interACT
A resource kit for working in integrated performance settings
Contents

What is interACT? 3
Mixed Abilities Ensemble Workshop Plans 5
Case Studies introduction By Alison Richardson 41

Case Studies

A Midsummer Night’s Dream – Disability Trust 45
Coming Up in Adoration & How to Handle a Fractured Heart – 52
Rozelle Neighbourhood Centre
Craving – Australian Theatre for Young People 58
Hard Daze – Powerhouse Youth Theatre 65
Home Among The Stars – intergratedliving Australia 76
Island Dreaming – Bago Magic Performance Group 83
My Space, My Place – sliced bread attraction 90
Peregrine – Can Do Performance Group 97
Sucked In – Powerhouse Youth Theatre 104
interACT
A resource kit for working in integrated performance settings.

What's in interACT?
The kit contains the Workshop Plans for the first 7 weeks of a 15 week performance training program for people with & without a disability.

The kit also contains nine Case Studies that were contributed by various arts organisations & disability services across regional & metropolitan areas in NSW who have worked in integrated performance settings.

A Resource page is included on the website that provides links to the websites of the organizations that submitted a Case Study & also provides links to other sites of use in the arts and disability sector.

Why have a kit of this kind?
Firstly, to create awareness amongst a wider audience of the work that is going on in the field of integrated performance. Secondly, to help those who may want to work in this field & are wanting to know how to get started & what is involved and lastly to give those working in the field already acknowledgement for the work they have done & also a sharing of ideas & ways of working.

How do I use interACT?
You can simply read it online or you can download the whole document as either a PDF or a word document. A large print version can also be downloaded as a word document.

It is then up to you if you want to use any ideas from the workshops or be informed and inspired by the organisations who have contributed case studies or browse through some of the links in the Resource section.
Who created interACT?

Claudia Chidiac & Eleanor Winkler, Powerhouse Youth Theatre’s Artistic Director and General Manager, thought an online resource kit highlighting the Mixed Abilities Ensemble & the development of *Hard Daze* could maybe be of benefit to others doing similar or thinking about doing similar work. Accessible Arts also recognised this need to information share and so Jennifer Teo & Alison Richardson from the Western Sydney team at Accessible Arts were employed to set up interACT.
Mixed Abilities Ensemble Workshop plans

The Mixed Abilities Ensemble (MAE) performance training program was an initiative of Powerhouse Youth Theatre (PYT) & Accessible Arts Western Sydney. The following are the workshops plans from the training program that was held at CabraVale Leisure Centre from May- July 2008. It was funded through the Matana Foundation, Fairfield City Council and Accessible Arts. Facilitators were sourced and a flier developed which called out for participants with and without a disability to take part in this unique training program.

Twelve people with and without a disability met every Saturday for 15 weeks to train in performance making, movement and vocal skills. These workshop plans are specifically from weeks 1-7 as this was where each Saturday was divided into the aforementioned three sections. Weeks 8-15 were spent devising a short piece to be shown on the final workshop days to family and friends.

The performance workshops were conducted by Powerhouse Youth Theatre’s Artistic Director, Claudia Chidiac (with two guests spots by Alison Richardson from Accessible Arts), the movement workshops were conducted by movement artist and facilitator, Angela Hill and the voice workshops by singer, actor and facilitator, Aimee Falzon.

The aim in presenting these workshop plans is for those unfamiliar with what an integrated performance training program may consist of to gain awareness into the process and how practitioners work with an integrated group. It is also for those looking for new ideas to use in their own workshops and to reaffirm that working with an integrated group is not all about reinventing the wheel but about sometimes having to think outside the square and adapt and modify exercises and activities that you may already be doing so they are able to be engage a group with diverse needs.

The participants of this training program then became the Mixed Abilities Ensemble (MAE) who, in the second half of 2008, worked together on the creative development stage of the major production, *Hard Daze* and then reformed in 2009 to continue devising & ultimately perform in the full scale production.
WORKSHOP 1

PERFORMANCE

Move around the space

Get the group to simply walk or move in the way they feel most comfortable around the space. If they find themselves moving in one direction or pattern, get them to change it. Instruct the group to begin to make eye contact with each other & give each other a smile. Use a drum/whistle/bell or simply yell ‘freeze’ to get the group to stop mid move. Get them to find a point of focus and not take their eyes of this focus point. Either yell, ‘Unfreeze’ or hit the drum, blow whistle etc to get them to continue on moving around the space. Get the group to shake hands with people who they pass whilst moving.

You can also add way of moving around the space, taken from suggestions by the group for example, move like you’re lighter than air, like you’re wading through mud, like you’ve lost something small & precious, like you’re scared. This introduces the idea of motivation and intention behind an action.

A great exercise for the group to own the space and familiarise themselves with it. It also allows participants to become conscious of their body & how it moves.
Circle clap

Group stands in a circle. One person begins by ‘passing a clap’ to the person next to them. This means they turn to the person next to them make eye contact and clap in their direction. The clap then gets passed around the circle. The aim is to pass the clap quickly, so it is like an electric current running through the group, everyone in the same rhythm ready for the clap and read to pass it on.

This exercise is good for focus, coordination & concentration.

Deaf whispers –

to listen with your eyes

The group is to stand in a line. Everyone has their backs to the leader who is at the front of the group. The leader thinks of an action and then taps the person in front of them on the shoulder & shows them the action. The action could be a simple gesture for example scratching their head three times or poking their tongue out then smiling or a more complex set of moves for example picking up a basket from the ground and picking apples from a tree. The job of the person who has been tapped on the shoulder is to watch intently every move the leader makes and try and remember it. They can ask to see the moves one more time if they need to. Once the first person in the line has watched the leader’s moves they then tap the next person in line on the shoulder and try and repeat the leader’s actions exactly. This continues down the line until the last person has received the series of moves. Just like in Chinese Whispers the message sometimes changes, in Deaf Whispers the movements/ gestures sometimes change. The last person then shows the group what they saw. The leader can then show the group what the original actions were and everyone can see how accurate or not they were at observing, remembering and repeating.

Deaf Whispers can also be done competitively whereby there are two lines where the leaders of both lines are given a series of action by the facilitator/teacher. The team at the end that has the series of actions the most accurate are the winners.

VOICE

Explain how the voice is just like an instrument that needs practise and exercise to play at it’s best. These instruments are all made differently because every body is unique, so is every voice. As vocalists we need to develop an awareness of all parts of the ‘instrument’.
Whilst you want to always challenge your voice and the ideas you may have about your voice, it’s also important to respect what we can and can’t do physically. For those who aren’t so vocal for example, we can find ways of incorporating signing into the mix or percussive elements using the body.

Sound is movement - we’ll discover the more we play how very connected movement and voice are.

Before you begin it’s important to keep the voice hydrated (by drinking plenty of water) and warm. Coldness will constrict your vocal chords and can lead to straining your voice. (This is why we always sound better when we sing in the shower – the moisture and warmth together with the generally good acoustics of bathrooms!)

Firstly breath is what carries our sound. We need to be able to support the voice with our breath. If you were to watch any baby you would see that they actually have excellent breathing, ie. deep, full and diaphragmatic! Over time we learn habits that restrict our breath – so getting deep diaphragmatic breath is just a process of remembering. We also vocalise at our best when we are relaxed.

Breathing Awareness

Lead the group through the following:

Start by lying down on the floor on your back, or in your most reposed/comfortable state. Just notice your breath, what parts of your body move when you breathe? What parts of your body touch the floor? How does the breath feel as it enters through your nostrils and into your lungs? Really give yourself time throughout this, you may not have focused on these kind of things before, so allow any distracting thoughts to just pass through.

Honey Floor

Now imagine that your body is slowly turning into honey from the head down, not sinking into the floor but stretching out long and wide across the floor. Imagine your shoulders easing away from each other and spreading wide across the floor. Your back, each little vertebra, easing out and away from each other spreading long across the floor, until your body is a huge shallow pool of honey spread across the entire floor. Really feel the support of the floor across your back and shoulders.

Boulder Head

Now imagine that your head is a huge, heavy boulder and you’re going to turn as slow as you possibly can to the left...then back to centre...then to the right and back
to centre. Repeat this head movement. Now nod your head ever so slowly as if to say yes (still as the boulder). Repeat. By the end of these head movements your head should feel very centred and balanced.

**Pants!**

Get participants to work their diaphragms.

Lead them through the following: Place your hand on your belly, slightly up from your navel. Take a deep breath in and then do 10 pants (ie. Like a puppy dog that’s been running around) you should feel your diaphragm working, where your hand is, rising up and down with the breath. On the 10th pant expel all the air from your lungs, take a deep breath in through the nostrils and sigh out. Repeat this a couple of times. NB: students will inevitably find this exercise hilarious and start laughing because it is all a bit silly! But laughter is great for the diaphragm too – they can particularly feel that muscle working when they’re laughing if they keep their hand on their belly.

**The Lion**

Lead the group through the following:

Slowly roll to one side taking the feeling of the support of the floor with you. Come up to a kneeling/sitting position with bum on heels. Take a full, free breath through the nostrils, and on the out breath you’re going to press down onto your thighs with
your hands, stick your tongue right out and open your eyes wide as you push all the air out of your lungs as if you were roaring like a lion! Be careful not to ‘rasp’ the voice as you push the air out. Once all the air is pushed out hold it out for as long as you can before you allow an inward breath. When you finally breathe in you should feel your rib cage and diaphragm springing out to fill your lungs freely and easily. Repeat this exercise one/two times.

**Balloon Body**

Lead the group through the following:

Slowly bring your body to standing/upright. Breath out and allow your head to roll forwards, slowly rolling your body down, knees bent, towards the floor till your torso feels like it’s hanging from the hips, hands brushing the floor. Imagining that your body is like a deflated balloon we’re going to breathe the body up, back to an upright position. As we breath in, we float the body up a little ways, pause the upwards movement as you breath out. Take another breath in and breathe your body up some more. Pause the movement as you breathe out... and so on. Keep doing this till you breathe up your head, to an upright position, then finally breathe your arms up above your head as well. Once you have breathed your body up as high and fully as possible, have a big sigh out and allow your torso to roll gently towards the floor again. Then breathe your body back up again. You should feel the breath really starting to connect with the body now.

**Zoooo!**

This exercise helps to embody, project and free the voice. Demonstrate the movement/sound combinations below to the group (preferably positioned in a circle) allowing the whole group to respond as one as though echoing each movement/sound:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sound</th>
<th>Movement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zoooo!</td>
<td>Legs wide and knees bent, brush palms of hands down thighs towards the ground.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whoa</td>
<td>Shake the lower part of belly with both hands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoore</td>
<td>Rub upper belly with one hand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goh!</td>
<td>Hit chest and back with one fist at the same time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mmmaaaaaah</td>
<td>Rub palm of hand over heart then extend your arm, opening the hand out, around the circle - as if showing the circle something in your palm very openly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Feh! Brush the tops of the fingers from under the chin out abruptly – like an Italian-style insult!

Hah! No action.

Bah! No action.

Deh! Quickly pluck something off each cheek.

Paaay Run fingers slowly down face.

Keey As though pulling a long thread straight out from the middle of your forehead.

Ri! As though pulling a thread from the top of your head towards the ceiling. (Also try rolling the tongue on the ‘r’ for this one)

Now go through this exercise in reverse and repeat.

**Sound Corridor**

This exercise allows participants to use their voice creatively without the pressure of having to sound ‘good’ or ‘right’, pretty much anything goes and participants can be as imaginative as they wish. This exercise also helps free the voice and can ‘un-stick’ it from old patterns of use. This can also be quite an intense experience for whoever goes through the corridor, it’s great if everyone can get a chance to go through it at some point, here, or in later workshops where it will be revisited.

Get the group to form two straight lines, facing each other and wide enough for a person to move through quite snugly, thus creating a corridor. One person, who is in, starts at one end of the ‘corridor’ and begins to move through it very, very slowly with eyes closed or blindfolded. As the ‘in’ person moves through the corridor, those forming the corridor and close to the ‘in’ person, can make sounds. The sounds can be anything that comes to mind; radio, singing, static, animals, whatever. Essentially, it appears that the sounds ‘light-up’ along the corridor where the ‘in’ person walks.

The corridor can then be extended: once the ‘in’ person has completely passed someone forming the corridor, that person can then break off from the corridor and re-attach themselves to the other end of the corridor (the end that the ‘in’ person is walking towards) and begin making another sound. Once this ‘breaking-away and re-attaching’ corridor is flowing and working nicely you can try making the corridor twist and turn as people re-attach themselves. When the corridor comes to a halt allow the ‘in’ person an opportunity to talk about their experience in the corridor, ask about the sounds that they noticed? What feelings did they evoke? Did you get disorientated? Any memories or stories evoked?
MOVEMENT

Warm up the group with a ‘Brain Dance’ (Based on Anne Green Gilbert’s warm-up of eight fundamental movement patterns).

This exercise can be done seated, standing, in a circle or in any formation in general space. Be creative and playful with how you attend to each pattern.

1. Breathe (just take a few deep inhales and exhales feeling the expansion of your ribcage and abdomen)
2. Tactile - using your hands, or the hands of a partner do one round of each over your each arm, down your front torso and legs, up your back, on your shoulders and over your face and head: patting, tapping and brushing.
3. Core/distal - reaching out to your furthest distal length into space and coming into to a small shape close to your center or core.
4. Head/tail - move your head then your tail (hips) through the spine in circles or flexion and extension.
5. Upper/lower - move your upper body any way you want and keep your lower body still then do the lower body independent of upper.
6. Body half - like upper/lower except with the right half moving independent of the left and vice versa.
7. Contra-lateral - moving across the midline by taking your right elbow to your left knee then reverse and repeat.
8. Vestibular - activating the vestibular system through upper body swings or by spinning around.

Shakes

“Light technique” for release and contra lateral awareness. 8 shakes with right arm, left leg, left arm, right leg.

Outrageous Travel

The group is to move through the space with one leader doing any locomotor movement with a sound and switching leaders. This can be done as a group ‘clump’ or in a line.
Line Flock

The group lines up in a line. The leader moves throughout the space and each person in line takes impulse & manipulates the motif of the mover in front of them. For example if the leader marches & waves their hands above their head, then next person in line manipulates or changes this slightly. They use the part that is most interesting and/or accessible for them. Then change leaders.

You can vary this exercise by changing the quality, flow, task, travel with each change in leader, dancing to front or back of line for transitions.

Space Exploration & Level Changes

Get the group to move around the space with focus, that is, no talking, laughing, touching others, just being aware of others in their peripheral vision. Call out, ‘low’ and the group must find a low position, for example, lying on the ground like a star fish which they are to freeze. Unfreeze the group, get them to move around the space again and call out, ‘medium’ and then finally ‘high.’ The group should now have three shapes in three spots in the room. Split the group into two groups and get them to work out a transition from one shape and space to the next. Get groups to present these to each other.
Development
The group must use a connecting movement from last exploration in line flock and decide on which of the three level shapes is beginning, middle & end. The group then must create a short dance and show in two groups.

Flocking in groups
There are 2 groups in a diamond (square) formation. One leader at each point of diamond is determined by facing of group. The group begins to move slowly at first to maintain unison and being clear with each new facing/leader change. The groups can move toward and through the other group without losing original group unison.

A variation could be to have the group move away from the other group or to switch places in space or stay with other group to form one big group.
WORKSHOP 2

PERFORMANCE

Move around the space
(see Workshop 1)

Make sure as the group is moving around that they are filling up all the spaces in the room. Get them to move in the gaps between each other. Keep using the ‘freeze’ & ‘unfreeze’ command to build up focusing & stillness. Get the group to walk as a pair to experience what this is like and then try a trio and so on.

Yes Let’s! – to listen to an offer and accept it as a group

The group stands in a circle. Someone in the group begins by nominating an action to be mimed by the whole group. For example; posing in front of a camera. The participant says “Let’s pose in front of a camera” and the rest of the group replies, “Yes, Let’s!” The entire group mimes posing in front of a camera. While still all posing, another person calls out an action. For example; “Let’s wash the car”. Everyone replies, “Yes Let’s!” this continues around the circle and then at random. This exercise can also fill up the space it does not have to be confined to a circle.

Clap – leading the orchestra

Everyone sits in a circle. Someone offers to leave the room. Then, someone else will silently offer or be selected to be the leader. The leader will set up a rhythm (clapping, clicking fingers). The whole group will copy the rhythm of the leader. When the person who has left the room hears the group start, they will come back into the room and stand in the middle of the circle. They have three guesses to figure out who the leader of the rhythm is. It is the group’s job to protect the leader from being found out. The leader has to take risks and change the rhythm.

Deaf whispers – making different shapes

(See Workshop 1)
Animals

Everyone in the group lies, stands or sits. Whatever position they are most comfortable in. Get the group to think of an animal and not to tell anyone, just get a very clear picture in their minds about this animal. They need to think about how this animal sleeps and begin to move their body into this position as best they can. Lead the group through the following: You need to begin to have a dream like this animal. What does that look like? Feel like? You are now thirsty and find water and drink. And now it is time to mate. Seek out your mate, male or female. You cannot talk. How do you find each other? Do you agree with the person who is trying to mate with you? If so, invent a mating dance and dance it together as the animals. If not try to find a way to ward off these advances. You can make sounds, but no human talking.

Show mating dance to group.

VOICE

If you look at a baby you will notice that they have naturally excellent posture. As we grow, either through emotional/physical injury, or through simply learning and copying others we can acquire postural habits that can restrict the breath and restrict the voice.
**Tense & Release Greet**

Lead the group through the following:

Move around the space tensing parts of the body for a few seconds... then releasing, noticing the difference in how your body feels, moves and breathes in each instance. In each instance try to greet other people moving around the room with that part of your body tensed. Try these parts of the body: hands, neck, shoulders, chest, stomach. This will help you to become aware of any tensions in your body and be able to release them quickly. Give your body a good and thorough shake-out at the end of this exercise.

**Honey Melt**

*(a variation on ‘Honey Floor’ in Workshop 1)*

Lead the group through the following:

Lying down on the floor on your back, or in your most reposed/comfortable state. Hands by your side. In your mind repeat after me these instructions for your body: “Top of the head relax, easing across the floor, turning into honey. Forehead relax and easing across the floor, eyes, eyelids & eyebrows relaxed and easing across the floor, turning into honey. Cheeks relax etc.. jaw relax, tongue relax, neck etc etc.” Continue giving ‘melting’ instructions from the top of the body right down to the toes in great detail. It is actually very important that the time is taken to go into the detail to become aware of where all the little pockets of tension in our bodies can be released. Once you are fully relaxed you can start to notice and listen to the breath, feel the ease at which it flows in and out.

**Maaa**

Lead the group through the following:

Whilst lying down on your back or in your most relaxed/comfortable state, take in a full, free breath through an open throat and on the out breath go into a gentle “mmmmmmmmmmah” sound to a count of four. Repeat, but this time see if you can continue the “mmmmmmah” for six counts... then try eight counts if you're keen. You can work on extending the counts over the series of workshops, this will aide breath control and capacity.
Balloon Body
(see Workshop 1)
This time, whilst going through this exercise see if you can breathe your body up with the same, slow pace but with fewer stops- that is using increased lung capacity and breath control.

Hot Potato Yawn
This quick little exercise is to give participants a sense of, and feel for, an open and free throat that is beneficial for making and resonating sound. Standing in a circle, simply imagine you have hot potato (or anything hot) in your mouth. You can start making little ‘Hoh!’ sounds. These sounds can gradually lead into a yawning motion - which will often lead into real yawns! - but yawning in this context is good, because it opens and expands the mouth. In this exercise you want to be able to notice how the back of the tongue lowers and the soft palate of the mouth lifts up creating a feeling of expansion.

Zooo!
(see Workshop 1)
This time, with this exercise, get the participants to focus on sending the sounds out across the room, through the ceiling/floor, into the body etc imagining that the sound is piercing through solid things.
Sound Lead

Everyone finds a partner (preferably someone they haven’t worked much with before). Each pair has a person ‘A’ and a person ‘B’. Person B’s now close their eyes, person A’s job is to lead them through the space using their voice – whatever sounds they feel like using is fine (it could be ‘cooeee’s, hums, clicks etc.) but don’t use words. Person A can start off quite close to person B, then gradually try moving further away, be playful, spin around, see what adventures you can take your partner on, how can you befuddle them...

Allowing it to run on for a good length of time will give the pairs a chance to develop and refine a kind of sound vocabulary that helps them navigate the space. For example, beepbeeps for reversing, squawks for danger, grunts for stop etc.. Give the pairs a chance to swap A/B roles.

At the end of the exercise discuss with the participants how they felt throughout it, what role did they most enjoy and why? Did you trust your partner to lead you through the space? What were your favourite/strangest/worst sounds? What did they eventually mean?

Radio Pairs

In pairs again! Pairs decide on a person A, the other is person B. Person A is now a radio that person B can control. Person A begins on a ‘channel’ that is, making some kind of sound (the sound can be anything: news stories, static, singing, whirrings, meowing – be as imaginative as you can!) Person B can then change the ‘channel’ by saying “change!” and person ‘A’ must respond by making a new sound. Person ‘B’ can also change A’s volume setting by saying “Up!” or “Down!”.

Get person ‘B’ to really play with the pace of the changes, that is, speeding it up see how well your ‘radio’ can respond to the demands. This requires person ‘A’ to think quickly and spontaneously and to disengage the critical mind.

Next, get the pairs to swap A/B roles.

Briefly allow each pair to ‘perform’ their radio playings to the other pairs.

Afterwards, discuss what role the participants preferred and why? What was difficult or easy? Were there any surprising sounds that emerged?
MOVEMENT

Continuation of Workshop 1
Warm up with higher intensity “Brain Dance” and review of shakes

Sampling
Get the group to move through the space being conscious of filling up the whole space & traveling through it. Get the group to experiment with different improvisational movements & sample or take inspiration from other people in the group’s movements which can be developed or shaped into new ideas.

Flocking with variations
(in two lines)
See Workshop 1 but the group forms two lines. Members of each line can switch lines at will as they are traveling through space or they can break out into solo in the space in between the two lines.
WORKSHOP 3

PERFORMANCE

Move around the space
(See previous workshops)
Get the group to explore the pace at which they are moving through the space. For example; slow, extremely slow, moderate, fast. Get the group to try and build the pace as a group until it gets very fast & then bring it back as a group to the pace at which they started.

Line Order
As the group are moving about the space get them to form a line in order of:
1. Shoe size.
2. Length of hair.
3. Alphabetical order of surname

Knife & Fork
As the group continues to move through the space, call out a number, the group then has to quickly form groups of that number (if there is one person over or under, it doesn’t matter). Then an object or shape is called out for example, a ‘knife and fork’ and using their bodies the group have to form that shape. The challenge is to do it without talking. It’s about observing someone’s first physical offer and then the rest of the group accepting and yielding to this offer. It depends on what number is called out as to what object is best to call out.

Other examples include: soccer ball, tissue box, coat hanger, piano, car, watch, a candelabra.

Deaf whispers
(See Workshop 1)
Same image with both groups then one big group.

West side story
Make two equal lines facing each other, about six feet apart. One person from the end of the line, from each group stands in the centre facing each other.
Leader #1 does a rhythmic sound and gesture (no language) that is a challenge to the other leader and their group. This challenge must be able to travel forward. Leader #1’s group, having seen the challenge, copies it and does it with their leader, as loud and big as possible backing leader #2 and the group up until they reach the opposite wall of the room. Then leader #2 responds with another sound and gesture challenge, which the group copies and does with the leader, backing leader #1 and their group to the far wall. Then both leaders join the line. The process is repeated back and forth until everyone has a go. This is best when it is done quickly and loudly.

What are you doing?
The group stands in a semi-circle, with one person standing in front of the group miming a given action. For example, washing their hair. One person in the circle approaches the person who is washing their hair and asks “What are you doing?” The first person responds by saying something they are not doing. For example, “I am picking flowers out of a garden” (whilst washing their hair).

The first person goes back to the group. The second person then begins to mime picking flowers out of a garden. A third person comes up to ask “What are you doing?” The second person then responds by saying something they are obviously not doing. The third person then mimes what the second person has said. This continues until everybody has had a turn.

Space jump
Four people can play this physical improvised game. One person begins a scene from a given topic for example, catching a fly and the facilitator yells ‘Space Jump’ and the first person freezes. A second person enters the frozen scene using the first person’s position to set up a different scene. This continues until all 4 people have entered the continuously changing scenario. Then Space Jump reverses with the people leaving the scene in the order they entered. Each scene should last 30-40 seconds.

VOICE
Honey Floor
(see Workshop 1)
Lead the group through the following:
Begin, this time, with first noticing your breath, the pattern of your breathing, without feeling you need to change anything. Just notice and feel it.
When going through the exercise it is now the outward exhalation of breath that we imagine moves or pushes the honey throughout the body and changes it. So that as you breathe out, in sync with the breath, the honey travels through your body, melting and stretching it as it goes.

**Pants!**  
*(see Workshop 1)*

Lead the group through the following:

This time, on the outward exhalation of breath, after the 10 pants, hold the breath out for as long as you can before allowing the chest and diaphragm to spring open and so take in breath. This is very much the same as is done in ‘The Lion’ exercise.

**Maa**  
*(see Workshop 2)*

Lead the group through the following:

This time, see if you can start the outward breath count at four and work up to eight/ten.

Close your eyes and begin with gentle ‘Maa’s’, then gradually increase the volume of each ‘Maa’ until eventually, with eyes open, you are piercing the ceiling with the sound! Be careful not to over extend the voice, projection happens very gradually!

It’s important to note that these ‘Maa’s’ do not need to sound ‘pretty’ – the focus is on extension of breath and projection.

**Hot Potato Yawn**  
*(see Workshop 2)*

**Sirens**

Lead the group through the following:

On a gentle hum, travel up and down in pitch like a siren, gradually increasing in volume. Next, open the sound up into a “Meeee”, “Meh”, “Mah”, “Moh” and “Muu”.

For variation, you can also start on a “N” or “Ng” sound. ie. “Neee”, “Neh” etc.
Battles!

Participants form two lines, facing each other. This is a ‘sound-off’, call-and-response battle where the two lines/teams start off very close together and vocalising softly, as they slowly start to move apart (back away from each other) their voices become louder and louder, so that by the end of it the two lines are at opposite ends of the room, still facing each other and vocalising very loudly!

Get each team to move together as one. A good way to aide this is by using the rhythm of whatever phrase/sound you’re making. You can really use any sound or phrase for this, perhaps inspired by one of the participants. It’s most fun if what you use has some rhythm and can be sung-spoken. It could be a few words from the chorus of a favourite song for example. Keep the up the pace, it should have the feel of a tennis match, where sound is thrown quickly and with purpose, back and forth across the space by the two teams.

Be warned! In this ‘battle’ atmosphere, you’ll find participants discovering vocal projection powers they never thought they had!

Banana Custard Musical Genres

In this game, you (the director/facilitator) first quickly act-out/show the participants the basic ‘Banana Custard’ story:

Mum’s in the kitchen, chopping up, mixing ingredients, cooking a banana custard. Her son/daughter comes into the kitchen.
“Good-morning mum!”
“Good-morning dear!”
“What’s that you’re cooking?”
“Oh! Your favourite!”
“Looks like banana custard, smells like banana custard, tastes like....” (the child tastes the mixture, promptly chokes and dies a dramatic over the top death). Mum screams and calls the doctor.
“Oh! Doctor, Doctor! Come quickly, there’s something terribly wrong with my son/daughter!”

*The doctor – from the other side of the room:* “Certainly! I’ll be there in a second!” Doctor knocks on the ‘door’ of the kitchen. Mum: “Oh! Thank goodness you’re here -” Doc steps into the kitchen: “Now, what’s the matter here- oh! What’s that you’re cooking?!... Looks like banana custard, smells like banana custard, tastes like...” (the doctor tastes the mixture and also promptly dies a ridiculous death)! Mum, looking at the two bodies at her feet, freaks out and dies of shock!!
Now, split the participants into groups of three. Each group is going to act out the story to the rest of the participants, adding a musical genre and a bit of their own flavour. So, a bit of improvising around the story is great, so long as they get the basic elements in.

Some musical styles you could use: hip-hop, RnB, Disney musical, pop song, opera, cabaret, hard rock, blues, boy-band, goth-rock, punk-band, emo music... When assigning genres, offer examples, singers, bands, shows etc for inspiration and so that they have a clear idea of what kind of style they’re going for.

Give the groups about 5 minutes to work on their scene before presenting it.

You’ll also get a bit of an insight into participants’ interest in, and exposure to, various vocal and musical styles.

**MOVEMENT**

**Body painting**

Get the group to imagine that they are laying (or sitting for wheel chair users) in paint and that they are to cover their entire body with it by slowly moving various parts to explore all the surfaces & how they contact the floor. Use the images of sand & seaweed for movement connectivity. Lead the group by getting them to imagine the image of pouring sand within the container of their body from one part to another & then imagine you are a piece of seaweed being tossed by the surf.

Then guide the group to give into gravity by yielding weight into the floor or their seat & then use muscular strength to push away in an exploratory improvisational dance that eventually takes them from a low level to their highest level either sitting or standing.

**Rock/Lizard & Cat/Table**

With a partner, one of you is a “rock” (child’s pose) and the other is a “lizard” trying out various lazy positions to relax in the sun in order to learn to give and receive body weight. Then try the same with “table” (on all fours) and “cat” to create different supported shapes with full body contact.
Hand dance and head dance

Further exploring the concept of point of contact through a partner hand and head dance – there is no leader, so you must both be sensitive to the other’s movement and continue to yield and push into the pressure of the other's body part.

Leading “the blind”

A trust game where one person leads a partner who has their eyes closed. Keeping two points of contact and creating safety they can begin to play with pathways, pauses, changes in speed and in the points of contact.
WORKSHOP 4

PERFORMANCE/ MOVEMENT

(N.B. This part of the workshop was run by Alison)

Hypnotist

In pairs. One person is the Hypnotist. The other will be ‘hypnotised.’ The Hypnotist puts their hand directly out in front of them, their partner looks at their hand and does not take their eyes off it, whatever movements the hand makes their partner has to follow. Encourage the Hypnotist to use low, high and mid level movements and to take their partner all around the space. Swap over. This can also be performed in threes where there is one Hypnotist who uses both hands and the other two people are the hypnotised and can not take their eyes off the hands. Explore what other variations may be used, for example, one hypnotist who uses one foot & one hand to hypnotise two people.

Thank you

This exercise teaches focus & also body awareness. The group stands in a circle. One person moves into the middle of the circle and takes up a shape with their body. It can be anything. They are to find a point to look at, their focus, and not take their eyes off it. Another person enters the space and freezes in a position in relation to the other person. The first person unfreezes, says (or signs) ‘thank you’ & returns back to the circle. Another person enters the middle and takes up a frozen position in relation to the frozen person and the exercise continues on. The positions do not have to make sense in relation to each other. The aim is to not think and just jump in and make a shape, so the aim is to play it quite quickly.

Once the group begin to get into the swing of the exercise add the idea that they are to look at contrasting levels, so high, low & mid level shapes. Then add the idea of proximity, so how close & far away they are from each other. How close can they get? How far away can they be? Lastly ask the group to explore their body in relation to the space they are in, so get them to look at what’s in the room. The circle will now be quite large as the group explores the space around them.
Knee/ Shoulder slaps
To re-energise and focus the group. This exercise is done in pairs and is a competition between two people to see how many times they can tap their partner on the backs of their knees. Get the partners then to try this as if they are huge sumo wrestlers, so they can’t move very fast and then try it with the shoulders same idea but instead of tapping the backs of the knees it’s the shoulders. Try this as different characters, for example, an upper class English person.

Imaginative writing exercise
Get group to lie on their backs and close their eyes. They are to imagine an animal and really try and picture it clearly, really zoom in to see all it’s features. Get them to picture how it moves, what sounds it makes, what’s around it. Once you feel they have a clear picture in their minds get them to sit up and without talking or thinking get them to start writing a flow of conscious, so whatever comes into their head from what they remember of the picture they were just imagining. As it is a flow of conscious the piece of writing should have many tangents and disjointed thoughts. This exercise is an exercise in unblocking the mind and freeing it from over thinking or analysis. As they are writing you can ‘throw in’ words that they may like to use or may not. These words should be evocative for example; blood, exile, abandon. This exercise should take about 3-5 mins of solid writing, where the pen doesn’t stop moving. Then form small groups where the pieces of writing are shared. Each group are to choose four lines that they a particular find interesting from all the pieces. They are then asked to form fours tableaux, that is, frozen images of these lines. They are to focus on levels & proximity and how they move from one frozen image into the next. How fast or slow do they do this? They can then add their lines of dialogue also focussing on pace but also pitch and volume.

These are then presented for the rest of the group to see and provide feedback on.

VOICE
Threads
Have the whole group walk around the space; get them to notice their breath and the feeling of the air passing through their nostrils and into their lungs. Now get them imagine that there is a thread running through their spine and out through the top of their head and suspending them from the ceiling as they walk, making their back feel long.

Now, get them to imagine that there is a second thread, running between, through and out from their shoulders, supporting and suspending them, creating an open
feeling in the chest. Get them to try and maintain an awareness of the breath focus on these threads for a minute or two as they walk.

**Massage Circle**

Get the group to form a close knit circle, with everyone facing the back of the person to their right. Everyone should be in a position to reach the shoulders of the person in front of them.

Get the group to start to massage the shoulders, neck and upper back of the person in front of them. Next, get them to cup the palms of the hands and tap them over the shoulders and back of the person in front of them. Whilst the person is receiving (at the same time as giving) these taps get them to gently hum and notice the resonance through the tapping. Then go into a chopping motion with the hands across the back (the fingers should be relaxed when you ‘chop’ – this way you won’t hurt the person you’re working on).

**Body/Face wake-up**

Get the group to start to tap on their own body; along the arms, back, chest, belly, legs and around the head, humming as they go to feel the resonance of sound in those parts that they are tapping. Lead the group by going through the following:
• Massage around the nose and cheeks making an “nngg” sound.
• Massage around the hinge of the jaw and slowly draw the ball of your palm down the jaw line, allowing your jaw to hang loose.
• Imagining that your jaw is tranquilised, hold your closed fists just away from your chest to shake your body, and allow the jaw to swing of its own accord without you controlling it.

Note: it actually takes quite a bit of practise and relaxing to get the jaw to swing loosely, so people may not be able to do it for the first time- but you can keep working at it!

Now imagine you have five big pieces of chewing gum in your mouth that you’re trying to chew. This will give the organs of articulation a good work out – particularly the tongue and lips. Next, blow air through your lips – a bit like a horse – allowing your lips to relax and vibrate. You can also make a ‘siren’ sound whilst blowing the air through.

Sirens
(see Workshop 3)

Zooo!
(see Workshop 1)

This time, get the participants to focus on sending the sounds out across the room, through the ceiling/floor, into the body etc imagining that the sound is piercing through solid things.

Tongue Twisters
Go through the following phrases slowly at first, then try repeating them ten times - fast!
• I need unique New York, but does unique New York need me?
• A proper cup of coffee in a proper coffee cup
• Red lorry, yellow lorry
• The big black bug bled black blood

These twisters will give all the organs of articulation and good work-out and prepare the voice for the next battle below!
Battles! -  
Shakespearean Insults variation

(see Workshop 3)

In this exercise, we use Shakespearean insults in the ‘Battles‘ structure. The two battle lines must be even so that each person faces someone on the other side – these become the battle pairs and each pair will choose an insult from the table below to say (and eventually hurl across the room) to each other.

Combine one word from each of the three columns below, prefaced with “Thou“:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column 1</th>
<th>Column 2</th>
<th>Column 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>artless</td>
<td>base-court</td>
<td>apple-john</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bawdy</td>
<td>bat-fowling</td>
<td>baggage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beslubbering</td>
<td>beef-witted</td>
<td>barnacle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bootless</td>
<td>beetle-headed</td>
<td>bladder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>churlish</td>
<td>boil-brained</td>
<td>boar-pig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cockered</td>
<td>clapper-clawed</td>
<td>bugbear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clouted</td>
<td>clay-brained</td>
<td>bum-bailey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>craven</td>
<td>common-kissing</td>
<td>canker-blossom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>currish</td>
<td>crook-pated</td>
<td>clack-dish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dankish</td>
<td>dismal-dreaming</td>
<td>clotpole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dissembling</td>
<td>dizzy-eyed</td>
<td>coxcomb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>droning</td>
<td>doghearted</td>
<td>codpiece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>errant</td>
<td>dread-bolted</td>
<td>death-token</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fawning</td>
<td>earth-vexing</td>
<td>dewberry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fobbing</td>
<td>elf-skinned</td>
<td>flap-dragon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>froward</td>
<td>fat-kidneyed</td>
<td>flax-wench</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frothy</td>
<td>fen-sucked</td>
<td>flirt-gill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gleeking</td>
<td>flap-mouthed</td>
<td>foot-licker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>goatish</td>
<td>fly-bitten</td>
<td>fustilarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gorbellied</td>
<td>folly-fallen</td>
<td>giglet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>impertinent</td>
<td>fool-born</td>
<td>gudgeon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>infectious</td>
<td>full-gorged</td>
<td>haggard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jarring</td>
<td>guts-griping</td>
<td>harpy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loggerheaded</td>
<td>half-faced</td>
<td>hedge-pig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lumpish</td>
<td>hasty-witted</td>
<td>horn-beast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mammering</td>
<td>hedge-born</td>
<td>hugger-mugger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mangled</td>
<td>hell-hated</td>
<td>joithead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mewling</td>
<td>idle-headed</td>
<td>lewdster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paunchy</td>
<td>ill-breeding</td>
<td>lout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pribbling</td>
<td>ill-nurtured</td>
<td>maggot-pie</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
puking knotty-pted malt-worm
puny milk-livered mammet
qualling motley-minded measles
rank onion-eyed minnow
reedy plume-plucked miscreant
roguish pottle-deep moldwarp
ruttish pox-marked mumble-news
saucy reeling-ripe nut-hook
spleeny rough-hewn pigeon-egg
spongy rude-growing pignut
surly rump-fed puttock
tottering shard-borne pumpeon
unmuzzled sheep-biting ratsbane
vain spur-galled scut
venomed swag-bellied skainsmate
villainous tardy-gaited strumpet
warped tickle-brained varlot
wayward toad-spotted vassal
weedy unchin-snouted whey-face
yeasty weather-bitten wagtail
WORKSHOP 5

PERFORMANCE

(N.B. This part of the workshop was run by Alison)

Thank you
(See Workshop 4)

Move around the space

Get the group to move around space. Play with pace, that is, fast and slow. Really try & get the group to focus on themselves & not to worry about what everyone else in the group is doing but still being mindful and aware of the presence of others.

Now, introduce a single clap to the group. So when you clap your hands once they are to turn to the right but yell out “Left!” and keep moving. Continue this until they all get the hang of it and then add a double clap to which they are to turn left & yell out, “Right!” and continue moving. Continue with both single and double claps, it may prove to be a bit confusing for the group at first but if you remind them of what each clap means and get them to focus they should be able to achieve it.

With your own body, so arms outstretched, begin to make the space smaller so the group doesn’t have as much space to move in and continue with clapping. Gradually make the space smaller until the group practically can’t move and are in a tight knit group. Get the group now to close their eyes and listen to each other breathing. Guide the group in breathing slowly in and out as a group. Once they are in sync then get them on the out breath to slowly change their position subtly, try this for about five changes. This will lead into the next exercise.

Group Build

Decide on a theme such as, escape, trapped, love, lost, hope. Choose a piece of music to play, something instrumental or from a movie soundtrack usually works best. One person then takes up a position in the middle of the circle based on this theme. One at a time a new person enters and takes up a position that also reflects this theme but has to also be connected to the first person in the circle, for example their elbow could be connected with the other person’s knee, their toe with their finger etc. This continues until there are five (or thereabouts) people in one group shape. Like in the previous exercise ask the group to now begin to breath as one entity, guide them by using the ‘breathe in and out’ instruction. Once they are in
sync then get them on the ‘out’ breath to subtly change their body position. Once they have explored this for a few rounds with you using the guiding instruction then stop guiding them and see if they can do the subtle changes on the ‘out’ breath as a group independent of you. Continue this for a minute or so and then ask for one person to leave the group shape and make their way back into the audience. Get each person to leave until no one is left but making sure it is only one person at a time leaving so they have to be aware of others in the group. Repeat this exercise with another five members of the group. Experiment with changing the music for each group build as this really changes the tone of the piece.

**VOICE**

**Tense & Release Greet**  
*(see Workshop 2)*

**Body/Face wake-up**  
*(see Workshop 4)*

**Sirens**  
*(see Workshop 3)*

**Zooool!**  
*(see Workshop 1)*

**Sound Corridor**  
*(see Workshop 1)*

This time, see if you can incorporate some of the Shakespearean insults discovered in the last workshop. Try to work in different themes, that is, one corridor could be a farm sound-scape, the next corridor a morning sound-scape, classroom sound-scape etc.

Also try working with different dynamics within the corridor. For example, you may ask the group to start off softly then become very loud towards the middle of the corridor then softer towards the end.
Battles! - Takadimi/Takita Version
(see Workshop 3)

This time, have one battle line call out “takadimi” at the same time the other calls out “takita”. This is an exercise in rhythm, and in being able to hold your own rhythm whilst hearing a different one. “Takadimi” is the spoken Indian equivalent to 4/4 time in western music. “Takita” is the equivalent to (waltzing) time. A steady pace needs to be kept. Sometimes adding a simple melody to these spoken rhythms can make it easier to handle. Encourage the participants to get the rhythms into their body, to move with them. Setting 4/4 time against time seems to be a very advanced thing to be doing here but this exercise allows it to come a lot more approachable and easy.

You can also play with the movement of the ‘battle-lines’: A real challenge is, once the lines are at the farthest ends of the room, facing each other, ask them to swap sides by slowly walking towards each other and eventually passing through each other (going extra-slow when they’re really close to each other) and see if they can sustain their own rhythm!

The Incredible Sound Machine!

Start in a circle. One participant goes into the centre of the circle and makes any short repetitive sound accompanied by a repeated action. For example repeating the sound “whirrrrzttt!” whilst sweeping the left arm back and forth – like a part of a bigger machine. Another person enters the circle, connecting with the first person in some way, adding their own new repeated sound and movement (the first person continues with their sound & movement). Soon the next person enters and the next and so on, each connecting and sounding in their own way (whilst trying to ‘compliment’ the rest of the machine, work with it) until all the participants are part of this massive, machine-like creature.

Once everyone is in place you can play with the dynamic of the machine; asking them to speed-up, slow down, peter-out or even explode!

Learn a little song!

At this point in the workshops, I like to teach the participants a simple little song, rounds are good, as are songs with simple melodies that are easy to harmonize and improvise with. “Freedom is Coming” is a great little song, very easy to learn the basic melody with plenty of room for play!
MOUMENT

Review and development of Workshop 3

Warm up from Workshop 3

Sculpture and clay
With a partner, one person acting as a sculptor, the other as clay, using different body parts to lead the other person into various shapes which they are to hold.

“Where are you?”
With a partner, moving just the other persons hands into different shapes then asking them, “Where are you?” to which they quickly and briefly answer the first thing that pops into their head.

Moving and still duets
With a partner improvising movement and stillness simultaneously.
WORKSHOP 6

(N.B. there was no specific movement section of this workshop as Angela was absent)

PERFORMANCE

Move around the space
Ask the group to move around the space, first as individuals then in pairs, in threes. Whilst in either group of two or three call out shapes and/or objects for them to make, for example, a comb, a rose in a vase, an egg in a frypan.

Mirror exercises
This exercise is performed in pairs facing each other. One person is the leader and the other the follower or the mirror. The leader begins to make slow movements with their hands which the mirror has to copy exactly. Encourage the group to move as slowly so that the movements can be precise & exact as possible. If they are doing it correctly an outside observer wouldn’t be able to tell who is the Leader & who is the follower. They can also begin to incorporate other body parts like the head and legs. The partners can then swap over who is the Leader and who is the mirror. If they want to challenge themselves they can begin to slowly move around the room.

VOICE

At this stage, it is good to revisit some of the early technique exercises which can sometimes be forgotten about when one gets into the more creative and improvisational aspects. Ideally you’d want participants to continue these exercises at home – but when you go over the exercises here, keep an eye out for any aspects that may have been incorrectly learnt or practised.

Honey Floor
(see Workshop 1)

Pants!
(see Workshop 1)

The Lion
(see Workshop 1)
Hot Potato Yawn
(see Workshop 2)

Zoo! 
(see Workshop 1)

Circle Sound Pass
Participants stand in a circle. One person begins with an imaginary object held in their hands (or hand - if it’s a small object), they then pass/throw this ‘object’ to another person in the circle and give it a sound as they pass it. The person who then receives the object repeats the offered sound as the object comes into their possession. The receiver then passes/throws the object to another person in the circle added a new strange sound.

The game continues on with the object being thrown quickly around the circle. It’s important for participants not to think too much about their choice of sound as they pass the object – it should be very quick -the sounds should be what ever comes first to mind.

Participants are also welcome to change the physicality of the imagined object they pass this will often inspire new sounds.

The Incredible Sound Machine
(see Workshop 5)

This time, play with different sound-scapes for the machine (similar for what was done with the ‘Sound Corridor’). But this exercise allows participants to physicalise the sounds they are making more than in the Sound Corridor. You could try, for example, a playground soundscape, a city soundscape, a romance soundscape, a horror soundscape (so think about how you could ‘mechanise’ these in the sound machine)

Again, play with the dynamics of the machine once it’s going. If you have a large group, you could create two groups, once the two machines are complete, see if they can move across the space – and eventually crash into each other in a sound catastrophe!
WORKSHOP 7

(N.B. there was no specific movement section of this workshop as Angela was absent)

PERFORMANCE

Dance. Freeze

The group is asked to dance around the space freely to music. The music stops and they have to freeze.

They are encouraged to use their whole bodies and the entire space.

After two or three turns at dancing and freezing the facilitator walks around the space and eliminates those who aren’t frozen.

Deaf whispers

(See Workshop 1)

Same image with both groups then one big group.
What are you doing?
(see Workshop 3)

**VOICE**

**Threads**
(see workshop 4)

**Tense and Release Greet**
(see workshop 5)

**Body/Face wake-up**
(see workshop 4)

**Sirens**
(see workshop 3)

**Zooo**
(see workshop 1)

**Battles - Takita/Takadimi Version**
(see workshop 5)

This time, really focus on listening to each other and attaching a melody (or even words!) to each rhythm- if you want a real challenge!

Learn a new song or revisit the song from the last workshop.
Case studies introduction

By Alison Richardson

I was aware of several organisations in NSW that were producing theatre with people with a disability. I asked them to contribute a case study to interACT highlighting the process, strengths & challenges they faced when mounting the production. In the nine case studies included it was interesting to note that there were a few prevailing themes which I will summarise here to act as a quick reference guide for people. I have also added some tips and suggestions which may or may not be of use to everyone and every production as I understand that every production is different with varying levels of funding, resources and support.

The following Case Studies are included in the kit:

1. A Midsummer Night’s Dream - Disability Trust
2. Coming Up in Adoration & How to Handle a Fractured Heart - Rozelle Neighbourhood Centre
3. Craving - Australian Theatre for Young People
4. Hard Daze - Powerhouse Youth Theatre
5. Home Among The Stars - intergratedliving Australia
6. Island Dreaming - Bago Magic Performance Group
7. My Space, My Place - sliced bread attraction
8. Peregrine - Can Do Performance Group
9. Sucked In - Powerhouse Youth Theatre
Strengths
Many of the Case Studies mentioned the following as indicators of the strength of their production & rehearsal process:

- That a sense of self value, self worth & the enormous sense of achievement is gained by the performers being involved in the process and the final performance outcome.
- Aim to produce quality, non patronising theatre that can stand on its own merits as a quality piece of theatre.
- A sense of community was established between cast, artists & the production team who were all working towards the common goal of putting on a production.
- The ownership and empowerment that the cast receive by seeing their contribution of ideas, thoughts & stories valued and presented on stage. Also the fresh & unique perspectives brought into the devising process.
- The process was a two way learning street & engagement between members of the cast with a disability and those without.

Challenges
It was interesting to note the commonalities of the challenges faced when working in integrated performance settings. I asked each case study contributor to be quite frank and honest with this section as we can all learn from each other and also feel reassured that other people experience similar challenges and may offer suggestions on how to prevent or deal with these challenges as they arise.

Time Management
Time is always a major factor when putting on any kind of production. There was the general feeling that there was not enough time to do everything people wanted to achieve with their production and lots of individuals were pushed to their limit. It was mentioned that the cast were also tired by the time opening night came around due to the last minute rush towards the end of the rehearsal process.

Managing time is crucial in any creative process but particularly when working with people with a disability and integrated casts. Reducing the scale and producing quality not necessarily quantity- the bigger the better doesn’t always ring true, but an inclusive, open, well thought out and organised process allows for a level of engagement and input from all participants that can sometimes get lost when trying to mount a huge scale production in a limited amount of time.
**Transport**

Most people mentioned that a lack of transport was a challenge as many people with a disability may not be independent enough to get themselves to and from rehearsals and performances so either have to rely on the service they are with or their parents or carers. So when resources at services are limited (i.e., not enough vans or staff) and parents may not have the time, a car themselves or in some cases are perhaps unwilling to pick up or drop off their child this can place extra pressure on other cast member’s parents/carers or the production team itself.

Before starting any production try and work out how each individual will be getting to and from the rehearsals and performances. Ask the parents and the services that are involved as this will give you the level of understanding you need when it comes to problem solving, scheduling & trying to locate missing cast members or issues around lack of attendance at rehearsals.

If the members of the production team find themselves doing drop offs and pick ups make sure that the parents/carers are aware that it is not the production team’s responsibility but something they are doing as there doesn’t seem any other alternative and they want their child to have the experience and opportunity. Some may see it as part of a ‘service’ and therefore have not put their hand up to help with the transporting, it may be merely a lack of awareness.

A volunteer (or paid!) designated driver maybe a handy person to have on board your production team. Also, if possible utilizing local council’s community transport buses/vans may also be a viable option.

**Funding**

There is always going to be an issue around funding, usually that there is none or that it’s limited. There are a variety of ways of funding a production as you’ll read in each of the case studies. Some organisations asked for payment to cover the costs of the tutor/director, some sourced funding from local councils, philanthropic or the Community Support & Expenditure (CDSE) scheme.

For the disability sector it is worth noting that if you are putting on production you can tap into arts based funding. The federal, state and several local councils fund cultural projects. It can be daunting and intimidating sometimes to get your head around an unfamiliar application and process but talk to others who have put in applications, talk to the funding body themselves and also to Accessible Arts all of whom can provide support and advice when going for funding.
Communication

A lot of friction & conflict can be avoided by having open lines of communication with cast, crew, services & parents/ carers. There is no such thing as too much communication or checking things too many times. Regular meetings with all involved in the production are essential.

It is also about checking in with the cast constantly about what they are actually doing (that is, rehearsing for a show- in my experience they sometimes need to be reminded of this), when the shows are on and talking them through what it will be like on opening night- audience arriving, behaviour backstage etc.

Enjoy reading all about the various creative, unique, entertaining and inspired productions!
A Midsummer Night’s Dream

An integrated performance of William Shakespeare's well known play.

2008

The Disability Trust (Sport & Recreation Services) in conjunction with Wollongong Workshop Theatre, Wollongong.

Case study prepared by Ryan Kiddle, Manager, Sport & Recreation Services

ABOUT

Sport & Recreation Services (a service of The Disability Trust) have offered sport and recreation programs for adults and children with disabilities throughout the Illawarra for the past 15 years. The service conducts a variety of sporting and recreational activities as well as working in partnership with mainstream organisations to provide further opportunities for participation. This includes providing training and support to trainers, coaches and administrators in mainstream sport and recreation organisations.

One of the many Sport & Recreation Services programs on offer is the Altogether Drama group, an amateur theatre group for people with a disability. This group has been operating for 15 years and meets every Saturday morning in Wollongong to develop their acting and stage production skills and rehearse production pieces.

Wollongong Workshop Theatre (an amateur theatre group based in Wollongong) were approached in 2007 to co-produce the Illawarra’s first integrated drama production, alongside Altogether Drama (Sport & Recreation Services Disability Theatre Group). As many members of the Altogether Drama group had expressed an interest in performing a Shakespeare piece, it was from here that A Midsummer Night’s Dream was chosen for the production. Wollongong Workshop Theatre had been
previously invited to Altogether Drama’s recent performance “Sex and the Steel City”, and from this had offered their support to integrate the Altogether Drama actors into one of their productions.

Actors, cast and crew were assembled from both The Disability Trust and Wollongong Workshop Theatre (WWT). A total of 28 cast and crew members were assembled, with support from the Illawarra Performing Arts Centre also provided. Seven actors were from Altogether Drama with sixteen actors from WWT. The production crew comprised of three WWT members and three Sport & Recreation Services staff, with two support staff from Sport & Recreation Services also provided.

PROCESS

Once *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* was chosen as the production piece in mid 2007, regular meetings were established between Sport & Recreation Services management and WWT production staff. This Shakespeare piece was chosen by the Director from Wollongong Workshop Theatre as he was able to adapt and simplify the script for the Altogether Drama actors to allow them to follow the storyline but not replace the Shakespearean language. This piece was also chosen to clearly link it to the theme of “Australia”.

interACT 46
It was from here sponsorship and funding was gained to ensure adequate resources and exposure for the production. Sport & Recreation Services management took to the task of applying for funds through Wollongong City Council’s Cultural Grants, which were successful in gaining limited funds for the use of the Illawarra Performing Arts Centre for the production. Both parties also worked together to ensure effective media coverage, including radio interviews and advertisements, television news stories and article in Wollongong’s local print media. An emphasis was placed on the fact that the performance was one of the Illawarra’s first integrated productions, and highlighted the ability of Altogether Drama actors alongside WWT actors.

An information night was held in early 2008 to identify available and interested actors from WWT. Altogether Drama members performed on the night to showcase their ability on stage. This also allowed for WWT actors to ask any questions to Sport & Recreation Services staff in regards to working with people with disabilities, and assist to break down the barriers between mainstream and disability theatre groups.

The script was developed by the director using adapted Shakespearean language to assist with the learning process for people with a disability. The script was also given an Australian theme and was focused around a Boab tree which became the image for all advertising material as well as the set design.

The script was completed in April 2008, and was given to all Altogether Drama members once completed. A picture script was also developed for one actor from Altogether Drama to assist her to learn her lines. All actors were put through the audition process to identify character roles. This was a new experience for Altogether Drama actors, however they were able to learn their audition piece in the weeks leading up to the auditions during weekly workshops at their regular Saturday morning sessions. The auditions were conducted to ascertain who was going to be playing what role, and were kept as close as possible to real auditions alongside WWT actors to ensure Altogether Drama actors were able to experience what it is like to audition for a production.

Once auditions were completed and roles were assigned, Altogether Drama members continued to meet weekly to rehearse and work closely with two support staff to develop their skills for the production during their Saturday morning class. All actors were given a role and were cast according to their previous experience and skills. A recorded reading was held to ensure actors were able to use an audio version of the play to practise at home.

Full cast rehearsals commenced in August 2008 with both Altogether Drama and WWT cast members working together two days a week for 8 weeks. Although the Altogether Drama actors had been rehearsing on Saturdays as a group, this was the
first time (apart from auditions) that the full cast had come together to rehearse. This intensified to three days a week closer to the production week. Support staff was provided by Sport & Recreation Services at each of the rehearsal sessions to ensure adequate support was provided to the actors with disabilities. There was an increase in production meetings between the two organisations to ensure that communication channels were open and that all issues could be resolved.

Two full dress rehearsals were held the two evenings before the run. Production week saw a run of 5 shows from October 22 to 25. Each show and dress rehearsal had three support staff employed by Sport & Recreation Services to assist the actors with a disability. The shows were a huge success with audience members comprising of local school groups, community organisations and relatives and friends as well as the general public.
STRENGTHS

- Increased opportunity in the arts for people with a disability in the Illawarra.
- Increased community awareness of the abilities of actors with a disability in the Illawarra.
- Positive outcomes and indicators for integration and inclusion in mainstream activities. Talks have continued for further collaborations.
- Support staff involvement assisted both WWT Actors and their understanding of working with people with disabilities and the Altogether Drama actors in developing their skills to create a successful performance. Support was given to find suitable transport options to and from rehearsals such as bus routes, train timetables etc. if own transport could not be supplied. Support staff was funded by The Disability Trust.
- The long lead up rehearsal time gave the Altogether Drama actors sufficient time to rehearse to ensure they were able to perform at a similar level as the WWT actors.
- Regular production meetings were essential to keep open lines of communication.
- Community Grants funding allowed for the use of an appropriate venue, and the development of an effective set, props and costumes.
- Support from the venue (Illawarra performing Arts Centre) was provided through bump in and out, and by providing lighting assistance that was cost effective.

CHALLENGES

Routines changed for some Altogether Drama actors and extra support was needed to ensure that these people were able to meet the demands of the production. This meant extra staff from Sport & Recreation Services was needed.

Initially, the integration of the two acting groups created tension, however over time this eased and gradually allowed the talents of each actor to work together to create excellent individual performances.

Some actors from WWT were not fully committed to the rehearsal process. This resulted in a number of people stepping into roles that were working with Altogether Drama actors and thus made it hard for them to relate and react to characters in the play due to the changes of cast members.

The production was of a much larger scale that previous productions attempted by Altogether Drama members, and although they were up to the challenge, the longer run did make some cast members lethargic and tired.
With such a large cast and crew, full cast rehearsals were hard in the space available (WWT). The venue used to rehearse made it hard for all actors to be in the same space at the same time. Costs associated with using a larger space prevented this from happening.

As the performers had previously worked in the Illawarra Performing Arts Centre and were aware of the performance space, there were no real issues when the space was used the first time. If a different performance venue was to be used, this may create the need for more time in the space to adapt to the change.

Communication of events between the two organisations at times broke down, leading to a misunderstanding of certain rehearsal times for various actors. As people with a disability need to be prepared due to the nature of the rehearsals (e.g. transport training or transport organisation) a list of rehearsal times were sent in the early stages of the production by one organisation, however these were changed weekly by another organisation, without conveying the information to each other. This created confusion for actors, and it was therefore decided that the number of production meetings would increase.

As the production run included night performances, some of the Altogether Drama actors had to work throughout the day, and were slightly fatigued come time for the performance. By the final performance, it was noticeable that some of the actors
who had also been working through the week were quite tired and lethargic. It was encouraged that the actors maybe take leave from their employment if available.

OUTCOME

A Midsummer Nights Dream was performed at the Illawarra Performing Arts Centre from the 22nd to 25th October 2008 across 5 shows (2 matinee and 3 evening shows). Each performance saw excellent crowd numbers with a sell out final show. The performance showcased the skills and talents of both WWT and Altogether Drama actors, and audience members were supportive of the integration of both groups and the efforts involved by all. It is envisaged that in the next few years both groups will again come together to perform another piece.

- Increased community awareness of actors with a disability and their ability to perform and interact with mainstream actors on stage.
- Inclusive practices performed in a drama setting.
- Partnerships developed between Arts organisations in the Illawarra and The Disability Trust.
- An integrated production, culminating in five performances which were attended by large crowd numbers at all five performances, including a sell out crowd at the final performance.

Cast
Bill Dalley, Peter Scrine, Katie Jones, Ian McColm, Juliet Scrine, Benjamin Verdon, Luke Berman, Rowan Keyzer, Rachael Murphy, Sam Ford, Gabi Harding, Gemma Parsons, Tony Hammond, Phillip Prentice, Malcolm Allison, Troy Newberry, Susie Hamers, Rachel Head, Jacque Skinner, Belinda Dawson, Sandra Roche, McKenzie Scrine, Darcy Scrine

Crew
Director: Lajos Hamers
Producer/Support staff: Michael Norris
Producer/Support staff: Ryan Kiddle
Producer/Support staff: Skye Darling
Producer/Support staff: Tessa Parsons
Stage Manager: Julie Hicks
Assistant Stage Manager: Simon Greer
Set design/ construction: Zoe Jenkins & Glenda Darling
Make up:
Coming Up in Adoration & How to Handle a Fractured Heart

The development and creation of a new major work by Ever After Theatre Company, Rozelle.

2009

Case study prepared by Sue Johnston, Groups and Arts Access Coordinator & Lara Thoms, Ever After Theatre Company Coordinator.

ABOUT

What is now the Ever After Theatre Company, began in a coffee shop with the parent of a young person with a disability, a worker from the Rozelle Neighbourhood Centre and a community worker from our local council. Together they recognised a need to provide opportunities for young people with intellectual disabilities to access the creative and performing arts.

The theatre ensemble is a local performing arts group made up of twelve young people. The company members have an interest in movement, drama, music and creating self devised performances. They also have an intellectual disability.

The group was formed in 2001, and has so far delivered 12 performances to the public in the Inner West of Sydney. They have also appeared at the Sydney corporate headquarters of Swiss Re, the NSW Arts Activated Conference at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, The Awakenings Festival, Horsham Victoria, Leichhardt Town Hall and Rozelle Neighbourhood Centre.
The group meet weekly at Rozelle Neighbourhood Centre for one and a half hours of workshops and rehearsals to create performances which give shape to their ideas, experiences and creativity. Participants have been together in Ever After Theatre Company for up to 7 years, others have been with the group for 2 or 3 years. The participants reside in the Inner West area of Sydney. Many of the participants attend other programs at Rozelle Neighbourhood Centre.

Ever After Theatre Company is a program of the Rozelle Neighbourhood Centre, and funded through corporate sponsorships, one-off grants and donations.

Coming Up in Adoration is a work made in response to participants’ stories, and improvisations looking at the larger themes of family, spirituality, empowerment and change. Material for the show comes from the actors facilitated by the director, and other collaborating artists workshopping participant’s ideas. After several years of making short works Ever After wanted to develop a new self devised work for a broader audience. Coming Up in Adoration was the creative development stage of the production, How to Handle a Fractured Heart.
PROCESS

Ever After Theatre Company meet weekly to attend development workshops/drama classes so they are all very familiar with each other so there is already a strong bond & trust set up amongst the participants from the outset.

For Coming Up in Adoration seven extra lab sessions were implemented which focussed on a particular skill. These were in voice, improvisation and indigenous story-telling/movement, with a specialist practitioner for each area.

The ensemble would improvise scenes based on their own writing and themes of family and spirituality. These were documented and reviewed and then developed in weekly sessions. Selected scenes are then workshopped & rehearsed further to be included in the final piece.

During rehearsals, actors get to work in small groups on their scenes, made possible by supporting volunteers with arts experience – this intensive work again refines the material.

An important part of the process was open workshops/performances for small audiences throughout the development process – this provides valuable opportunities for actors to practice performing their scenes with an audience, and for practitioners to refine their directorial approach to the work. This occurred in December 2008 at Rozelle Neighbourhood Centre for an audience of fifty family and friends.

In 2009 Ever After commenced further development of Coming Up In Adoration and began to refine scenes. Director Majella O’Shea created a script, which included text and improvisational directions throughout. The group began intensive rehearsals. The designer and technical director were engaged, and started attending some rehearsals in order to contribute to the final aesthetic of the work. Funding was sort and received from the Ian Potter Foundation.

The group renamed the work to How to Handle a Fractured Heart and continued to rehearse intensively, while preparing for a short performance season at PACT Theatre.

Whilst they have performed at other venues, this work is the group’s first major production at a theatre, with professional design and technical staff.
STRENGTHS

The strengths of How to Handle a Fractured Heart are many. The performers comprise of young adults with a disability who have been working together for several years so are quite experienced on stage and also working as an ensemble. Due to an ongoing performance program at Rozelle Neighbourhood Centre (RNC) & regular attendance by a core group of performers there is a strong relationship in place with the director, Majella O’Shea performers and RNC. The long lasting relationship is beneficial as for performers are more comfortable to take risks in creating content and perform together as an ensemble who trust one another.

Due to receiving arts funding for this production the performers were also able to work with several arts professionals on the work. These are Ashley Dyer – Voice Tutor and Terrence Olsen, Indigenous story-teller. Other designers, technicians and musicians were recruited for the final production. These artists build participants skills and offer advice on how the production can be presented in the most engaging manner.

Volunteers have come to us from word of mouth or seeing a production Their contribution is primarily beneficial because as it is a large group, participants are often divided into small groups to rehearse with a volunteer. They also support productions though hands-on activities such as assisting with costumes and make-up, handing out programs, catering and bump out.
The strength of the show lies in it being developed from the participant’s own ideas, stories & experiences. This is a strength as it draws on the skills of each individual member and allows stories not often voiced in mainstream culture to shine.

**CHALLENGES**

It was challenging to schedule some extra development sessions due to varying time commitments of participants and artists.

As there was a diversity of skill level within the group some actors are more comfortable devising their own work, and some actors are more comfortable working with scripted pieces. This meant some got distracted during improvisation or others had literacy issues with reading scripts/remembering texts. This has been resolved by scripting words out of improvisations for those who prefer it.

For many participants any changes in routine can be challenging & also for those people (parents/carers) who are responsible for transporting them to & from rehearsals. When extra development sessions were scheduled it took some time for everyone to adjust and initially slowed down the process.

It was a challenge developing work in a different space to that of the performance venue which meant there was limited time for actors to become familiar with the performance space that they will be performing in. We spent production week rehearsing each evening in the performance space which enabled the work to be plotted out and the actors and workers to become familiar with the work in the space.

Negotiating the relationship and role boundaries between director and participating artists. Collaborative processes can be complex if a director is used to working solo or other artists are not familiar with the directors process. However this has not been a significant problem.

It was also challenging to maintain the holding space of a creative project – as this piece is an intensive self devised piece, sometimes containing people’s focus on arts as opposed to deeply exploring their personal issues can be a challenge, however we are lucky to work with expert arts practitioners with significant skills in this area.

And lastly it is challenging to plan further into the future and make plans for the company without secured funding for 2010/2011.
OUTCOME

To date there has been an open workshop public performance which took place on December 2nd, 2008 at Rozelle Neighbourhood Centre and was attended by fifty audience members who were mainly family and friends of the participants.

The group further developed the work into a full production of named How to Handle a Fractured Heart which ran for a short season in August 2009 at PACT Theatre, Erskineville.

The experience of being in a theatre space with full technical and design support has positively impacted the company and our perception of ourselves as a performance group.

Documentation of this project has included photography, audio and film and these are valuable materials for the group to evaluate our work and convey our unique style to future collaborators.

Cast:
Kerrie-Anne Bezzina, Matthew Cutmore, Tara Elliffe, Sophie Grivas, Tom Hancock, Megan Jury, Thomas Maxwell, Emma Plant, Jo Rix, Luke Salmon, Roddy Salinas, Digby Webster.

Crew:
Director: Majella O’ Shea
Company Manager: Sue Johnston
Designer: Julia Young
Lighting Designer: Aaron Clarke
Production Management: Ashley Dyer and Lara Thoms
Production Assistant: Caroline Thomson
Cellist: Karella Mitchell
Craving

A devised theatre piece by Australian Theatre for Young People, Walsh Bay.

2006

Case study prepared by Bronwyn Purvis, director of Craving.

ABOUT

Australian Theatre for Young People (atyp) is a Sydney based theatre company exclusively devoted to young people. Driven by the idea that the arts can inspire creative, courageous and confident young people wherever they are and whatever they want to be. We believe that the arts have the power to transform lives, enrich communities and ultimately impact upon the future of our nation.

Artistic Director of atyp Tim Jones approached me to create a show with atyp, asking me what I would like to do. This was an amazing opportunity and one of the key things I wanted to explore was working with an ensemble of performers with and without a disability.

Craving began with an idea that “The deepest principal in human nature is the craving to be appreciated.” It got me thinking about how some compulsions are innate, and how the desire for love and acceptance manifests itself in so many different ways, popping out and bubbling up as addictions and obsessions around weird or mundane things.

PROCESS

The performers in Craving came from across Sydney and were all young people between the ages of 16 – 28. atyp advertised auditions through their database and usual performing arts networks, as well as advertising through Australian Theatre for the Deaf, Accessible Arts, Shopfront Theatre, Family Advocacy & Ever After Theatre
Company. This attracted a lot of people to the group auditions but only 3 performers with a disability. This came as a surprise. This was the first project where atyp had specifically invited people with disabilities to take part, and thus it took a little while for performers with disabilities to connect with the new approach.

I then had to actively seek out individual performers with a disability to do solo auditions. This involved talking with other producers and directors who recommended performers, as well as approaching performers with a disability that I had worked with in the past. The method of meeting with individuals and small groups face to face to talk about the project seemed to work as a better method of encouraging people with disabilities to get involved. After meetings, people agreed to do individual auditions. So introducing the project in a number of different methods – not just traditional advertising was an important part of the process. This required additional work but paid off in terms of creating a truly unique, diverse and dynamic ensemble.

The audition process ran over 2 weeks, with 1 large group audition and then a series of individual solo auditions. Participants paid a workshop tuition fee to take part in the process. Two scholarships were awarded by atyp to participants who could not afford the fees. The funding for the show came out of atyp’s budget.
Once the cast was decided upon we began to workshop the ideas associated with ‘craving.’ Scenes & stories were developed about plane spotting, email addiction, water compulsion, Kate Winslett and global domination, un/happy families and the fear of being alone.

After the initial ideas generation it was then a process of devising workshops and rehearsal. There were two workshops a week over an 8 week period with each being 3 hours in length. One workshop each week was dedicated to multi media work including scriptwriting, filmmaking, sound recording, photo shoots, super 8 shoots and screen performance. The other workshop was based developing theatre skills and devising workshops which included movement, voice, Theatresports, improvisation, monologue and stage combat work.

Throughout the workshop process the ensemble was set many homework tasks including writing a personal monologue about a craving/ obsession they have, bringing in their favorite objects, bringing in a musical track that they like to play over and over again, documenting their lives using mobile phone cameras and more.

The cast also worked closely with video artist, Barnaby Norris which allowed them to script, shoot & edit their own film pieces around their cravings.

Jessica Tuckwell was essential in her role as assistant director. As a young performer herself, she was able to connect with the ensemble, share her own performance experiences and ideas as well as provide individual performance support. atyp’s Artistic Director Tim Jones and Artistic Associate Becky Chapman provided valuable directorial mentoring and dramaturgical support throughout the workshop and rehearsal process. It is important when doing youth theatre and particularly when you are working with a mixed ensemble that the technical crew and artists have an understanding of needs of the ensemble. Luke Cowling as production manager and Matt Marshall as lighting and sound designer/ operator were fantastic in how they worked with the ensemble. They were both professionally across their roles so had time to form individual relationships with ensemble members, as well as give a relaxed and humorous vibe to the company which assisted with such things as the pressure of opening night.

A series of artists contributed to the process (some with disabilities and some without) including filmmaker Nathan O’Sullivan, Erica Hardwick, Antoniette Dyce and Paul Corfiatis, visual artist Leigh Davenport, musician Angus Hailer (Nothing Sold) who each contributed film, sound design, music and artwork for the show. Also guest workshops artists including Katherine Daniel and Holly Austin ran physical theatre and voice workshops respectively. Vanessa Bates, Chris Saunders and Phillip Crawford provided important dramaturgical feedback.
The process culminated in 2 weeks of intensive rehearsal and 1 week of technical rehearsal in which the cast were required for 5 days each week, similar to a professional companies rehearsal schedule. The production ran for 1 show week which included 9 shows.

**STRENGTHS**

The strengths lay in the ensemble of performers and the honest and original perspectives they bought to the devising process. The time spent in the casting and bringing together of the ensemble was invaluable in terms of how the workshop process panned out.

The devising workshops were also a strength with the ensemble having an opportunity to work with a number of guest artists to develop a broad range of skills including stage combat, filmmaking, sound recording, animation, writing and vocal techniques. A particular highlight was the video and film workshops which the ensemble were very engaged with which also enabled the ensemble to explore another medium of creative expression.

The opportunity to do school performances was another strength of the process where senior high school students could witness young people their age doing something truly unique to what they would have experienced or expected.
Tim Jones and Becky Chapman provided in house directing support from atyp. Jessica Tuckwell was a regular performer at atyp and put her hand up to be assistant director on the production, as part of atyp directing mentorship system. The atyp production manager Luke Cowling production managed the show. He bought in a freelance lighting/ av designer Matt Marshall as well as a freelance stage manager. atyp promoted and advertised the show themselves. The highly technical production was supported by atyp on a number of levels. The creative process was greatly helped by the fact that Matt Marshall and myself had worked together before. It was also good that the stage manager was fluent in Auslan as one of the performers was Deaf. We were not able to afford to have interpreters at each rehearsal but luckily this participant was a very good lip reader. I had to just spend time discussing with him about what he needed and always make sure I was facing him when explaining anything. I also provided a lot of written material of what was going on at each workshop. The stage manager (who knew Auslan) was only there for tech week and show week which was useful as time had become tighter.

CHALLENGES

As a director, I was so excited by the ideas and work being created in the devising workshops, that I didn’t allow enough time for rehearsals. I learnt that in order for there to be enough time there needs to be a point to stop devising, consolidate and start rehearsing. This resulted in the final weeks of Craving being quite rushed, with
ideas being thrown together too quickly and without proper dramaturgical analysis. It also meant the ensemble had to juggle full time work or school commitments with a full time rehearsal commitment in the last few weeks which did take it’s toll, in terms of people’s energy and concentration levels.

As we were still creating & devising up until quite late in the process enough time wasn’t allowed for the video art/ AV design. Barnaby Norris worked above and beyond his calling (with many sleepless nights!) to deliver a great AV design.

I think time is a very valuable element when working with a mixed abilities ensemble in a workshop setting. As there was such a wide variety of communication styles there needed to be time allowed so that everyone can engage in the workshop task and have time to reflect and share ideas. I did allow for this time, but may have underestimated how much would be required in the lead up to the production.

Another challenge was the ensemble being able to juggle their other commitments such as work and school as well as the Craving workshops and rehearsals. This was mainly only an issues for 2 participants who were trying to maintain their full time workload as well as an intense rehearsal commitment, particularly around the production week. However all cast tried their hardest to be there at all times, and all parents were very supportive of this.

Some ensemble members had difficulties with the fees to participate in the Craving workshop. This was solved by atyp granting scholarships to allow all ensemble members to participate fully in the program. atyp always has a scholarship program for its workshops and production and this is advertised in all their workshop brochures.

At the beginning of the process two ensemble members withdrew from the process due to not feeling comfortable with the mixed ensemble environment. It was personally challenging to think how such a response could have been prevented, except that perhaps the audition process had assumed too much of the young people without disabilities in having an understanding of what it means to be involved in a mixed ability ensemble. This response was surprising, however I don’t feel that we needed to be more clearer in the way the production was advertised, auditioned and the ensemble formed. Otherwise I feel that a production that is designed to be about creating a work of quality theatre, can easily start apologizing for itself and become viewed as a work of charity.
OUTCOME

The outcome was Craving - a new devised work exploring where obsession begins, what feeds them and what happens when they take over. Through video, photography, music, movement, verbatim storytelling and text the mixed abilities ensemble cast created a unique performance.

Creating a show through a devised process always involves a step into the unknown. The cast of Craving made this exploration a truly revealing experience with their commitment and honesty resulting in a rich bank of ideas. The casts different cultural backgrounds & perspectives of the world was shown in the depth of their work.

By staging a show such as Craving it provided the opportunity for new audiences and participants to become more aware of the work of atyp does so was good in terms of audience development as well for atyp.

Craving had one performance week which in total had 9 performances, including 2 school shows during the day.

Craving was produced by Australian Theatre for Young People as part of their 2006 season.

Cast:
Bendeguz Devenyi-Botos, Janet Diane, Sokong Kim, Freya Madelaine, Joanne Paterson, Tracie Sammut, Tim Stephen & Digby Webster.

Crew:
Director: Bronwyn Purvis
Assistant Director: Jessica Tuckwell
Video Artist: Barnaby Norris
Production Manager: Luke Cowling
Lighting Design: Matt Marshall
Hard Daze

A devised production by Powerhouse Youth Theatre (PYT) and the Mixed Abilities Ensemble.

2009

Case study prepared by Claudia Chidiac, Artistic Director Powerhouse Youth Theatre and Craig Anderson, Director, Hard Daze.

ABOUT

Powerhouse Youth Theatre (PYT) is the leading youth theatre company in Western Sydney. By engaging with young people from across the region, PYT creates new, innovative and inclusive performing arts opportunities lead by collaborative processes and participation.

Hard Daze was created from the real life stories of young people living and working across Western Sydney. Nine community participants collaborated with a diverse team of professional artists to examine the complexity of equitable working rights and discrimination in the workplace.

Hard Daze was born out of informal community consultations with young people working across Western Sydney during 2007 after the proposed changes to the Liberal governments Industrial Relations Laws. A climate of anger and revolt has brewed since then particularly amongst young workers from Non-English speaking backgrounds and those with disabilities.

A number of young people came to PYT with stories and experiences of being mistreated, exploited or discriminated against at work.

Set in the still beating industrial heart of Sydney. A modern factory space came to life as the mixed abilities ensemble sang, danced and flung open the door on the private underbelly that is the day-to-day going-ons of a modern workplace.
PROCESS

Hard Daze was created and developed over a 12 month period & in four major stages.

STAGE 1: Performance Training

In 2008 PYT formed its first Mixed Abilities Ensemble (MAE). The MAE was developed in consultation with Accessible Arts and supported by the Matana Foundation for young people. For 15 weeks PYT ran professional training workshops in voice, movement and theatre making. Please see the ‘Workshop Plans’ section of this kit for a description of the first 7 weeks of workshops with the MAE.

STAGE 2: Creative Development

The creative development is a process where the artistic team and participants work together to explore the themes of the performance. The Hard Daze creative development took place from August to October 2008 at PYT.

It was an eight week process that eventuated in a short 30 minute performance for family, services and the performance industry.
The creative development stage helped to create a wealth of resources, scenes, stories, songs, movements and expressions that dealt with workplace relations, power, control and past experiences. This was a very important period. Participants learnt about each other and became very familiar with the subject material. This stage also locked in many of the key design attributes- such as the long tables that were the focal point of the performance & became an important physical framework. The performers worked with props at these desks, which helped to develop performative characters. Another important element that grew during this period was a sense of community between the performers. As they all had differing abilities the only common thread joining the participants was being part of the ensemble- a desire to perform, create and tell stories.

This stage was funded by Matana Foundation, Accessible Arts, Fairfield City Council, PYT.

STAGE 3: Rehearsal

In February 2009 the ensemble re-united for the rehearsal phase of *Hard Daze*. This was led by Director, Craig Anderson.

This stage was funded by Community Partnerships - Australia Council for the Arts, Parramatta City Council, Matana Foundation, Accessible Arts, Fairfield City Council and PYT.

*Note: the following notes are from director Craig Anderson’s artistic report*

**Week 1**

I introduced the idea of the show to the group. I told them the style and form that I thought the show would take. I referenced television shows and movies- which I showed clips from to illustrate my point. I decided that I wanted to create the environment where the performance would take place. One thing I learnt during the creative process is that the participants’ stories were all varied and needed a semi-expressionistic environment to be performed in. The common thread in most of their stories was ‘being screwed over by overpowering circumstance”. So I decided to represent this with a giant ‘machine’ that ruled over them in an Orwellian manner.

The ‘machine’ would control their lives- ironically the majority of characters ended up ignoring the machine- but it’s presence should be felt by the audience and it’s dominance over the characters absolute. I explained this to the group and they were all happy with it.
During the creative development phase myself and one of the participant’s carers, Paul participated in performance exercises and in the showing of the work. As a lot of performers were ‘inexperienced’ and tended to follow their own tangents, Paul and I found that we could help guide the show ‘from the inside’. After the development period Paul was no longer the carer for the MAE participant and I had moved onto the director’s role, so I felt that there was a gap in the ensemble for one or two performers who could guide the performance from the inside.

I knew of Will and Collin through PYT, other projects and had taught them in Improvisation and Clowning. I knew that they would work well in the group and be able to use their improvisational skills to guide the performances. I asked them to join the ensemble and fortunately they agreed.

**Week 2/3**

After various comedic/improvisation based warm up exercises I got the group to start thinking about story. We already had a wealth of material from the creative development and pasted these collective memories/resources up on paper around the rehearsal space. I then introduced the group to some story structure theory. They were receptive.

Characters were created by the participants and were loosely based on themselves and more importantly their fantasies.
During Week 2/3 I created a story structure based on the character points. Lump-
ing them all into scenes. Most could happen with the whole group on stage- some
points had to happen with the individual members of the group in their own scenes.
The structure changed almost every week- even up until the final night.

**Week 4- Week 8**

From Week 5 onwards I had drawn up a rehearsal schedule that included rehearsal
hours being extended before and after the normal rehearsal time. Everyone agreed
that it was the only way to get things done. The following weeks continued in the
same manner- ‘scene work’.

**Final Rehearsals**

I always wanted to finish doing scene work with a few weekends left- this would allow
us to do a have a few run throughs of the entire show. Unfortunately due to the large
amount of scenes (close to 40), this was impossible and the first time we got to put
the show together was when we were in the space for the tech run.

**STAGE 4: Production& Performance**

The production process utilized a lot of material that had already been developed
and hung them around a blank story arc that I had drawn up. Each performer then
filled in the blanks on the story arc and created a narrative for their character (which
was going to be similar to their own personalities).

We then worked with these narratives and created scenes where the characters
would interact- some dialogue based, some music or movement based. All partici-
pants were asked to come up with ways that they could tell the story.

This occurred over eight weeks, until finally we locked in the types of scenes and
focused on running the performance together and solving transitions and other
performance problems- this was the same time that we got into the space. After that
we had two run-throughs before audience.

The intention was always to perform the show in a non-theatre space within the
Parramatta region. Early on in the process we began looking for factories/ware-
houses that we could perform in. We always knew that we may not have a space
locked in until the final weeks- and this is what happened. To prepare ourselves for
this we worked with the desk spaces that we had already established in the Cre-
ative Development and knew that they would be the focal design element. Kate, the
designer, was very accommodating to this and was smart not to push more design
elements on top of what we had. The majority of our design meetings existed under
a very “let’s see what happens” vibe. At some point she started to toy with the idea
of scaffolding - in case we got a space that was literally a big empty space with nothing exciting in it. Once we locked in our location, Kate was happy enough to say goodbye to the scaffolding and focus the performance around the existing features of the found space.

Our first rehearsal in the space involved moving through the show from beginning to end and finding spaces for all of the scenes and learning where performers could travel between scenes - this process took six hours the first day and another two and a half hours the next day. It was useful and I am glad that we were in the space for it. It was the first time we had put the show together and I had a few fears about the running length of the show.

Two nights before opening we had a dress rehearsal with lights & sound. It went well and the show’s duration was now shorter. The run helped the performers to realise the gravity of the situation and focus more intently on what they were doing. Some scenes still needed shortening and so did some monologues. The following day we started working on these changes.

On Opening Night the group all arrived early enough for us to do a warm up - the only warm up we did (as a group) was to rehearse the complex movement piece known as the Love Quadrangle. The Love Quadrangle is pure farce and set to a five minute big band piece of music. It involves characters entering and exiting the stage rapidly and then expressing their feelings and intentions with quick, over exagger-
ated gestures. The group loved developing this piece and it was done so in a very mathematical and collaborative process. We rehearsed this once before the Opening to help focus the team and get their bodies warm. After this everyone went backstage and got ready for the show. The show went well. I saw a multitude of problems with just about every transition and about eighty per cent of the scenes. The majority of the problems were with the storytelling’s fluidity. But this was simply because we had not sufficiently rehearsed the full run of the show. Everyone had fun and felt great when the audience liked the show. There was real value in it- a value in the exchange. Everyone had told his or her story.

After the matinee (which moved at the same pace as the Opening Night show), I focussed on tightening up several of the key scenes. Perhaps the most important thing was the speech I gave them all an hour out from the show. I had the participants sit in the audience seating and told them about pacing and how they all needed to move the show along- ‘the audience will get bored if they have to watch you walk around and sit down when you finish a scene’. I demonstrated and they all took the criticism on board and then performed faster. Whilst talking to them, almost reprimanding them, I realised there had been an amazing transformation- they were no longer a ‘rag-tag’ group - they were all experienced performers and I was speaking to them, the same way I would talk to a professional company. It was amazing the transformation they have all been through. The group’s passion and desire to tell their story had driven them to this point

**STRENGTHS**

The group was very high functioning and the fact that they had different abilities made the creating process as easy as utilising a palette of various performance skills. There was never a time where their individual disabilities got in the way of the storytelling- this was partly because the story was being created by them and because we were not beholden to any storytelling technique.

At times when we were rehearsing like a professional troupe there were certain allowances and exceptions that had to be made based upon their personalities (mostly originating with their disabilities). Basically it was no different to the kind of eccentrics you can find directing any acting group- as long as you remain attentive, available, impartial and patient then you should have no problem.

For the participants I believe that having a goal (storytelling on stage) gave them focus and desire. It was important to remind them every couple of weeks, why we were doing the show- to tell the story of what it is like to have a disability at work and how there are many obstacles. This strengthened their resolve and provided them with the passion to continue.
I believe that the participants got out of the process an understanding of story structure and scene structure, as well as an understanding of how narrative performance can be put together. They also learnt important lessons about preparing as an actor for performance, stage presence, and how to work with lights and sound.

Individual strengths were realised during the process. Performer Ana Nguyen, had a long desire and dream to record her own song and it was in this process that she worked alongside a sound artist and musical composer to record her first ever songs, they were then compiled onto an album entitled: Ana K. A soundtrack of the performance was recorded onto an album and both this and Ana K were sold after each show. For very album (30) that was sold Ana made $5 of each album.

The professionalism of the core team, the designer, sound artist, musical composer and Director played such an important role in the delivery of Hard Daze. As a result, they were able to support the participants in creating a unique production, who for some it was their very first time performing.

There were audience members who felt confronted by seeing people with a disability on stage. Hard Daze broke down many stereotypes that mainstream society have
of people with disabilities, it humanised their struggles, in particular the struggles they face in the workplace.

PYT was able to pay the participants a fee for their performance. It is an initiative that the company has begun to implement where box office is split between the producers (PYT) and the performers (ensemble).

The funding received allowed for all four stages to happen, something which is quite rare in youth theatre. It is a common practice for companies to charge participants to participate in a production, however, the Hard Daze ensemble did not have to pay.

**CHALLENGES**

There were many exciting challenges. Perhaps the toughest one was utilising time effectively as we only had 8 weeks to put on a site specific show. A lot of the participants had time restraints due to work commitments, carer availabilities, cost, travel requirements, broken cars, overprotective guardians and the simple fact that life is a tad more difficult for people living with disabilities.

When taking all of these factors into account, I would draw up rehearsal schedules each week and was extremely careful not to leave anyone without something to do. I didn’t want to waste their time when they were in rehearsal.

Sometimes participants would understandably require special attention. This was because we were dealing with deep and loaded issues that were affecting their daily existence. In fact most of them were using stories that came from their own lives and playing heightened versions of themselves.

Every so often I found myself fulfilling the role of councillor, listening to their problems, allowing them to vent their frustrations, deal with their parents, etc.

As a director I am familiar with this sort of thing, but was not ready for the levels that happened in this process. I dealt with it, but I admit it was challenging- as the pressure of the show and the team’s individual problems built up.

The intention was always to perform the show in a non-theatre space within the Parramatta region. Early on in the process we began looking for factories/warehouses that we could perform in. We always knew that we may not have a space locked in until the final weeks- and this is what happened. For the artistic team this was a challenge as they had to be prepared for whatever site was found. And for the participants this proved to also be a challenge, the open space wasn’t very accommodating for vocal projection.
Hard Daze was targeted at an audience who identified as living with a disability and those who don’t. We wanted the audience to reflect the diversity of the ensemble, so it was really important to be able to get people with disabilities to attend the shows. The company decided to have a matinee performance at 11am, the morning after opening night, to cater for disability services and their clients. We felt certain that this would attract a large audience, particularly those from disability services who would otherwise not be able to attend without support. However, the attendance for that performance was incredibly low, with only one service bringing a few clients.

There were challenges and the final numbers of audiences with disabilities were not as high as the company would have liked.

There needs to be a marketing strategy designed especially for the disability community, where upon the community that include services are given up to 8 weeks notice of an event; that audience development needed to begin more thoroughly during the creative development stage.

Transport amongst the ensemble proved to have challenging moments. Who is responsible for the participants arriving? You want to make sure that they are going to arrive safely but when the pressure is on the creative team to pick up the partici-
pants and drive them home it does affect the creative process and put pressure on the creative team. In this instance it would be recommended that families and carers play more of an active role in picking up and dropping off participants.

OUTCOME

Set in a disused factory space in Granville, the audience were taken on a journey that comprised of nine stories, that reflected the voices of young people living with and without disabilities. Their stories were told through the use of lights, music and dance.

*Hard Daze* was performed over three days with a total of four performances, to audience of over 300 people.

A combination of comedy, drama and madness, *Hard Daze* was a unique site specific performance experience.

**Cast**

Georgia Cranko
Janet Diane
William Erimya
Collin Gosper
Ana Nguyen
Andrew Pall
Ramak Razy
Tracie Sammut
Omeima Sukkarieh

**Artistic Team**

Director
Set/Costume Design
Musical Composition/
Sound Artist
Dramaturg
Production Manager/
Lighting Design
Stage Manager

Craig Anderson
Kate Shanahan
Pete Condello &
Milo Taylor /Brickhouse Productions
Claudia Chidiac
Larry Kelly.
Ruben Matheson
Home Among The Stars

A new work devised by participants from integratedliving Australia and St Joseph’s High School, Aberdeen.

2009

Case Study prepared by Alison Richardson, co-director Home Among The Stars.

ABOUT

Integratedliving is an innovative, not-for-profit community business delivering a broad range of quality community care services across regional New South Wales and Queensland. Integratedliving’s reason for being is to deliver quality outcomes based on the individual goals and aspirations and constantly strives to maximise people’s quality of life.

One of integratedliving programs is aimed at providing recreation and leisure activities for people living with a disabilities in an age-appropriate and supportive environment.

When planning programs for 2006 the then program Team Leader Lee Deverinne and Chief Executive Officer Peter Rothnie dreamed up the concept of an 5 day live in workshop series based on drama and dance with the inclusion of music. In January 2006 the All Stars were born and the first workshop was held at the Muswellbrook RSL. The workshop concluded with a concert for family, friends and the wider community to showcase everyone’s talents. All involved gained so much in confidence and increased self esteem from this workshop that that this workshop program has become an annual event.

The current team leader, of the Overton service Chic Taylor saw how much the group of people in her care love singing and acting has continued to develop this concept.
The annual four day drama camp is based at the Overton farm house whereby a group of about 18 people from their services, can attend theatre making workshops and be involved in a performance of their own devising over five days at the local high school, St Joseph's, Aberdeen in the Upper Hunter region of NSW. The piece of theatre is devised over 4 and half days with a performance of the fifth day for the families, friends and local community.

The piece that will be the focus of this case study was titled *Home Among The Stars* and was co-directed by Emma Palmer and myself in 2009. It was based on the themes of ‘home’ and ‘belonging and what that means to each of the participants. A film tutor & documenter, David Lawrance also came along to document the process and outcome and also to facilitate a filmmaking workshop. A multimedia element was also incorporated by David into the final show based on interviews and footage from the local area.

**PROCESS**

The process for creating *Home Among The Stars* was a very intense and tiring one for all involved due to the large amount of people involved and the fact that a show was to be devised from scratch in four and half days. Having said this it was also a hugely rewarding and fulfilling experience and for a lot of the participants a life changing one. The integration of students and the All Stars (the name given to the
performers from integratedliving Australia) was fantastic and the involvement of the whole community was incredible.

*Home Among the Stars* was the second piece of work that Emma and I had devised with the group and as a director coming from the city I am always moved and impressed by the level of support from the community and the willingness and generosity from all those around. This feeling of community can sometimes get lost in the city and so it is always refreshing and touching to see this during the All Stars week.

Emma, David and I arrived on the Tuesday. This year we were better prepared as we had already devised one work with the group the year before. We spoke with Chic before arriving and asked if she could ask the All Stars to bring in an object(s) that held some significant meaning to them - it could be photographs, something from their room, a piece of jewellery a stuffed toy, anything at all. We started the devising process immediately upon our arrival and these items became the starting point. They each placed them in the middle of our very large circle of people and spoke about it’s significance. This placing of the objects in the middle of the space also became part of the show. Over the next three days it was then jamming in as many theatre exercises and scene work as we could in the hope that it would all piece together in a fabulous piece of intimate and moving theatre. The key was to facilitate exercises that could be then used in the performance as well. We were devising with the group from 10-4pm each day and would also spend about 4-5 hours each night preparing for the next day. David also ran a film making workshop for anyone that was interested and also conducted interviews with participants. The Saturday was the final day of rehearsal and this was the day for running the show with no new ideas. We relied a lot on the St Joseph’s students to help get the show up and running, from being responsible for the lighting and sound to helping make and props and sets. We also ‘buddied’ up the All Stars with a St Joseph’s student. The student was then responsible for their buddy’s props and if they needed any assistance with remembering when and where to go on and off stage.

Our goal as directors this year was to place as much power in the hands of the All Stars as possible so encouraging a performance that was driven, devised and performed entirely by them. We were really wanting the performance to be non patronising and were also trying to extend the All Stars and at the same time give each person a moment to shine. The All Stars also get very excited about the talent quest that happens after the devised show. They work on pieces themselves and with Chic (who they love having involved in their pieces and who is fabulous) which is usually a short skit or singing a song.
The All Stars week is one of the activities funded by The Upper Hunter Peer Support Program, funded by the NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care. However the resources required to deliver this program exceed those provided by DADHC and local business and community groups have come on board and provided financial support to enable this program to grow since its inception in 2006.

**STRENGTHS**

I believe a big strength of the All Stars week was the level of support from the community. From volunteers making lunches to people offering to fetch anything we may need for the creation of the show. Everybody is there to support each other and provide the best possible experience for the All Stars.

The exceptional leadership from Chic inspires all those around her. Everyone wants to help as much as they can as they know Chic is going way beyond her call of duty and will neglect her own self in order to provide a positive and rewarding experience for ‘the guys’ as she affectionately calls them.

The collaboration with St Joseph’s was fantastic. The principal and students give up their time in the holidays to be a part of the experience. Some say that they didn’t know what they wanted to do after leaving school but now after being a part of the All Stars week they will think about working with people with a disability. It is hugely satisfying being able to reach teenagers at this impressionable age by providing
this experience for them. We encouraged them to support the All Stars to be as independent as they could on and off stage and to avoid mollycoddling them. It was also heartening watching everyone interacting during the lunch time period where they all danced, sang, played cricket together— a perfect, integrated, supportive environment to be in.

I think extending the group beyond the lip syncing and singing & dancing to favourite songs that they are used to performing was a strength of the devising process. I think intimacy of this show by not using the traditional stage but by presenting the show on the floor and in the round and hearing about personal experiences allowed the audience a glimpse into lives of the All Stars and made for a powerful theatrical experience. Also the inclusion of the film element into the show as well exposed the group to something that was new and unfamiliar in their theatre making experience.

Chic says that, ‘Christmas doesn’t get a look in, they all just start counting down for when the next All Stars week is going to be.’
CHALLENGES

The main challenge was the pressure to produce a new theatrical piece in four and half days. Both Emma and I care about not producing a piece of theatre that people don’t give the ‘pity clap’ to and say how good it is that these people with a disability are ‘giving it a go.’ We really wanted to present something that had integrity and artistic merit as this was presented to a relatively large audience and we really wanted to show them the capabilities of this group.

Everyone was quite resilient but by performance day quite tired. The group was very large as well, with 18 All Stars and over 25 St Joseph’s students. Everyone was cooperative and all worked well together but just by having that may bodies around and feeling like they should all be engaged in some way was also a challenge.

The ongoing success of this annual event is dependant on the support of St Joseph’s and the many local community groups and business that have supported the program over the last few years. With the support of Bengalla Mining, integratedliving has recorded a song written by Chic Taylor and all proceeds made from the sale of the CD will go towards this event and similar events.

OUTCOME

The outcome was a 40 minute devised piece of theatre called Home Among The Stars. It incorporated movement sequences, short scenes, solo performances and sound scapes & a multimedia element. It was performed in-the-round at St Joseph’s school hall in Aberdeen on Sunday January 11th, 2009 to an audience of over 100 people consisting of family and friends of the students and All Stars, people from disability services and local the community.

All Stars

St Joseph’s students
Lucy Murrie, Katie Andrews, Lauren Smith, Amanda Morris, Hannah Taylor, Nikole Brooks, Zoe Donaldson, Maddie Collins, Shelby Lewis, Jaydan Klus, Ben Leece, Matt Bailey, Edwina Casey, Chloe Jennet, Jess Scotts, Lewis Turvey, Nathan Lane, Melissa

Producer       Chic Taylor
Directors      Emma Palmer, Alison Richardson
Video Artist   David Lawrance
Island Dreaming

A devised work by Bago Magic Performance Group, Wauchope.

2005

Case study prepared by Mariet Ludriks, Coordinator, Bago Magic Performance Group Inc.

ABOUT

Bago Magic Performance Group (BMPG) started in 2001 as a Respite Service and a leisure link outing for people with disabilities in the rural areas of Port Macquarie. We started running an exercise class in the Wauchope Show Ground hall, but the 5 participants we had were more interested in being on the stage than doing the exercises. That’s how it all started and the idea for BMPG came about!

Now 8 years on Bago Magic Performance Group Inc has become a community performance group which strives to be accessible and meaningful for all members of the community. We offer drama, music and visual arts classes, delivered by professional teachers and designed to include all participants. Workshops are held weekly during school terms at the Wauchope Community Arts Council Hall. Throughout the year participants will develop skills and experience in a variety of aspects leading to live performance. Opportunities exist to be involved in making of props, costumes, masks, make-up application, acting, singing, playing music, lighting, film and sound. We hope to create an atmosphere where everybody helps others and we work together towards a common goal.

Island Dreaming was a devised theatrical piece created from the ideas, stories and experiences of the participants of BMPG. The participants also contributed to the music and the design and construction of the set thus creating a show that was truly their own.
PROCESS

Script & Music Development

Island Dreaming started with a discussion, whereby participants put forward all sorts of ideas. The characters in Island Dreaming were developed by the participants in the drama group around individual preferences and skills guided by the director, Angela MacPherson. Participants chose the character they would like to play and preferred themes and then the story developed. Methods such as visualization, group discussion & small group work ensued based on these decisions that were made by the group and ensured involvement from all participants. For inspiration the group watched videos of Pacific Island culture, listened to Island myths, invited guest speakers from Pacific island cultures and flicked through travel brochures. After about four weeks of discussions, we started putting ideas into action. The group met weekly, with music and drama workshops from 10-12pm, and visual arts workshops from 1-2pm. We rehearsed this play for at least seven months before performing. Angela then compiled these ideas into a workable dramatic script which was rehearsed for several weeks.

The music in Island Dreaming directed by Elly Franchimont was inspired by traditional island music and adapted for our performance. Throughout the development the music group created appropriate music and sound effects to enhance the
performance. The music group was made up of members of BMPG that were interested in music. They were involved in developing the music right from the beginning of rehearsals. Many percussion instruments were used, and also voice.

Costumes, props and backdrops were made by participants of BMPG under the direction of Margrit Rickenbach & Claude Teyssier. During weekly workshops throughout the year participants worked on projects such as printing individual designs on sarongs or creating masks and butterflies. Visual arts workshops were on the same day as the performance workshops, but in the afternoon.

The backdrops, palm trees and volcano were made using paper we painted then glued on to the objects which were constructed using bamboo. The art works played a major role in the evolution of the play.

To ensure that BMPG adopts all inclusive processes is to keep asking questions so that the facilitators become just that, ‘facilitators’ that prompt discussion & activity through questioning. Questions like; Do you like the story? What would you change? Do you like the props? Costumes? Are you happy and comfortable with the lines? These keep us all on track as we do this through regular sit around a circle discussions.

BMPG is partly funded by the participants. Each participant pays $10 per week for the workshops. This is not enough to fund BMPG, so we also apply for grants, and have been successful in securing two major grants from Regional Arts NSW. Other funding comes from Council and other grants, donations and fundraising. BMPG pays for production and all other costs out of these funds.

**STRENGTHS**

The major strength of *Island Dreaming* was that it was developed from a collaboration of ideas and suggestions from all participants of BMPG, which were woven together to created a play based on all the ideas, stories and experiences of the participants giving them a great sense of ownership over the final production. For example: someone suggested having a volcano on a holiday island, another person, obviously very fond of chocolate and cheese thought it would be a good idea to have real chocolate and cheese in the play exploding from the volcano – why not?? Another idea came then from the musicians to write a song about this and so it happened and it worked! This was the essence that made this and other plays performed by BMPG such a success and utterly unique.

Another strength is the fact that BMPG includes people with and without disabilities, whom are interested in working together as a group towards a common goal, which
is putting on high quality performances and/or have an interest in music, dance, visual arts and other aspects relating to performing arts.

Another strength of Island Dreaming & other BMPG performances is the employment & instruction by qualified tutors/artists. These tutors have the skills to create something special from all the ideas put forward.

**CHALLENGES**

One of the biggest challenges of this project was space. We never seemed to have enough space. We started this play in the Wauchope Community Arts Hall (we are not in the Arts Hall any longer, but have moved to an Industrial shed nearby) but with 40 participants it was quite a squeeze and storing props was nearly impossible with only a tiny tin shed out the back however we did manage this for a long time as we had nowhere else to go at the time. In the last few weeks of rehearsals leading up to the performance we asked Port Macquarie Council if we could use the Port Macquarie Civic Centre, that stood empty and was going to be demolished within a year to make way for the new Port Macquarie ‘Glasshouse.’ They agreed & for a few weeks we had a big space & a stage to work on, plus two change rooms and some storage space. The Civic Centre was not very accessible and all the participants had to climb a big flight of stairs to get inside (just as well BMPG had no-one in a wheelchair at the time). The next challenge was the venue we hired to actually perform
Island Dreaming. The committee running this venue was not very supportive and very difficult to deal with even though we paid an extraordinary amount to hire this venue for a matinee and a nighttime performance. They denied us rehearsal time in the venue before the show which we had to put up with because again we felt we had no alternative at the time. We ended up walking the biggest props that didn’t fit in the cars (like the volcano) from the Civic Centre to the performance venue approximately 1.5km away. This was quite fun, we got a lot of looks and questions & proved to be good advertising!

Another challenge was (and still is) to get carers and parents to bring participants on time (or at all) for rehearsals & performances. The frustrations experienced by our tutors when participants were not showing up to perform certain roles and without any notice can be very difficult. It is about getting people to realise putting on production is a team effort just like sport but it seems sometimes that the arts is not quite seen as valuable as team sport is.

Also we have many transport issues and often resort to doing the transporting (pick-ups and drives home) ourselves. Transport has always been a major problem with numerous phone calls to community transport etc. but to no avail. Also the transporting of props is usually done (including loading and unloading) by the person with the biggest car/van and trailer. It is a lot of work & takes a lot of time and money (petrol) which because of limited funds is paid by the transporter/driver themselves.

This brings me to another challenge: funding and the constant chasing of grants. It’s time consuming, frustrating and disappointing when you miss out, but satisfying when you manage to secure one.

The last point I want to make is my personal challenge. As the coordinator I currently try to manage about 50 BMPG participants. I have to admit I don’t always find this easy since I have no managerial experience especially when conflict arises. I always try and hope that I’m doing the right thing but it can be frustrating and a bit undervalued. I have managed the group for the last 8 years and am constantly filling out application forms for grants, proposals and acquittals which are all done on the week ends when my husband and I aren’t working this is becoming very exhausting and taxing for both of us. Ideally we would like to employ a local artist to be facilitating the workshops so that we with our little experience don’t have to do this as well. A recent application we had in to fund this was unsuccessful.

Next time I would like to allow more time to put a performance together. It was quite a challenge to get the show together in the time we had. The script was not complicated, but we had a lot of participants who all needed a worthy role. It took a long time to make sure all the participants were included into the script.
OUTCOME

The outcome of Island Dreaming:
• A very satisfied and excited audience
• Very proud and excited participants ready to do it all again
• Loads of great feedback from people from all walks of life, who came to see the show. A lot more understanding from committee members of the venue where we performed.

The result was a fantastic, visually stunning story. We performed twice at a local theatre in Port Macquarie, a matinee and an evening performance. We had about 350 audience for the shows, made up of family, friends, disability groups and general public.

Cast/ Musicians:
Lis Tuck, Michelle Spencer, Chris Dacre, Jan Dark, Sarah Henderson, Kerrie Sicurella, Kerry Brown, Blair Webb, Chris Wood, Jacinta Evans-Wicks, Pat Theoret, Burt Atkinson, Maryanne Steitz, Charles Hall, Jacqui Clarke, Stephanie Gunn, Claude Teyssier, Abby Cass, Michaela Andrew, Sam Boffa, Aimee McWhirter, Melisa Steitz, Helen Beach, Christie Darnan, Denis McCarthy, Brian McLean, Cameron Skinner, Troy Bentley, Brendan Hall, James Kennedy, Mariet Ludriks, Jill Oliver, Melissa Patton, Allison Quirk, Kylie Winn.
Crew:

Coordinators: Maryanne Steitz and Mariet Ludriks
Director: Angela Macpherson
Musical Director: Elly Franchimont
Costume Design and Props: Margrit Rickenbach
Set Design: Claude Teyssier
Stage Manager: Coleen Turner
Backstage crew: Greg Aurisch, Claude Teyssier, Mark Payton, Margrit Rickenbach, Ron Hutchinson.
Lighting: John Hanson
Make up and costumes: Celia Steadman, Trish Ginn
Film crew: Remi, Marcus & Chris
Front of House: Nicolas Cameron, Ethan Fitzgerald, Sarah Norrie, Natalie Smith, Erin Theoret.
My Space, My Place

A devised work by sliced bread attraction.

2007

Case study prepared by Alison Richardson, Artistic Director of sliced bread attraction.

ABOUT

The production of My Space, My Place (MSMP) was produced by sliced bread attraction in October of 2007. I established sliced bread attraction in 2007 in response to the need for more creative opportunities for people with a disability particularly in Western Sydney. I recognised that there was a lack of quality and innovative creative opportunities for people with a disability outside of the art therapy model. Over the last two years sliced bread attraction has received funding from local councils and through the Community Development & Support Expenditure Scheme to produce inclusive events for International Day for People with a Disability, workshops in performance, photography, sound and also Bakehouse an inclusive arts festival which was held at, CarriageWorks in Eveleigh & also several other venues across Sydney.

The idea for MSMP came from an article I read by Hugh Mackay in the Sydney Morning Herald. The article spoke about indigenous people’s strong attachment to place and how regardless of our age, gender, race of ability that is the one thing we have in common, we have all come from somewhere- a Place. So this idea became the stimulus for the devising of a new theatre work with six people from two disability services in the south west of Sydney. The rehearsals and the performance took place at Powerhouse Youth Theatre in Fairfield, Sydney.
PROCESS

The rehearsal process occurred over 22 weeks from May – October 2007, one day a week. So all up we had 22 rehearsals of about 3 hours each. The cast was drawn from two disability services in Western Sydney that had previously engaged in *sliced bread attraction* and PYT’s workshops & programs. Ideally all the people that participated in the *Get Toasted Performance Training Program* (a performance program for people with a disability) would have made up the cast but in reality and due to practical considerations this could not be the case.

However, this didn’t matter as the cast was made up of participants from Stage 1 and 3 of the MSMP project so they had already explored to some degree the notion & idea of Space and Place. Funding for this production was from Canley Heights RSL Club through their Community Development Support & Expenditure scheme. The venue for rehearsal and the show was generously given to us in kind by Powerhouse Youth Theatre. It was vital to the success of the performance to be rehearsing in the space that they group would end up performing in. It also became apparent that the set needed to be workable and in the space as soon as we knew what it was going to be in order for the cast to start working with it. Abstract concepts such as, “Michael, imagine there is a window and you open it” was too hard a concept to grasp. Luckily, we had the most brilliant and dedicated set designer, Kate Shanahan attached to the project who was present at every rehearsal. She was able to design and create a
set that was fantastic, adaptable & flexible enough to be able to pushed to the side when we weren’t in the space so that the space was free for PYT and other hirers. Kate was not only a great designer but a fabulous support for me who at times felt like I was really flying solo.

The process was divided up into four stages, these were the ideas generation stage (7 rehearsals), creation & the shaping of show stage (9 rehearsals) and then straight rehearsals (6 rehearsals) which mean that there were no new ideas or creating taking place. This was a tight timeline but I knew we could achieve a quality show if we managed our time effectively and had the full support of the two services we were working with. I was conscious of when working with people with intellectual disabilities consolidation and rehearsing scenes over and over again was needed in order to produce a quality show that could sit alongside any theatre production in Sydney.

The actual material for the show was generated by the group. I came in with the concept of us as humans having one thing in common which was that we have all come form somewhere, that is a Place and that we all desire to belong to and have a connection to somewhere. As a group we then began devising around this topic. We had brainstorm discussions on each individual member’s favourite & least favourite places and from this ascertained if there were any recurrent themes that could be explored more by the group. Themes of ‘safety’ and ‘escape’ were a couple of common themes so we began to look at how we could use boxes on stage to represent these feelings of being trapped, wanting to escape or feeling safe and comfortable inside something that was your own.

Other exercises used to generate material for the show were getting each person to map their home on the floor with electrical tape (like a blue print map) and then walk the group through it, explaining parts of their home. They brought in an object and photos from home that held significant meaning for them, drew their dream homes, wrote group haikus about their home, explored concepts of leaving home by dressing each other to leave, created object sculptures and sound scapes from objects found around the home, told stories through the use of shadow puppets and over heads and objects placed on an overhead projector. Once the idea generation phase was completed we then moved onto shaping the show together- selecting what ideas we wanted to keep and explore further and making sure that everyone had their moment to shine.
STRENGTHS

The reason why I really love working with an ensemble of performers with intellectual disabilities particularly is because of the fresh new and unique generation of ideas and new perspectives on exercise & activities that I would throw at them. It’s then being able to spot these ideas, respect them, pick them out and embrace them and work out how to best use them in the creation process. I did this by posing open ended questions and having activities broad enough for their own creative self expression to flourish. It was exciting when an exercise would go off on an unexpected tangent & bring to the process ideas that I would never have thought of or intended at the beginning of the exercise. This was when the process was at it’s most exciting for me- a true collaboration.

The cast were extremely creative and brought so much positive energy, unbridled enthusiasm, and joy to the process that it made it a fabulously creative and supportive environment to work in for all. No sense of ego or pretence was brought into the rehearsal or a second guessing of what was right or wrong but rather a fantastic sense of play and exploration.

The support from Powerhouse Youth Theatre was invaluable. They lent us the space in kind and were understanding of us having to have the set up very early. We made the set as such that it could be moved to one side to allow for other activities that happened in the space to still occur. They also auspiced the grant that I received
and also helped promote the show. We also had good support from one of the services who’s support worker stage managed one of the performances and also did hair and make up. Our set designer, Kate as mentioned previously was outstanding in her set design but also became almost a co-director alongside me as well. We were also mentoring a young person as assistant director through the process who was also a huge help in the execution of the show.

The show also worked alongside the My Space, My Place Outreach Exhibition so the foyer displayed the result of sound and photography workshops that were conducted with participants of day programs & special schools across Western Sydney.

**CHALLENGES**

The challenges were actually having all six cast members present at each rehearsal. It wasn’t until the 4th workshop that two of the six cast members came from the second service but the other four were away as their van was in service so as a consequence none of them could make it. So it was the 6th workshop where we actually had a full cast. These absences were largely due to staff ratios if one person was sick or away no one from that service could make it or the van been serviced or the volunteer driver sick. So being flexible and understanding was essential but sometimes it did make me wonder if the show was ever going to get off the ground.

Before the process started I was very mindful of communication issues- I was trying to put into place preventative measures very early on to ensure that the process would run as smoothly as possible. I set up a meeting with the team leaders from both services to run through with them what level of commitment was needed by them in order for the show to be of a certain standard and quality. I was aware that the workers were not from arts and theatre backgrounds so may not realise the importance of having the cast there at every rehearsal. I also wanted to discuss the production week and to see if there was the opportunity of fitting in one extra rehearsal that week (so that would be two rehearsals) and the possibility of a night show (which meant services giving their staff time in lieu to be present). So after these efforts and ensuing phone calls it was hugely disappointing that one of the services didn’t hold up their end of the deal by contacting parents and letting them know what was happening. As a consequence one performer could not make the Friday performance as she had to work and no matter of negotiating and offering to pay her the same wage she’d receive for her work that day could convince her or her mum to let her do it. A huge let down for the cast and crew. Another member’s father was not going to let his son out at night to perform the night time show so this was also hugely disappointing for him and the cast. Consequently we then had to hurriedly rework parts of the show and find other people to fill in sections (including myself).
I had done my level best to avoid throwing new ideas to the group at the last minute but this is what I found myself having to do. To their absolute credit I was so proud of them being able to remember new tasks and changes. It really showed their ability as performers to be adaptable and take on new ideas without complaint and with confidence. They were brilliant.

Basically, not having direct contact with the parents was very frustrating and not having the full support and commitment for one of the services was very upsetting and disappointing for those performers who didn’t get to perform due to the lack of communication with the parents.

OUTCOME

The outcome was a hour long group devised piece of theatre that explored with six people living with a disability their ideas of belonging and personal connection to space and place. It was a theatre piece that didn’t rely on loads of dialogue or a linear narrative but rather moments and abstracts based on the central themes of escape, belonging, isolation, searching and loss.

There were 4 performance were held at Powerhouse Youth Theatre from October 24\textsuperscript{th}-26\textsuperscript{th}, 2007.
Cast:
Maria Revoltar, Michael Micallef, Nadya Silbanof, Melissa Huntsman, Holly Dempster, Tom Nazor, Digby Webster (Friday day performance), David Doyle (Saturday night performance).

Crew:
Director: Alison Richardson
Set/ Costume Designer: Kate Shanahan
Assistant Director/ Stage Manager: Mary Jekki
Sound design: Nick Wishart
Production Manager: Tim Dennis
Assistant production manager: Ashton Whitwell
Stage Manager (Thursday): Christie
Peregrine

A new work devised by members of Can-Do Performance Group, Great Lakes region.

2008

Case study prepared by Vicki Smyth, Team Leader, Great Lakes Leisure & Respite Options.

ABOUT

Can-Do Performance Group was born out of a Social Support programme at Great Lakes Leisure and Respite Options (GLLARO), in celebration of International Day of People with a Disability. The original aim was to present a piece of theatre which could give the performers a new and positive personal experience and to increase performing skills. It was also intended to give individuals a sense of accomplishment and pride, and to create a quality piece of theatre to entertain and touch a local audience, while having relevance to the actors.

Can-Do Performance is a group of diverse people with varying abilities who came together for the first time in April 2007 with a common interest being drama. The group evolved from an adult social support program in 2007 at GLLARO a service which provides respite for carers and social activities for people with a disability. The group showed their first performance of Mr Zarbouvray Dreams of a Flying Machine in December 2007.

December 2008 saw Can-Do’s 2nd play which was performed to celebrate International Day of People with a Disability. Can-Do Performance group staged Peregrine, a contemporary piece of theatre exploring notions of individuality, group mentality and personal treasures. Set in a 1946 train station this non-narrative play tightly follows a sound score consisting of a mix of 1940s, contemporary music with sound effects of steam trains. Not one word is spoken through the entire show as station crowds come and go and individuals privately reveal to the audience the contents of
their precious suitcases: the thing they treasure most. Earlier in 2009, Can-Do Performance group were awarded the Cultural Award at the Local Government Cultural Awards 2009 for Peregrine.

PROCESS

At the 2008 GLLARO annual Planning Day, drama was the number one requested activity by the clients. The Team Leader, Vicki Smyth negotiated with the show’s writer, director and designer, Mel Harris regarding terms for the project, roles, time-frames, etc. Since the inception in April 2007, Can-Do performance group breaks after the annual performance in early December and re-forms the following April, getting together on a fortnightly basis until September, then weekly until the December performance.

When the group re-forms in April, discussion and exercises focus on the possible themes for the upcoming production. Mel takes her time to get to know each individual and the talents brought by each person to the group – as well as challenges.

Each of the rehearsals are filled with lots of good fun, side splitting laughter, warm fuzzy feelings, with new friendships being formed and existing ones deepened and barriers being broken down.
April commences with drama exercises which provide the chance for individuals to explore, express and share feelings, dreams, frustrations and secrets – it is liberating and provides a great sense of freedom for the group to express themselves.

The drama exercises include short script work, improvisations, ice breaker circles which all allow individuals a chance to express and experience a range of emotions. Individuals would happily step out of their comfort zones and their use their faces and bodies to express great joy, deep sadness, total surprise, being lazy, happy and sociable, lonely and dejected. Individuals are shocked with the amount of noise produced by singing, clapping, stamping, shouting and a melody of different sounds. Other times were soft, quiet and gentle, floating around like thin air.

By approximately June, the storyline is universal and revealed. The culture of the space needs the individuals to feel a sense of safety, acceptance and security so the cast feel open to share their views and feelings. The writing of Peregrine came by posing the question, “If you had to pack up your life and move to another place and you could only take one thing with you, what would it be?” Again the performers experienced various activities focusing on their individuality, uniqueness, and what was important to each of them. Old black and white prints were used to inspire a sense of the setting and gain feedback. Feedback can come in a range of ways; observing body language, drawings, acting & showing pictures. When each person identified their most treasured thing, this became the contents of their suitcase. A 1946 train station was chosen as the setting for the show as this was a period...
of great social change and migration, and the train station is a metaphor for life’s journey & new directions. The entire cast of 19 went on a train trip for a weekend to Sydney (from Taree) this was so they could experience first hand the business of travel, stations, luggage and they also saw Cirque du Soleil to give them the experience of what it was like to be an audience member and also to see a professional production.  *Peregrine* had no script, the entire show being driven by a tight score of sound & music. The performance consisted of 21 linked scenes, each with its own music piece. Crowd scenes, exploring group mentality and the individual verses the mass, were interspersed with solo scenes in which individuals privately revealed the contents of their suitcases to the audience.

When it came to costuming, the community stepped forward. Local theatre groups Taree Arts Council and Great Lakes Amateur Dramatic Society offered costumes for free, or at low cost. A local hairdresser gave her time to create the stunning hair-dos, parents and friends gave assistance and the cast was transformed into 1940’s travellers. Other volunteers created props, stage managed behind the scenes, and kept the cast fed and watered. The process which the performers undertook during the initial stages allowed each person to own their role and breathe life into it so it was truly their message which they wished to convey. The transport for clients was provided by either volunteers or car pools organised for the families.

The GLLARO Team Leader, Vicki Smyth developed a full budget for the project and sourced additional funding and in-kind support. A $1,000 Community Development & Support Expenditure (CDSE) Grant was obtained. This provided most of the funding needed for the purchase of stage props and theatre sets. Clients of GLLARO paid a $5.00 contribution for each rehearsal, which also paid for the director. The venue was donated free of charge. Stage props were loaned by Bunnings, or at subsidised cost by Great Lakes Resource Recovery. A local photographer provided his services at a reduced rate, and provided a CD of all photographs free of charge and free of copyright. The production of a DVD of the performance was provided free of charge. Admission was by gold coin donation. The project is self-funding.

**STRENGTHS**

Audiences were stunned after Can-Do’s first show in 2007, *Mr Zarbouvray Dreams Of A Flying Machine*. Positive feedback rippled through the community for months, and the DVD of the play was shown to community groups long after the event. There was a sense of amazement that the group could produce such a moving, high-quality show.
Through the process of building *Peregrine* the cast developed a greater empathy with each other and a shared bond within the group. There was also an obvious increase of self value and worth.

Longer term objectives of Can Do are to break down barriers, stereotypes, and challenge community perceptions of people with a disability by presenting quality and professional theatre with a Can-Do punch to delight, touch and astound audiences. The group set out to make theatre which can stand on its own strengths, and not be appreciated in a condescending manner simply because it was performed by people with a disability. Part of this objective is to make the Can-Do name well-known and respected in the local area for the quality and innovation of the group’s performances. Another objective is for the productions to have a ‘not-to-be-missed’ reputation as we build on the group’s skills and repertoire into the future.

The Community have embraced the performances and numbers have increased from the first performance to the second, and currently people are asking when the next show will be. The show finished with afternoon tea following the show, during which the cast and broader community mingled.
CHALLENGES

One of the challenges following the initial success of the 2007 production of Mr Zarbouvray Dreams Of A Flying Machine was to raise the bar even higher, and to produce a completely different piece of theatre to wow audiences once again, and demonstrate the versatility of the group. Learning to move in particular ways to a set rhythm was a challenge for most, as was the demanding performance order of many entrances & exits. In some ways it was like a ballet of walking, precisely timed and executed, therefore many hours of rehearsal were spent getting it right. Within the cast were 5 volunteers who aided the process.

The performance was entirely non-verbal, with not a word spoken. The previous year as there was words spoken within the performance a sign language interpreter was present on the stage to interpret. On reflection of Peregrine, we received some feedback from a vision impaired person, who found it very difficult to read and work out the concept of the performance due to their vision being limited.

OUTCOME

The outcomes reached a broad spectrum within the Great Lakes community and beyond. These included; the ongoing, planned respite component for the families of the person with the disability by delivering an activity which the client is enthusiastic to attend, bringing carers together with a positive goal to focus on & a social and meaningful experience for the person with a disability which includes friendships and a deepening of relationships with peers. The project was cost effective and provided the opportunity for community involvement, friends and family to engage and contribute towards a positive goal. Networking with other service providers, private businesses, government organisations and individuals within the community resulted in a positive relationship with a view to ongoing ventures.

The audience viewed a quality production which was entertaining and had the ability to move the audience and transport them into another world. The fact that it was performed by a cast who had disability was an after thought. The clients were viewed in a light which promoted dignity, respect and admiration.

There were two performances of Peregrine which was seen by approximately 700 members of the local community. An audience of approximately 800 school students who attended the performance were engaged and remained quiet and interested through the performance. The cast also now have increased their acting skills, improved their physical abilities in rhythm and timing, and have a greater appreciation of theatre.
Cast:

Crew:
Director/Writer: Melanie Harris
Peter Craig, Lisa Stone, Jenny MacDonald, Grant Melzer, Kim Winter, Kaye Hancock, Trish Caddis, Leslie Stemp, Kathleen Fraser, Matt Watters, Shane Chalker

The Team Leader, Vicki Smyth initiated the drama activity into GLLARO in 2007 and the staff all support this activity and annual performance including the additional workload leading up to performance time; Sandra Davies and Linda Trinajstic.
Sucked In!

A devised work by Powerhouse Youth Theatre, Fairfield & Accessible Arts (AArts).

2003
Case study by Katrina Douglas, Director of Sucked In!

ABOUT

Powerhouse Youth Theatre (PYT) is the leading youth theatre company in Western Sydney. By engaging with young people from across the region, PYT creates new, innovative and inclusive performing arts opportunities lead by collaborative processes and participation. Accessible Arts is the peak arts and disability organisation across New South Wales. Sucked In was the first integrated performance that both PYT and AArts had produced.

Sucked In was a multimedia performance devised and performed by young people with and without a disability in June 2003. Sucked In took a light-hearted, satirical look at how young people perceive our computer-dominated world, the digital revolution and the next stage of human evolution - cyborgs. During a routine computer link up twelve young people are sucked into a strange cyber world. Trapped with nowhere to hide, the group are tested by the mysterious ‘deus machinca’. Those ‘chosen’ by the deus machinca are assimilated and upgraded into super humans - part machine part human. Over the course of 40 minutes Sucked In took the audience on a journey through a brave new world where humans are obsolete and the next super power is an internet fridge hell bent on revenge.

Sucked In was created over a five months by a team of eight professional artists, two emerging artists and a group of twelve young performers with and without a disability. This creative team devised a 40 minute multimedia production that was given a spontaneous standing ovation on opening night. PYT staff, artists and performers all received outstanding feedback from family, friends, funding bodies and other artists.
Sucked In was produced by Powerhouse Youth Theatre (PYT) in association with Accessible Arts (AArts). Sucked In was funded by Australia Council for the Arts and Arts NSW.

**PROCESS**

Sucked In was initiated in 2002 by staff at PYT and Accessible Arts (AArts) namely Neri-dah, Claire Havey and Katrina Douglas. The original idea was to explore how marketing and mass media targeted young people and how young people responded to and negotiated their way through the ever expanding world of marketing and new technologies. From the outset both PYT and AArts agreed that the project should integrate young people with and without a disability, and that we would not target any particular disability. One of the core objectives of the project was to enhance understanding and promote acceptance between different groups of young people.

At the time there was little happening in the disability arts sector in NSW and most of the artists involved had had no experience working with people with a disability, so AArts and PYT arranged two training sessions run by Caroline Downs. The first session was held before the workshops began and focussed on exercises and ideas on how to devise a performance with young people with a disability and dealing
with problematic behaviour. The training was not specific as at that point we did not know the make up of the group. The second session was held after workshops had started and dealt primarily with problematic behaviour and working with a large group many of whom were high needs. It was generally felt that the second session was more successful and appropriate for this project. It’s interesting to note that no one involved, including AArts staff, had worked with an integrated group on a performance project before and there was no training that we knew of that we could offer the artists. We all effectively entered the project ‘blind’.

A call out for interested young people was distributed in December 2002 and again January 2003. The call out was coordinated by PYT and AArts, and was sent primarily through the organisations’ extensive networks. Email, paper flyer, print media and word of mouth were the main methods of getting the word out about the project.

While disability services were aware of *Sucked In*, and asked to refer on interested young people, this project worked entirely outside of the disability sector. This proved to be both a blessing and curse. It definitely worked in our favour when dealing directly with participants and their families rather relying on services to pass on information. Also in general the participants felt freer to reach outside themselves. Everyone started the project with a blank slate, including those without a disability, and there were no pre-existing parameters about what someone could or could not do. Working outside the disability sector did mean that we had no support workers in the room and this was problematic. It also meant that we were not able to attract an audience from the disability sector. Please see below for more details.

Workshops began in February 2003 at PYT’s home, Fairfield School of the Arts, with approximately 22 young people. The majority of the group, roughly 65%, identified as having a disability. The disabilities ranged from physical, intellectual, Down Syndrome, acquired brain injury (ABI), mental and visual. This initial group had such diverse abilities and high needs that often the artists, and some of the participants, were forced to baby sit the less social and more problematic members of the group. Over the first 4 to 6 weeks of workshops, nearly half the group dropped out and we were left with 12 performers. Of these 12, 7 identified as having a disability ranging from physical, intellectual, Down Syndrome, acquired brain injury (ABI), cerebral palsy and visual. The overwhelming response from all the artists involved was that the initial group of 22 was too large and difficult to work with, particularly as we did have carers in the room. The loss of almost half the participants during the process was viewed not as a problem but as essential for the ongoing success of the project. It is important to note that the final 12 performers functioned remarkably cohesively and despite some small problems were extremely supportive and caring toward each other.
The group met 10am till 4pm every Sunday for 5 months. It quickly became apparent that the majority of the group had no or very little performance experience and the first 2 / 3 months were focussed on skills training. All artists ran workshops in their speciality, and participants gained skills in acting, physical theatre, voice, script development, sound, digital technology and design. Caroline Downs ran the first two workshops to help ease the other artists into the process. Caroline was not involved in the project after the 2nd workshop.

From day one we made it clear that no one would be forced to perform in the final production, but that we wanted everyone actively participate in the workshops, including the artists. This approach was important, as several in the group were nervous about performing. For example Ashley wanted to write scripts for the production but was adamant that he would not perform. Ashley has cerebral palsy and was worried that the audience would not understand him. We encouraged Ashley to attend the workshops and participate in the exercises and improvisations, though we made it clear he did not have to perform in the final production. With the support of the artists and the other participants Ashley's confidence grew and it became clear he was not only a skilled writer but also a wonderful actor. In the end we couldn’t get Ashley off the stage, and after Sucked In he pursued other performance and writing opportunities at ATYP and NIDA.
We worked very hard to ensure that the workshop space was safe and supportive but no one was allowed to use their ‘ability’ to get out of trying an exercise. As a result everyone in the group developed new skills and achieved things they thought (and were often told) they were incapable of doing. For example at the beginning of the project Hakki had a habit of withdrawing and saying he could not do an exercise because he was blind. It became obvious that in certain circumstances he used his lack of vision as an excuse to pull out of an exercise he did not want to do. At first we encouraged him to join in, then we gently pushed him to do activities and eventually we forced Hakki to try different exercises. By the end of the project he had huge shift in attitude and gained a lot of confidence in himself. One of my favourite moments was when we did trust walks. Everyone had to be guided blind around the room and trust their partner to be their eyes. Hakki loved this exercise and was thrilled to be given the chance to be someone’s eyes. It was very empowering for him to be the one guiding rather then always having to be guided.

About a month into the process it was obvious the group were not interested in the original concepts. They didn’t want to make a show about advertising and marketing nor were they interested in discussing their different levels of ability. When ideas about ability were raised they either fell silent and refused to talk or stated that it was not an issue. The most interesting and thought provoking ideas emerged when discussing new technologies, futuristic worlds and popular culture. For example we asked the group to name a digital or technological invention that they would like to see developed and how they would use it. Andrew suggested a robotic arm so he could pick up girls!

The artists debated long and hard about what to do and how far we should push them to talk about something they did not want to discuss. As the performance season loomed and with few ideas around marketing, we made a conscious choice to abandon the original concept and create a production based on their thoughts and ideas. We all felt that it was more important the work come from them and that they ‘own’ it. Hence the evil internet fridge and Sucked In was born.

The final performance was a mix of pre-written scripts and group devised improvisations. We generated as much material as possible through group improvisations, script writing and design workshops. Then at a production meeting all their work was tabled and we pulled out the most interesting and dynamic ideas. I provided a framework for the show, which the group all fed into and agreed on. Then the last 4 to 6 weeks were spent refining, re-writing and developing the final performance.

As we entered the final few weeks of rehearsals it became apparent that several in the group were struggling to remember the story and structure. To help them learn it, all the devised scenes were transcribed and a script of the entire show was...
compiled. With a written script in hand all the performers were encouraged to learn their lines and remember their movements. The thought of learning a script proved to be a massive hurdle for some of the group and in hindsight it might not have been the solution. However what could have been a disaster turned into a major achievement for the participants. For example Lina had been told over and over again that she could not remember lines because of her injury (ABI). She spoke quite openly about her supposed ‘inability’ however it was obviously a source of frustration for her. When we gave her the script she was horrified. She genuinely did not believe she was capable of learning and retaining it. We encouraged her to forget what she had been told in the past and to learn as much as she could. With a lot of support Lina learnt all her lines and nailed them each night. She was absolutely thrilled to have achieved this and after the final performance spoke to me about how much confidence she has gained and how glad she was that she had conquered this fear.

The final two weeks were focussed, hectic and pushed all the participants to do and achieve things they thought were impossible. No one was allowed to say ‘I can’t do that’ or use their perception of their own ability as an excuse. And it is a credit to everyone involved that the final production was pulled together in a relatively short space of time. The week of performances was exciting, scary, exhaustive and extremely satisfying. The opening night was probably the best performance with all the nervous tension and excitement exploding in a fantastic performance. The standing ovation given by the audience speaks volumes about this performance.
Subsequent shows were all fantastic however five proved to be too much for the group and many were extremely tired by the end of the week. Audience numbers were strong throughout the season and feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

**STRENGTHS**

One of the greatest strengths of *Sucked In* was the sense of community that developed between the participants and artists. It was not an easy task integrating a group of young people with mixed abilities however by the end the group had a strong, supportive, friendly bond that was noticeable both on and off stage. This achievement is extremely important and significant particularly when there was so little work of this type happening in 2003. The positive relationship between the participants also had a huge impact on the audience, including funding bodies and people who worked in the disability sector. I was told numerous time by audience members how surprised and impressed they were that the group not only worked so well together on stage but that they had obviously established close friendships.

All the performers benefited a great deal from their participation in *Sucked In*. They all collaborated successfully with peers they would not normally work or ‘hang out’ with. It was the first time that the young people without a disability had worked with a large group of peers with a disability and vice versa. They learnt a lot about each other and their own preconceptions about ability and disability. For me this was the important objective of this project – to breakdown some of the barriers and stereotypes that exist between young people with and without a disability.

The supportive relationship was the direct result of the working process and environment set up and nurtured by the artists. From the outset we ensured that the group were not split into those with a disability and those without. We endeavoured to get feedback and ideas from everyone in the group and ensured that the group listened and considered everyone’s thoughts. We noted that our behaviour was ‘copied’ by the young people without a disability in the beginning however as the project progressed and friendships developed, they did not need us to set an example.

I think it is important to recognise the young people without a disability, as often they can become lost in an integrated group. These young people all volunteered for this project and stuck with the process despite the difficulties that arose. The size of the group meant that artists were swamped coping with the different needs in the room. This was particularly true at the start. Often the young people without a disability stepped in and assisted without any prompting on our behalf. Their assistance included encouraging ideas and participation, helping with lines and at times (literally) babysitting. These young people are remarkable people who displayed maturity beyond their years. It was important however that we (i.e. the artistic team)
ensure that they also were been pushed and challenged. It was definitely difficult finding and maintaining a balance and we succeed as much as we failed but was an issue that we always raised at production meetings so we were constantly thinking about how best to meet the needs of everyone in the room.

A really important outcome of the project was that the written and visual material was either initiated or developed by the performers. The participants were able to see how their ideas and input were essential to building the show and hence they all felt a strong sense of ownership over the project. Ashley Walker and Robert Jenkins wrote several scenes for the play and a team of five co-wrote the short film and nearly all the other scenes came from improvisations. Some of the funniest moments came from comments or ideas suggested by the participants during the final two weeks of the rehearsals. Sucked In was very much a participant driven performance.

I think all the artists benefited from the project and enjoyed working with the group. A very strong bond developed amongst the artists and our process on the floor was very fluid, supportive and open. It was however an extremely difficult and exhausting project. Everyone worked above and beyond the original guidelines, and we were all required to take on extra tasks. But all the artists generally enjoyed working with this group and gained so much from the project. We all learnt new skills and as a result are confident working with an integrated group and / or people with a disability.
CHALLENGES

Sucked In was not without its challenges. The initial size of the group was too large for the artists to handle. The first few weeks were spent solving problems and dealing with the participants with high needs. This meant artistic process and skills development took a back seat. At times we felt like we were running respite care and child minding service. I have never been so relieved to lose nearly half the participants of a project.

We discovered that many of the participants had behavioural problems and/or trouble with social interaction. Some of the problems we were dealing with included theft, mild physical violence, sexual harassment (verbal & physical), refusal to participate, refusal to listen to or accept direction or suggestions, and a high number of arguments between participants with disabilities. All the artists were pushed to the limits of their patience and tempers. We were all forced to deal with problems and issues that drew their focus away from their main artistic role. For example Richard spent most of the last few weeks sitting next to one participant with an ABI who could not censor his thoughts before thinking. Not surprisingly this caused numerous problems and the only solution we could find was to ask the participant to say everything quietly to Richard first and then Richard could filter out anything that could offend others. We would have benefited from the presence of trained carers and more assistants in the room. I would also recommend that future projects have systems in place to de-brief artists during and at the end of a project.

One of the biggest challenges of this project was that it struggled to attract an audience from the disability sector. It was very difficult to secure bookings from disability organisations for several reasons including lack of notice, all the performances were at night and because we were working outside the disability sector. I also believe the project needed a dedicated PR person. Both PYT and AArts had limited staff and it was impossible to dedicate the time required to effectively publicise the project to the disability sector. We did as much publicity as we were able but this was primarily to local papers and company networks. In hindsight we should have budgeted for a PR person.

OUTCOME

The final performance was a great success and is a tribute to everyone involved. The audience response was overwhelmingly positive and we were rewarded with a standing ovation on opening night. The final production, I believe, was able to combine sound, video, design and digital with the live performance to create an integrated production. The sci-fi nature of the story provided the ideal scenario for the multi-media aspects of the production.
The audience numbers were high throughout the season (215 over 5 performances) with some attending several performances. The performances were attended by Arts NSW, the Australia Council for the Arts, Fairfield City Council, Holroyd City Council and of course family and friends. Numerous youth theatre practitioners also attended. I know there were people, other directors and artists who criticised *Sucked In* for not pushing contemporary theatre practice or for been a bit rough and ready. But it’s interesting to note some of the artists who criticised *Sucked In*, went away and initiated their own integrated theatre project, and that in it’s self is a successful outcome.

Finally I think it was a major achievement that this project was produced. When we set up the project I was not aware of many other performances that were created and performed by an integrated group. It was exciting to work outside of our every day parameters, and watch that group grow, develop and support each other. Most of all it was exciting to be able to have the opportunity to be part of *Sucked In*. 
Cast
Mary Jekki, Robert Jenkins, Kylie Matthews, Teresa Nguyen, Andrew Pall, Simon Parkes, Emma Plant, Lina, Pollifrone, Megan Power, Hakki Soyvermis, Julie Trunong, Ashley Walker

Crew
Producers: Powerhouse Youth Theatre in association with Accessible Arts
Project Managers: Rayce Coyte, India Zegan & Katrina Douglas
Director: Katrina Douglas
Dramaturg: Richard Lagarto
Musician / Digital Artist: Nick Wishart
Designer: Lisa Mimmocchi
Lighting Designer: Rodney Bertram
Stage Manager: Padaric Meredith-Keller
Movement Director: Karen Therese
Drama Tutor / Mentor: Caroline A Downs
Assistant Director: Eva Cashel
Design Assistant: Katrin Kircheiss