bach is based in Denmark but travels around the world with performances and art projects for younger children. The performances are visual and include all the senses.
www.madambach.com

**TEATR MALEGO WIDZA, Polonia**

Founded in 2011, Teatr Malego Widza is the only stationary and repertory theater in Poland which is mainly focused on producing and presenting work for children from the first year of life. Over 3 years, it has produced 10 shows for this age and organized workshops for children and for families.
www.teatrmalegowidza.pl

**TEATRO ALL'IMPROVISO, Italy**

Teatro all'improvviso is a professional theatrical children's company founded by Dario Moretti, who realizes shows using various techniques and languages. He also founded "Segni d'infanzia", international children festival of Mantua.
www.teatroallimprovviso.it

**TEATRO PAN, Switzerland**

Teatro Pan produces shows for children of different ages and organises the review "Senza confini grandi e piccini insieme a teatro", and the festival "Il Maggiolino", especially dedicated to the early years.
www.teatro-pan.ch

**TEATRO PARAISO, Spain**

Teatro Paraiso produces shows for different age groups, specialising in young audiences. They programme "Pequeña Escena" for children aged 1-6, in Vitoria.
www.teatroparaiso.com

**TEATRUL ION CREANGA, Romania**

Teatrul Ion Creangă organises the International Theatre for Children Festival "100, 1.000, 1.000.000 stories" in Bucharest. The company's mission is to produce performances of high artistic standard.
www.teatrulioncreanga.ro

**THEATER DE SPIEGEL, Belgium**

Theater De Spiegel is a touring company that combines music with objects and puppets. Every 2 years they organise the "Babelut" festival in Neerpelt focusing on music, theatre and art for children aged between 0 and 3 years.
www.despiegel.com

**THÉÂTRE DE LA GUIMBARDE, Belgium**

Théâtre de la Guimbarde is a theatre company specialised in young audiences. It produces shows for different age groups and organises "Pépites, l'Art et les Tout-Petits" festival, an annual gathering of artists and early childhood professionals.
www.laguimbarde.be

**THEATRE HULLABALOO, UK**

It organises the festival for children and young people "Takeoff". The festival hosts a special section dedicated to early years.
www.theatrehullabaloo.org.uk

**THÉÂTRE O'NAVIO, France**

O'Navio produces shows for different age groups and programmes the seasonal theatre performances at La Marmaille, a theatre dedicated exclusively to children with a special focus on early years.
www.onavio.com

**TOIHAUS THEATER, Austria**

Every two years Toihaus organises the international theatre festival for small children "BIM BAM - Internationale Theater-Festival für Kleinst-und Kinder". They produce shows for different age groups.
www.toihaus.at

YUTAKA TAKEI, Japan

www.forestbeats.com

