



Frankst & Angst: an Evaluation Report of *Maze*

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Introduction

Background

About this report

This report is an evaluation of a Community Cultural Development (CCD) project entitled *Maze*. This evaluation report focuses on the facilitators and young people's perceptions and understandings of the processes and short-term outcomes. It describes a collaborative model of practice and compares the short-term outcomes of the project with the initial goals. The evaluation framework is informed by a series of questions ordered under 4 categories: clarity and transparency of goals and interests, engagement & participation, creating and finally learning, change & leadership.

The Centre for Popular Education carried out the evaluation of *Maze*. The Centre undertakes research, consulting and teaching activities that are concerned with education and community capacity building. In particular, the Centre is intent on studying and supporting educational practice that serves the interests of people who are marginalised, or/and engaged in advocacy, social action or community development activities. Centre members research and teach in a range of arenas, including schools, health promotion, youth work/education, arts and cultural development, international and community development, adult and community education, basic education, social movements and unions. The researcher on this project was research fellow, Celina McEwen.

About the Project

Maze was a project of the Ashfield Youth Theatre funded by Ashfield Council and the Ministry for the Arts. The project ran between February and June 2002. It was a skills training project that built on a core ensemble of 15 young people, called the Droogs (from Stanley Kubrick's *Clockwork Orange*), who worked on a similar youth theatre project with the current director in 2001. In 2002, the project attracted a group of 27 young people who worked together, building on "the language" developed in 2001.

The project was workshop based. Over 5 months a director, assistant director, musical director and designer worked with a group of 27 young people at devising a performance work including theatre, music and physical theatre, requiring young people to use movement, singing and acting skills. The project was seen as collaborative work between professional artists and young people, rather than an out of school activity for young people led by youth workers. This focus on collaboration meant that the young people were given a lot of room to make artistic decisions for the show. Though the ideas didn't necessarily all have to come from the young people involved they had to be negotiated between the artists and the young people.

The young people and professional artists worked together in workshops held at 2 different venues, Bastable Community Centre in Croydon and Ashfield Town Hall. As well as a place to experiment with ideas and theatre making, those workshops were used as social meeting place to catch up with friends outside of school. Workshops were 3.5 to 4hrs long twice a week on Thursdays and Saturdays. Typically, Thursdays were training, rehearsal and devising nights. Young people would work with the

director and assistant director in sharpening their acting skills. Those sessions would begin with a focus exercise, then move into warm up and team building / group dynamics exercises. The 2nd part of the session would focus on smaller group work, skills training, devising exercises to explore a component or scene of the play and rehearsals. Saturdays were design-based workshops to draw (literally as well as metaphorically) out issues. The young people would then mainly work with the director and designer. These sessions started in a similar way to Thursdays, but in the 2nd half young people worked with the designer looking at the role of visuals as another means of communication and discussing elements of the set and costumes to see how they related to the intention or purpose of the play. The artistic outcome of this project was a play entitled *Maze* that was performed for 3 nights between 20-22 June 2002 at Ashfield Town Hall.

Methodology

The research methodologies drew on a qualitative approach to fieldwork. The intention was to go beyond artists and young people's anecdotal accounts and highlight the evaluative judgements of key informants. The emphasis was on collecting 'rich' qualitative data to inform the development of evaluation models and practices for Australian CCD practitioners.

Data Gathering

The data was collected from both young people and facilitators through individual and focus group interviews, observation of workshops and performances and self-evaluation sessions. Different questions were drawn for the young people and facilitators (see appendix 1). Interviews, focus group sessions and self-evaluation sessions were carried out early on in the project, between the devising and rehearsal periods and at the end of the project. A random sample of young people were interviewed twice pre and once post-performance. The pre-performance interviews were carried out at the venue during the Saturday sessions in groups of 3. For the last interview the young people were contacted one on one over the phone, between 2 to 5 weeks after the performances. Further data was collated from the whole group of young people post-performance during a self-evaluation session supported by the researcher. All 5 facilitators were interviewed and reflection on their practice fostered through focus groups and self-evaluation sessions. For the facilitators, the first interview was conducted on the phone or at the workshop venue. The last interview was carried out as part of a self-evaluation session one week after the performances. Anecdotal evidence was also gathered from audience members on the night of the dress rehearsal.

A random sample of 28% of the young people participating as performers in this project were chosen early in the project and were interviewed twice pre and once post-performance. Of the young people interviewed 7 were young women and 1 a young man, compared with the wider group which included 18 young women and 9 young men. The young people interviewed aged between 15 and 17, compared with the age range of the wider group which ranged from 14 to 21 years old. Out of the young people interviewed 75% lived in the Ashfield local government area, compared with 25% in the wider group.

The researcher was able to follow up with all the young people interviewed as they all remained committed to the project till its completion. As well as being part of this project, all of the young people interviewed were in school at the beginning of the project. Most of them were also involved in extra curricular activities other than *Maze*. Two were working on a youth festival, 1 playing music, 1 playing soccer and another part of the Girl guides once a week. Further, 2 young people worked part-time. For all, but one young person who had decided to leave school, their activities remained mostly the same, except for a shift in priorities. For some, their focus was on rehearsing and performing *Maze* while for others their focus was on school assessments.

The young people interviewed had diverse aspirations as to their occupation following the completion of their secondary school education. Some recurring aspirations were to travel the world, be happy and in love, and be a writer/director.

The 5 facilitators of the project were professional artists. They included Frank Newman, actor, Director and Ashfield Youth Theatre Director, Mitch Stitt, actor and Assistant Director, Trevor Brown, musician, composer and Musical Director, Leonie Evans and Kate Shanahan, both Set and costume designers. All were experienced practitioners in their respective fields but with varying levels of experience in youth work.

Due care and ethical procedures, such as the use of consent forms with young people interviewed, were put in place to advise young people of the nature of the work carried out by the researcher and the conditions of their involvement in the evaluation (see appendix2). Young people were interviewed on the premises of the workshops in groups of 2 or 3. Answers to questions asked were noted rather than taped. With facilitators, interviews were taped as well as documented through notes.

The evaluation was done by the researcher as an outsider looking in. It was noted that her presence had a change effect mainly on the director and the young people interviewed. Informants commented that her presence made the sessions more reflective. The director and some of the young people interviewed welcomed the opportunity for reflection that was fostered by having an evaluation component attached to the project. The young people commented that "the evaluation helps to reflect" and "You get to express yourself in a different way through evaluation."

Data Analysis

Often CCD practitioners (Thiele & Marsden, 2002; Slattery, 2002) claim that their practice reaches young people where other strategies have failed. They state that their practice engages young people in participatory ways to bring about positive learning, transformation or empowerment. In practice as well as a construct the concept of CCD is problematic. The term is used to cover a variety of practice ranging from resistance art or art for social change to site specific art via community arts. It is usually characterised, though, by a collaborative effort between a group of marginalised or disenfranchised people and artists in making art. Generally speaking, this kind of work is born out of an intention to intervene in a social issue with a desire to collaborate in making art or vice versa. This intention to address social injustice can be broadly translated into a spectrum ranging from increasing people's access to democratic rights to transforming society so that no group is systematically oppressed

by a dominant group. In the first instance, CCD practitioners see their work as providing a chance to improve participants' offending behaviour and take on more conventional attitudes and values in order to play a useful part in society, to benefit society (Cooper & White, 1994). In this context the practice aims to engage community members in self-help. The focus here is on helping the disadvantaged compete for the "good things" in life, to seek equality of opportunity, or to ensure that young people are aware of their rights and have support in realising those (Cooper & White, 1994). In the second instance, this kind of work is seen as having a capacity for self-representation and social change by empowering individuals and transforming structures for the betterment of society. In this context the practitioner works with community members at providing a channel for their voice and a medium for self-expression. The focus here is on radical societal changes at individual and institutional levels. It is about community members understanding their place in society and gaining more power over their own life (Cooper & White, 1994).

This analysis aims to put these CCD theories to the test by focusing on the following areas of inquiry:

- The clarity and transparency of the goals and interests, looking at questions such as 'Who plays a leading role in defining the goals and concepts?', 'Are the different goals and interests of diverse participating groups shared?' and 'Are the goals and interests able to be negotiated and further developed?';
- The level of engagement of participation of the young people involved, answering questions such as 'What constitutes a desirable level of participation in the project?', 'What strategies are used to engage with young people and foster their participation?' and 'What models of engagement and participation characterise this project?';
- The kind of play that was created, addressing questions such as 'What sort of theatre is being created?', 'Who controls and owns the creative outcome?' and 'What role do practitioners and participants play in creating the play?'; and
- The learning and change that occurred through this project for the informants, clarifying questions such as 'What sort of learning might the project support and facilitate?', 'Do the participants have changed views about themselves, others and nominated issues?' and 'Does the project help create more opportunities for participating young people to learn and work together?'

Research & Evaluation Questions Addressed

Clarity and transparency of goals and interests

Facilitators and young people's Goals and Interests

The leading goals and concepts of the project were clearly stated in the project proposal to the funding bodies (Ashfield Youth Theatre, 2001). Those were defined by *Maze's* director, Frank Newman. The proposal states several aims. Those varied from providing a space for young people, to providing training and development opportunities, developing new audiences, creating a particular type of theatre, being a vehicle for discussion and expression, building confidence and empowering young people. The proposal asserts that those aims will be met by challenging young people on their perception of theatre.

The goals and interests of the young people interviewed varied from gaining acting or performance skills as well as people skills, to developing personally and building confidence, to meeting people and making friends, working with the director at putting together a piece of theatre in a fun and unconventional way and finally to thinking differently about various issues / reflecting on society and their place in it. The facilitators' goals and interests were threefold: 1) to ensure that quality theatre was being created as their reputation as professional artists was at stake in the eyes of the artistic community and the young people's involved in this project; 2) to ensure that the young people were participating in a positive learning experience; and 3) that the project met the proposal's goals. Not all of the goals were consensual yet they weren't in conflict with the goals the young people and the facilitators had either. The shared goals were in the area of providing training and personal development opportunities for the young people involved in the project. There was room for most goals and interests to be accommodated within the project.

Facilitators and young people's comments on leading goals

The goals stated in the proposal were transparent in that they were clearly stated in the project proposal and that the young people involved had access to them. Further, some young people were asked to comment on those goals as part of the evaluation process. Their comments as well as that of the director's follow.

In relation to the project's goal to provide an outlet for youth arts in Ashfield where there are currently no youth arts services, the director saw that as being achieved as evidenced by the number of young people the project had attracted. All young people interviewed were also in agreement, though some expressed reservations as to how sustainable this could be without the group having its own venue. This concern was not ignored by the director who thought that "This show will do all sorts of stuff for the Ashfield Youth Theatre" such as being the springboard for providing a permanent space.

Another goal was to provide opportunities for professional development. The director's objective was to teach the young people to become "artists that want to create their own work, as opposed to actors that just want to wait by the phone for their agent." It was thought that through this process of collaboration young people

would develop life skills and build their confidence by coming together as a community, learning performance skills and thinking about issues of coming of age in different ways. All but one young person interviewed thought that the project would provide opportunities for professional development. They stated that this project would provide them with opportunities in the entertainment industry, but on a broader scale provide professional development in the area of personal and professional relationships building.

As for the goal to create powerful and provocative theatre to address issues faced by young people, the director saw this as collaborative work. The young people saw it as work based on the director idea's of rite of passage as a starting point and them building on; "They have the ideas about what they say is interesting and what they say is important to them." There was a general consensus among the young people interviewed that the play dealt with "dominant issues" of becoming an adult, but some of them felt that "sometimes it is imposed by other young people. Not everyone has the same issues which is a problem if you're looking at self-expression but not if you're looking at theatre, because it is interesting theatre." The director's goal of creating an exciting and unconventional piece of theatre that would change young people's perception of theatre as boring, "you sit down and watch it", was a vision that the young people fed on rather than generated. All young people interviewed thought that the processes in place would help create an interesting, non-cliché and open to interpretation piece of theatre, but were aware that they were working within the director's framework. A couple of young people summarised this situation by nicknaming the project "Frankst & Angst", which meant working with the director's vision, at defining teenage angst.

All young people interviewed felt the project provided opportunities for them to engage in cultural discussions about Ashfield and the culture of Sydney, Australia and the world they live in. They felt divided though as to whether this discussion did happen. Some stated it didn't actually happen because it wasn't a feature of the play being devised while others thought it did happen because of the diversity of the young people working on the project. "Today we're so different but working together. It opens up your mind" as one informant said.

To the questions of whether the project had young people involved in the decision-making processes in regards to artistic and financial management of the Ashfield Youth Theatre, informants' answers were mixed. In regards to the artistic management, all young people interviewed agreed that they were involved in the decision making process, especially in design. But in relation to the financial decision making process most felt that they had the opportunity to be involved but decided not to. The director's answer mirrored the young people's. The director stated that the young people were "definitely involved in the decision making processes in regards to artistic management". As for the financial management he stated that the young people knew how much was being spent, but weren't interested in making decisions there.

Addressing the goal aiming to empower and build confidence in young people through a process of artistic creation, the director defined empowerment as "to provide a space where people can feel that they are safe and therefore can express whatever it is that they are. [...] They then do things and are rewarded for it." The

project put young people in a situation where they were able to try out and experiment in a safe environment which helped them feel strong, unafraid of dealing with new situations. The assistant director saw this project empowering young people, because "it gives young people the strength and power" through theatre making processes to deal with issues relevant to youths in a truthful manner. Further, he thought that for young people to be allowed to express themselves in the project would give them strength in every day life. All young people interviewed found that this process empowered them because the director made them feel valued by using processes that enabled them to put their own views across.

Engagement and participation

Levels of engagement and participation

Young people were recruited for this project through advertisements distributed to local high school drama teachers, at festivals and through word of mouth (some members of the 2001 ensemble talking to their friends about it). Musicians were also recruited as an existing band by the director and worked separately from the rest of the group with the musical director at devising music for the play based on their own material and the musical director's vision. Most of the young people interviewed stated that their decision to take part in the project was initially because they wanted to explore drama further.

Evidence that the young people engaged with the ideas and processes of the project was found in their level of attendance, their behaviour in the workshops, their comments on the experience of being part of the project and their level of energy and enthusiasm during the performances. The project was accessible to all young people of the area because it was free and not aimed at a particular target group of "at risk" or disadvantaged young people. All but one of the young people who attended the 1st week of the workshops remained with the project till completion. A majority of the young people attended workshops at least once a week. Attendance of the workshops was most substantial on Thursdays. Smaller numbers of young people usually attended Saturdays. Thursday workshops averaged 20 and 10 on Saturdays. Saturdays were the least attended because it often clashed with other extra curricula activities and work, because of disagreement with parents over the time spent on the project or because some young people weren't as interested in being involved in the design aspect of the project ("Don't come to Saturdays because I can't draw") as they were in being part of the devising.

For the young people interviewed it was important for them to attend the workshops. Most of the young people interviewed stated not attending a maximum of 2 weeks out of the 5 months. They enjoyed attending the workshops because they felt they could be themselves, they were with like-minded people, they were engaged in activities they enjoyed, they would "miss out on something" otherwise and because "It's the only thing I really like doing" as one informant stated and "It is something I want to do" another said. This was reflected in their behaviour. During the workshops the young people laughed and cheered each other on. They were also warm and supportive of each other often embracing one another. Further, they felt safe enough to experiment with words, emotions and gender norms.

The facilitators thought the young people engaged with and participated in the project because it was creative, provocative, new, exciting, fun and safe. They also thought the project gave them the opportunity to:

- collaborate with professional practicing artists;
- be heard and see their ideas integrated in the product; and
- be "involved in a show which is of a higher quality than they can produce if it was just them."

In this project the director stated that there was a role for everyone as long as they were not disrupting the progress of the rest of the group. He described a desirable level of participation by the young people in the project as engaging with the processes of devising and concepts of rites of passage by providing ideas for the form and content of the creation. He defined an acceptable level of participation as being present, engaged in peripheral activities and "part of the final performance in even a minute way."

Strategies of engagement and participation

A third of the young people interviewed found the progress of the project slow, but thorough and worthwhile. Most of the young people interviewed said they enjoyed the games and exercises, though they sometimes found it "hard to see where they were leading to and how they related to each other". They saw this process as different from an arts or drama class at school because of:

- the people attending ("Everyone wants to do drama. There's a better atmosphere.");
- the focus on the devising rather than the text ("Drama class at school is performance based, here we concentrate on meaning", "In year 12 at school you work with a set text and theory. Here we work with ideas."); and
- the pedagogical strategies used ("Doesn't teach you like a teacher, not as many boundaries." "More interesting in the way we are taught." "The exercises we do make us remember it." "We're learning through games.", "Here it is more practical.", "Can express yourself more.").

The strategies used to engage young people's interest and foster their participation in the devising process included a bottom up approach to decision making, negotiated rather than imposed disciplinary measures, a non-judgmental approach to ideas offered and non didactic group work. Those were based on participatory, peer group and experiential principles of learning. These strategies relied heavily on the facilitators creating a safe environment and developing close, respectful and trusting relationships with the young people over a long period of time.

This project was not primarily seen as youth work rather it was seen as youth theatre work with an emphasis on process rather than product. Some of these strategies aimed at creating a sense of community (the community process) whilst others aimed at creating art (the artistic process). These strategies set a standard or "a starting point with room for improvement" for future Ashfield Youth Theatre projects as the director said.

Through the community process, young people gained skills such group work, people skills and building confidence. The process also "brought a group of [young] people together [and] created a community which extended to their parents and friends" as

the initial designer said. The community process included stages of development which paralleled those associated by the young people in the play with rites of passage (Ashfield Youth Theatre, 2002). The initial stage (separation) extended over the 1st 6 weeks where the young people had to adapt to new ways of working outside the square of traditional theatre and the familiar environment of school drama or other extra curricular activities. A series of discussions, exercises and games were used that “crystallised the level of thought that they needed to engage with” as the director said. This stage was an important period for 2 reasons. It offered young people a moment of realisation of what was required of them and allowed them to open up creatively. The following stage (transition) was an intermediary period where the young people went on a self-discovery journey which also meant for facilitators having to occasionally deal with young people's crises. Further, it was a time for the group to negotiate and define its norms and operating rules. The final stage (re-incorporation) saw the young people develop a strong sense of belonging to the group.

The artistic process helped the young people learn about being creative and how to devise an artistic product. In this project the artistic process included the following stages of development:

1. Improvising / devising - over the 1st 6 to 8 weeks. This is the 'research' stage using brainstorming and improvising exercises involving all young people present based on ideas or starting points suggested by the director.
2. Setting / staging - over a period of 3 weeks. This is mainly led by the director and assistant director in collaboration with those young people interested in writing. This included integrating some of the group's improvisations.
3. Rehearsing - over the last week. Done by including the musicians. Including remembering lines and movement and working on making the material familiar.
4. Performing - over 3 nights to conclude the project.

Creating

The kind of theatre created

Using the processes described above, a play was devised and performed to over 300 people. Overall the sort of theatre created matched the informants' expectations. The young people and the facilitators achieved most of their creative objectives.

The proposal states that *Maze* intended to be an interactive piece of theatre with live music that felt like a rock concert and ended in a dance party. This piece was also to be an exploration of issues identified by the group within the concept of rites of passage or journey from childhood into adulthood, based on the visual metaphor of a maze. The maze was to be used as a device to force audience members to participate in the performance as well as act as a means to establish scenes and characters. *Maze* was aimed at an audience of 15 to 26 year olds. The objective was to "shake the audience up and get them used to a world where anything can happen and where they have to actually react." (Ashfield Youth Theatre, 2001, pp7-8)

For all but one of the young people interviewed the project exceeded their expectations since they only "had a vague idea" of what was intended. They found that the creation matched their expectations because of a feeling of achievement rather than because the product matched their vision. Their sense of achievement was due to

the fact that they felt they had challenged the audience into thinking about and relating to the young people's lives and because they got satisfaction from doing something worthwhile, exciting and fun. They saw it as different from what they were used to doing at school in drama classes and different to what they had devised the previous year for those involved in the Droogs; "it's got to be interesting, not the same old cliches of school drama. It's real and not blown out of proportion. It's credible" one young informant said. Further, they had expectations of interaction and greater use of design which they found was met in the final performances. They liked the sort of theatre created because it was unconventional, an experiment and something they hadn't done before "It was a good piece of theatre because of the themes and the way it was put together plus the good energy from the audience."

The young people were also critical of some aspects of the theatre created. One of the young people interviewed found that she "Didn't like the kind of theatre created because it asks too much of the audience. I agree that it should have a message, but it should be more entertaining. It was more of an in-joke. Why let the audience draw their own conclusion when there is a message we want to tell?" Others found that some difficulty arose in the project due to the slow progress, working in a big group which frequently lost focus, the lax rules and the fact that there was only one full rehearsal in the Town Hall. As one young person stated we "should have been more selective in terms of dedication to process and rehearsal."

The theatre created matched the facilitators expectations. They found that the show worked well and that they worked well with the young people and with each other. Further, they found that their work achieved its objective of getting audience members spontaneously moving through the show. However, they also commented on obstacles that could have prevented the creation of the kind of theatre intended. Some of the obstacles were:

- the need to find a new designer at short notice;
- the fact that the musicians weren't integrated in the process of devising early enough;
- the pacing of the project, leaving little time for rehearsal;
- the lack of focus on stage managing; and
- the use of challenging and complex acting techniques such improvisation and intentional disruptions when working with non professional actors.

Audience members found the kind of theatre created was "really energising" and engaging. But some also mentioned that "it needed to be tighter". The content was clearly identified as being about growing up and "inhibition and anger against society and parents". As intended, they found the performance confronting in some parts and "the usual markers of theatre aren't there". Some also said that their views of young people as apathetic or depressed by a bleak future had changed as they saw another picture of active young people and having a good time.

The roles of the facilitators and young people in this creation

The data collected also offers insights into a particular model of CCD practice. This project can be described by its strategies of engagement and participation as well as by the relationship between the young people and the facilitators as "the artistic hero" model of CCD practice where a "group of artists work together on the artistic director's vision" (Flowers, 2002, p7). This was characterised here by the cohesion of

the group around the director as a role model; "He's in control", "he teaches us things we want and gives us the initiative", "the dude everyone wants to impress" were some of the comments young people made. The creative process was controlled by the director, "The idea has got to work for me, because ultimately I'm the Director, so I've got to see how it can work." While the creative outcome was owned by the group. A sense of ownership of the outcome was achieved for the young people by having their comments and ideas represented in the final play by integrating their research materials, language and writing. That sense of ownership was shared though it was also clear to the young people interviewed that the process was owned by the director as he would usually have the final say as to what material would be included or not.

The young people interviewed were divided on the kind of role they saw themselves playing in the project. Half saw themselves as dispensable ("an extra") since they were working towards someone else's vision, while the other half saw themselves as active participants in a democratic process ("Everybody contributes equally", "We need everyone to be there."). Within that latter group, they saw themselves as performers/actors and/or writers. Yet they also clearly saw the process mainly relying on the director. The other facilitators were also seen as leaders, the ones keeping the whole project going and in that respect having to wear several hats such as director, scriptwriter, prop manager, lighting manager, wardrobe manager, facilitators, promoters, etc., doing "all the things we don't think about." The young people interviewed acknowledged the amount of work the facilitators were doing and expressed pride in them.

Learning, Change & Leadership

The kind of learning supported and facilitated within the project

Through the young people's participation in this project and because of the facilitators' focus on them as individuals, they came together and learnt from each other, showed some level of commitment and took responsibility for some aspects of work in this devising project. Their learning was about life skills ("Understanding other people and their experience of life") as well as theatre skills. The skills learnt helped the young people understand accept their place in society ("The young people where forced to be critical about themselves and their place in the world. [...] The critical analysis was then carried into their lives and parents'") rather than change it.

From their work on this project, most facilitators stated having gained personal skills, people skills and management skills. For example, the assistant director reported having learnt a lot from working with the director and working in a community setting as opposed to working as an actor in an institution like NIDA for instance.

The kind of change that occurred

The project didn't so much foster changed views in the young people involved about themselves and others rather it gave them an opportunity to assert themselves by expressing a view about themselves not previously done in public. This project encouraged young people to explore themselves, others and issues relevant to them. They could be as extreme and challenging as the facilitators wanted them or needed them to be to break through their own boundaries and personal barriers and "think outside the square". By devising an unconventional piece of theatre, the director

encouraged young people to look at ideas about rites of passage in Australia. He saw his role as a director, but also as a teacher, as to "help them to bring out their ideas and teach them [...] how that can be used." The director thought that the young people involved would be transformed because "performance is like a ritual and you come out changed, however small", but didn't think the young people would actually embody the ideas of rites of passage or experience rites of passage by being part of this project. He thought that the young people would have a better understanding of the world and what it is to grow up. The hope was that by discussing nominated issues in a non-clichéd way and challenging their taken-for-assumptions the "ideas might sink in later on" and therefore "be able to name it when it's happening". For example, the facilitators and the young people would talk and share their views about the world until the director thought "they've got it or until they want to stop asking questions". The assistant director hoped that being part of this project would offer young people involved a moment of realisation as had happened to him. He felt **this work had offered him a moment of realisation where he could reflect on his path to adulthood and "pick through the points in my life when I went through". This realisation helped him change in that " I felt complete". Similarly,** He hoped it would help young people realise that "I've got the power now, because I know where I am, I can analyse where I am, and I can direct this situation now."

Leadership initiatives

The project generated further opportunities for young people to learn and work together when a group of 3 young women involved in the project decided to submit a grant application for acting development skills with the Australia Council for the Arts. They were unsuccessful in receiving the grant, but showed signs of initiative and leadership in applying for it.

Conclusion

Based on the informants' comments and my observations this project did have clear and transparent goals, there was a high level of engagement of participation by the young people involved, the kind of play that was created matched informants' expectations and the project fostered learning and change.

The leading goals and concepts of the project defined by the director in the project proposal were clear and transparent. Some of the diverse participating groups' goals and interests were shared while others differed. The shared goals were mainly in the area of providing training and personal development opportunities for the young people involved in the project. They were shared overall, but also allowed for further development and negotiation in their interpretation at an individual level.

The director had different expectations of levels of engagement and participation in the project. These varied from desirable to acceptable. A desirable level of engagement and participation meant that the young people were engaged with the processes of devising and concepts of rites of passage by providing ideas for the form and content of the creation. An acceptable level of engagement and participation was defined as being present, engaged in peripheral activities and part of the performance. The strategies used to engage young people's interest and foster their participation in the devising process relied heavily on the facilitators creating a safe environment and developing close, respectful and trusting relationships with the young people over a long period of time. They aimed at creating a sense of community (the community process) whilst others aimed at creating art (the artistic process).

The sort of theatre created matched the proposal's intentions as well as the informants' expectations in its form and content. The play created was interactive, included elements of a rock concert with the use of live music, ended in a dance party and explored issues of rites of passage based on the visual metaphor of a maze. The director controlled the creative process, while the wider group felt a sense of ownership of the product. The facilitators and young people had different roles in creating the play. The cohesion of the group was based on the director's presence as a role model and his vision. The other artists were mainly seen by the young people interviewed as facilitators while the young people's understanding of their role varied from extra to collaborator.

The sort of learning that the project supported and facilitated ranged from personal skills, to drama skills and management skills. The young people gained life skills, self-confidence, theatrical skills and learnt how to work with people. This project encouraged young people to explore themselves, others and issues relevant to them rather than changed their views about themselves, others and nominated issues. In small ways, the project helped to create more opportunities for the young people involved to learn and work together by allowing some young people to show initiative and leadership.

Maze provided the space, time and energy to focus on issues of coming of age and the importance of providing a ritualised way of coming of age. The young people interviewed thought the project was a success and a memorable experience. They

called it "Brilliant, fascinating." "Bloody fantastic." "Really fun." "Special, close to me." "The best time." Most of them stated that "I'd do it again." They enjoyed most of all meeting different types of people, making friendships, taking part in fun activities such as devising and performing and seeing the process unfold and build into a performance they thought was of good artistic quality. For the facilitators this project was a success too. As for the director he stated that it was a success because "[the young people involved] formed friendships, that's a sign that it's worked, that it's been positive."

References

- Ashfield Youth Theatre (2001) *Application for assistance under the New South Wales Government's 2002 Theatre Program*. Unpublished.
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- Flowers, Rick (2002) *Research And Evaluation Plan About 'Re-Igniting Community'*. Prepared for Torch Inc., the Brotherhood of St Laurence, by the Centre for Popular Education, UTS. Unpublished.
- Thiele, Martin and Marsden, Sally (2002) "P(ART)icipation and social change". Conference paper, NZ, unpublished.
- Slattery, Peter (2001) *Youth Works: A very practical book about working with young people*. Sydney: Peter Slattery.

Appendix 1: Questionnaires

1st questionnaire for young people

Questions about the young people

What is your (nick)name and age (optional)?

Do you live in Ashfield LGA?

What keeps you busy?

What other out of school activities do you do?

What are your dreams? Where do you see yourself in 10 years time?

Questions about the *Maze*

How did you find out about The *Maze*?

How would you describe it to a friend? Would you recommend it to a friend?

How important is it for you to be attending these sessions?

Questions about the process

What do you think about the way you are working here? What is the difference between Thursdays and Saturdays?

How different is it from an arts or drama class at school?

What are the high points so far?

What are the low points so far?

Questions about the stated aims

What do you think you will get out of this project?

Some people reckon that these kind of projects are beneficial to young people in all sorts of ways? What do you reckon?

For example, what do you think about the stated aims of this project?

- To provide an outlet for youth arts in Ashfield where there are currently no youth art services.
- To empower, build confidence and give confidence to young people through the process of artistic creation
- To provide opportunities for professional development.
- To provide access for young people regardless of their socio-economic or ethnic background.
- To create powerful and provocative theatre to address issues faced by young people.
- For young people to be involved in the decision making processes in regards to artistic and financial management of the Ashfield Youth Theatre
- To provide opportunities to young people to engage in cultural discussions about Ashfield and the culture of Sydney, Australia and the world we live in.

2nd Interview questions with young people

Questions about the young people

(nick)name and age (optional)

Has your routine changed since the first interview? What keeps you busy now?

How many sessions have attended so far?

Is it still important for you to be attending these sessions?

Questions about the *Maze*

What is the *Maze* focusing on? Themes, issues, values?

What is it trying to achieve for the audience and participants/you?

Questions about the process

How would you describe your role in this project?

How would you describe Frank, Mitch, Trevor and Designer/s role in this project?

What are some of the high points so far?

What are some of the low points / challenges so far?

What have you gotten out of it so far?

Other comments?

3rd questionnaire for young people

(nick)name and age (optional)

How did you find the performances?

Did this project match your expectations?

Did you find that you created the kind of theatre you wanted?

What did you enjoy the most?

What did you find the most challenging?

What would you do differently?

What did you learn through this experience?

Other comments?

1st questionnaire for facilitators

What is your background?

What is your position title?

How did you find out about/come up with the ideas of the *Maze*

Have you worked before with young people?

What other CCD projects have you done before?

What do you think about this young people of work?

How would you describe the *Maze*?

How does it fit within your big picture?

What do you see it achieving? What are your hopes/goals for it?

Have you got any concerns about its effect/impact or lack of impact?

Other comments

2nd questionnaire for facilitators

Did this project match your expectations of group devised work?

Did you find that you created the kind of theatre you wanted?

Were the target audience and participants reached?

Were your initial aims and objectives (for the development of the community and the youth theatre) met?

Did you find your starting point useful?

Did the process form and structure you set up initially have to be changed as the project progressed?

What did you enjoy the most?

What did you find the most challenging?

What would you do differently?
What did you learn through this experience?
Other comments?

Appendix 2: Consent Form

Centre for Popular Education

PO Box 123
Broadway NSW 2007
Australia

Tel: (02) 9514 3843
Fax: (02) 9514 3939
Email: cpe@uts.edu.au



University of Technology Sydney

UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, SYDNEY CONSENT FORM - STUDENT RESEARCH

Maze is an arts project for you and other young people based in Ashfield Local Government Area, funded by the NSW Ministry of the Arts and Ashfield Council. It will mean working with a team of artists to create a show that will be performed at the Ashfield Town Hall. Family and friends will be invited to come and see the show.

As part of *Maze* is a research project about the long-term value of this project funded by the Australia Council of the Arts. Celina McEwen from the Centre for Popular Education, University of Technology, Sydney will be taking notes and might ask you for your views and opinions. Feel free to tell her what you think about the process, what you have observed, etc.

Other things that are important for you to know:

- I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time I wish and without giving a reason.
- I understand that all information given is totally confidential.
- I know that if I have any concerns about the research I can contact Celina McEwen from UTS (ph: 9514 3847) or Frank Newman (ph: 9716 1844).
- I agree that the research data gathered from this project may be published in a form that does not identify me in any way.

Signed by

___/___/___

Witnessed by

___/___/___

NOTE:

This study has been approved by the University of Technology, Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any aspect of your participation in this research which you cannot resolve with the researcher, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officer, Ms Susanna Davis (ph: 9514 1279, Susanna.Davis@uts.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.

Office City campus, 1 Quay Street, Haymarket, Sydney NSW