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# HOW TO BE A SUPERHERO: STORIES OF CREATING A CULTURE OF INCLUSION THROUGH THEATRE

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## ABSTRACT

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This thesis investigates the use of Inclusive theatre to disengage the ‘disabled’/ ‘non-disabled’ binary for transformation to inclusive cultures. The research extends existing scholarship in Inclusive and applied theatre practices by documenting selected case studies in west and southern Africa.

A sociocultural lens defines disability as a social construct, problematizing community reactions, systemic oppression and societal barriers as the disabling force rather than any physical or cognitive impairment. A series of participatory action research projects explore inclusion through an applied theatre praxis and critical/performance ethnography. Progressive pedagogy informs the methods, ethics, and values of each cross-cultural inclusive project.

Participants with neurodivergent, or atypical (dis)abilities are contextualized as heroes within the metaphoric framework of the hero’s journey as popularized by Joseph Campbell. Campbell’s stages are juxtaposed with project workshops and performances to emphasize the universal application of inclusion, and the educational power of storytelling. The primary journey follows the development of Nigeria’s premier inclusive theatre company; from drama-as-therapy beginnings to their professional performance of *How to be a Superhero: A Guide to Saving the World*.

Supplementary projects with Hijinx Theatre in Lesotho and the Oasis Association in South Africa provide stories of igniting hidden talents and overcoming the obstacles that create barriers to inclusion in both the arts and society. An enabled dramaturgy details accessibility, authenticity, engagement, transformation, and aesthetics to debate the allies/enemies of inclusive theatre. Each project reveals the boons of adapting practices through considerations of accessibility, accommodations, and modifications.

The culminating performances of each project provide evidence that storytelling, building relationships, transforming and engaging participants and audiences through theatre forges empathy, increases representation, and encourages visibility. Psychologist Philip Zimbardo argues that “Heroism can be learned, can be taught, can be modeled, and can be a quality of being to which we all should aspire.” (2011). This research, inspired by Campbell and Zimbardo, argues that inclusion, like heroism, can be learned, taught and modeled through theatre to create a culture of inclusion.

Key words: Inclusion, Inclusive theatre, disability, accessibility, accommodations, neurodivergent

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

---

*“The fight is won or lost far away from witnesses—behind the lines, in the gym and out there on the road, long before I dance under those lights.”*

– Muhammad Ali

As I began my PhD journey, I also happened to take up boxing as a hobby. Maybe it was a way to deal with the stress of living on a foreign continent, the politics of academia, and literally fighting stigma against disability. It definitely helped me manage my mental, physical and emotional health after patiently working all day in under-supported, understaffed and underappreciated institutions. Throughout this process, we have been fighting for inclusion, for visibility, and for opportunities; for me, boxing was both metaphorically and literally the way I battled through the research. There are many similarities between theatre and boxing; the characters that fighters outwardly portray when entering the ring, the performative aspect leading up to the fight, the hours of training, the passion, dedication- but most of all, the importance of those that surround you-the coaches, the fans, the opponents, the community. To appropriate Mohammad Ali’s wisdom-the fight for inclusion “is won or lost far away from the witnesses...” It is the little by little battles won each day in the classroom, on the street and in the homes. This research leads to a performance, a “dance under those lights,” but that isn’t what wins the battle for equity and acceptance. It’s the process, the training, the strengthening, and gaining the support of the community. Though the bell hasn’t rung yet, there are many more fights to champion. My most fervent hope is that this research leads others to train for the fight of inclusion.



FIGURE 1 FIGHTING FOR INCLUSION

That having been said, I would like to wholeheartedly thank my team, both inside and outside of the ring: those who fight with us, who strive to make us better and those who show up to support.

Thank you to my actual boxing trainers and teams, both at Elitebox Nigeria as well as Blood Sweat and Tears in Cape Town. Thank you for letting me punch it out and cry when times were tough, for always encouraging me to go “one more round” in life, and for showing up to support my shows and work. The occasional punch in the face kept my mind clear, and allowed me to remember what was really important.

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And on that note, I would like to dedicate this work to the true champions in my life: my students. From Andy Austin and Shrikahn in Theatre Productions; to Sophie, Briana, Lauren, Joshua, Morgan, Zeynep and the rest of WIT, to Femi, Ruki, Shola and all of my Nigerian friends at the CDC, and to my friends and colleagues at UCT and Oasis—thank you for trusting the process, for sharing your talents, abilities, love and friendship. You make me a better teacher, a better person, and give me a reason to keep fighting. Even on the toughest days, you remind me of the good in people, the hope for the future and how inclusion can change everyone's lives. World renowned boxer Jack Dempsey once said, "*A champion is someone who gets up when he can't.*" I have had the opportunity to work with champions who fight every day to be heard, respected, taught and loved. We fight for each other, next to each other and sometimes in spite of each other. I am forever grateful, and I am always in your corner.

To the kids who are different, bullied, or forgotten, to anyone who was ever told they couldn't do something, they would never read, or write, or be included-you are my champions. Every day is a fight for inclusion and a battle against stigma, but we can always go another round. A few words of advice from all my boxing trainers to anyone who wants to join our fight: "Don't quit when you're tired, only stop when it's finished;" and in the words of Muhammad Ali: "*Don't count the days, make the days count.*"

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# INTRODUCTION: PROPOSING HEROISM

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*"THERE IS A SUPERHERO IN ALL OF US.  
WE JUST NEED THE COURAGE TO PUT ON THE CAPE."  
-SUPERMAN*

A young, brave hero flings back his cape and looks out upon the world. Corruption, discrimination and poverty are propelling the world into a violent spin. Sickness, stigma and hunger keep the planet shaking, while pollution threatens to destroy it. The hero calls out to his community: "Are you ready to save the world?!" A chorus of children and adults respond with enthusiastic cheers and battle cries. Mass chaos ensues, and a battle begins. Weapons are held high and energy explodes as what can only



FIGURE 2 A HEROIC TOBI LOOKING INTO THE AUDIENCE

be described as a force of adolescents suddenly charge toward a seated, uncertain gathering of families. Previously sedentary sons and daughters jump to their feet, grabbing swords from under their chairs as their parents cheer and shout. Capes soar and swords clash as the air is filled with kicks, punches and laughter. Superheroes of all kinds ignite their superpowers, dispelling knowledge with courage and heart. Although the world is thrown into disarray, the battle is not against competing sides. It is fought together. Together, both friends and strangers fight against stigma and discrimination to keep the world from crashing to the ground. Over the chaos, an amplified voice rings out, shouting, "How can we save the world?!" In response, the entire battlefield shouts in unison: "DO THE RIGHT THING!" As swords drop to the floor and warriors return to their seats, a heroic soundtrack begins to play, and the voices of the community join together in song:

*Do the right thing / let the world see  
Let the light shine everywhere  
When it seems like no one's watching / do the right thing anyway  
and you'll have the whole world singing oh oh oh oh*

The end of one battle is the beginning of another story; a cycle; a hero's journey. This performance is the world, as created and performed for, by and with a team of heroes from the Children's Developmental Centre in Lagos, Nigeria. This work begins with the end product of its research: the culminating scene of the final performance of *How to be a Superhero: A Guide to Saving the World*. In the words of Augusto Boal, "The end is the beginning!" (2006:4) because the end, namely the saving of the world, is not what is most important. What is most important is the process that builds heroes and the journey to greatness, so when the rage of battle subsides, the community members understand as a whole how they too can be heroes. The learning takes place over the course of this journey and the development of this communal understanding.

*"NOW I PROPOSE TO YOU THAT STORYTELLING IS AN ACT OF HEROISM, THAT WHEN YOU ACTUALLY REACH OUT AND TELL A STORY TO SOMEONE, YOU'RE CREATING AN EMPATHIC BRIDGE."*

(BOGART, 2015)

*How to be a Superhero: A Guide to Saving the World* and the research that it encapsulates consists of a series of stories describing individuals with and without disabilities, detailing



their battles, their triumphs and their journeys. These stories document, analyze and reflect upon a group of ordinary people, a community, as they release their inner heroes to help create a culture of inclusion. World-renowned psychologist Philip Zimbardo (2011a, 2011b) of the infamous Stanford prison experiment argues that every individual has the potential to be a hero. His research asserts that it is possible, through strategies combining psychological research, intervention education and social activism, for us to learn to be heroes for our own communities. The stories that comprise *How to be a Superhero: A Guide to Saving*

FIGURE 3 PERFORMANCE POSTER FOR HOW TO BE A SUPERHERO

the World attempt to teach heroism in the following three steps: **Step 1:** Choose a good name; **Step 2:** Find your ability; and **Step 3:** Save the world.



FIGURE 4 PERFORMANCE OF HOW TO BE A SUPERHERO: A GUIDE TO SAVING THE WORLD

A multitude of stories are shared in the process of presenting these steps, which are meant to engage members of the audience and encourage them to share their own stories. Every aspect of the performance was conceived, contributed and created by the participants, their voices, understanding and stories. Storytelling has historically been an ideal means of learning, teaching and community building. Tales of heroes and heroic journeys, including those of the ancient Greek odysseys, Jesus, Scheherazade, Robin Hood and Superman, have

*“ANYONE CAN BE A HERO AT ANY TIME AN OPPORTUNITY ARISES TO STAND UP FOR WHAT IS RIGHT AND JUST, AND TO SPEAK OUT AGAINST INJUSTICE, CORRUPTION, AND OTHER EVILS. HEROISM CAN BE LEARNED, CAN BE TAUGHT, CAN BE MODELED, AND CAN BE A QUALITY OF BEING TO WHICH WE ALL SHOULD ASPIRE.”*

(ZIMBARDO, 2011B)

served to build empathic bridges that, in turn, create strong and resourceful communities (Bogart, 2015; Campbell, 1987, 2004; Zimbardo, 2011; Pearson, 2015; Denzin, 2002, 2003; Ingold, 2007).

In his research, Zimbardo identifies the following key principle of heroism: “Heroes are most effective not alone but in a network. It’s through forming a network that people have the resources to bring their heroic impulses to life” (Zimbardo, 2011). The beauty in the battle described at the beginning of this chapter lies in the community coming together to

save the world, the spontaneous network formed through theatre to create an inclusive culture. What may not be immediately apparent is that Tobi, the young hero calling out to his community, has been stigmatized and ostracized from this very community throughout his life due to physical and learning disabilities. These disabilities, however, are not what make him a hero.

*“DISABILITY DOESN'T MAKE YOU EXCEPTIONAL, BUT QUESTIONING WHAT YOU THINK YOU KNOW ABOUT IT DOES.” (YOUNG, 2014)*

The implication that Tobi is a hero simply because he has a disability is what disability theorists and advocates refer to as “inspiration porn” (Young, 2014; Liebowitz, 2015; Mitchell, 2017; Pulrang, 2019), in which people with disabilities are called brave or heroic for doing normal, everyday things. This attitude objectifies “disabled people for the benefit of nondisabled people” (Young, 2014). The aim of this research is not to succumb to inspiration porn but to weave the stories, voices and perspectives of participants together to explore creating a network of heroes and a culture of inclusion, specifically through theatre. The objective is to share the varied personalities and complicated experiences involved in the creation of inclusive communities that unequivocally include those living with disabilities. The research strives to operate in full awareness of the unethical dimensions of ableism and the associated propensity to share stories that “at first glance are about disabled people and disability themes, [but] actually center on non-disabled people selflessly helping or including disabled people in everyday situations” (Pulrang, 2019). It is critical to acknowledge what constitutes inspiration porn in order to avoid it. The term encompasses a vast range of stories and media portrayals of disability that share one or more of the following qualities (Pulrang, 2019; Young, 2014; Laudau, 2019; Liebowitz, 2015):

- Oversentimentality or pity that frames people with disabilities as brave or inspirational when the same individuals would not be regarded as such if they were not disabled
- Infantilizing or moralizing tones; a condescending attitude toward actual accomplishments by focusing on how “brave” an individual was or by asserting that someone “overcame” a disability instead of focusing on the person and the accomplishment itself

- Uplifting moral messages aimed at non-disabled viewers that negate true aspects of disability (e.g., “the only true disability is a bad attitude!”)
- Framing non-disabled people as saints or heroes just for being nice to disabled people or for working with those with disabilities
- Anonymous objectification of disabled people, even if they are “named,” wherein the focus is on the disability, thereby ignoring the personality and perspectives of the person

Disability advocate Andrew Pulrang stipulates that “stories about disability should always include ideas, impressions, and/or direct quotations from actual disabled people” (2019). The Disability Arts movement is full of stories about the overcoming of adversity, prejudice and discrimination as well as stories of love, adventure and success. Though inspired by Disability Arts and Disability Theatre, this research does not fall into those categories. Inclusive Theatre is “different than ‘disability theatre,’ which is theatre groups who work specifically with one or more segments of the disabled population” (Barton Farcas, 2018). Inclusive groups such as Hijinx (Wales), FTH:K (South Africa) and The River (USA) are shattering stigmas throughout the arts by creating a network of heroes- a community- to include *all* marginalized groups. This research on Inclusive Theatre is a study of everyday heroes. It focuses on the inclusion of a spectrum of disabilities, but not in the way that *inspiration porn* objectifies the disability community. These are stories of communities coming together to support, celebrate and grow together towards an inclusive society. The focus of the journeys range from individuals to groups to whole communities, proving the formation of inclusive networks as a determining factor for change.

The groups within these stories develop a “network of heroes” (Zimbardo, 2011a) to improve their communities, their lives and the lives of others. The title of both the final performance and this written dissertation (*How to be a Superhero*) was a collective decision derived from the group for their culminating performance. It is a satirical comment on notion of oversimplified self-help books and the idea of ‘easy change’ to demonstrate that anyone can change the world, contribute to an inclusive community or discover their talents. In no way is it implying that the storytelling researcher is a hero. Over the past decade, the inclusive

movement has gained momentum that started with building “empathic bridges” (Bogart, 2015) to create networks, uniting audiences and performers by sharing stories that educate, ally and advocate while defying limitations. These heroic networks of performers are telling their stories through theatre, dance, song and movement. Unfortunately, there remains a large portion of the world that has not yet begun to construct these “empathic bridges” with disability inclusive communities. The manifestations of exclusion and oppression for these communities differ according to national and cultural boundaries, but the concern is a global, multicultural issue.

## THE HEROIC JOURNEY

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Zimbardo (2008, 2011, 2012) defines heroism as an act that comprises four parts: a quest in service to those in need or defense of ideals; voluntary engagement; recognition of risks (be they physical or risks to one’s own reputation); and completion without anticipation of external gain. Tobi is risking stigma and possible violence on the part of his community as he calls out to them to “save the world”; he has voluntarily undertaken a quest through theatre to defend the ideals of inclusion, and for this performance, he gains nothing but the experience of taking part in his community. Tobi is a hero because he fights for the ideal of inclusion, both onstage and offstage.

*“TALES COMMONLY SUPPORT OR SUPPLANT THIS THEME OF THE EXILE WITH THAT OF THE DESPISED ONE, OR THE HANDICAPPED: THE ABUSED YOUNGEST SON OR DAUGHTER, THE ORPHAN, STEPCHILD, UGLY DUCKLING, OR THE SQUIRE OF LOW DEGREE.”*  
(CAMPBELL 2004:301)

The heroic journey popularized by Campbell (1949; 1987; 2004) serves as an organizational tool: a map to focus discussions and implications throughout multiple case studies, field sites, performances and participants within the research. Campbell’s journey is often referenced for its universality, as it calls upon the collective structure of tales, myths and stories that lead to the “transformation of consciousness” (2004). In his seminal work, *The Power of Myth*, Campbell observed consistencies in the structures of myths from around the world. He distilled these observations into a storytelling form that he describes as “The Monomyth,”

which features the quintessential aspects of a heroic journey. The power of the monomyth is encapsulated in the advice, “if you really want to help people in this world, what you have to teach them is how to live in it” (1987). This adage implies that members of society can learn to transform their world and the status quo. The steps of this journey, traced through transcultural literature, media and comparative religions, connect to Zimbardo’s assertions that “heroism can be learned, can be taught, can be modeled, and can be a quality of being to which we all should aspire” (Zimbardo, 2011b). Though organized through the heroic



FIGURE 5 THE HERO'S JOURNEY (MALONE, 2019)

journey, Campbell’s connections do not serve as a critical, theoretical or literary framework or lens, but merely a way to connect the stories and experiences. This research, in the vein of Campbell and Zimbardo, strives to argue that inclusion, like heroism, can be learned, taught and modeled through theatre toward the goal of creating a culture of inclusion.

Much like Campbell’s *Hero with a Thousand Faces* (2004), this is not just the story of one hero, such as Tobi, or even of his team of heroes from the Children’s Development Centre (hereafter referred to as the CDC or the Centre). This work includes the stories of multiple cycles of heroic journeys. The stages of the cycle function to organize the thought processes of a neurodivergent storyteller turned researcher. As a Western outsider (American) collecting the stories and experiences within transcultural settings, not unlike Campbell, the need to organize and accommodate for connections and understandings was necessary. The use of the heroic journey encouraged a climatic, chronological narrative as an organizational vehicle (rather than a theoretical, critical or literary framework), assisting in focusing the roles and understandings of a neurodivergent researcher/facilitator/storyteller. Additionally,

it accommodates the vast spectrum of understandings from participants and potential readers.

The main study follows the CDC in Nigeria as its members fight for inclusion. Theories and evidence are reinforced by tracking comparative journeys, such as the journey of Welsh Hijinx actors as they venture to Lesotho and the voyages of University of Cape Town students as they discover an oasis of inclusion. Most of these stories take place across the African continent, from the bustling streets of Lagos, Nigeria, to distant villages in mountain-clad Lesotho and to recycling workshops on the coast of Cape Town. The pan-African context serves as a critical base for this research, but the nature of heroic ideals is such that the message is universal and cross-cultural. As a white American researcher in a majority of nonwestern, Black contexts, it would be remiss to overlook the potential colonial legacies or imperialistic critiques that have befallen Campbell's work since his passing (Gill, 1989; Manganaro, 1992; Grebe, 1991; Lefkowitz, 1990; Bond & Christensen, 2021). To circumvent similar concerns, the lenses and frameworks that subtend and support this research include:

- **Progressive Pedagogy and Inclusive Education** (hooks, 1994, 2003, 1994; Freire, 1970, 1997, 1998, 2005; Giroux, 1983, 1997, 2009, 2015; McLaren, 2006, 2014, 2019; Denzin, 1997, 2003; Therborn, 2007; Rieser, 2004, 2012 and others).
- **Applied Theatre theory** (Boal, 1979, 2002, 2006; Nicholson, 2005; Prentki & Preston, 2009; Prendergast & Saxton, 2013, 2009; and more)
  - with additional **focuses on African contexts** (Baxter, 2000, 2009; Kerr, 2009; Chivandikwa, Makumbirofa & Muwati, 2019; Loots, 2015; Sutherland, 2017; Baxter & Low, 2017) and others) and
  - **within the Disability community** (Goodley, 2000, 2011; Hayhow, 2008, 2015 Runswick-Cole, 2011; and others).
- **Disability and Inclusive performance theories** (Hadley, 2019, 2020; Hargrave, 2009, 2015; Hatton, 2009; Leighton, 2005, 2009; Sealey, 2009, 2017; Johnston, 2012, 2009, 2016; and others).
- **Disability Studies** (Linton, 1998, 2006; Hosking, 2008; Charleton, 2006); with specificity and focus in **sociocultural anthropology** understandings of Inclusion and Disability (Barnes, 2014, 2013, 1991; Mercer, 2000; Cervinkova, 1996;

Reid-Cunningham, 2009; Shuttleworth & Kasnitz, 2004; Walcott, 2002 and others).

The heroic quest for inclusion is universally cyclical. According to Campbell (2004: 153), the cycle “is normally represented as repeating itself, world without end.” The path of the hero’s journey forms a map for the research but is an ever-repeating cyclical process. Applied theatre theorist Helen Nicholson notes the journey of an applied theatre praxis is similarly “a cyclical process in which practice generates new insights and where, reciprocally, theoretical ideas are interrogated, created and embodied in practice” (Nicholson, 2005: 39). She extends the metaphor for learning by asserting that “each journey is different and the experience is unpredictable. The map is based on journeys which have already taken place, but it also offers a guide for those who have yet to start” (2005: 39). The three field sites (Nigeria, Lesotho and South Africa) follow similar maps in the inclusive praxis, but each journey is unique. In each context, the heroes “[venture] forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the [heroes come] back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on [their] fellow man” (Campbell, 1949: 30). Campbell stipulates three stages of the hero’s journey: the departure from the ordinary world, the heroic quest and the return. These stages form the theoretical framework of the study and align with themes from field studies and analytical discussions. This work is divided into three stages, and ten chapters that parallel with Campbell’s heroic journey.

*“WHEN ORDINARY PEOPLE BAND TOGETHER TO OPPOSE SYSTEMIC EVIL OF ANY KIND, THEY BECOME COMMUNAL HEROES. THEY WOULD BE RELATIVELY IMPOTENT IF ACTING ALONE.”  
(ZIMBARDO, 2011B)*

Onstage in Nigeria, Tobi and his team of heroes are fighting for inclusion. In their battle to transform the status quo, they combat corruption, discrimination and insecurity, and they struggle against sickness, stigma and fear. These are literally and symbolically the barriers to creating inclusive communities: the demarcation of “us” from “them”; the generations of inequality; and the interaction of misunderstanding, fear and exclusion (Therborn, 2007:3).



FIGURE 6 BATTLES AGAINST SYSTEMIC BARRIERS IN PERFORMANCE

Within the beginning stages of all heroic journeys, the heroes exist in the ordinary world. They often don't fit in and must somehow bring transformation and rise against the "monster of the status quo [...] the keeper of the past" (Campbell, 2004:311). These keepers of past are the systemic evils referred to by Zimbardo: the cultural, social, economic or religious systems in place that are structured on axes such as perceived ability, race, gender and social class. They are the systems of oppression that can include the following: racism, sexism, imperialism or colonialism, ableism, class-based oppression, poverty, exclusion, objectification and dehumanization (Giroux, 1997; McLaren, 2009; hooks, 1994; Freire, 2005). The way in which these systems work is by establishing the status quo through social, political or cultural systems (such as schools, churches or laws) that teach, model and reinforce ideals of what is normal, accepted or right according to the dominant culture. The status quo establishes the concept of "normal," and anything outside that view is projected as less than, abnormal, incorrect, broken, dangerous or destructive (Tamburro, 2013; Payne, 1997; Charleton, 2006; Preston, 2009).

Disability studies view disability as the “product of specific social, cultural and economic structures; these theories have been used to address the institutional, cultural and psychological exclusion of disabled people”

(Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2011). These structures and systems of domination that establish “the construction of ‘disability’ as less than [are] like any other form of oppression” (Grady, 2009:132) as they lead to exclusion and oppression in society.

*“THE VAST MAJORITY OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN POOR, POWERLESS, AND DEGRADED. DISABILITY OPPRESSION IS A PRODUCT OF BOTH THE PAST AND THE PRESENT.”*  
(CHARLETON, 2006:217)

The need for networks of heroes, whom individually and as a group work to improve their world, is established in the guidelines of world welfare non-profit groups. The United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund and the World Health Organization [WHO]) state a wide range of physical, social and environmental barriers that prevent full participation in society and reduce access to health care, education and other support services for children and adults with disabilities (UNICEF, 2012; WHO, 2011). People with disabilities are “more likely to experience poverty, live in poor quality or insecure housing and have low levels of education. They are often socially isolated, with fewer opportunities to take part in community life” (WHO, 2011). In addition, many adults with disabilities are without employment or are under-employed, with numbers of unemployment exponentially rising for adults with neurodevelopmental and cognitive disabilities (Migliore & Domin, 2011; Sealey, 2009; Sandahl, 2002). The denial of access to community, culture and education silences the stories of these communities and restricts the building of heroic networks to create inclusive communities. The primary rationale of this study is to inspire heroic inclusive communities that allow empowerment, equality and opportunities for people of all abilities.

*“INCLUSION IS NOT A STRATEGY TO HELP PEOPLE FIT INTO THE SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES WHICH EXIST IN OUR SOCIETIES; IT IS ABOUT TRANSFORMING THE SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES TO MAKE IT BETTER FOR EVERYONE. INCLUSION IS ABOUT CREATING A BETTER WORLD FOR EVERYONE.”*

(DIANE RICHLER QUOTED IN REISER, 2012:198)



FIGURE 7 REHEARSING THE FIGHT FOR INCLUSION AT THE CDC

Inclusion confronts the status quo; it challenges the systemic evils that lead to injustice, inhumanity or indifference within the community and within society as a whole. As a concept, inclusion can refer to any and all marginalized communities, including those based on gender, race, culture, age, health,

identification or ability. Parallel quests have been made by previous heroes and marginalized groups and will continue to be journeyed – but this quest in particular focuses on inclusion in regard to disability.

In this context of disability inclusion, current educational theory and theories of social anthropology refer to inclusion to reference specifically the inclusion of disabled with non-disabled peers in both educational and social communities. Inclusion is a way of changing the societal systems so that they address a spectrum of needs and abilities, not a way to force people into the systems in place. Theorists define inclusion in a variety of ways; Busatto states, “Inclusion is community [and] to participate in a process of changing one’s own life and collective life” (2007: 4). The relationship between community and the individual suggests that inclusion is mutually beneficial. Lombe’s definition continues this emphasis, asserting that “[i]nclusion is the realization that everyone has essential dignity and everyone has something to contribute.” (Lombe, 2007:3). The United Nations, WHO and UNICEF define inclusion on the basis of impermeable economic, cultural and social boundaries; they present it as “access for all” (UNDP, 2007; WHO, 2011) and a way to rise “above differences of race, gender, class, generation and geography to ensure equality of opportunity regardless of origin” (UNDP, 2011).

The “five dimensions of inclusion,” as delineated by Therborn, frame the methods used during this study’s fieldwork and are concrete ways to challenge and transform systemic structures. The dimensions are listed as follows:

1. Visibility: to be noticed; to be recognized.
2. Consideration: one’s concerns and needs are considered by policy makers.
3. Access to social interactions.
4. Rights: rights to act and claim (including right to be different; right to “identity”); rights to access quality and accessible social services (e.g., housing, education, transport, healthcare); the right to work; the right to participate in the customs of one’s local or personal culture.
5. Resources to fully participate in society: social and financial resources are key; other important aspects, such as time, energy and spatial distance, must also be considered for the possibility to fully participate. (2007:5-12)

The objective of this research is to examine effective ways to create, teach and encourage dimensions of inclusion through both drama processes and theatre performances and to challenge the status quo of both theatres and societies. Just as Tobi is not a hero for merely existing in the world with a disability, nor are the accompanying team of heroes standing behind him who live with various physical, developmental and learning disabilities – they fight for inclusion in society daily; nor are the audience of peers, families and strangers heroes for attending the performance and supporting the group. Each member of this community, as Zimbardo ascertains, has the power to be a hero, and together they can build a “heroic network.” Therein lies the logic of this research: how can telling stories through theatre release the heroes within to create inclusive communities?

## THE CALL TO ACTION

“Are you ready to save the world?” Almost inevitably, every heroic story begins with a poignant question of one kind or another, namely a call to adventure. This critical question incites the energy of the story; it moves the story forward. The legend evolves in response to that single igniting question. Tobi cried out, “How can we save the world?” Admittedly, this is a broad and strongly emotive question to begin a heroic story with, and it inevitably has a vast array of potential answers. This research does not propose to solve the question of how to save the world. It builds on Zimbardo’s work through the use of applied theatre to fight the stigma of disability and to build bridges of empathy through storytelling for the creation of inclusive cultures. The first scene (see *Figure 8*) begins with a call for transformation, the impetus that ignites this research. It engages with the following essential questions and aligns to each phase of the journey with subsequent clarifying questions.

**Opening: SUPER HEROES ENTER, Call to Action**

*Music Plays: “Stronger than Before” by Cohbams Asuquo as the heroes march in slow motion making lines on stage. Together they sing & make “super hero poses” while addressing the audience)*

There a sound across the Nation  
It's a call so clear and strong  
It's a call to build our Nation  
It's a call for everyone  
Everyone who is Nigerian  
Hear the sound so clear and loud  
It's a call for transformation  
And the time for change is now

FIGURE 8 OPENING SCENE OF HOW TO BE A SUPERHERO

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

How can inclusive theatre release the heroes within to transform a community for the creation of a culture of inclusion?

- 1) Why is there a need to create cultures of inclusion in the arts and in society in general?
- 2) How can the collaborative creation of an applied theatre performance aid in empowering a network of heroes of all abilities within a community to advocate for inclusion and challenge societal norms?
- 3) How can theatre practices be adapted to create accessibility and participation for participants and audiences of all abilities?
- 4) What makes a performance inclusive theatre, and what are the obstacles, temptations and rewards of an inclusive theatre praxis?

- 5) What impact does an inclusive theatre performance have on the families, communities and peers of participants? What impacts and opportunities arise outside of the performance?

## THE NEED FOR STUDY

The status quo of society, the disability community and the fields of theatre or education can be further be established through defining the need for this study. There are multiple needs – such as those that are altruistic, academic and theatrical – all of which build upon the rationale behind this research.

## THE ALTRUISTIC NEED TO SUPPORT AND CREATE CULTURES OF INCLUSION

Disability, whether physical, intellectual, cognitive or developmental, does not differentiate between Western and non-Western cultures, gender, race, age or sexual orientation. Anyone and everyone, in any culture, in any country, on any continent, no matter of their class, education or financial status, can (and probably will) be affected by disability. It is, by far, the largest, most encompassing of marginalized groups and the only minority group one can join (Davis, 1997). The WHO, UNICEF and the United Nations attribute factors that place people with disabilities at higher risk to include the following: stigma, discrimination, ignorance about disability, a lack of social support for those who care for them and institutionalization.

The repercussions of marginalization can

create a poor quality of life, including a lack of access to healthcare, education and community, unemployment, isolation, poverty and violence (Barnett, 2014; WHO, 2014; WHO, 2012; UN, 2014; UNICEF, 2013). In extreme contexts, adults and youths with

disabilities are killed, abandoned or trafficked (Etieyibo & Omiegbe, 2013). Globally, namely in both developed and developing nations, there is an altruistic need for inclusive cultures to be built to address the oppression, stigmatization and marginalization of people with disabilities. Helen Nicholson defines altruism as “ways of achieving human betterment

*“DISABILITY IS GOING TO TOUCH ALL OF OUR LIVES AT SOME POINT, BY DISEASE, BY ACCIDENT, BY THE NATURAL PROCESS OF AGING AND LIVING LONGER. [...] HOW DO WE WANT TO BE INCLUDED IN OUR COMMUNITIES?”*

(DUNLAP, 2015)

through creating a society” based on selflessness and working for the “common good” (2005:29). Finding successful ways to create or increase cultures of inclusion can only contribute to opportunities for society as a whole by improving the human condition and achieving cohesive communities that support people of all abilities.

## THE NEED FOR MODERNIZATION AND DOCUMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE PRACTICES AND PERFORMANCES

Academically and theatrically, there is a need to document Inclusive practices and performances. There is a breadth of theory about Disability Theatre which is often incorrectly conflated with Inclusive Theatre. Specifically, within the field of theatre, there is a lack of research on training for and in inclusive practice, inclusive dramaturgy and understandings of inclusive theatre. Hargrave states that the “work of learning-disabled artists is under theorized. What has been written has tended to focus on the therapeutic benefits” (2016:8). Most current literature on inclusive and disability theatre emphasizes “drama as a process rather than drama as a performance (i.e., Theatre)” (Jindal-Snape & Vettraino, 2007:107). The aesthetics and artistic contributions of inclusive theatre are often disregarded as professional due to assumptions of therapy or charity (Kuppers, 2014; Hadley, 2020). There is a need to document and share the work of professional and amateur inclusive theatre productions, the processes that create them and their impact on communities and audiences.

Moreover, the information available on theatre and drama practices with people with disabilities needs to be updated. The majority of writings use outdated terminology and perceptions of disability (Bailey, 2010; Cattanach, 1992; Jennings, 1979; Kempe, 1996; McCurrach & Darnley, 1999; Peter, 1995; Tomlinson, 1982). Furthermore, the majority of current research focuses on non-cognitive disabilities (i.e., physical, visual or auditory impairments) or Autism, thereby excluding the spectrum of neurodevelopmental disorders (Corbett et al, 2016; 2014; Hargrave, 2015; Kempe & Tissot, 2012; O’Sullivan, 2016; Ramamoorthi & Nelson, 2011; Sherrat & Peter, 2002). The work of inclusive theatre is blossoming from grassroots to a more accessible and widely accepted field, but

“professionals are not making an attempt to learn from each other’s work,” which leads to a “lack of strong theoretical underpinning for research” (Jindal-Snape & Vettriano, 2007:116). There is therefore a need to document, analyze and compare the works of inclusive theatre companies (Bailey, 2010; Campbell, 2013, Eckard & Myers, 2009; Hargrave, 2015; Kempe, 2013).

## THE NEED FOR INCLUSIVE TRAINING, CASTING AND CREATING IN THEATRE

In 1982, Richard Tomlinson founded the first established disability theatre company, Graeae. He noted the “inadequacies and unavailability of [theatrical] training for disabled people” (71), attributing it to teachers who “although experienced in teaching drama, [...] often feel inadequate to teach disabled people” (72). Decades later, Graeae still cites the need for inclusion, training, accessibility and opportunities for actors with disabilities both professionally and in communities (graeae.org, 2020). Darke asserts that disability artists often “have no education and no training [...] and, if they do, they are only allowed within the inner sanctum of art production if they reinforce these values” (2003:140). Sauer and Johansen further articulate the “no win situation” that a lack of opportunities, accessibility and training creates (2013:247). Few professional theatres offer inclusive training to aspiring learning-disabled or neurodivergent performers (Conroy, 2009; Dacre & Bulmer, 2009; Campbell, 2014; Elkin, 2015; Hargrave, 2015; Rothbart, 2015). In addition to expanding training opportunities and methods, there is also a need to advocate for inclusive casting; professional theatre, television and film companies should be challenged to cast actors with disabilities in both disabled and nondisabled roles. Documentation on inclusive training adds to the current practices with a focus on inclusive approaches that embrace neurodivergency.

## THE NEED FOR INCLUSIVE THEATRE RESEARCH OUTSIDE OF DEVELOPED, WESTERN ENVIRONMENTS

Prentki, Preston and Byam call for “radical discourse among theatre workers to debate issues of culture, globalization and the aesthetics and ethics of performance within developing nations” (Landy & Montgomery, 2012:149). The current research on inclusive theatre is based on developed, Western (i.e., the UK, the USA and some Scandinavian) contexts (Bailey,

2010; Brodzinski, 2010; Brown, 2012; Cattanach, 1992; Corbett et al., 2016; Ekard & Myers, 2009; Elkin, 2015; Fahy & King, 2002; Hargrave, 2015; Johnston, 2012; Jindal-Snape & Vettraino, 2007; Kempe, 2016; O'Sullivan, 2016; Ramamoorthi & Nelson, 2011; Sandahl & Auslander, 2005). This emphasis in current studies results in a focus on well-funded, nationalized organizations, often excluding local public entities, such as schools or non-profits, as well as cultural contexts outside of Western, government-supported arts. There is thus a need to consider non-Western inclusive theatre work, as well as the work outside of what is supported and heavily funded (and thus influenced) by professional or governmental theatre and arts campaigns.

There is a minimal amount of documented inclusive arts within the African context, and what is available shows the prevalence of theatre-as-therapy, and remnants of post-colonial stigmatization/fixing/healing within the arts fields. Published works on theatre and disability tend to focus on Disability Theatre, dramatherapy, Theatre for Development or decolonizing applied methods. The contextualization of decolonizing disability, and processes of working toward more inclusive societies often focus on physical disabilities, HIV/AIDS, Albinism or mental health (Chinyowa & Chivandikwa, 2017; Sutherland, 2017; Seda & Chivandikwa, 2014; Chivandikwa, Makumbirofa & Muwati, 2019). There is little documented research spanning into neurodiversity, learning disorders or cognitive disabilities, or creating inclusive communities specifically. There is some documentation of inclusive dance, performance art or groups working inclusively (Loots, 2015; Unmute, 2020; fth:k, 2019), but little mention of Inclusive Theatre directly. There is often a tendency to conflate, stigmatize or coadunate all arts/performances with disability into one synonymous group rather than recognizing the vastly different objectives, goals, processes and outcomes (including lumping together therapy, professional, community, inclusive, and Disability-led, disability themed arts) (Hadley, 2019, 2020; Grech, 2015; Jacobs, 2020). This study documents and analyzes three separate pan-African inclusive projects (i.e., in Nigeria, Lesotho and South Africa) in both trained and untrained settings, with no governmental or commercial campaigns.

## THE NEED TO INVESTIGATE ALL PARTICIPANTS' (I.E., BOTH DISABLED AND NON-DISABLED) EXPERIENCES WITH INCLUSIVE THEATRE IN CREATING AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY

The majority of contemporary research focuses solely on the effects of inclusive theatre on disabled participants (Bailey, 2010; Corbett et al., 2016; Ekard & Myers, 2009; Elkin, 2015; Fahy & King, 2002; Hargrave, 2015; Johnston, 2012; Jindal-Snape & Vettrano, 2007; Kempe, 2016; O'Sullivan, 2016; Ramamoorthi & Nelson, 2011; Sandahl & Auslander, 2005). These disregard the nature of inclusion by discounting the impact on the participants both with and without diagnosed disabilities, as well as the cultures created or adapted in the process. Hadley confirms that “the disability arts sector has yet to develop any accepted theory of artist-ally relations [...] or accepted framework to support the empowering artist-ally partnerships that could help create – and in the longer term come to characterize – a more inclusive arts industry” (2020: 179). This study aims to research the impact of theatre within an inclusive community without extrapolating solely the impacts and influences based on perceived ability.

## THE NEED FOR RESEARCH ON SUSTAINABLE, CROSS-CULTURAL INCLUSIVE PROJECTS

Often, outsiders such as the WHO, the United Nations or independent non-profits and educators are necessary to model or support inclusive practices in communities that have long been rooted in stigmatizing disability (UN, 2011; WHO, 2014; Reid-Cunningham, 2009). Nicholson articulates the cross-cultural aspect of applied theatre, stating that “whether practitioners are cultural outsiders or local performers, practicing drama has the potential to build the ethical division between civic citizenship and social citizenship” (2005:32). The WHO and the United Nations both detail inclusion in cultural activities, specifically theatre, music, dance and art, as suggested means of community-based rehabilitation and social inclusion for persons with disabilities (WHO, 2012; UN, 2014). Although recommended in the UN/WHO's guidelines, there are few suggestions of how to create inclusive arts projects and little documentation on inclusive arts projects being conducted. Despite altruistic intentions, many inclusive projects are unsustainable. These organizations have influenced policy development, but without addressing systemic factors such as capacity, education or belief systems, actual implementation is a matter of political understanding or sovereign will.

Currently, there is a lack of published information on the sustainability of intercultural, inclusive theatre projects and experiences and their long-term influences. With the world becoming more accessible through the sharing of ideas and cross-cultural understandings via the internet, there are opportunities to explore and document inclusive, cross-cultural experiences and their sustainability. This study advocates for community-based rehabilitation and adds to the extant research specific ways to create inclusive cultures and opportunities through theatre. This research addresses both the altruistic need for creating, supporting and teaching inclusive cultures and the practical need to investigate and document theatre-based community rehabilitation as designated by the UN, WHO and UNICEF.

## HOW TO BE A SUPERHERO

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These calls to adventure rationalize the need for this research. They begin the three stages of Campbell's heroic journey: the ordinary world, the quest and the return. These stages form the theoretical framework of the study. The conceptual outline of the thesis is scaffolded by the three steps involved in becoming a superhero as presented in the performance of *How to be a Superhero: A Guide to Saving the World*.

### STEP 1: CHOOSE A GOOD NAME

The first section embraces the realm of Campbell's ordinary world, the preparation stage. The call to adventure initiates the journey with essential questions and clarifies the need for study that furthers the research. The review of literature throughout the section names key theories, frameworks and methodologies.

- *Chapter 1: The Ordinary World* contextualizes the rationale for creating cultures of inclusion and defines theoretical foundations and key concepts.
- *Chapter 2: Refusal of the Call* locates the environment of the main case study participants in Nigeria and establishes the status quo within the fieldwork sites. The

research design, methods and methodologies are explained through a “recipe” for research that addresses ethics and values.

- *Chapter 3: Meeting the Mentor(s)* introduces the foundations of applied theatre, progressive pedagogy and inclusive education that guide the study. A self-reflexive experience teaching a University of Cape Town seminar positions the stance of the researcher while highlighting associated issues within the practice.
- *Chapter 4: Crossing the Threshold* documents the CDC’s inclusive, cross-cultural exchange trip to Houston. It provides preliminary research that maps the theoretical backgrounds that influence the ensuing projects.

## STEP 2: FIND YOUR ABILITY; FIND YOUR SUPERPOWER

This second section ventures into the world of unknown adventures, the heroic quest or the journey stage. It presents, analyzes and discusses the evidence and findings of the research. Comparative projects develop a praxis and a criterion for assessment. Approaches to creating performances, successes, challenges and outcomes are explored and connected to theoretical foundations.

- *Chapter 5: The First Challenge* initiates the presentation of evidence and findings through the documentation of the CDC’s first performance, *Planet of Inclusion*. The first phase of research develops a praxis curriculum derived from vocational training, special education curriculums and therapies.
- *Chapter 6: Allies, Enemies & Accomplices* reviews the work of others in the field to establish a criterion and an enabled dramaturgy of inclusive theatre. Due to the absence of documented inclusive theatre companies within the African context, comparative analytical reviews of inclusive performances at the Edinburgh Fringe establish a criterion to assess and support the fieldwork. A systematic and quantitative view of inclusion within the industry provides evidence and analysis for the state of inclusion within the field of theatre.
- *Chapter 7: The Road of Trials* returns to Nigeria to relay the successes and obstacles in the research cycles. The devised performance *Who Needs to be Normal?* advances the inclusive praxis and faces obstacles within the community. The cycle climaxes with

the professional production *Discovering a Planet of Inclusion*. Impacts on community, empowerment, employment and opportunities are investigated and discussed.

- *Chapter 8: Dark Moments & Temptations* compares the praxis and obstacles of Welsh professional, inclusive company Hijinx as they venture to Lesotho with the *Able to Act* team. A detached observer lens on the cross-cultural project provides professional development and reflection on the collective obstacles in creating cultures of inclusion.
- *Chapter 9: Approaching the Ultimate Boon* challenges the established praxis. Collaborative projects with the University of Cape Town and the Oasis Association group home in South Africa test the praxis in trial-run performances. Case studies provide examples of best practices and insight from theatre-trained participants in the inclusive praxis.

### STEP 3: SAVE THE WORLD

The final section focuses on transformation and the return to enlighten the community. It concludes the journeys within the field sites, reflects on the transformations of participants and makes recommendations for the future.

- *The Final Battle* returns to the CDC's performance of *How to be a Superhero* to summarize the study and to acknowledge the constraints and implications inherent in the findings.
- *The Freedom to Live* reflects on the conclusions and suggests recommendations for the future.

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## STEP 1: CHOOSE A GOOD NAME

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Journal, October 2013

*The window is open, allowing a breeze to enter the cramped, crowded and humid Grade 5 classroom. A young man, Ayomide, age 12, stands daydreaming, looking out into the courtyard with sweat dripping down his face. Twenty wooden desks are haphazardly placed around the room with benches facing a dented, faded blackboard. There is a torn map of Africa from the 1970s on the wall, as well as drawings and worksheets spanning more than a few classes of students who have occupied this classroom. The other 28 students in the room repeat after the teacher verbatim, sometimes filling in a blank but more often performing the rote memorization of vocabulary words or main ideas. The teacher is performing his role with gusto, and I wonder if class would be conducted the same way if I were not present. When asked to take a seat, Ayo smiles. "He cannot speak," one of his younger classmates says. When asked his name, Ayomide proudly states, "Ayo." When asked to write his name, he slowly musters out a crooked letter "A" before another classmate takes the pencil and finishes the "YO" while explaining, "he cannot write." The teacher, upon seeing a potential distraction, scolds Ayo and sends him into the courtyard, explaining, "This child is not normal. He cannot learn". During break, Ayo returns and watches as his peers play football. When he chases the ball, they yell at him to "go sit down" until the bell is rung to return to class.*



FIGURE 9 AYO AT THE WINDOW

Ayomide translates to “my joy has come” in Yoruba, one of the dominant languages of Nigeria. Nigerian names are “intimately associated with various events in the life of the individual as well as those of the family and the larger social groups” (Wieschhoff, 1941:212). A person’s name, or what people call them, defines them. “Choose a good name” is the first

step to becoming a superhero, as devised by the cast of *How to be a Superhero*. Throughout the performance scene (as shown in *Figure 10*), the cast reflects on the cultural implications for names, titles and labels in Nigeria. The narrator states, “Words have the power to build people up or tear them down. Labelling can isolate people from society and discourage or destabilize their vision of hope” (2018). The three main characters choose to be represented by the names Champion, Freedom and Ability, and within the scene of the naming ceremony, they allude to names often used to describe disabilities in Nigeria: wrong, not normal and not okay.

<p><b>SCENE 1: CHOOSE A GOOD NAMES</b></p> <p><b>Maureen:</b> STEP ONE!</p> <p><b>Tope &amp; Salina:</b> Choose a good name! <i>(different actors say their name into the microphone “Femi” “Shola” “Osegwe” and then move to another place on stage- or to a bench to sit down)</i></p> <p><b>Maureen:</b> Some Super hero names are already taken like..... SPIDERMAN <i>(Spiderman music plays- Emmanuel, Osegwe, Salina &amp; Shola Abimbola recreate spiderman moves)</i></p> <p><b>Maureen:</b> BATMAN <i>(Batman music plays- Emmanuel, Osegwe, Salina &amp; Shola Abimbola recreate batman moves)</i></p> <p><b>Titi:</b> Here in Nigeria, we are born with GREAT NAMES. <i>(Victoria comes out holding a baby like a naming ceremony)</i></p> <p><b>Tope:</b> This child is STRONG!</p> <p><b>Titi:</b> This child is GREAT!</p> <p><b>Biola:</b> This child is a blessing to his family!</p> <p><b>Tope:</b> We will call him:</p> <p><b>All:</b> CHAMPION!</p> <p><b>Tope:</b> we will call him:</p> <p><b>All:</b> CHAMPION!</p> <p><b>Tope:</b> We will call him:</p> <p><b>All:</b> CHAMPION!</p> <p><i>(Everyone cheers and the men get into place for “Stand up for the Champion”)</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">I was built to be the best Number one and nothing less Leave me to my destiny I have waited patiently I have vision' oh I believe I know I can count on me So stand up for the champions For the champions stand up</p>	<p><b>Tope:</b> This child is SMART.</p> <p><b>Titi:</b> This child is talented.</p> <p><b>Biola:</b> This child is a blessing to her family!</p> <p><b>Titi:</b> We will call her:</p> <p><b>All:</b> FREEDOM!</p> <p><b>Titi:</b> We will call her:</p> <p><b>All:</b> FREEDOM!</p> <p><b>Titi:</b> We will call her:</p> <p><b>All:</b> FREEDOM! <i>(Everyone cheers and the ladies get into place for “Waving Flag”)</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">When I get older I will be stronger They'll call me 'Freedom' Just like a wavin' flag (x5)</p> <p><b>Maureen:</b> But sometimes people are called by other names:</p> <p><b>Tope:</b> This child is not okay. <i>(everyone says no- boos)</i></p> <p><b>Biola:</b> This child is not normal. <i>(everyone says no- boos)</i></p> <p><b>Titi:</b> What is wrong with this child? <i>(everyone says no- boos)</i></p> <p><b>Tope:</b> This child is SPECIAL. <i>(everyone says YES!)</i></p> <p><b>Titi:</b> This child is BRAVE. <i>(everyone CHEERS!)</i></p> <p><b>Maureen:</b> This child has strengths &amp; weaknesses. <i>(everyone CHEERS!)</i></p> <p><b>Biola:</b> This child is a blessing to their family! <i>(everyone CHEERS!)</i></p> <p><b>Tope:</b> What can we call this child?</p> <p><b>All:</b> ABILITY!</p> <p><b>Tope:</b> We will call them:</p> <p><b>All:</b> ABILITY!</p> <p><b>Tope:</b> We will call them:</p> <p><b>All:</b> ABILITY!</p> <p><b>Narrator (RECORDED):</b> There is power in names. It is important what we call people- Words have the power to build people up, or tear them down. Labeling can isolate people from society and discourage or destabilize their vision of hope. We all have super powers- We have the power to change Nigeria. It starts with you &amp; me.</p> <p><b>Maureen:</b> (to actors &amp; audience) WHAT WOULD YOUR SUPER HERO NAME BE? <i>(audience members for their super hero names, everyone repeats the name &amp; cheers)</i></p>
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FIGURE 10 DRAFT SCRIPT OF STEP 1: CHOOSE A GOOD NAME IN HOW TO BE A SUPERHERO

Giroux states, “Language is intimately related to power, and it constitutes the way that teachers and students define, mediate, and understand their relation to each other and larger society” (133 Giroux 1997). This is demonstrated culturally in Nigerian society through the specific use of names and titles to differentiate hierarchies within the community. For example, at the CDC, the top of the hierarchy is “the doctor,” who is always referred to as such. Below the doctor are the heads of each unit, who are addressed as Mr. and Mrs. and

their chosen name (i.e., Mr. Segun). All junior staff members are referred to as “Auntie” until they reach a certain age, at which point they are called “Mama” to show respect.

Students are referred to by name and often cite the meaning of their names: Ifeoluwa means “love of God”; Funke means “God has given me someone to care for” and Zweobi is “anger of the heart, a warning against witchcraft.” These names were used when students were peaceful or well-behaved. When being “troublesome” or not following a routine, the same students or adult members were referred to as “this boy” or “naughty girl.” Often, more “troublesome” participants were only referred to by these phrases.



FIGURE 11 NIGERIAN NAMING CEREMONY IN STEP 1: CHOOSE A GOOD NAME

The importance of names and the stigmatizing nature of society in Nigeria can be further understood by examining the work of Pulitzer-prize-awarded Nigerian playwright, Wole Soyinka, in his play *The Strong Breed* (1963). The story revolves around Eman, a stranger who arrives in a Nigerian village as a teacher. The plot takes place during an annual purification ritual to expel evil in the community. The ritual demands a scapegoat, preferably and historically a stranger and one with a visible disability. This carrier dispenses the sins, evils and curses of the village as a sacrifice through a public ceremony of beating, abuse and exile or death. Eman befriends the marginalized in the community in the form of a young, disabled girl and Ifada, the “idiot” chosen as that year’s sacrifice. Ultimately, Eman sacrifices himself for the betterment of the community and to protect Ifada.

The theme reflects how societies use the weakest, most vulnerable citizens as a scapegoat for the perceived greater good, citing religion or culture to validate false fears and prejudices.

Soyinka employs the importance of names in Nigerian culture to reinforce the themes of religion and scapegoats that are prevalent in a stigmatizing society (Odebode, 2012). Eman, who ultimately sacrifices his life to save the community and Ifada, is named as an analogy and contraction of Emmanuel (the biblical Christ). This is fitting for his role as teacher, friend of the outcast and eventual sacrifice. Ifada, the proposed scapegoat, is labeled an idiot, and Soyinka here puns upon the Yoruba phrase *ifa dara* (meaning “free gifts are good”) as Ifada is seen as a beggar who clings to Eman for free gifts in the form of food, work and, ultimately, the gift of salvation (Odebode, 2012:127-132). Each character name represents an aspect of society that stigmatizes the marginalized people in Nigerian culture: Oroge (from *oro jeje*, meaning soft words) implicates a bystander to the oppression afraid to speak against power; Jaguna (literally the Yoruba title for Army Chief) represents the aggressive and violent ways that society clings to the status quo and manifestations of power. His daughter, Sunma (an analogy of the biblical Samson, who stood up to his father), represents those in the status quo who may attempt to stand against power but are weak. Sunma disagrees with the culture and fears for Eman as an outsider and possible scapegoat, but despite her attempts, she cannot stop the sacrifice from being made. In addition to projecting the religious and cultural behavior, namely that of segregation, abuse and abandonment, toward the disabled community in Nigeria, Soyinka also attempts to humanize disability acceptance and inclusion through Eman’s relationship with the disabled and stigmatized characters. Eman’s kind friendship with Ifada is a model of human decency; he sees the potential in Ifada and offers him work and other opportunities. In contrast, Sunma shuns Ifada, reflecting the general view of society that operates out of fear. She calls Ifada a “creature” and an “insect” that she “cannot bear the sight of” (1964:116) and that “fills [her] with revulsion” (117).

*“THERE IS POWER IN NAMES. IT IS IMPORTANT WHAT WE CALL PEOPLE – WORDS HAVE THE POWER TO BUILD PEOPLE UP, OR TEAR THEM DOWN. LABELLING CAN ISOLATE PEOPLE FROM SOCIETY AND DISCOURAGE OR DESTABILIZE THEIR VISION OF HOPE.”*  
(*HOW TO BE A SUPERHERO, 2018*)

Quayson suggests that the “subliminal fear and moral panic” summoned by the disabled community is manifested within the structures of a culture’s art and literature; he terms this crisis “aesthetic nervousness” (2007:14-15). Soyinka depicts this aesthetic nervousness

throughout the play. His use of naming “transcends the illocutionary act of labeling to bring into play the social indices of occupation, age, geography, ethnicity and religion” (Odebode, 2012:127). It is these very social constructs that lead to the anthropological moral model of disability prevalent in Nigeria.

Sociocultural and anthropologic literature has defined disability as both an aspect of a culture and a culture within itself (Peter, 2006; Currans, Kupper & Heit; 2015; Mcrae & Rowe, 2019; Nelson & Maag, 2019; Hadley, 2020). The term “disability” serves as broad label that covers anything from physical disabilities, D/deafness, Blindness, visual impairments, cognitive and developmental impairments, wheelchair use, mental illnesses, learning disorders. This includes Down’s syndrome, cerebral palsy, autism, attention deficient disorders, dyslexia, giftedness and various spectrums of impairments and difficulties (Elkin, 2015; Bailey, 1993; Linton, 1998). Alongside “disability,” terms such as “special needs” and “learning disabilities” also function as broad terms that encompass a vast spectrum of “conditions that inhibit a person’s ability to process or present information” (Bailey, 1993:56); they also act as euphemisms for “physical disability, cognitive impairment and mental illness” (Kempe, 2001:171). Ethically, it is problematic to generalize exactly what a specific disability diagnosis entails as each individual is unique

(Kempe, 2001; Elkin, 2015). To address this problem, the term “inclusive” or “inclusion” is utilized to assert the importance of the community as a whole rather than further stigmatizing or labeling individuals.

*“PHRASES SUCH AS [DISABLED, SPECIAL OR HANDICAPPED] MAKE A CONVERSATION SIMPLER, THEY ALSO SERVE TO REINFORCE OR CREATE SOCIAL STIGMA, OFTEN GENERATING A NEGATIVE EMOTIONAL RESPONSE TO THE INDIVIDUAL BEING SO LABELED.”*

(WARREN, 1988:49)

To alleviate the moral fears or subliminal panic of aesthetic nervousness, foundations of progressive pedagogy and applied theatre are used as lenses in creating inclusion. Much like the many names, labels and differentiations that accompany disability, progressive pedagogy and applied theatre both come with their own set of labels that minutely discriminate the different from the norm and the atypical from the typical. There are many different theories

and names that fall under progressive pedagogy (hooks, 1994; Robinson, 2008; Tomlinson, 2014), including radical education (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1997), revolutionary pedagogy (McLaren, 1998), transformative education (Boyd & Myers, 2006), engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994) and critical pedagogy (Giroux, 1983; McLaren; 2002; Kincheloe, 2005). Each theory is established on ideas of education as a mutual, participatory and transformative process and build upon Freire's theories of education for social change.

Applied theatre theory and theorists define applied theatre in a variety of ways: theatre for change (Landry & Montgomery, 2012); theatre for, by or with communities (Prentki & Preston, 2009); and theatre as "a way of conceptualizing and interpreting the ethical and cultural practices that are motivated by the desire to make a difference to the lives of others" (Nicholson, 2005:16). Applied theatre uses the conventions, crafts and creativity of pure theatre to address a specific question or solve a real-world problem. This differentiation takes theatre out of normal or traditional theatre spaces and into communities, be they within schools, hospitals, prisons, retirement homes, villages, offices or streets. This aligns with the applied concept of theatre as transformative (Hargrave, 2015; Cattanach, 1996; Prentki & Preston, 2009; Salhi, 1998), "a tool for cultural intervention" (Prentki & Selman, 2003:3) and a "force of change" (Boal, 2002:xxvii). Applied theatre "operates at the point of intersection between culture, community and identity" (Nicholson, 2005:40), which aligns with Giroux and McLaren's polysemic concept of culture as "caught between social formations, everyday life, and representational practices" (Giroux & McLaren, 1994:7). This alignment supports an argument that progressive pedagogy through applied theatre can be a route to the creation or transformation of culture.

Choosing the right words and names is critical to defining the aspects that frame these stories and this research. The names chosen are inclusive, progressive and applied; they name the critical importance of community transformation in a real-world context. The following chapters contextualize the ordinary world and name the key theories that define this research, the research design and the methodologies that begin the study.

## CHAPTER 1: THE ORDINARY WORLD

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Journal, January 2014

*Today while tutoring Ayomide, we were crammed in a dark passage between the kindergarten classrooms and the latrine toilets. Not the ideal learning space. His teacher reiterated that Ayo couldn't read or learn but agreed that he could try. We made a booklet by coloring and tracing short words about things that are blue. As we practiced reading the book to each other, Ayo memorized what I had said or threw out guesses based on the pictures for each page, more or less acting like he was reading. During our break, we practiced some songs. During "Row, Row your Boat," Ayo's face lit up; he knew all the words and hand movements – he had learned in church. He wanted to teach the neighboring kindergarten class the song when he was finished reading. So, after practicing and role-playing as a teacher, we entered the classroom, and I asked the teacher if Ayo could teach her class. She reminded me that he "did not speak" and that he would upset the children. As I looked over to him, Ayo tucked his shirt in "like teacher" and asked me to write the words on the board. He grabbed a stick and pointed at the words as he guided the class through the song. After a few verses, Ayo ran to the passage and grabbed the blue booklet. He returned to "read" it aloud to the class. When he finished, the Kindergarten teacher and class clapped for him, and he yelled at each student to "sit down and be quiet."*



FIGURE 12 AYO IN THE CLASSROOM

In terms of the heroic journey, Ayomide (here onwards known as Ayo) and his classroom experiences are indicative of the ordinary world that begins the stories of this research. These journal entries encapsulate several different themes of the research: the uncomfortable nature of addressing disability; stigma and society deciding what a person can or cannot do; teachers and students performing roles; the awkward tensions of being an outsider in cross-cultural projects; and the uncertainty of field research.

The setting of this primary school is within Africa's largest city and the self-titled "centre of excellence," namely Lagos, Nigeria. Many factors are working against Ayo's success: the

stigma of disability in Nigerian culture; the lack of training and understanding of teachers to accommodate students with disability; a residual colonial or missionary system of education that focuses on regurgitation rather than critical thinking; poverty; and a lack of supplies and opportunities. It seems that most people have given up on Ayo; his teachers are overwhelmed by large class sizes, inadequate supplies, an outdated curriculum and burnout due to loss of salaries and poor support. It would be easy to assume that Ayo's perceived "inability to learn" has been caused, or at least exacerbated, by these inherent issues in the educational system. However, any solid research can prove that correlation does not imply causation, and Ayo's experience is not unique to Lagos or Nigeria, nor is it unique to Africa, developing nations or even so-called developed nations.

Similar stories can be told internationally, regardless of culture, wealth, or education systems. According to WHO (2015), 200 million children and young people, representing 10% of the world's youth, have sensory, intellectual or mental health impairments. Approximately 80% of these children live in developing nations where disability rights, advocacy and education are rudimentary. In addition to this global epidemic of adolescents lacking access to education, social inclusion and community engagement, the compounding effects of marginalization result in unemployment, poverty and abuse. With limited employment prospects, adults with disabilities "often live lives of isolation and dependence with restricted opportunities to improve their quality of life" (Barnett, 2014:2). Furthermore, poverty and unemployment manifest violence, with statistics reporting that youths with disabilities are "3.7 times more likely than non-disabled children to be victims of any sort of violence, 3.6 times more likely to be victims of physical violence, and 2.9 times more likely to be victims of sexual violence" (WHO, 2014).

The anthropologic view of disability sees the "social reactions of the community to people with disabilities as the disabling force, rather than implicating the bodily differences as the true source of disability [...] changing the focus from human behavior of people with disabilities to the social environment of the population at large" (Shuttleworth & Kasnitz, 2004). This definition of disability cites Ayo's peers who speak and write for him, his teacher

who fails to see his potential and his community who exclude him as the true nature of his disability. Inclusion and advocacy are learned behaviors (Porter, 2001) and thus behaviors that need to be taught. The presiding barrier to Ayo’s success, and to the success of students like him globally, is the lack of a culture of inclusion.

## INCLUSION IN NIGERIA

The anecdotes that begin this section and this chapter raise questions on what inclusion entails. Ayo is allowed in the public school, surrounded by his classmates, but there is not equitable opportunities in his education. His presence is not mutually beneficial. Ayo’s peers and teachers try to force him into the upheld system by naming and defining him based on the perceived things that he cannot do; he cannot write, he cannot speak and he cannot learn. However, mere moments with Ayo reveal that he can do all these things, albeit not at the speed or expectation of his classroom. Inclusion can be simply defined as “the act of being included,” but the concept of inclusion goes further than being included. The specific choice of the term “inclusion” can be further explained by defining inclusion through definitions of exclusion, segregation and integration.

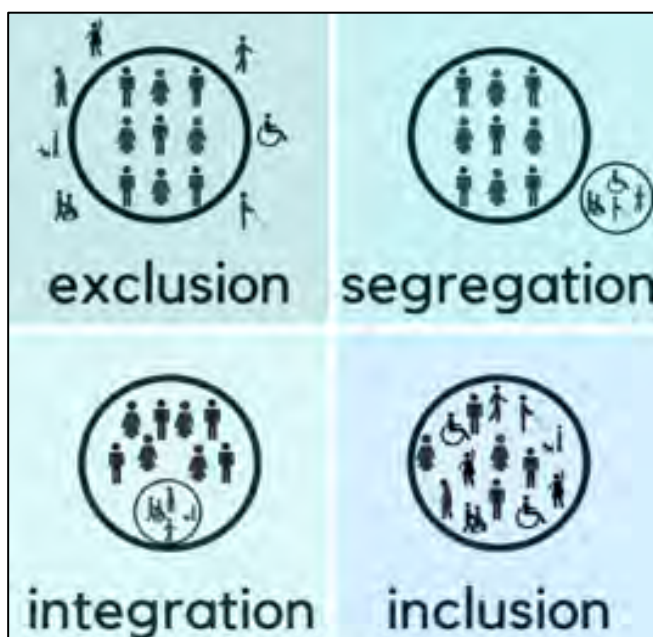


FIGURE 13 INCLUSION, SEGREGATION, EXCLUSION, INTEGRATION

The graphic in *Figure 13* illustrates the difference between inclusion, exclusion, segregation and integration. Exclusion is a process that “pushes certain individuals to the margins of society and prevents their full participation in relevant social, economic, cultural and political processes” (UNDP, 2011:6). Segregation can be defined as separation from a group, and integration can be defined as a model that attempts to fit or force people into

the present system without changing any parameters (Rieser, 2012; Coleman, 2006; Roulstone, 2010; Perring, 2008). Inclusion recognizes that the systems must be transformed to accommodate all individuals and thus provides adaptations and services for the benefit of everyone.

Many schools, programs and community centers may attempt inclusive practices but ultimately propagate integrated or segregated models. The distinctions between these names (i.e., inclusive arts, D/disability arts and integrated arts) carry distinctly political meanings that mirror wider disability debates and reflect differentiations in positionality and agency within practices (Roulstone, 2010; Hadley, 2020). Inclusion is a constantly changing and evolving process that must transform the systems and structures in society to improve them for everyone. Within the arts and theatre sector specifically, attempts to include artists with physical, visual or auditory impairments has ultimately segregated practices and excluded artists with neurodivergent disabilities. The specific name choice of inclusive theatre or inclusive arts signifies the joint collaborations across disabled and non-disabled binaries, thereby indicating an allyship of “skilled practice, pursued over time, in partnership with disabled people” (Hadley, 2020:185). The partnerships embrace all disabilities, be they physical, cognitive, neurodevelopmental or otherwise. In contrast, disability arts or arts that are “disability-led” (191) primarily focus on artists with physical, visual and auditory impairments (e.g., artists who are Deaf, visually impaired or who use wheelchairs). This fails to create an “inclusive arts industry” (179) as it negates allyship and atypical or neurodivergent artists.

## DISABILITY AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT

Social anthropology and disability theorists determine the social construction of disability, identifying the “social reactions of the community to people with disabilities as the disabling force, rather than implicating the bodily differences as the true source of disability” (Shuttleworth & Kasnitz, 2004). Disability studies theorists embrace the idea that the concept of disability did not appear until the Industrial Revolution rendered certain bodies unsuitable

for work in factories (Barnes, 1991; Davis, 1995; Linton, 2006; Hargrave, 2015). Ayo's classmates and teachers deemed him unsuitable for the work in the classroom; he could only do what they told him he could do or what they let him do. Consequently, he could not do what they told him was impossible for him.

*“DISABILITY EXISTS WHEN PEOPLE EXPERIENCE DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF PERCEIVED FUNCTIONAL LIMITATIONS.” (KASNITZ & SHUTTLEWORTH, 2001:2)*

The social construction of disability is defined by societal standards for normative bodies, behaviors and role fulfillment rather than the degree of functional loss or impairment (Reid-Cunningham, 2009; Armstrong & Maureen, 1996; Holzer, 1999; Ingstad & Whyte, 1995; Susman, 1994). As a result, disabilities are viewed as the “perceptions and prejudices of an able-bodied majority” that restrict the independence of people with disabilities (Cervinkova, 1996). Anthropological theories of disability (Ineland & Sauer, 2007; Solvang, 2000; Reid-Cunningham, 2009) determine disability as a social construct based on three discourses:

- the normality/deviance discourse, which focuses on rehabilitation, normalization and integration
- the equality/inequality discourse, which focuses on economics and equal rights
- the historically dominant us/them discourse, which focuses on identity and belonging

In order to define disability, anthropologists name differing models of disability that reflect historical and cultural shifts in thinking and illuminate the progress being made within cultures and societies. Each model must be addressed to shift and transform cultural understandings to create inclusive cultures.

## THE MORAL MODEL

Ayo's experience mirrors one of the unfortunate best-case scenarios for many students with learning disabilities, both in Nigeria and globally. He is allowed to be “included” albeit while segregated and frequently ignored within the school. This is not always the case, as disability is often viewed through a moral model, as was exemplified by Soyinka's *The Strong Breed*. Nigeria is a devoutly religious country, with 48.3% of the population identifying as Muslim and 49.2% as Christian (WHO, 2010). Religion is a prominent factor that contributes to the

“moral model of disability” (Devlieger, 2005). This moral model of disability is derived from cultural, religious or social beliefs and describes “disabled people [...] in terms of divine punishment, karma or moral failing” (Shakespeare, 2006:197). The basis of the moral model is “the never-ending competition between good and evil and [the view of] unfortunate events as the working of evil (in people, witches, or the emanation of evil, the Devil)” (Devlieger, 2005:8). Differing cultures may conceive evil in diverse ways, including blaming evil spirits, karma, black magic, witchcraft or curses, the consequences of parental or ancestral misconduct, sin or God’s will (Devlieger, 1995, 2005; Littlewood, 2006; Peters, 2000; Whyte, 1995; Reid-Cunningham, 2009; Ravindran & Myersa, 2012; Baker, Miller & Dang, 2010; Odom, Horner, Snell & Blacher, 2007; Armstrong & Fitzgerald, 1996).

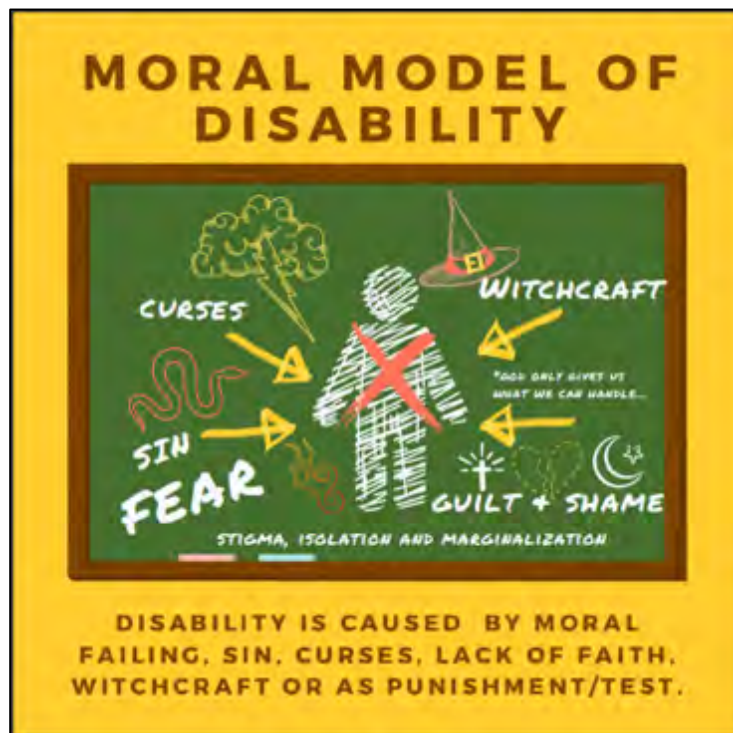


FIGURE 14 MORAL MODEL OF DISABILITY

The moral model establishes the social norms of the non-disabled majority as good or normal and any deviance (in the physical appearance or behavior of the disabled minority) as evil, wrong or bad (Goffman, 1963; Reid-Cunningham, 2009; Shuttleworth & Kasnitz, 2004; Stiker, 1999; Devlieger, 1999). Disability, whether of a visible, physical nature (such as cerebral palsy) or an invisible nature (such as neurodivergence or learning disabilities like autism), can be described as deviant behavior as it violates social norms (Reid-Cunningham, 2009; Stiker, 1999; Devlieger, 1999; Murphy, 1990). This accentuates an us/them discourse that can be combatted by advocating for inclusive education, culture and community.

*“TO BE A HERO, YOU HAVE TO LEARN TO BE A DEVIANT, BECAUSE YOU’RE ALWAYS GOING AGAINST THE CONFORMITY OF THE GROUP. HEROES ARE ORDINARY PEOPLE WHOSE SOCIAL ACTIONS ARE EXTRAORDINARY. WHO ACT.” (ZIMBARDO, 2008)*

## THE MEDICAL MODEL

Ayo's teacher explains that he "is an autistic [sic]" and that his family wanted to send him to a "school for the physically and mentally challenged," but the fees were too high. These phrases, and others such as "the blind girl," "that deaf dancer" or "the special-needs school," all mirror the medical model of disability. The medical model sees diagnosis over personhood and "views disability as a problem that needs to be cured or fixed" (Dunlap, 2015). This model was formulated in contradiction to the moral model and focuses on "rehabilitation, normalization and integration" (Ineland & Sauer, 2007:49) to justify a normality/deviance discourse through classifications and diagnoses. Within medical fields, individuals are categorized (i.e., into those with physical and mobility impairments, brain injuries, vision impairments, auditory impairments, cognitive or learning disabilities, psychological disorders or other multiple and profound disabilities) and further diagnosed into specific conditions (i.e., learning disabilities can be specified as neurodevelopmental and then diagnosed as autism spectrum disorder).

Although the medical model is useful in the medical field and is often required as proof of disability for social care or support benefits, the major fault of this model is its predominant use outside of hospitals or doctors' offices. The medical model views people with disabilities "as 'patients', a role that is often infantilizing, pathologizing and disempowering. A patient that cannot be cured or at least rehabilitated enough to 'pass' is often segregated from the nondisabled mainstream, either

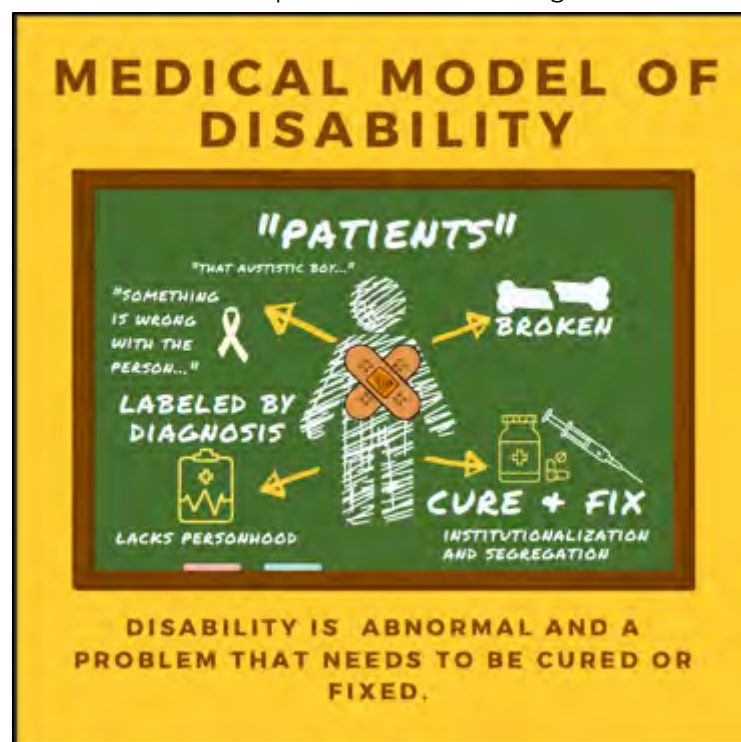


FIGURE 15 MEDICAL MODEL OF DISABILITY

*"CONSEQUENCES OF THE MEDICAL MODEL HAVE BEEN DEVASTATING FOR DISABLED PEOPLE THROUGHOUT HISTORY, RESULTING IN DENIAL OF PUBLIC EDUCATION, INCARCERATION IN NURSING HOMES, INVOLUNTARY STERILIZATION, AND MERCY KILLINGS."*

(SANDAHL & AUSLANDER, 2008:129)

forcibly through institutionalization or possibly through the lack of access to public and private spaces” (Sandahl & Auslander, 2008:129). The model fails to consider the personal traits, personalities, communities and experiences that define a person, as well as their talents and abilities.

Ayo has a learning disability, specifically a neurodevelopmental disorder as defined by the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition* (DSM-5, 2013) as a disorder that “manifest[s] early in development [and is] characterized by developmental deficits that produce impairments of personal, social, academic or occupational functioning.” Ayo’s personal struggles include limited verbal communication, difficulties in reading and writing and attention deficits. His autism diagnosis does not reflect his love for playing football, his ever-present smile, his talent with kindergarteners or his desire to be part of the group. Dr. Temple Grandin, an agricultural theorist and disability advocate, is also diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. She articulately explains her discomfort with eye contact, the way her brain comprehends pictures better than words and her desire to be included but respected for her differences (2018). The DSM-5 medical diagnosis may account for her savant understanding of agriculture, her discomfort with social situations and eye contact or her tendency to become overstimulated; nevertheless, it does not account for her unique fashion sense, her inspiring public speaking or her effect on the disability movement. One of the few things that Ayo and Dr. Grandin have in common is their medical diagnosis.

The vast spectrum of diversity in autism pales in comparison to the multiplicities between other categorized neurodevelopmental disorders. All disabilities can be seen as on a spectrum, and though diagnoses can be the same, the disability may vary greatly for different individuals. These medical classifications are fixated on curing, fixing or otherwise changing a person and fail to appreciate the individual. This rearticulates the hegemony of normalcy and systemic oppression that contributes to the labeling, othering, stigmatizing and marginalizing of those with disabilities.

## THE SOCIAL MODEL

Just as the medical model was formed to contradict the moral model, the social model of disability defines itself in contradiction to the medical model. It moves away from feelings of pity and sympathy and toward “feelings of empathy that are more conducive to reciprocity and lasting social change” (Doolittle, 2016: 247). This view of disability “places disability



FIGURE 16 SOCIAL MODEL OF DISABILITY

within a society built for nondisabled people” (Sandahl, 2002:20). The social model of disability reflects the equality/inequality discourse, which focuses on “economics and equal rights” (Ineland & Sauer, 2007:49). The manner in which Ayo’s classmates and teachers decide what he can or cannot do is indicative of the social model of disability. It is the way Ayo’s peers do his work for him – or a written text for a student with dyslexia, a

verbal instruction to the citizen with hearing impairments or a set of stairs for a friend in a wheelchair – that disables an individual, not the impairment itself. The social model of disability is a neutral view that positions “societal barriers as the problem” (Dunlap, 2015), rather than the individual. Accepting impairments as “natural, inevitable human differences that should be accommodated” (Sandahl & Auslander 2008: 128) creates opportunities and new potential through accessible physical environments, adaptive technology and alternative modes of communication. Inclusive practices in education, theatre or community rehabilitation build upon the social model of disability as they seek ways to increase accessibility, break down barriers and accommodate all abilities.

## THE CULTURAL MODEL

This model asserts that cultural norms and values influence conceptions of disability; it considers disability to be a culture and a culture, in some respect, to be a disability (McDermott & Herve, 1995; Reid-Cunningham, 2009; Devlieger, 2005). The cultural model of disability differs from the previous models because it was not formed to contradict nor synthesize previous models. It was formed on the knowledge that preceding models of disability can never be fully replaced or accepted and that the definition of disability will always be “a matter of dominance, of situational context, and in particular of time” (Devlieger, 2005:7). Disability is defined as a reflection of the dominant (i.e., non-disabled)



FIGURE 17 CULTURAL MODEL OF DISABILITY

culture and as a culturally determined behavior. The view of disability as a culture and product of cultures “moves people from many specific cultures into one large and universally oppressed category” (Conroy, 2009:3). Within the cultural model, the designation of “disabled” prompts the development of identities and communities that embrace disability as a counter-hegemonic act that provides support against similar

oppressions. This united front can challenge mainstream culture to fight oppression and advocate for inclusive cultures (Devlieger, 2005; Reid-Cunningham, 2009; Sandahl, 2002; Eckard & Myers, 2009).

## THE SEMANTICS OF NAMING DISABILITY

Hargrave jokes that the “study of disability makes neologists of us all: to append ‘dis’ to a

given term creates instant portmanteau words like distoriography, disprecision, dismodern. Such words acquire a particular agency in certain contexts, upsetting the binary hierarchies, crippling or queering them” (2016:233). Neologism, the act of making new words or new uses for old words, is persistent in discussions of naming disability. Terms such as “handicapped,” “crippled” or “retarded” are replaced with “special,” “disabled” or “differently abled” as transforming worldviews deem previous labels to be insensitive or offensive (Davis, 2006; Linton, 2006). These definitions and labels reflect upon the worldview and how inequalities or understandings can be addressed to establish an inclusive culture. This is seen in and as a result of each model of disability (i.e., moral, medical, social and cultural) and can serve as a lens into the creation, barriers and definitions of disability within a culture.

These meanings of these models, names and labels “differ, but they all signify inferiority on their face” and determine what individuals “can (potentially/expect to) do and what they cannot do from the very date of their labeling” (Charleston, 2006). Labels perpetuate myths or misconceptions regarding disability; the language used affects perceptions of individuals that reinforce a social construction (Warren, 1988; Karafistan, 2004; Palmer & Heyhow, 2008; Liebowitz, 2015). The semantics of disability vary based on the culture, time period and context. The semantics of choosing a good name or term are therefore critical to transformation.

### Reflective field notes, 2014

*Every time I returned to Ayo’s school, I found him staring out his window. What began as hopeful quickly became frustrating. After years of being told he couldn’t do things, it was increasingly difficult to prove to him that he could. His peers and teachers, by their social reactions, continued to exemplify the social model of disability: speaking for him, doing his work, deciding what he can and cannot do and continuing their disabling force. I spent months one-on-one tutoring Ayo in letters, numbers and colors with hopes of proving to his teachers and peers that there were possibilities for*

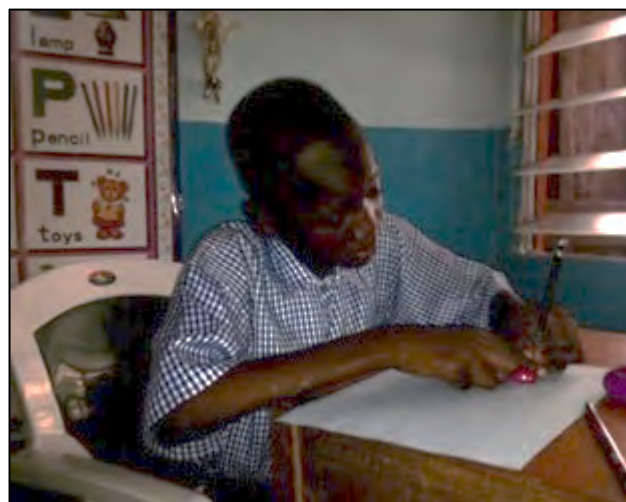


FIGURE 18 AYO WORKING ON HIS BOOK

*him. Together, we would rehearse reading a small book or a song, and then Ayo would perform the lesson for the younger classes. The amount of information that Ayo retained is questionable, but our sessions gave him respite from the constant negativity of his classmates, and the joy on his face while teaching the younger students was profound. In retrospect, these were my first inclusive theatre experiences in Nigeria, with Ayo and I performing the roles of teacher (Ayo) and assistant teacher (me) for a participatory audience of kindergarten students. As the year went on, Ayo became more confident in his role as a teacher, and other opportunities began to open up to him. The kindergarten teacher often requested that he watch her class when she took breaks. His peers and teacher in grade 5 began to include him in some classroom responsibilities and even let him lead a song at the end-of-year party. Ayomide means “my joy has come,” and with the smallest changes toward a more inclusive culture, the joy of inclusion began to transform Ayo’s daily ordinary world.*

The ordinary world of Ayo’s everyday experiences illustrates the social construction of disability, the status quo of systemic oppression and realities of living with a disability in Nigeria. The role-play work with Ayo may not have prepared him to move up to grade 6, but it did give him the chance to be included within the school environment. He effectively showed his peers and teachers that he could achieve more than their preconceived notions. This experience plays an instigating role in the decision to analyze how theatre can create cultures of inclusion, defy labels and transform communities. The purpose of this study is to share stories – like Ayo’s – of creating cultures of inclusion to explore how inclusive theatre practices, both professional and applied, can transform the ordinary world into one of more inclusive cultures.

## CHAPTER 2: REFUSAL OF THE CALL

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*“THE GENERAL POPULATION WHO DO NOTHING, WHO I CALL THE “RELUCTANT HEROES” – THOSE WHO REFUSE THE CALL TO ACTION AND, BY DOING NOTHING, OFTEN IMPLICITLY SUPPORT THE PERPETRATORS OF EVIL.” (ZIMBARDO, 2011)*

This research is not solely about Ayo or Tobi; it encompasses tales of communities, heroes – who are often reluctant – and cultures of inclusion created through inclusive theatre practices. It is a longitudinal, ethnographic, arts-based study, and it aims to produce a banquet of stories, performances and pictures of experiences. There are stories about Kim, who is one of the eight certified bakers in the Oasis workshop baking program. She loves



FIGURE 19 CUPCAKES WITH KIM AT OASIS

cupcakes, Michael Jackson, spending time with friends and dancing. Moreover, this research includes wisdom from Shola, who helps stuff meat pies and make puff-puff with the CDC’s catering initiative. She washes the bowls and pans after each baking session, helps pack delivery boxes and loves to wear her apron and baker’s hat. This research also includes stories from Laura, a Welsh professional actress with Hijinx who also works at a café selling baked goods, and Estelle, who hates baking but is motivated to work when offered baked goods as an incentive.

These voices represent the settings for the fieldwork of this study. The primary fieldwork is conducted at the CDC in Nigeria. Supportive secondary fieldwork sites occur in South Africa with a collaboration between the University of Cape Town (hereafter referred to as UCT) and the Oasis Association and in Lesotho with Hijinx (a Wales/Lesotho partnership). There are commonalities between these settings; one is that in each context, baking provides an occupational opportunity for the members involved. Another similarity, perhaps more critical, is that initially each of the participants above were told that they could not contribute artistically to the community. They had been informed that they would never perform

onstage; they could never become professional actors, singers or dancers; their stories were not important enough to be shared. Personal communication with managers at the fieldwork sites disclosed to the researcher that “drama might not work with our guys” (Oasis, personal communication, 2016) and that “they won’t be able to remember this” (CDC, personal communication, 2015). As a result of this narrative, the participants believed they were unable to contribute. Prior to a drama workshop, Shola expressed, “[I] can’t do drama. I can’t dance well.” She pointed to her legs and proceeded to shake her head as she limped to a chair in the corner. At Oasis, Kim stated a similar remark. They both, like many heroes before them, refused the call to adventure.

Campbell explains that “refusal of the summons converts the adventure into its negative. Walled in boredom, hard work, or ‘culture’, the subject loses the power of significant affirmative action and becomes a victim to be saved” (1949:23). The refusal of the call within the hero’s journey accentuates the status quo; no matter how exciting the adventure or how abysmal the ordinary world may be, straying from it leaves the hero vulnerable and full of doubts and fears. This chapter illustrates the “refusal of the call” within the primary case study to employ a “recipe” for research that defines the research design and methodologies and reinforces the environment of the status quo.

### Journal, January 2016

*As I was rounding up the team for rehearsal today, Mr. Segun told me that there was no time for “playing drama” because the group was busy. I could hear some yelling and the smell of baking, which led me to the back garden shed where Auntie Maureen, Shola and Victoria were huddled around a large open-flame oven. On top of the oven was a boiling pot of oil. A few broken stools and a wonky desk were covered in flour, and bowls and containers were on every open surface, be it a broken wheelchair, a stack of plastic chairs or some faded therapy mats. Victoria immediately told me to “wash. Now,” as she thrust a bowl of soapy water at me and gestured hand washing.*



FIGURE 20 FRYING PUFF-PUFF AT THE CDC

*The next thing I knew, Shola was showing me how to roll balls of cornflakes, butter and sugar into cookies as Victoria stuffed meat pies for the oven, and Auntie Maureen prepared puff-puff to be fried. I asked if I could drop some puff-puff into the oil, which caused the entire room to laugh as they shook their heads. I had “too much energy,” so it would be “so much wahala” for me to deal with the dangerous oil.*

This story introduces some of the members of the adolescent and adult unit at the CDC. The CDC, which was founded by Dr. Yinka Akindayomi, is one of the few centers for children and young adults living with disabilities in Nigeria. It promotes “a place to belong” (www.cdcnigeria.org.ng, 2015) through physical, social and emotional education, teacher training and occupational and physical therapies. The Centre is the main site of fieldwork for the study, and the members’ heroic journeys through theatre comprise the majority of the stories in this research.

At the Centre, there are varying degrees and spectrums of abilities, some with diagnoses and some without. Many of the participants, including the researcher herself, are labelled within the realm of neurodivergency. Some participants are non-verbal, while others speak at length. Some read and write, while others communicate through gestures and pointing. Participant diagnoses that fall into the category of neurodivergency include but are not limited to the following: autism spectrum disorder, down syndrome, cerebral palsy, attention deficit disorder, genetic disorders, intellectual disabilities and motor disorders (DSM-5, 2016).



FIGURE 21 THE TEABREAKERS BAKING INITIATIVE AT THE CDC

Neurodevelopmental disorders (i.e., neurodivergency) are spectrum disorders, wherein what applies to one learner may (but usually will not) apply to another with the same diagnosis. Each field study involves a mixed variety of abilities, with a majority of participants identifying as neurodivergent. Nevertheless, this research attempts to avoid personal medical diagnoses unless absolutely necessary to the understanding of events or where avoidance of such would interfere

with impact or transformative qualities. The use of unnecessary labels is problematic, as in the medical model of disability. It also reinforces hegemonic misconceptions and is unnecessary to the creation of a culture of inclusion, the sharing of stories and the promotion of personhood over diagnosis.

Baking is one of the many occupational and entrepreneurial schemes at the Centre and is subsequently an activity that reoccurs at each of the fieldwork sites. Therefore, it seemed appropriate to allude to ethnographer Harry S. Walcott's analogy within the research description:

The making of an ethnography is rather like making a loaf of bread. Both demand a skillful combining of the customary, everyday ingredients, none of which is absolutely critical [...] The end product takes form in shape at the hands of an ethnographer – or baker – familiar with local expectations as to how it should look and who therefore selects, combines, and shapes ingredients accordingly. (2002: 38)

The research conducted is ethnographic, arts-based, exploratory and inductive; it is constructed using a design research approach (Bruner, 1996; Gravemeijer, 1994; Bakker & van Eerde, 2014; Drijvers, 2003). As such, it follows the description of “customary everyday ingredients, none of which is absolutely critical” by using a mixed methods approach, with the principal method being ethnographic combined with qualitative and arts-based methods. Inspired by Walcott's analogy and its applicability to the status quo of the field studies, the rationalization of the research design will be done in the style of a recipe. A recipe can present a cross-cultural, reliable praxis that may differ due to local expectations and ingredients while ensuring the external reliability in such a way that it can be reconstructed by others (Drijvers, 2003; Gravemeijer, 1994; Gravemeijer & Cobb, 2001; Smaling, 1987, 1992). This recipe for research (see *Figure 22*) clarifies the mixed methods approach and this study's methodologies and also allows for reconstruction, simplification and scaffolding.



# A Recipe for Research

## Ingredients

- (1) Focus Research Question: How to create cultures of inclusion through theatre & drama?
- (1) Purposes of Inquiry: Exploratory
- (1) Mode of Logic: Inductive
- (1) Narrative mode of thought
- (2) Methodologies:
  - Participatory Action Research (PAR)
  - Practice-as-Research (PaR)
- (3) Methods:
  - Qualitative
  - Ethnography & Performance Ethnography
  - Arts-based

## Materials Needed

### FOR THE DATA ANALYSIS:

- Thematic Investigation
- Qualitative Data:
  - Observations, Questionnaires, Interviews, Discussions, Journals, Field-reflections, Feedback notes, Reflections
- Arts-Based Data:
  - Performances, Scripts, Pictures, Recordings, Music, Rehearsal, Devising Processes

### FOR THE INCLUSIVE PRAXIS:

- Participants in an inclusive theatre/drama praxis
- Control: Praxis leads to an Inclusive performance
- Independent Variables: cultural context, individual participants, developments in the praxis
- Dependent Variables: performances, data gathered, community
- Resources: a rehearsal space, mixed ability participants that include neurodiversity, speaker for music
- Performance/Devising supplies such as props, costumes, fabric, art supplies, etc.

## Time

### TOTAL: Longitudinal Study

- PREP: 2 years of intimate acquaintance & observations
- EACH CYCLE: 2-3 months over a 3 year period

## Preparation

Gather information from theory, literature, experiences and the work of other researchers or practitioners to develop a praxis and dramaturgy of creating Inclusive Theatre. This is informed by the understanding of inclusion and disability through the lenses of progressive pedagogy and sociocultural anthropology; as well as the foundations of Applied Theatre. Partner with an organization that supports adults with disabilities for possible fieldwork, and become familiar with the community. Throughout the process continue to support discoveries through professional development and reflection.

## Directions

### RESEARCH DESIGN; a Design Research approach

#### Step 1: Preliminary Design Phase

Use the Inclusive Theatre praxis and dramaturgy distilled from the preparation research (or retrospective analysis) to formulate a hypothetical learning trajectory (an idea of a possible path through instruction activities) for the creation of an Inclusive Theatre performance. This will be implemented in the teaching experiment phase.

#### Step 2: The Devising Process & Performance (ie. the Teaching Experiment Phase)

Implement through experience and participation with the community. This phase tests the prototype by confronting it with reality within the community. Collect qualitative and arts-based data.

#### Step 3: Retrospective Analysis Phase

Reflect and analyze data from the teaching experiment phase. Improve and adjust the learning experience to formulate a feed forward, or evolving praxis for the next cycle of research. Based on to what extent the actual learning trajectory corresponds to the hypothetical one, new instructions and revised learning trajectories can be designed.

#### Adapt, Revise & Repeat Cycle

Repeat by returning to step 1 to revise the praxis and learning trajectory, so that the cycle of design, revision and implementation can begin again. The cycles continue through a reflection-in-action that adapts to the learning, contexts, and circumstances of the community. The developed praxis is implemented in various field study contexts to develop at different levels and circumstances.

FIGURE 22 RECIPE FOR RESEARCH

## RESEARCH DESIGN

The use of design research (Bakker & van Eerde, 2014; Drijivers, 2003; Gravemeijer, 1994) is based on the premise that heroism, inclusion and advocacy are learnt behaviors (Porter, 2001; Zimbardo, 2011, 2012, 2006) and that teaching through theatre can lead to the creation of inclusive cultures. Therefore, it requires the use of educational theory-based “transformational research” (Gravemeijer, Bowers & Stephan 2003:53) that consists of a cyclic process of designing, testing and revising instructional sequences in learning environments. The instructional sequences are referred to as “praxis,” but they can also be defined as a curriculum or learning trajectories. The term “praxis” is used in this research as it denotes the Freirian concept of “reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed” (1970:126).

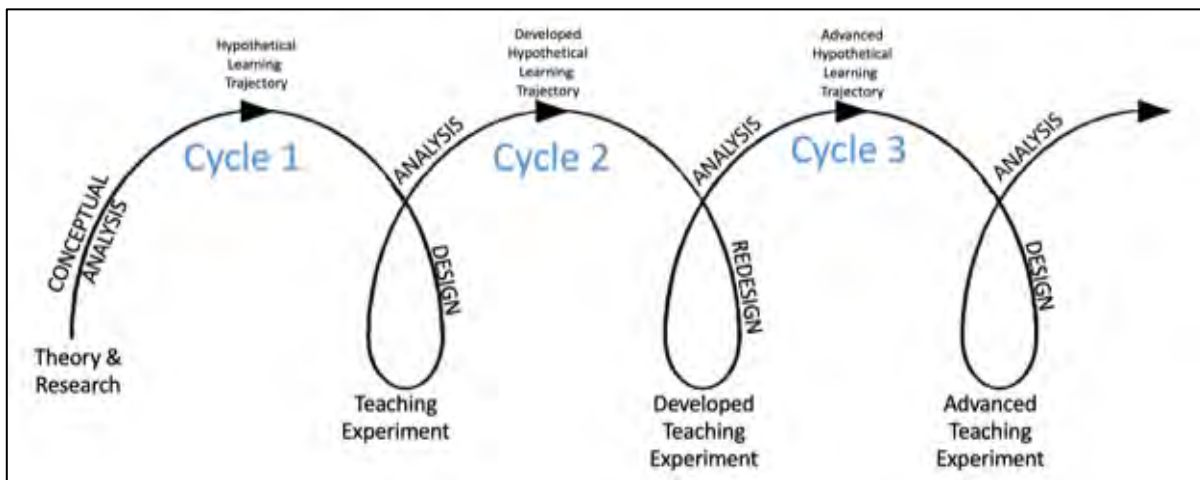


FIGURE 23 DESIGN RESEARCH CYCLES

The first step of design research uses research, literature and experience to develop and implement “hypothetical learning trajectories,” which form a prospective design of instruction activities. For this study, the hypothetical learning trajectory comprises the praxis for creating and performing inclusive theatre. It is developed through an analysis of concepts, theory and practice, including a dramaturgy for inclusive theatre that has been distilled from the work of others in the field, professional development and collaborations with other practitioners. Some of the concepts form secondary fieldwork sites and case studies, including Hijinx in Lesotho (*Chapter 8*), the UCT and Oasis collaboration (*Chapter 9*) and an extensive three-year review of inclusive theatre at the Edinburgh Fringe (*Chapter 6*).

The developed hypothetical praxis is tested within communities through workshops, rehearsals and performances; both qualitative and arts-based data are collected for analysis. This occurs through the primary fieldwork site and case studies conducted in Nigeria, which culminate in the following performances: *The Planet of Inclusion* (July 2016), *Who Needs to be Normal?* (December 2016), *Discovering a Planet of Inclusion* (March 2017), and *How to be a Superhero: A Guide to Saving the World* (March 2018). Each performance signals the teaching experiment phase or the second step of research design (see Figure 24).

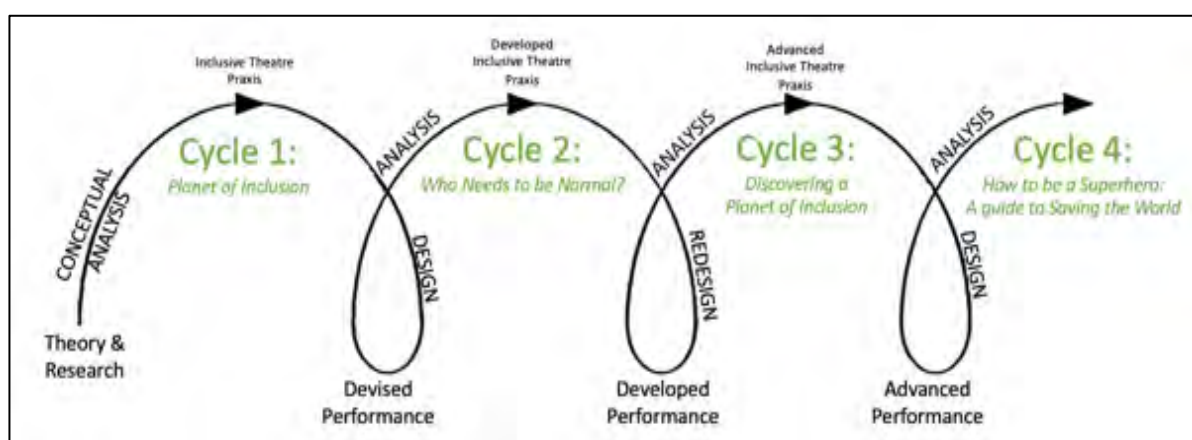


FIGURE 24 MODIFIED DESIGN RESEARCH FOR THE PRIMARY FIELD STUDY BASED IN NIGERIA

The third step is retrospective analysis, wherein the experiences and data collected are examined. Gravemeijer refers to this as “reflection-in-action” (1994) as it results in developing new hypotheses, new instructional activities and adaptations of the praxis that “feed-forward for the next research cycle, that may have a different character, according to new insights” (Drijvers, 2003).

The cycles of design research work both on macro and micro levels; each performance praxis is a cycle, but each rehearsal also follows a similar trajectory of planning, applying and reflection, as does the research in its entirety. The cyclical nature of design research complements the framework of the hero’s journey as that too is a cycle that feeds forward to bring transformation through gaining knowledge, participating and returning. The choice to use design research for this work allows it to “bridge the gap between educational practice

and theory”; it can contribute to both developing theories about learning and about “the means that are designed to support that learning” (Bakker & van Eerde, 2014).

## METHODS, DATA COLLECTION AND PRESENTATION

Walcott’s analogy continues by stating that “[w]e admire ethnographers able to season their accounts with just enough humor, compassion, pathos, irony, wonderment, mystery, and so forth” (2003:39). The “seasoning” in this study is that data is presented through ethnographic and arts-based means, including stories, scripts, performances, pictures and reflections (Denzin, 1997; Saur & Johansen, 2013), with the hope of rendering the “identities and creativities” (Goodly & Runswick-Cole, 2011:82) of the participants. This recipe for research, much like the vignettes that started this thesis and the scripts and stories that unfold throughout, is indicative of the presentation of data. An eclectic mix of inspired and arts-based methodologies allows this work to “[portray] new understandings textually, visually and/or performatively” (Gouzouasis, et al., 2006:1225). This presentation of data reflects foundations in ethnographic, qualitative and arts-based research methods as it produces a series of narratives that “consciously foreground the voices [...] and [minimize] extended theoretical discussion” (Foley, 2002:151). A metaphoric recipe also reflects the modes of understanding of a neurodivergent researcher through the contribution of a personal “seasoning” of eclectic, metaphoric and arts-based connections in the form of stories, recipes, lesson plans and scripts.

Walcott’s analogy of ethnography as baking continues, “All social researchers have at hand basically the same array of ingredients, beginning with an infinite supply of potential data that can be gleaned from everyday behavior, and an assortment of readily available improvers” (2003:39). The main ingredients, or methods, for this research are qualitative, ethnographic, arts-based data with “improvers” that include methodologies of participatory action research and practice as research. These specific methods and methodologies blend the concepts of performance, pedagogy and anthropology in regard to creating cultures of inclusion.

Data Collection					
Field Work Context	CDC:Nigeria			Oasis/UCT South Africa	Hijinx Lesotho
Collection Technique	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3		
Pre/Post questionnaires	+	+	-	+	-
Mini Interviews during Rehearsals	+	+	+	+	+
Observations in & out of rehearsal	+	+	+	+	+
Observations of discussions	+	+	+	+	+
Observations of activities	+	+	+	+	+
Participant written/verbal reflections	+	+	+	+	+
Participant journals	-	+	-	+	-
Participant video journals	-	+	+	+	+
Researcher journals	+	+	+	+	+
Observation of rehearsals	+	+	+	+	+
Post-Performance feedback	-	+	+	+	+
Community performances	+	+	+	+	+
Interviews with participants	+	+	+	+	+
Audience/community Interviews	+	+	+	+	+
Videos of rehearsal and performance	+	+	+	+	+
Photos of rehearsal and performance	+	+	+	+	+
Case Studies/Field Notes	+	+	+	+	+

FIGURE 25 DATA COLLECTION TABLE

Ethnography gleans data from everyday behavior and was traditionally a method of research in anthropology and education (Zou & Trueba, 2002; Walcott, 2002; Denzin, 2003). It creates a picture of communities, namely a “cross-cultural perspective” (Walcott, 2002:34) concerned with the ways in which people create themselves, to make sense of other worlds. An ethnographic lens provides “a valuable perspective for understanding disability, especially the experiences of people who are different from the researcher” (Reid-Cunningham, 2009), and unites all aspects of the research: performance, learning and teaching and inclusive cultures. In order to address the research questions, the study fulfills ethnography’s main attributes, which include the following: first-hand experience, long-term acquaintances between researcher and participants, conducted in natural settings, flexible, adaptive, cross-cultural and comparative (Walcott, 2002; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002; Carspecken, 1996; Guajardo & Guajardo, 2002).

Performance ethnography (Denzin, 2003; 1997) is an arts-based method of qualitative inquiry. It includes the collection of arts-based data, such as performances, scripts, music, pictures and recordings of rehearsals and performances, programs, rehearsal notes and discussions and interviews with the audience (see *Figure 25*). Performance ethnography presents a tangible opportunity to connect academic theory with teaching, learning and culture. The theatre as a site of research is transformed by performance ethnography from

entertainment to participatory action research that extends beyond the performance itself (Alexander, 2005; Finley, 2005; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). Denzin's concept of a "mystory" is reflected within the inclusive performances and within the research presentation itself. In this context, this research, the performances within it and the stories told are,

a montage text, cinematic and multimedia in shape, filled with sounds, music, poetry, and images taken from the writer's personal history [and] grafted onto discourses from popular culture. [They locate themselves] against the specialized knowledges that circulate in the larger society. The audience co-performs the text, and the writer, as narrator, functions as guide, commentator, and co-performer. (Denzin, 2003:17)

A critical aspect of this study is to foreground the voices of the participants and minimize "extended theoretical discussion" so as to feed the findings back into the communities where the work is being conducted. The methods, collection and presentation of data imitates both the researcher's personal learning styles and teaching styles with the hope of making this work accessible to those in the field wanting to implement inclusive theatre within their own practices. The data collected is codified and organized to extrapolate and develop the "relationships, patterns and themes" (Ely, Vinz, Downing & Anzul, 1997:162) that emerged to reflect on, adapt and implement them into the study.

The methodologies of participatory action research (Denzin, 2003; Kemmis & McTaggart 2000; Fine et al., 2003; Heywood, 1994; Guajardo & Guajardo, 2003) and practice as research (Trimingham & Shaughnessy, 2016; Hughes, Kidd & McNamara, 2011) function as an assortment of readily available improvers. To support Walcott's analogy, these methodologies, like yeast, improve functionality, strength and workability and allow the research to rise.

Participatory action research (PAR) focuses on work in communities through participation and action; its aim is to understand the world by trying to change it. PAR accepts research as praxis (Freire, 1993; Lather, 1991) that turns researchers and subjects "into coparticipants in a common moral project" (Denzin, 2003). It is characterized by shared ownership and a "transformative commitment to community action" (Kemmis & McTaggart 2000:568) that is

implemented by “participation and performance with, not for, community members” (Denzin, 2003). Similarly, action research generates theories about how learning has improved practice and is informing new practices (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006), with an emphasis on “collaborating with the community being studied, taking accounts back to



FIGURE 26 PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (CHEVALIER & BUCKLES; 2013:10)

them” (Foley, 2002:151). Action research aligns with Denzin’s concept of ethnography as praxis and links applied theatre with progressive pedagogy by leaning on the “emancipatory and critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal” (Saur & Johansen, 2013:249). PAR links praxis, learning and reflection by building on experiences through a collaborative approach to address inclusion and inclusive cultures.

Practice as research (PaR) denotes that research on inclusive theatre is conducted through the practice of inclusion in theatre. It challenges ideas of methods and methodology as fixed, finite procedures and favors principals of practice, such as artistry, improvisation and decomposition (Hughes, Kidd & McNamara, 2011). Artistry refers to a creative practice alongside the crafted research. Improvisation embraces the unpredictable events beyond the predetermined plans, and decomposition acknowledges moments when the plan deteriorates and regenerates in actual experience. Each design research cycle functions as PaR through the shared praxis of learning through doing and creating inclusive cultures. PaR allows the work to simultaneously follow a plan while constantly adapting and transforming. Applied theatre PaR starts “from the position that the matter of the research is something about the people, the microcosm of society that the participants comprise” (Mackey, 2016) and thus allows multiple voices to contribute while privileging the practice. Although PaR typically refers to the artistry of an art-based process (i.e., the devising and performance of theatre), in the case of this study, it also refers to the practice of creating a culture of inclusion, namely of practicing inclusion in the arts, in relationships and in communities.

## THE STANCE OF THE RESEARCHER, FAMILIARITY, VALUES AND ETHICS

*“THE END PRODUCT TAKES FORM IN SHAPE AT THE HANDS OF AN ETHNOGRAPHER – OR BAKER – FAMILIAR WITH LOCAL EXPECTATIONS AS TO HOW IT SHOULD LOOK AND WHO THEREFORE SELECTS, COMBINES, AND SHAPES INGREDIENTS ACCORDINGLY.” (WALCOTT, 2002:38)*

Throughout this work, as a researcher, facilitator and co-participant, I prefer not to write in first person but rather favor a third person perspective as stipulated by an academic research voice. If necessary, inspired by Kerr (2009), I may use the “first person plural [...] not as a royal ‘we’, but to identify myself” as a collaborator with the participants, who also own this research. This practice, both in the research and my personal artistry, relies on community but takes the stance of a reflective practitioner. Taylor describes a “reflective practitioner” as one who navigates “a discovery of self, a recognition of how one interacts with others, and how others read and are read by this interaction” (2003:110). Denzin explains these



FIGURE 27 PRACTICE BAKING IN REHEARSAL

interactions by addressing the inability to study experience directly; instead, its “performative representations” must be studied, wherein the researcher and participants “co-perform and the ethnographer inserts his or her experiences into the cultural performances that they study” (2003:12). In order to achieve this, it is critical to personally reflect

on the experiences that have developed my worldview and on my qualifications as a researcher.

First and foremost, I identify as an educator, a theatre-maker and an accomplice in inclusion. I was raised in an American working-middle-class suburb outside of Houston, Texas. This is critical to understanding how I grapple with acknowledging my personal white (and American) privilege as I live and work in pan-African contexts. Alongside my acknowledgement of my white, American privilege lies my stance on education. Both my brothers and I were diagnosed as neurodivergent with accompanying learning disabilities in elementary school, although we functioned at differing points on a spectrum. To varying degrees, we struggled with speech, attention spans, hyperactivity, writing, reading, confidence and anxiety. We were hyper, unruly and gifted, but mostly we were “different.” In classrooms where the main form of diversity was between neurotypical and neurodivergent or disabled learners, I experienced first-hand the teachers skilled in inclusion and creating inclusive classrooms and those who further stigmatized, belittled or were frustrated by neurodivergent learners. Though I personally identify as neurodivergent, I also acknowledge that the privilege of medications, therapies and support has often afforded me to “pass as normal” (Goffman, 1963; Linton, 2006; Devlieger, 2005). Bree Hadley (2020) employs the term “the lived experience of disability” to define those with disabilities, as well as their parents, partners, children and carers who participate in disability culture, encounter barriers to access by proxy and “thus do have a sense of identification with disabled people” (2020:182). My lived experience with disability – as well as living with family members with varying abilities – and participating and teaching in inclusive education settings directly forms the basis for my artistry.

## COMBINING VALUES

The selected theories, actions and practices are combined within this study based upon my values as an educator, practitioner and researcher. Essays and journal articles regarding disability and disability arts, as well as professional development through cross-cultural applied theatre projects, inclusive groups and theatre-in-education, helped me address and problematize my own values as a white, American, able-bodied but neurodivergent woman working in disability communities in mostly non-white, non-Western, post-colonial contexts. The values of altruism, radical citizenship and creativity combine this research and its

methodologies, practice, data and theory with the core concepts of applied theatre, progressive pedagogy and inclusion.

Altruism is the primary value within this research as it ensures that feelings of compassion, authenticity, meaningful work and responsibility are woven within the practices and experiences. The concept of service to others (rather than 'helping' others) and use of personal passions for "the greater good" allows what Nicholson refers to as "reciprocal altruism" (2005:33). Reciprocal altruism is the need to share the things that one loves with others, to take responsibility for neighbors and to compassionately pursue meaningful work. Nicholson (2005) and Thompson (2006) caution applied theatre practitioners working in contexts where they are cultural outsiders, warning that "good intentions to be good citizens are not always good enough" (2005:31). Nicholson cautions that "good intentions about 'helping' others in 'need' may be construed as patronizing or authoritarian, contributing to keeping 'others' on the margins rather than taking center stage" (Nicholson, 2005:30). Dana Snyder Young's *Theatre of Good Intentions* (2013) debates the limitations of theatre for social change, concluding that those fortunate enough to see or participate in theatre may experience small, personal effects, but significant social change is unlikely. Thompson suggests maintaining a level of humility and uncertainty about the "the effect and effectiveness" (2000) of the work.

In terms of reciprocal altruism, I can acknowledge that the value of the work for me, as an artist or researcher, is potentially as beneficial (if not more so) than for the participants. I feel that as someone who benefitted from inclusive practices, with a passion for inclusive theatre, it is my responsibility to learn and teach methods of inclusivity and model those behaviors while fully acknowledging that it benefits me as much as it may benefit others. This study shares altruistic moments in which the participants are able to serve each other. These moments reinforce that reciprocal altruism occurs when sharing the things that a person loves and that benefit both the giver and the receiver; reciprocal altruism is thus the main value that combines the stories within this work.

The second core value that combines this work with theory in this research is the idea of radical citizenship (Giroux, 2014; Nicholson, 2005; McLaren, 2003). Radical active citizenship, where “personhood is recognized” (Brodzinski, 2010:116), denotes that “individuals acknowledge their own vulnerabilities and limitations, and recognize that their dependence on the network of social relations is emotionally, culturally and politically productive” (Nicholson, 2005:36). This research is the product of and is dependent on networks of relationships and communities. Denzin explains the “moral commitment on the part of the researcher to the members of the community with whom he or she is working” as characterized by the absence of the researcher’s “need to be in control.” The researcher “wants nothing more than to participate in a collaborative, altruistic relationship” (2003:4-5). This lack of control allows shared ownership between the participants, the researcher and the community (Denzin, 2003; Sealey, 2017; Barnes, 2013; Bogart, 2007).

Creativity is the third and final core value, it encompasses concepts of authenticity, creative learning and commitment to excellence. Educationalist Sir Ken Robinson states, “The first task in teaching for creativity in any field is to encourage people to believe in their creative potential and to nurture the confidence to try” (2011:184). Progressive educational theorists cite the need to change the systemic dominations of current teaching practices (hooks, 1994; Giroux, 2009; McLaren, 1998). It is the repositioning of “creativity and opportunities for community participation” (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2011:78) that can change the education paradigm and thus societies. Robinson describes creativity as “the interaction of different disciplinary ways of seeing things” (2008). To create inclusive cultures – be they in theatres, schools or communities – the barriers that exist must be broken down by creative problem-solving and finding different ways of doing things. As this study employs arts-based PAR and PaR, the performances created inherently rely on creativity. The process of devising, creating and presenting a performance involves a multiplicity of different views, ideas and

concepts. This manifests creative learning, creative problem-solving and adapting ways to devise, produce and conduct performances.



FIGURE 28 CORE VALUES OF ALTRUISM, RADICAL CITIZENSHIP AND CREATIVITY IN ACTION

### SHAPED BY ETHICS

The ethics of applied theatre are often contested within the field, as debates to what the ethics are and how they may be implemented are dependent on the many communities in which an applied projects context can occur (Kerr, 2009; Bailey & Dickenson, 2018; Fisher, 2005; Gjaerum, 2013; Nicholson, 2005; Thompson, 2003). In order to avoid “doing harm when working with others,” Bailey and Dickinson present a potential code of ethics for applied theatre based on five factors: boundaries; competence; participants’ rights; research; and justice and advocacy (2018). Underlining these ethical principles is the fundamental need to be flexible and adapt to each individual, context, location or experience throughout the research project (Kerr, 2009). These factors can be distilled into Denzin’s “three principles” of PAR, namely “respect, beneficence, and justice,” which “are implemented through disciplinary codes of ethics and through a set of procedures” (2003:8-11).

Respect is modeled through boundaries, the participant's rights, competence and integrity; maintaining these factors allows the practitioners and participants to establish trust in their relationships. In this research, time was allotted to get to know each potential participant at the fieldwork sites. These sessions also ensured that each participant was "adequately informed about the research" and that "information was presented in an easily understood fashion, which may also include seeking third-party permission" (Denzin, 2003:10).

Boundaries were established by providing clear timelines and information about what might potentially happen within the sessions. The sphere of practice was clarified as using "Applied Theatre for exploring social justice issues with a community" but "not engag[ing] in pure theatre entertainment, on one hand, or therapeutic intervention, on another" (Bailey & Dickinson, 2018).

Participation was voluntary throughout the project and, when necessary, caregivers, social workers or therapists were involved to accommodate the participants' informed consent (Denzin, 2003; Leighton, 2009; Butler, 1993). Participants with learning disabilities are often excluded due to negative perceptions of agency and voluntarism (Kuppers, 2003; Schmidt & Sack, 2017; Johnston, 2012) or "the ability to make rational choices and decisions" (Leighton, 2009:103). Voluntarism (Leighton, 2009; Butler, 1993) led to the participants to signing the consent forms; as a group, the researcher and the participants created what Granet (2013) and educationists refer to as a "contract of agreements" to establish boundaries through agreed norms, rules and consequences. These agreements were written down and were posted on the walls so that they could be reviewed before a session. Check-ins and reflections during each session also assisted in establishing continued informed consent from each group member, as "participation was continuously negotiated throughout the project with participants verbally and physically opting in and out for entire sessions or a part of a session" (Leighton, 2009:104). Due to the check-ins and reflections, participants had the opportunity to exercise agency and accommodate their participation based on their current feelings and attitudes.

Ethical clearance was obtained through the Faculty of Humanities at UCT, and consent forms were completed by all participants. All photos, interviews and artwork used within the presentation of data have been approved for use by the creators or subjects as well as the organization that they are affiliated with. A stipulation here is that the data presents “positive images of persons with [intellectual disabilities] and images that will foster inclusion, acceptance and understanding that persons with [learning disabilities] are capable” (Davids, personal communication, 2018). The necessary informed consent from participants, their organizations and any third parties, such as for photos and artwork, was obtained through verbal and written consent, which was reaffirmed at each session.

Confidentiality protects the names, diagnoses and medical and welfare needs of each participant. Throughout the study, self-chosen pseudonyms and nicknames are used to protect the identities of the participants. Unless it interferes with the understanding of a story, impact or incident, the specifics of impairments, disabilities or diagnoses are intentionally removed from the study to allow focus on the personhood, relationships and abilities throughout the work.

Bailey and Dickinson’s (2018) concept of competence respectfully certifies the legitimacy of the research and the work of the practitioner. They detail the importance of competence and professional development, stating that “Applied Theatre Practitioners facilitate exploration into social justice issues through the models in which they have been trained.” This includes the specificity of competence in knowledge and skills, including “a base knowledge of applied theatre theories and models, directing, playwriting, and theatre pedagogy, and [the ability] to demonstrate skills in improvisation, directing, playwriting, teaching, and facilitation.” My specific experiences and qualifications as a researcher, educator and facilitator shape my perspectives, address the cross-cultural contexts and validate this research. These include the following:

- *A bachelor's degree in theatre from Pepperdine University in Los Angeles, with an emphasis on directing and design and a minor in social outreach.* This includes foundations in both pure and applied theatre; participation in various forms of modern and classical works; and intensive training in the fundamentals of voice, movement, directing, design and stagecraft. The social work aspect included internships at homeless shelters, prisons and literacy centers; four years of teaching preschool for AmeriCorps; and inclusive teaching experiences in the Dominican Republic, Guatemala and around Los Angeles. These reciprocal cross-cultural education exchanges instructed me in the importance of becoming embedded in a community as an outsider and the hazardous effects of “the white savior complex” (Cole, 2012; Aronson 2017). These experiences have shaped my views of cross-cultural learning, altruism and the acknowledgement of privilege, race and class.
- *Teaching certifications in special education, theatre and drama and five years' teaching experience at one of Houston's largest and most diverse, public inner-city schools.* In addition to classroom experience, this required professional development and training in disability assessment tools, inclusive curriculum planning, family and community engagement, adaptive physical education, first aid, conflict resolution, extensive work with the legality of working with students with disabilities, classroom management and following the stipulations of state and federally mandated inclusive education practices. In regard to training in the work of progressive pedagogy, Giroux, McLaren and hooks instruct that a person should be “be actively committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being if [they were] to teach in a manner that empowers students” (1996:15). Within the large public school, dilemmas of not being able to best accommodate for students with disabilities with 30–40+ diverse learners in a class led to the establishment of the Westside Inclusive Theatre company (WIT). In addition to providing inclusive theatre classes, WIT was a fully inclusive company of 50 students, both with and without disabilities, who created and devised performances. My work with WIT and the inclusive curriculum development led me to a three-month summer internship in Lesotho. Here, I undertook inclusive applied theatre projects for AIDS awareness, and I tutored

English language and literature in and around the village of Ha Ntlama, adding to my experience working in cross-cultural projects.

- *A master's degree in Applied Theatre from New York University, with a focus on communities and colleges.* Opportunities to train with leading theorists in applied and educational theatre included the following: applied facilitation and teaching artistry with Philip Taylor; theatre of the oppressed workshops with Julian Boal; role-play process drama with Cecily O'Neil; techniques for community and creativity with Nan Smithner; and applied drama research methods with David Montgomery. Cross-cultural applied and community engaged theatre in Dublin and Belfast with Joe Salvatore further informed me of the potentials of community work. An inclusive education internship in Ghana with Jonathan Zimmerman strengthened my international research experiences. Perhaps most influential to this study was my obtaining fluency in American Sign Language and incorporating sign and voice in performance through projects with J.W. Guido of the New York Deaf Theatre. Russell Granet's workshops on drama with special populations simultaneously encouraged my work with WIT and within classrooms but also enlightened me to the lack of proper training for inclusive theatre. Specifically, this course modeled ways to combine special education techniques, such as visual schedules and routines, with theatrical techniques. It became apparent that many teachers, theatres and programs struggled with inclusion and accessibility. These experiences gifted me the theory, tools and knowledge to become a progressive educator that uses drama and theatre as "ways [that] classrooms can be transformed so that the learning experience is inclusive" (hooks, 1994:35).

Beneficence entails the "ethics of representation," in which facilitators ensure "the representations that are made are produced through a climate of sensitivity, dialogue, respect and willingness for reciprocity" (Preston & Prentki, 2009:65). Hargrave cautions non-disabled practitioners and directors against using "'different' actors as pawns in some game of theatrical chess" (2009:51) in order to gain notoriety or awards for "their parasitic positional use of disabled participants" (Gurgens & Rasmussen, 2010:102). This is a critical

point of consideration within the ethics of representation. This research hopes to provide a positive representation that validates and includes “different skills, bodies, and subjectivities” (Perring 2005:185). As Kerr asserts, the beneficence aspect of applied theatre ethics is accomplished by “privilege[ing] long term rather than short-term analysis, to balance individual and community rights.” Moreover, Kerr states that facilitators must “be always open to the persuasive power of collective intelligence” (2009:186). Beneficence should account not only for the present situation during the research but also for the potentials of the community after the research is completed. The process of research must ensure that participants can “manipulate the artform for themselves” (Kempe, 1996:viii) and continue to participate after the projects end. The work within this research aspires to provide participants and facilitators with the tools to continue such projects while honoring their participation within the research.

Furthermore, justice is exhibited by ensuring that the research is inclusive and accessible to the community. Applied theatre aligns with the definition of action research, wherein it is essential to “give voice” to marginalized communities and to promote an “emphasis on collaborating with the community being studied, taking accounts back to them” (Trueba, 2002:151). To take accounts back into the community, the research must be presented in formats that span the spectrum of understanding for participants with and without learning disabilities. Within the work, justice and advocacy are modeled through the processes of inclusion and accessibility, with the objective of encouraging others to cultivate inclusive cultures. Throughout this study, concepts and ideas are presented and reinforced in a variety of formats that correspond to differentiated teaching and learning styles to ensure that they are accessible to each member of the community. The use of visual cues (Granet, 2013), pictorial symbols (Leighton, 2009), easy-read formats (Hargrave, 2015), pictures and informational charts ensure that the research is returned to the community and reinforce the participants’ ownership and contribution to the research. For example, in this work, pictures are used to break up large amounts of text, while summarizing quotes are often formatted in blue so that they are highlighted within the main text. These forms of presentation also reflect my personal learning styles and link with concepts of differentiated instruction and inclusive education. The principles of beneficence and justice are adhered to through

differentiated knowledge or the idea that communication can occur through spoken, written, visual and kinetic experiences (Granet, 2013; Kempe, 1996; Nicholson, 2005).

Moreover, Bailey and Dickinson (2018) specify the need for cultural competence wherein “[p]ractitioners understand the communities and systems from which their audiences derive; acknowledge, accept, and address privilege (to include white privilege, economic, ablest, etc.); and cultivate cultural humility.” Walcott cautions against adopting “a colonialist style of writing which assumes the superiority of the traveler’s cultural and moral values [...] Even when sympathetic towards the people being visited, this colonial rhetoric positions the indigenous people as childlike or lacking in reason” (Walcott, 2002:44). The consideration of my status as an American working in African contexts as an outsider or visitor, as well as the acknowledgement of my white, economic, able-bodied and Western education privilege, is paired with what ethnographers’ refer to as an “intimate, long-term acquaintance” (Walcott, 2002:34) with each context of the research. For each project, I have lived for years within the community, both culturally (in Nigeria and South Africa) and occupationally working with centers for disability to obtain cultural competency for the research projects.

## A TASTE OF NIGERIA

*“FOR THE ETHNOGRAPHER, WHAT MUST BE ADDED IS THE CULTURE. [...] WHEN ETHNOGRAPHY IS THE INTENDED END PRODUCT, CULTURE (OR SOME EQUIVALENT OR PARTICULAR SUBSET OF IT – SOCIAL STRUCTURE, WORLDVIEW, POLITICAL ECONOMY) IS THE PRINCIPAL BLENDING AGENT.”*  
(WALCOTT, 2002:39)

In 2013, long before the performance of *How to be a Superhero*, the researcher began what ethnography refers to as an “intimate, long-term acquaintance” (Walcott, 2002:34) with the CDC. Initially, visits the Centre took place two to three times a week to sit in on classes, participate in the routines, learn names and substitute the leaders when asked. These first two years with the CDC operated on the Freirean concept of “cultural synthesis”; visits were not undertaken “to teach or to transmit or to give anything, but rather to learn, with the people, about the people’s world” (Freire, 1972:160). This time allowed the researcher to

understand the cultures, names, personalities, routines and objectives of each of the Centre's four units: early intervention, preschool, school and the adult and adolescent unit. Each unit offered lessons on stigma and Nigerian culture that resonate with the research as a whole. These



FIGURE 29 NIGERIAN CULTURE DAY PORTRAIT AT THE CDC (AKINDAYOMI, 2018)

initial years of observations form a baseline to gauge the impacts and transformation throughout the research. The three aspects of stigma, which are described by Coleman as “fear, stigma’s primary affective component; stereotyping, its primary cognitive component; and social control, its primary behavioral component” (Coleman in Davis, 2006:149) are illustrated within observations of each unit.

#### THE EARLY INTERVENTION UNIT

The early intervention unit offered lessons on “fear, stigma’s primary affective component,” (2006:149). This was illustrated by the many distraught new parents bringing their children to the Centre for the first time. The early intervention unit houses learners of approximately ages 0–8, with the large margin due to exceptions for “severe and multiple disabilities” and newcomers to the Centre. Newcomers often arrived with stories of being chased out of markets or kicked off buses and people running away from children born with obvious visible differences. Sontag explains these actions, stating that “certain physical characteristics or illnesses elicit fear because the etiology of the attribute or disease is unknown, unpredictable, and unexpected” (Sontag, 1979). One mother who brought her daughter to the Centre described her husband and family’s lack of interest or acknowledgement of the child, supporting Davis’s assertion that “nonstigmatized people, through avoidance and social rejection, often treat stigmatized people as if they were invisible, nonexistent, or dead” (Davis, 2006:149). Many of the youngest children had not been provided suitable nutrition.

They often showed signs of abuse or neglect from parents transitioning into the unexpected life changes that a child with disability brings. Throughout the day, interventions were scarce, and children in the unit mostly napped, ate or occasionally attended a therapy session. On one tragic morning, a student aspirated food into his lungs while he was being fed. In a different environment, he would have used a feeding tube rather than being fed with a spoon by Mama. Staff members tried to revive him using CPR and rushed him to a hospital, but he did not survive. Mama grieved by yelling prayers, throwing her body in the dirt, and ripping at her hair. Other teachers present reacted with little to no emotion, citing God's will and the nature of life. The balance of grief and the return to normalcy served as a constant reminder of the fragility of life and the hardships in Nigeria.

#### THE PRESCHOOL UNIT

In sharp contrast to the early intervention unit, the preschool unit was constantly in motion. It illustrated "stereotyping, [stigma's] primary cognitive component" (Coleman, 2006:147). This chaotic room, filled with 3–8-year-olds, offered lessons on stamina, stigma and discipline. Teachers immediately introduced students with descriptive adjectives, such as "this child is very smart" or "she has too much energy." Research indicates that students are often "reduced to their labels," which can result in the "self-fulfilling prophecy of failure" (Grady, 2009: 134). One student was constantly violent, throwing tantrums, screaming and biting others. This behavior was explained by teachers as "his autism" and was often ignored or at times rewarded. Coleman attributes this stereotyping behavior as follows:

[learners with disabilities] are not expected to achieve in the same manner as other children. Parents, too, sometimes allow stigmatized children to behave in ways that 'normal' children in the same family are not permitted to do. Social exclusion as well as overprotection can lead to decreased performance. Lowered expectations also lead to decreased self-esteem. (Davis, 2006:148)

When adhering to the preschool unit's schedule, activities were plentiful, and most students moved from music to academics, to coloring, to lunch and to resting; noticeably, however, some students were left in a chair or on a floor mat with little to no engagement. Two students were constantly placed on a mat on the floor for the entire day. Neither were able



FIGURE 30 PUPPETRY WITH THE PRESCHOOL UNIT

to participate in or observe any activities, and attempts to include them were met with statements like, “Oh, he does not know” or “he cannot speak.” Teachers often scolded students, calling them “troublesome” or “lazy” if they failed to complete a task successfully, and opportunities for success were often disproportionately distributed. Students who were perceived as lazy, too energetic or troublesome were often told that they could not partake in

certain activities, thereby reinforcing stereotypes, while students who followed social norms were more often praised and given special treatment. The phrase “I will beat you” accompanied by swats to the bum, pinching or dragging screaming children out of the room by an arm was an often-prevalent form of classroom management. If a child was screaming or making too much noise, lips might be pinched shut or the child moved to a separate, empty room. It is important to note that this is typical and even expected behavior in classroom management in Nigeria. The CDC was significantly less reliant on corporal punishment when compared to public schools, and most teachers attempted alternative methods. Teachers were often exhausted and burnt out, awaiting months of backdated salaries and providing care for children who had been abandoned or neglected by their parents. The frustration of working without pay often dictated the how classes were held on any given day and how discipline and patience were displayed. The turnover rate of teachers and therapists was significantly higher in the preschool unit than in the school and adult/adolescent units.

### THE SCHOOL UNIT

The school unit illustrated “social control, [stigma’s] primary behavioral component” (Coleman, 2006) with the introduction of the CDC’s curriculum on life skills. This curriculum reinforced understandings of the rote education style of teaching that is predominant in

Nigeria and clarified the CDC's expectations on inclusion. Life skills evaluation was used to benchmark and determine the skills necessary to live inclusively, ideally independently, in mainstream society. The skills include the activities of daily living, such as eating, grooming, engaging in the community, vocational skills, social skills and communicating. Life skills curriculums have proven successful in developing positive skill proficiencies for learners with neurodevelopmental disorders (Meyers, 2011; Benz & Linstrom, 2003). These skills were taught in the school unit through rote teaching by call and response or repetition of key phrases. For example, a lesson on traffic safety would entail the entire class in a circle with the teacher in the center. Anyone who was not paying attention was reprimanded with verbal or corporal punishment. A typical lesson recorded from these observations involved the following:

**Teacher:** Today we are talking about traffic safety. We are talking about . . .

**Everyone:** Traffic safety.

**Teacher:** We are talking about . . . (x2)

**Everyone:** Traffic safety. (x2)

**Teacher:** When we cross the street, we look for traffic. We look for . . .

**Students:** Traffic.

**Teacher:** We look for . . . (x2)

**Students:** Traffic (x2)

**Teacher:** A traffic light has three colors. Green. Red. Yellow. A traffic light has . . .

**Students:** Three colors.

**Teacher:** A traffic light has . . . (x2)

**Students:** Three colors (x2)

**Teacher:** The color green means GO. The color green means . . .

**Students:** GO!

*(The teacher begins asking individual students, "the color green means . . .")*

**Teacher:** Yes. The color green means GO! Clap for yourself.

**Everyone:** *(claps the same rhythm in unison)*

This continues for all three colors and then progresses to looking and listening before crossing, before ending with the repetition of traffic safety. The entire lesson might take thirty to forty minutes, with no variation in pacing. This same structure was repeated for a variety of life skills, such as bathing or brushing one's teeth. The simplicity and lack of critical information within these lessons reflects Coleman's assertions that "many stigmatized people are not encouraged to develop or grow, to have aspirations or to be successful" (2006:148).



FIGURE 31 VICTORIA COPYING SENTENCES INTO HER NOTEBOOK

The school unit also participated in structured activities, such as academic lessons, mock market, art, beadwork, dance and karate. Academic lessons usually involved copying letters, words or numbers into a notebook or completing simple math problems. Mock market involved practicing counting money in exchange for market goods and also encompassed rote repetition. Art and beadwork sessions displayed cultural tendencies around the aesthetics of work, demonstrating Giroux's notion that "as sites of cultural production[,] schools embody representations and practices that construct as well as block possibilities for human agency among students" (Giroux 1997:133). The "art therapist" – which does not here signify a person with a degree or certification in art therapy but rather an artist employed by the Centre – would meticulously trace and cut out shapes for projects alongside an example of a finished product. Individually or in small groups, the students would then recreate the example, and any student unable to recreate the example perfectly would have it done for them. This often resulted in the only participation by some students being the writing of their name and the observing of the art project. It was more important that the product looked correct or perfect than that the student participated in the creation. Moreover, in beadwork, students would work on hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills by stringing beads on a wire. After a few hours, the beads were emptied back into a bag for later use. There was no artistic value or vocational opportunity in the beading; it was an exercise and a time filler. In contrast, dance

and karate relied more on mirroring the instructors. Students were encouraged to follow along, but those who were not actively participating or keeping up with the group were coerced to sit at the side and watch. These methods of teaching indicate how “schools establish the conditions under which some individuals and groups define the terms by which others live, resist, affirm, and participate in the construction of their own identities and subjectivities” (Giroux 1997:133). The initial expectations of inclusion for the CDC were that members had a place to belong and to receive opportunities; however, in reality, the Centre often lacked the support to ensure that each student could participate. Arguably, these activities served more to reinforce “compliance with the social order” (Prentki & Preston 2009: 127) and “legitimate social structures” of hegemony by establishing what is “normal and legitimate” (Heywood, 1994:101).

#### THE ADULT AND ADOLESCENT UNIT

Much like the previous units, the adult and adolescent unit followed a routine that balanced rote memorization, practical experiences, resting and lunch. The differences between the school unit and the adult and adolescent unit were opportunities for travel and the addition of job skills, such as baking and candle making, and job placements within local grocery stores. Each year, the group aimed for a group trip (as will be observed in *Chapter 4: Crossing the Threshold*).

The adult and adolescent unit generally consisted of approximately 35 members between the ages of 16–48+, three therapists, two teachers and a few aids and cleaners. Some of these staff members had been attending or working



FIGURE 32 COMMUNICATIONS CLASS AT THE CDC

with the Centre for more than twenty years. This unit illustrated the best practices established by the CDC. The turnover for teachers in other units was palpable, and often the entire staff in the preschool and school units would change within a few weeks, but the staff were consistent within the adult and adolescent unit for years.

In addition to more opportunities for community engagement, travel and vocational skills, the adult and adolescent unit created an environment where members could chat and “hang out” with each other. Despite the days supposedly having a full schedule, it is important to note that a large majority of time was spent waiting for the next activity, resting after an activity or forgoing activities completely due to heat, exhaustion or lack of motivation. It was in these moments that the cultural implications of names and titles and the critical importance of greetings became clear. It is custom to greet anyone one’s age or older when entering a room and to respectfully genuflect or bow when addressing older or higher-status individuals. This is a lesson that is constantly reinforced at the Centre in all age groups, and members of the adult and adolescent unit would often scold visitors for incorrect greetings. The significance of names and titles (as discussed in *Step One: Choose a Good Name*) reflects the perceived hierarchy and systemic oppression in Nigeria. These concepts and the importance of titles are replicated in the schedule and routines within the Centre. Every morning began with “communications,” which generally involved songs, chants and repetition, but conversations and actual communication were stifled in favor of repetitive rote participation. The following activities were lunch, resting, academic lessons and a series of “therapies.” These therapies could entail anything from stretches or structured hydrotherapy in an inflatable pool to sitting on a massage machine from the 1970s or visiting a closet filled with multisensory lights and soft cushions. The CDC works with certified physiotherapists and medical school interns, but a majority of the therapy sessions (including art therapy, vocational therapy and music therapy) would be theoretically categorized as activities rather than therapy.

The need to legitimize activities as “therapy” reflects the importance of titles within Nigerian society and likewise highlights the Centre’s attempt to combat the moral model of disability

with the medical model. To oppose the prominent beliefs in the moral model of disability in Nigeria (i.e., witchcraft and God's will), the Centre reflects a medical model of disability with a constant focus on therapies, assessments and training. This ultimately led to the development of a drama intervention program.

## BEGINNING THE STUDY

After two years of observations and cultural synthesis on the part of the researcher, the Centre began to implement a new assessment program. Assessments are conducted at least twice a year to document the progress of each individual member of the CDC. The Centre's new assessments were built upon the work of neurodevelopmental psychologists Partington and Muller in the *Assessment for Functional Life Skills* (AFLS; 2012). This assessment tool is "based on a criterion-referenced set of skills that can demonstrate a learner's current functional skill repertoire and provide tracking information for the progressive development of these skills" (Partington & Muller, 2012). Partington and Muller define functional skills as "adaptive skills, safety practices, managing daily life, and striving for independence" (2012), and their description includes a wide range of skill areas in the home, community participation, basic living, health and safety and vocational skills. Throughout the assessment, each learner works individually with a teacher or therapist to master these tasks using "task-analysis" (Szidon, 2010; Partington & Muller, 2012; Jaskolski, 2017), which is the process of breaking each skill into a series of smaller, more manageable steps and behaviors in order to assess and document educational outcomes. It has been shown to effectively aid learners with neurodevelopmental disorders in acquiring life skills (Szidon, 2010; Partington & Muller, 2012; Greenspan, 1998). The therapists and teachers use checklists (see *Figure 33*) to break down and document each skill and how they are prompted or achieved (e.g., independently, verbally, imitatively, using gestures, partially or fully physically) with the goal of independent comprehension. Reports are written, as well as individual educational plans that are designed based on the results of the assessment. These focus on the specific needs of each participant and allow for modifications to learning activities that will elicit the most effective ways to reach each individual (Greenspan, 1998; Jaskolski, 2017).

Task Analysis of Taking a Bath									
Student: _____									
Objective: Able to independently take a bath									
		+= independent V=verbal prompt I=Imitative prompt G= Gesture PP= Partial physical prompt FP= Full physical prompt							
Step	Behavior	Date:							
1	Take pajamas to bathroom								
2	Close the drain								
3	Turn on water								
4	Adjust water to reasonable temperature								
5	Fill water to appropriate height								
6	Remove clothing								
7	Get into tub								
8	Wet entire body								
9	Pour shampoo into hand								
10	Apply shampoo to hair								
11	Rinse shampoo from hair								
12	Apply soap to washcloth								
13	Rub body with soapy washcloth								
14	Rinse soap off entire body								
15	Open drain								
16	Get out of tub								
17	Dry entire body with towel								
18	Hang up towel								
19	Put on pajamas								
20	Put dirty clothes in hamper								
<b>SUM of Independent responses</b>									
<b>% Independent</b>									

FIGURE 33 TASK ANALYSIS ASSESSMENT FOR FUNCTIONAL LIFE SKILLS (PARTINGTON & MULLER, 2012:50)

Despite early success, the CDC’s implementation of the AFLS curriculum in the adult and adolescent unit soon proved to be frustrating for both learners and facilitators (Jaskolski, 2017). The repetition of behaviors and steps during task analysis bored learners, and the repetitive process led to burnout; therapists and teachers continued to work through the task analysis. However, these repetitive days of frustration sparked the idea of incorporating a drama process into the educational praxis as a “tasks and skills model” (Cattanach, 1996:76). Educational drama researchers and theorists have observed ways to teach through drama with special needs learners that align with a task assessment approach (Cattanach, 1996; Kempe, 1996; Brodinzski, 2010; Devlieger, 2005; Palmer & Hayhow, 2008).

Imagination and play were integrated into the repetitive practice, in attempt to keep each task analysis engaging. A vocational task analysis of baking a cake might begin with a student completing the steps alone with some prompting. Then replicate the task, guided by a

facilitator, pretending to be at a fancy restaurant or baking a cake for a family wedding. The integration of play and role-play into learning is significant, using a drama-in-education praxis for learners with special needs (Kempe, 1996; Cattanach, 1996; Jennings, 1990; Ramamoorthi & Nelson, 2011; Sherrat & Peter, 2002; Peter, 1995). Facilitators continued to “differentiate instruction” (Tomlinson; 2014), modifying the ways tasks were taught, and completing each chore in a variety of ways. Songs were written incorporating each step of a task, often accompanied by dance moves. Pictures, games and home-videos were created to reinforce learning. Principles of educational drama (Heathcote, 1997; O’Neil, 1995; Neelands, 2010; 2000) outline a variety of methods to develop learning through dramatic process. Students and facilitators began enjoying the lessons more with the addition of differentiated instruction (in the use of roles, games, songs, and movement), and the focus shifted from ‘checking the boxes’ to applying the experience to real or imagined scenarios (Jaskolski, 2017).

Participants started to collaborate on task-analysis scenes. They began to support each other, and those who required additional assistance worked within their group to find success. This peer-mentoring allowed for independence from facilitators, teachers and therapists (Kempe & Tissot, 2012). Modifications such as visual cues, side-coaching, prompting, group work, imitation, multisensory exercises and the addition of props and costumes were included to allow all students access to the dramatic process (Kempe, 1996; Cattanach, 1996; McCurrach & Darnley, 1999; Bailey, 2010; Sherrat & Peter, 2002; O’Sullivan, 2016; Peter, 1995; Ramamoorthi & Nelson, 2011; Jaskolski, 2017). These task analysis performances began to reflect the strengths and abilities of each individual, and the group as a whole.

In order to encourage participation and engagement through positive reinforcement, the adult/adolescent unit began to perform their task analysis scenes for the younger units of the Centre. These instances established Boal’s concept of solidary multiplication: “each group will have to organize other small groups to which they can transmit the learning, following the notion that “one only learns when one teaches”, in the quest of the Multiplicatory Effect” (Boal, 2006:51). Each group would combine a task analysis with dances, songs, or a pantomime that developed a storyline. For example, baking a cake could include a cake-baking song at an imagined bakery owned by a favorite cartoon character. This scene could

then be performed for the younger school units. Post-performance, the school age children were excitedly included in the imaginary cake baking process. Members of the adult/adolescent unit began coaching, one-on-one, the steps and behaviors in the task analysis of baking a cake to younger units (Jaskolski, 2017). Participants would first learn tasks regulated by cognitive assessment tools; upon mastery of each task, the students then used drama to model and teach others. Task analysis scenes became more performance-based, and with the dramatic interpretation of each AFLS task, members of the adult unit became reinvigorated to complete more tasks.



FIGURE 34 TASK-ANALYSIS OF BAKING DRAMATIZED WITH YOUNGER UNITS

Music, art, dance and drama are often utilized for their therapeutic and rehabilitative values or as a way to improve skills and competencies for people with disabilities (Sauer, 2004; Barnes, Mercer & Shakespeare, 2000; Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2011). The relationship between the AFLS task analysis assessments and the elements of drama, role-play and imagination began to resonate strongly with concepts of dramatherapy. The initial development of a drama praxis in task assessment tended to “integrate an aesthetic process with a therapeutic one” (Landry & Montgomery, 2012:174), a major theme in dramatherapy.

It is critical to understand that though some of their processes, methods or objectives are similar, dramatherapy and an applied approach to inclusive theatre have “essential differences in contract, training, leadership and purpose” (Landry & Montgomery, 2012:174). Dramatherapy most often works toward “psychological change,” whereas applied theatre approaches focus more on “cognitive, social and political change” (Landry & Montgomery, 2012:175). The preference to approach communities with disabilities solely equipped with dramatherapy creates assumptions that “participation in the arts is valuable for [persons with disability] primarily for its therapeutic and rehabilitative potential” and in turn, therapy views creativity as “elitist and predicated on a narrow concept of ability” (Goodley & Runswick-

Cole, 2011: 88). This is inherently an exclusive view. The beginnings of the drama intervention prototype are founded on “therapies”; however, this research is not based in dramatherapy but in an applied theatre approach to inclusion. In anthropological terms, dramatherapy reflects the medical model of disability, which works to fix, change or cure. The objectives of an applied approach to inclusive theatre are more explicitly formulated toward community transformation within an artistic discourse or the sociocultural models of disability. If dramatherapy “can be seen as enabling participants to integrate with the society around them,” then an applied approach to inclusive theatre “invites the world to enter into a dialogue on the terms set by those who are routinely marginalized” (Wooster, 2009:88). Rather than focusing on the therapeutic and rehabilitative aspects of participation in the arts, inclusive theatre creates creative opportunities for the personal and socio-political development (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2011) of both disabled and non-disabled participants. This helps establish the social model of disability by addressing the disabling factors of a community rather than the individual.

### **Personal reflection from beginning the study**

*After years of assisting in assessment programs, editing documents, visiting programs, meeting parents, coloring, singing or supporting the Centre’s various initiatives, each time we discussed starting some drama games or a theatre workshop, the topic was avoided. It wasn’t normal. There were always justifications – people were traveling for the holidays, the group wouldn’t understand me, there wasn’t enough time in the schedule. It took years to develop trust in a Centre accustomed to privileged “volunteers” popping-in to donate good, or propose work who then disappeared after a photo-op. Even after years of trust, in the months that led up to our first performance for the Parent’s Summit on Disability, participants were constantly pulled from rehearsal to tend to the kitchen. Ironically, Shola, Auntie Maureen and Victoria never did allow me to bake or even contribute in the kitchen, although, eventually Shola changed her mind about being unable to do theatre. Her first devised scene involved teaching a stranger how to cook; it was subsequently developed and appeared in various forms in various performances, including one for a conference on disability rights. During the final dress rehearsal, the day before the conference, half the group was pulled to bake snacks for the event, and it was suggested that food was more important than the drama and that perhaps we should cancel the performance.*

The Centre was hesitant and reluctant to leave the comfort and tasks of their everyday existence and to disrupt their known world to risk a public performance of abilities in a



FIGURE 35 BOTH SHOLAS SHOWING THEIR BAKING SKILLS THROUGH THEATRE

community that accepts disability as a “mark of disgrace” (Omobowale, J., personal communication, 2016). They refused the call to adventure and to challenge the status quo. In retrospect, perhaps they did not see drama as an important “therapy” or were afraid that they would not live up to expectations. The medical model of disability pushed drama interventions as “therapies” that attempted to fix or cure the participants through task assessments.

It was critical to move away from this view of fixing or integrating members of the group and find ways to share the talents and potentials with the community at large. The prevalence of the moral model and the shame and fear associated with disability in Nigeria initially confined the talents and abilities of participants inside the walls of the building. They were “reluctant heroes” implicitly supporting the perpetrators of their own oppression.

Walcott’s metaphorical allegory of ethnography as baking a loaf of bread and the status quo symbolized by baking within the Centre inspire a “recipe” for research. This summarizes the research design, methodology, ethics and values of the study. Metaphorically, as a “baker” and reflective researcher, the ethics and values that select, combine and shape the study are flexible. The process is cyclical, developmental and transformative; it entails learning to teach and teaching to learn. “Solidary multiplication” is depicted in Shola reciprocally sharing her baking knowledge. Her dramatization of teaching baking successively taught others of Shola’s abilities as a baker and how to bake. The foundations of applied theatre, PAR, practice-led research, design research and inclusive education can all be incorporated into this concept: one only learns when one teaches.

## CHAPTER 3: MEETING THE MENTOR(S)

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*“THERE’S NO SUCH THING AS NEUTRAL EDUCATION. EDUCATION EITHER FUNCTIONS AS AN INSTRUMENT TO BRING ABOUT CONFORMITY OR FREEDOM.”*

(FREIRE, 1970:34)



FIGURE 36 UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

Early in the heroic journey, a mentor appears. They guide the adventure by instilling confidence in the hero to accept the call and overcome fears or obstacles. Throughout the journey, the mentor offers training, advice, and companionship, for they have often been there before. Campbell states that “what such a figure represents is the benign, protecting, power of destiny” (Campbell, 2004:66). The metaphorical mentors in the present research are the practitioners of progressive critical pedagogy, applied theatre, and the theatre of the oppressed: Augusto Boal, Paulo Freire, bell hooks, Sir Kenneth Robinson, Helen Nicholson, Peter McLaren, and Henry Giroux among others. They are the shoulders on which we stand. The knowledge and skills provided by their mentorship clarify the meaning of a *culture of inclusion*, and establish foundational literature for how inclusive theatre might create such cultures. As a reflexive researcher in practice-led and participatory action research, I function as a mentor in addition to having roles as a facilitator, theatre-maker, and educator. This chapter portrays an attempt to teach inclusion in an inaccessible, defensive, and unreceptive environment: the university. The experience introduces the South African context, highlights known and associated issues, and establishes the practices of the researcher as a mentor-facilitator within the research.

### **Journal, May 2016**

*It takes at least two flights of stairs to get up to the Commerce Lecture Hall, a classic academic space on the University of Cape Town’s Hiddingh Campus. The building seems to echo its colonial past as this is the original university campus with stone stairwells, wooden pews, and flickering fluorescent lighting that sets the tone of this sacred academic space. It feels like only the elite of academia can pass through these doors, and the room is literally*

*configured like an alter to hierarchical teaching. The similarities to a temple or church are hardly unnoticeable; instead of incense, the smell of burnt coffee and traces of smoked cigarettes fill the air. Each pew-like bench is focused toward the front for sermonizing, PowerPoints, and questions with no room for circles, movement, or discussions. This is the theatre of theories and theses with performances that seem to fit into the roles of either the reverent rhetoric of an idol dispensing theoretical knowledge to the masses or a vulnerable sacrifice of unsure academic apostles.*

*“WHAT MORE MUST BE DONE TO MAKE BUILDINGS ON CAMPUS ACCESSIBLE, AND WELL BEYOND THAT, TO CREATE SOCIAL AND INTELLECTUAL SPACES FOR PEOPLE WITH IMPAIRMENTS TO BE FULL CITIZENS IN THE LIFE OF THE UNIVERSITY?” (ROMAN, 2009:671)*



FIGURE 37 UCT HIDDINGH CAMPUS

Professor, theatre-maker, and activist Dr. Carrie Sandahl articulates that, “[m]ost academic, professional, and community theatres send a clear message to people with disabilities: you may be an observer, but you are not wanted in the sacred stage space” (2002:24). This space (Hiddingh Campus, Commerce Lecture Hall) is anything but accessible, with no elevator, no ramps, and little to no space for a wheelchair. The university stage, whether referring to classrooms, lecture halls, or proscenium arches as well as all performance spaces and rehearsal studios, both educational and professional, are “an important site of public discourse, where our cultural values are represented and often interrogated. The configuration of our performance spaces communicate that only able bodies are granted the privilege to represent others, even characters with disabilities” (Sandahl, 2002:24).

One of the first official academic steps in a University of Cape Town (henceforth UCT) postgraduate’s expedition is the task of presenting at a seminar in the *sacred stage space* of the Commerce Lecture Hall to faculty and graduate students. Seemingly, this could be an opportunity for public discourse, to represent and interrogate the values of inclusion (or inherent exclusion) within the university culture. Because the nature of this research

concerned inclusion, the task and performance space demanded *the privilege to represent others*, specifically friends and colleagues with disabilities who contributed to this research. Adaptability (i.e., changes made to environments, behaviors, and/or attitudes) must be addressed in order to develop inclusive environments within the university performance space. The first barrier encountered was how to teach a seminar on inclusion in an exclusive space: Does identifying with one's own disabilities grant the right to speak for a vast spectrum of mixed abilities? Do we venture out to find some like-minded theatre artists or facilitators with more visible disabilities to help balance the room? No—not only would this be awkward and disrespectful but, as is typical, the room is also inaccessible. How could they even get to the door? How can the culture of the university stage be adapted to be more inclusive?

### ACCESSIBILITY: ALLOWING ENTRANCE

Accessibility is the baseline of adaptability as it allows entrance. The layout of a physical space reveals the ideology encoded there, and often dictates “the power relationships based on who can and cannot enter where” (Sandahl, 2002:23). Accessibility is an adaptation to the design of an environment that allows admission and contact, or enables literal admittance in a space. In many countries, laws attempt to mandate accessibility to “reconfigure public space to be minimally inclusive” (Sandahl, 2002:24). Ramps, curb cuts, bus lifts, automatic doors, widened doors, and elevators are examples of mandated adaptations in public buildings or environments. Although laws are created, they are difficult to enforce, with excuses for inaccessibility often being a lack of resources, financial burdens, or historical preservation (Sealey et. all, 2017). The lack of actual implementation is representative of how an ablest ideology is entrenched in

society, and could be addressed through inclusive cultures such as universal design. Universal design incorporates accessible systems, which are designed to be usable by as many people as possible regardless of disability, such as

*“WE’RE TALKING ABOUT THEATRE BOTH AS A PHYSICAL SPACE AND A LITERAL AND CONCEPTUAL ACTIVITY. CERTAINLY, THE ISSUE OF PHYSICAL ACCESSIBILITY IS KEY. EVEN MOST NEW SPACES TEND TO BE POORLY DESIGNED, WITH ACCOMMODATION FOR A FEW WHEELCHAIRS AT BEST, USUALLY IN THE BACK ROW, AND THAT’S NOT ACCESSIBILITY—IT’S TOKENISM.”*

(LIPKIN, IN TOLAN, 2001)

elevators. Everyone can use/benefit from an elevator, but not everyone can use a set of stairs. This reflects the social model of disability in which systemic barriers are minimized for the good of all (Johnston, 2012; Bailey, 2010; Hargrave, 2015; Kempe, 2013; Lipkin & Fox, 2001).

*“WHAT MIGHT OUR THEATRE LOOK LIKE IF WE WENT BEYOND THE MINIMUM SO THAT DISABLED ARTISTS COULD FULLY AND BOLDLY PARTICIPATE? [...] SUCH AN ENVIRONMENT WOULD IMMEDIATELY ALTER THE SPACE'S IDEOLOGY, MAKING THE ENVIRONMENT WELCOMING TO INNOVATIVE AND GENUINE INPUT BY DISABLED ARTISTS AND MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION BY DISABLED AUDIENCE MEMBERS.” (SANDAHL, 2002:24)*

A space can be inaccessible because of the attitudes and behaviors presented beyond its physical accessibility. Accessibility means that a space is welcoming to people with disabilities. Spaces are often belittling or patronizing and participants are segregated, marginalized, “treated as children and put in unchallenging roles’,” and even stereotyped as unable, asexual, apolitical, or “some kind of charity” (Saur & Johansen, 2013). Access for an inclusive culture, be it within a university, a theatre performance, or an everyday experience, is a “basic right and requirement” and a “continually evolving methodology” (Graeae, 2016) that enhances the social, theatrical, and professional landscape.

In terms of theatre performance, an example of the artistic potentials of access is modelled by the Graeae Theatre company in their development of an “aesthetics of access” (Sealey et al, 2017; Sealey, 2009; Graeae, 2019; Cavallo & Fryer, 2018). Graeae is “artistically led by disabled people” and committed to inclusive working practices and accessible theatrical experiences. Their signature characteristic is “building accessibility into the show itself” (Sealey et al, 2017:20), by “taking the techniques used to provide access and weaving them into the very performances they themselves support” (Verrant, 2018). They use accessibility, and at times inaccessibility, as a “deliberate artistic choice” (Sealey, 2009:21) through the creative integration of “matching tools and techniques with the specific performance, the specific characters – building it from within to create a seamless product, stretching and enhancing the whole”(Cavallo & Fryer, 2018). This is demonstrated in their production *Cosmic Scallies*. In the script, the character Dent is in a lot of pain and needs a prescription,

with no reference provided to a specific disability. Rachel Denning, the actress cast as Dent, is genetically short in stature. The artistic choices of steep ramps, extra high benches, and moving step stools to reach tall platforms enables the audience, while hearing Dent speak of the physical pain, to draw further understanding of the added dimensions of living with pain and battling inaccessible environments (see *Figure 38*). The aesthetics of access layer the internal struggles of the character, with social/political commentary about the physical obstacles posed by disability. Throughout the performance and performance space, Graeae weaves accessibility through a variety of accommodations and modifications, including captioning, interpreters, ramps, and seating options. Along with developing an aesthetics of access on stage, Graeae challenges institutional barriers “around attitudinal access” by working with schools, universities, and theatre training providers, to “increase inclusive practices and to improve access (in particular attitudinal) to training and employment opportunities for disabled/deaf artists” (Dacre & Bulmer 2009:132). These training programs and workshops offer participatory, progressive, and applied processes to address accessibility, adaptability, and inclusion within theatres, universities, and society.



FIGURE 38 GRAEAE'S COSMIC SCALLIES (GRAEAE, 2019)

### Journal, May 2016 (Continued)

*I was anxious about the inclusive seminar for weeks—are they going to think I’m weird? Will I sound stupid? What if I talk too fast? Living with a neurodevelopmental disorder and anxiety, I*

have learned to adapt, modify, and accommodate for myself. To cater to my own best practices in both teaching and learning—instead of a PowerPoint lecture style seminar, I planned an energetic, detailed, time-efficient (dare I say fun) participatory inclusive workshop to highlight the main ideas and concepts of inclusive theatre. With music, props, positive reinforcement, choices to participate, and a variety of learning styles—kinetic, visual, auditory, tactile. It was supposed to be a meta-performance on how to make customary theatre routines inclusive to a variety of abilities, with a dash of my own chaotic neurodivergent oomph. I knew it was a risk to stray from the seminar lecture expectations, but it was a risk I was willing to take. Trying to force myself into an academic structure that made me nervous could only end poorly for me. By teaching the way that I learn best, and was most comfortable—what could go wrong?

Instead of lecturing, the seminar was facilitated and adapted as a participatory inclusive workshop turned meta-performance of inclusive facilitation. A facilitator finds “accessible, creative and collaborative ways to handover the power to the participants” (Prentki &

<b>Inclusive Seminar Workshop Plan</b>	
<b>CONTEXT</b>	Length of Workshop: 60 Minutes Location: University of Cape Town Age Group of Participants: diverse, 18-60 (?) Facilitator: Kate Jaskolski
<b>Workshop Title:</b>	<b>disABLING Marginalization through Inclusive Applied Theatre or disLABEL Ability: Inclusive Theatre of Skills</b>
<b>Aims &amp; Objectives:</b>	Participants will understand the obstacles to creating inclusive spaces, and practice methods to adapt, accommodate and modify techniques to become more inclusive.  This workshop is designed to introduce concepts of inclusion specifically focused on theatre and performance.
<b>Goals:</b>	Practical experience and a clearer understanding of possible ways to adapt personal artistry to include diverse abilities.
<b>Essential Question</b>	How can THEATRE and PERFORMANCE include participants within the spectrum of abilities/(dis)abilities?
<b>Key Ideas</b>	Applied theatre. Progressive pedagogy. Disability. Inclusion. Adaptability. Modifications. Accommodations. Accessibility.
<b>Material Needed</b>	Visual schedules, access ball, visual reinforcement, space to participate, comment cards, pens, positive reinforcers,
<b>WORKSHOP PLAN</b>	
<b>Introduction &amp; Warm-Up Activities (15 Minutes)</b>	-Group welcome, intro self & vocal chant for energy. -Check-in circle with access ball; one-word to describe what you think inclusion means. -Inclusion relay ( <i>see lesson plan</i> ) with follow-up reflection questions: what did you notice? How did you feel as an observer? As a participant? Etc. -Agreements on word-usage, participation, etc.
<b>MAIN ACTIVITIES (25-30 minutes)</b>	-Image theatre game to introduce Access, Ability, & Inclusion. -Transition images built from game. - Liz Lerman transitional images to open discussion on inclusion. -Via PowerPoint, define and show examples of inclusive theatre through ACCESSIBILITY, MODIFICATIONS and ACCOMMODATIONS. -Small group brainstorms how <i>your</i> own artistry could potentially adapt, accommodate, or modify for accessibility. -Options to share ideas with the group, via description or practice examples. **Backup- if participation is limited, then use intro to acting techniques and brainstorm as a group way to make them more inclusive?
<b>Reflection &amp; Closing Activity (5-10 minutes)</b>	-Positive & gratitude reinforcement -Comment cards to reinforce ideas, and clarify participant understandings. -Questions/comments?

FIGURE 39 SUMMARIZED INCLUSIVE SEMINAR WORKSHOP PLAN

Preston, 2009:342). The techniques of facilitation are “guided by a self-advocacy model. In order for this to happen, the facilitator needs to ensure that there are structures which are integral to the process that enable participants to have a choice, to gain skills and insight” (Prentki & Preston; 2009:342). Everyone within the seminar presentation was asked to participate at their comfort level, and were provided choices regarding how and what to contribute. A self-advocacy model approaches tasks by “coming to recognize one’s own strengths and weaknesses...

[which allows] more room for creative expression” (Kempe, 1996:23-24). Personal learning styles often require movement, participation, reading, hearing, seeing, and doing, which can result in a struggle to learn in mostly verbal lectures or seminars (Robinson, 2008; Nicholson, 2005). Often, neurodivergent learners need to reinforce ideas and understandings in a variety of ways, with things broken down into steps and keywords. Some need to take notes, talk about the concepts, and break complex ideas down into metaphors supported by clear and simple examples that relate to personal life experiences. These are all best practices for progressive pedagogy (McLaren, 2003; Giroux, 1997; hooks, 1994, 2010), aesthetic or embodied learning (Trowsdale & Hayhow, 2015; Doolittle et al, 2016), and the addressing of multiple learning styles (Tomlinson, 2014; Robinson 2008; Bailey, 2010). The choice of a participatory workshop (see *Figure 39*), rather than a lecture, reflects a progressive pedagogical approach to teaching inclusion within the university.

Progressive pedagogies are rooted in Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which argues against the “banking system” of education (i.e., a lecture) as a hierarchical oppressive “act of depositing information into students” (1970:70). Instead, education is seen as a mutual, transformative participatory process. Progressive pedagogies challenge and interrogate current and past education practices and elucidate the problems and inconsistencies of global modern education for marginalized communities. These radical views of education “insist that everyone’s presence is acknowledged” and delineate the classroom as a “communal space” that enhances “creating and sustaining a learning community” (hooks, 1994:8). A learning community creates “new forms of sociality” instead of “individualistic and competitive approaches” to learning; students are encouraged to work together (Giroux, 1997:109). An applied theatre workshop, as run within the seminar, is a form of progressive pedagogy within the field of theatre and performance.

As opposed to a pure theatre, applied theatre builds upon “the pedagogical theory of Paulo Freire, the political theatre of Bertolt Brecht, and Augusto Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed.” Facilitators “deliver participatory theatre projects that involve workshops and performances that are designed to intervene or transform as ‘purposeful’ practices” (Elliot, Silverman &

Bowman, 2015:483). The structure of the seminar's workshop on inclusive theatre is comparable to those used throughout the research field sites, including those in the South African context. The pictures (i.e., *Figure 40-43, 49-55*) used to illustrate concepts are from an inclusive applied theatre collaboration with UCT and the Oasis group home for adults with intellectual disabilities that followed a parallel structure.

Perhaps the most clichéd definition of applied theatre is that of an umbrella term (Jackson & Vine, 2013; Landry & Montgomery, 2012; Prentki & Preston, 2009) under which a variety of similar forms coexist, overlap, and differentiate. The core elements of applied theatre are that it is facilitated, process-based, problem-solving, and community-centered, addressing real-world problems in unconventional spaces, commonly with untrained performers (Nicholson, 2005; Jackson & Vine, 2013; Landry & Montgomery, 2012; Prentki & Preston, 2009). Applied theatre uses the conventions, crafts, and creativity of pure theatre (including but not limited to playwriting, performance, improvisation, character, role, spectacle, audience, and storytelling) to address a specific question or solve a real-world problem. This differentiation takes theatre out of *normal or traditional* theatre spaces and into communities, be it in schools, hospitals, prisons, retirement homes, villages, offices, or streets.



FIGURE 40 APPLIED THEATRE AT OASIS HOME REHEARSAL

Inclusive theatre, which falls under the umbrella of applied theatre, refers to collaborative drama and theatre created with participants with and without disabilities. Its aim is to discover creative ways of generating theatre that focuses on the unique abilities and contributions of each participant, and often incorporates multiple media (e.g., song, dance, text, movement, and art) woven together. Inclusive theatre can be influenced by other aspects under the umbrella of applied theatre/drama, including Theatre of the Oppressed, Theatre in Education (TiE), Drama in Education (DiE), community-based theatre, popular theatre, theatre for development (TfD), and theatre for health education (Prentki & Preston, 2009; Prendergast & Saxton, 2009;2013); in addition, what was previously termed remedial theatre or theatre for special needs (Palmer & Hayhow, 2008; Peter, 1995; Jennings, 1990; Cattanach, 1996; Kempe, 1996), dramatherapy (Whyman, 2006; Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2011; Landry & Montgomery, 2012), and aspects of the Disability Arts movement (Bailey, 2010; Conroy, 2009; Hargrave, 2009; Sandahl, 2002) have overall influences. Inclusive theatre practice is often inspired by Augusto Boal's forum and image theatre techniques as well as the work of educational theatre/drama practitioners such as Jonathan Neelands, Cecily O'Neill, Dorothy Heathcote, and Philip Taylor. It relies on the applied foundations of facilitation and "a formidable array of participatory theatre techniques" to "bare the challenges of learning-disabled self-determination, advocacy and activism in wider civic society" and is "rooted in learning disabled experience and articulated through the language of performance, within the broader context of social justice" (Campbell, 2014:76).



FIGURE 41 APPLIED INCLUSIVE PERFORMANCE AT OASIS PROTECTIVE WORKSHOP AND BAKERY

## STRUCTURING AN INCLUSIVE APPLIED THEATRE WORKSHOP

When working with mixed abilities, inclusive theorists support utilizing a clear structure and following a similar routine from session to session (Bailey, 2010; Cattanach, 1996; Kempe, 1996). Although working practices and environments always depend on the participants involved, the inclusive work modeled in the seminar (and throughout the fieldwork) started with a welcoming circle before following a routine of a warm-up, main activity, reflection, and closing circle (Granet, 2013; Cattanach, 1996, Sherrat & Peter, 2002; Kempe, 1996). This routine can be shortened or

extended according to the interests of the participants or the needs of the session.

Moreover, the routine can alleviate anxiety for neurodivergent participants

because there are clear references to what is happening/will happen.

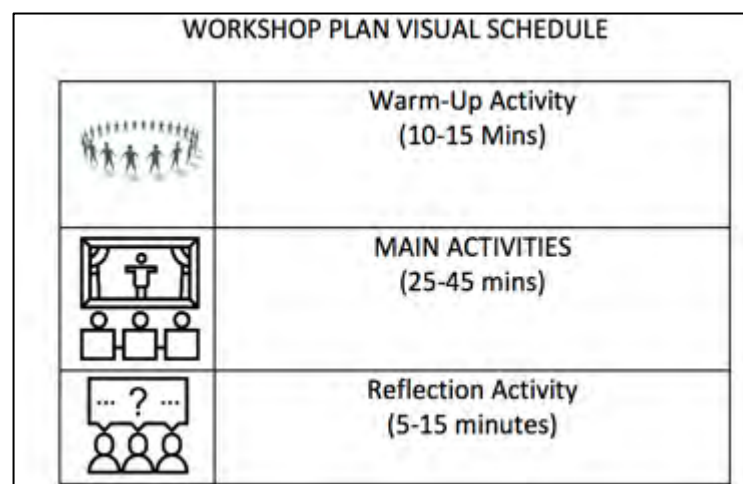


FIGURE 42 VISUAL SCHEDULE TEMPLATE

The welcome circle “offers an important situation for each actor to be seen and be heard and for each of the involved parties to gauge where the others are at, to tune in to one another” (Saur & Johansen, 2013:252). The seminar modeled a ritual wherein a sensory-friendly ball is passed around a circle, and everyone is given a choice to share one word or a movement/gesture/sound to encompass how they are feeling. Kempe identifies that circles for inclusive practices are “democratic and everyone can be valued; the participants can see everyone in the group; it focuses attention inwards and shuts out what is outside the circle; they are a natural space in which to share ideas without having to create a ‘stage’ area and thus create anxiety” (1996:89). They can also be an opportunity to introduce key ideas to be covered (i.e., a word, sound, or movement to express one’s greatest ability) as well as any adaptations, choices, or access materials (i.e., any sensory, verbal, auditory, or visual aspects to supplement the session, such as books, pictures, programs of inclusive work, or printed large-text transcripts).


 <b>Rehearsal Schedule</b>	
	<b>Circle Hero March</b>
	<b>Warm- Up Games</b>
	<b>Small Group Rehearsals</b>
	<b>Share Performances</b>
	<b>Thoughts and Reflections</b>
	<b>Circle Meeting and Goodbyes</b>
	<b>Dinner</b>

FIGURE 43 VISUAL SCHEDULE FOR OASIS REHEARSAL

Following the welcome circle is a review of the planned routine accompanied by a visual schedule (see *Figure 43*). The graphic representation of the tasks and activities organized for the session breaks down the activities to reduce anxiety and provide consistency for all the participants, with or without disabilities (Granet, 2013; Kluth, 2011). After an overview of activities, warm-ups begin to set the mood and prepare the participants for the main activities (Bailey, 2010; Cattanach, 1996).

### WARM-UPS

Warm-ups in applied drama and theatrical processes utilize games and drama-based exercises to serve “as useful physical, mental and social warm-ups across a wide range of abilities” (Kempe, 1996:36). They can involve active engagement, assist understanding of rules and codes of behavior, promote intellectual and emotional flexibility, inspire energy in a lethargic group, or calm an over-excited group. Facilitators need to adapt games/warm-ups to have a “relationship to the activities which follow” (Taylor, 2006:7) by tying into the key ideas for a session, or suiting the needs of the objectives the session will approach. A warm-up routinely utilized for inclusive seminars, specifically in noninclusive environments, is an inclusive relay (see *Figure 44*). It addresses disability and denominator culture, and is modelled after Russel Granet’s (2013) *Drama with Special Populations* workshop.

<b>Inclusion Relay Warm-Up</b>	
<b>Objective:</b>	Participants will experience disability and inclusion from a different perspective, model dominator culture and exclusion through competition, and ideally create methods of adaptations in order to begin a conversation on Inclusion.
<b>Materials needed:</b>	<p>(numbers vary pending on the number of relay teams, each team needs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notecard with inclusive quote written on it. Each team may have a different quote of varying lengths. For example: “Inclusion is a right, not a privilege for a select few” “There is only one way to look at things until someone shows us how to look at them with different eyes” “we are less when we don’t include everyone” “Inclusion is not a strategy to help people fit into the systems and structures which exist in our societies, it’s about transforming those systems and structures to make it better for everyone”</li> <li>• A clear starting line with a large piece of paper taped to a wall across the room from the start. The more stairs or obstacles between the start and the paper, the better.</li> <li>• One marker/writing utensil</li> <li>• Blind fold</li> <li>• Ear plugs</li> <li>• Chair</li> <li>• Positive reinforcers (such as candy, pens, extra points)</li> </ul>
<b>Rules</b>	<p>Post the rules on a board or power point - Go over them repeatedly, before and after instructions, and throughout the exercise. In lieu of answering any clarifying questions, only repeat these rules:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no cheating.</li> <li>• Everyone in each group must take turns, and everyone must participate.</li> <li>• Only one group member may write ONE word at a time.</li> <li>• The first group to finish wins.</li> </ul>
<b>Instructions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Divide the class into relay teams with each team having an equal number of participants. Ask anyone not participating to make observations since some participants may choose to watch and sit out the relay.</li> <li>2. Go over the rules. State the objective of the game is to replicate the quote from the notecard to the paper taped on the wall on the opposite side of the room and the first team to finish wins (positive reinforcement). They have 4 minutes. Repeat the rules.</li> <li>3. Explain that each group member will be assigned a diverse impairment. <b>Do not allow any preplanning.</b> It is important to mention that in no way are you asking them to “act” a certain way, just honor the restriction of their impairment. Examples of impairments are listed below and can be adapted depending on number of participants per group. Additionally, you can choose to overlap, double up, omit or adapt impairments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual impairment (blindfold)</li> <li>• Auditory impairment (ear plugs)</li> <li>• Restricted mobility (no use of legs, must remain in the chair)</li> <li>• Restricted mobility (no use of dominant arm/hand)</li> <li>• Nonverbal (do not speak)</li> <li>• Echolalia (do not speak, but repeat the last word anyone says 3x)</li> <li>• Hyperactivity (after each person’s turn you must do 10 jumping jacks)</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. <b>Try to discourage any preplanning from the group. Set a timer for 4 minutes. Ready, set, GO!</b></li> <li>5. As the group members begin the relay, constantly remind the groups of the rules, the prize for winning, and the amount of time left.</li> <li>6. Pending on what happens, you may choose to ignore the timer and allow a group to finish or not. Once a team has finished, or the timer has gone off- stop all groups and ask them to relax. Have each group read off the quote they were attempting to write.</li> <li>7. Proceed to the questions and discussion portion. If possible, write answers on the board or ask a participant to record the answers on the board.</li> </ol>
<b>Questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did it feel? To participate? To watch? To have [specific impairment]?</li> <li>• What are some things you observed or noticed?</li> <li>• What are some things you liked or appreciated?</li> <li>• What are some things you could do differently?</li> <li>• Did who you are, what you know, or your ability to contribute change?</li> <li>• Why do you think I asked you to do this exercise?</li> </ul> <p>Pending on what the groups did, and what/how people answer the questions bring up the idea of adaptations. What could groups have done or did do to adapt the exercise? Maybe bring the paper off the wall to the group? Change the expectation of what makes a ‘turn’? How did it feel when someone forcibly pushed you if you were blindfolded vs. guided you gently? Did any group try to physically move the chair? How did it feel not to be able to ...? Did anyone feel like they got ignored or forgotten about? What was frustrating? Etc. <b>End by gearing the conversation towards the rules, and the vague specificity of them. What expectations did they set up?</b></p>

FIGURE 44 INCLUSION RELAY WARM-UP PLAN (AS INSPIRED BY GRANITE, 2013)

This warm-up can encourage discussion on inclusion and adaptations and introduces ways to discuss disability, particularly in a room where accessibility for participants with disabilities is limited. It often models a focus on what people cannot do, rather than on what they can do, and the barriers society creates. Parrish emphasizes that, “jumping in the wheelchair for a few minutes, wearing a blindfold, and stuffing cotton in one’s ears does not make a person understand life with disability,” but through acknowledging different perspectives such exercises may provide a stimulus to discuss what can be done with “appropriate access technology or skill [...] how disability can be mitigated” (qtd. in Kempe, 2013: 73). The vaguely specific rules and competitive nature reflect the structure of society and how “[d]ominator culture promotes and encourages competition” (hooks, 2003:75). In addition, an inclusion relay allows for a visual participatory experience in accommodations or ways to facilitate communication and understanding.

## ACCOMMODATIONS: FACILITATING COMMUNICATION

Accommodations are how participants can meet the same expectations or achieve the same experience regardless of ability. When accessibility alone is not enough or may not effectively address everyone’s access requirements, accommodations are the reactive second step. They include supports and services that adapt, assist, and ensure access, communication, and opportunities. Participants may require a variety of diverse means of communication during education and dramatic processes. These include sign language, braille or large-text documents, closed captioning or projected captioning, audio descriptions, lip reading, advance copies of scripts or lectures, and visual aids. Accommodations may differ for each individual, be supportive for select groups, or enhance understanding for everyone. It is critical to also consider accommodations within the setting (i.e., where someone sits, sight lines, and acoustics) for appropriate communication. For example, participants with hearing impairments or identifying as Deaf may require an appropriate eyeline to see an

*“GIVEN THE THEATRE IS ALL ABOUT COMMUNICATION, HOW DO YOU ENSURE THAT EVERYONE— ONSTAGE AND IN THE AUDIENCE— IS GETTING IT? ALL INDIVIDUALS HAVE DIFFERENT CHALLENGES AND IMPAIRMENTS. THEY’RE UNITED BY A COMMON HUMANITY.”*  
(SEALEY ET ALL 2017:284)

interpreter or proximity to read lips. Participants with visual impairments may require the consideration of proximity for auditory attention, use of recording devices or headphones, or the opportunity to type/record information.

The use of assistive technology—or any piece of equipment used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of an individual with a disability—can provide accommodations. This includes personal devices such as hearing aids, wheelchairs, walkers, or glasses, as well as the use of technology such as iPads, computers, communication apps, or specialized devices to assist in communication, understanding, and memory. This may include communication boards, computer screens, speech synthesizers, or more simple accommodations such as a writing tablet, handwritten notes, and gestural miming. In addition, interpreters and access support workers, such as caregivers and personal assistants, can act as a communicator or function as a form of accommodations. Notably, when working with someone who has an access support individual, it is best practice to speak directly to the participant and not to their support worker. Unless pre-agreed with the participant and group, a support worker should be viewed as an accommodation for the individual and not as an additional participant. Participants with neurodevelopmental impairments or attention deficits may benefit from multisensory integration (Sherrat & Peter, 2002), which allows multiple ways of hearing, seeing, and touching to accommodate understanding. This could potentially include the use of visual pictures and objects for clarification or visual images to support verbal

instructions (Bailey, 2010), Widgit Rebus pictorial symbols (Leighton, 2009), or pictures/signs substituted for words (Bailey 2010, Sherrat & Peter, 2002).

In terms of performance, some

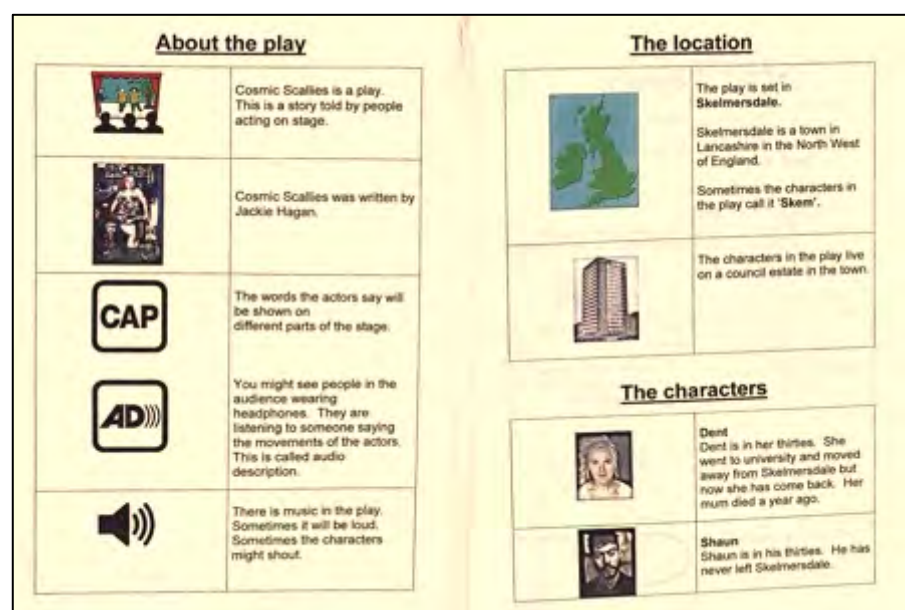


FIGURE 45 EASY READ PROGRAM FOR COSMIC SCALLIES (GRAEAE, 2017)

accommodations can be embedded into processes or performances, which for performers, facilitators, and the audience may potentially include the following:

- **Audio description:** A verbal description of the actions, scenery, body language, or other relevant details, often delivered through personal headsets or direct from stage. This provides blind or partially sighted audience members with access to visual aspects of performance, and may include a verbal description of characters, costumes, the set, as well as a synopsis, cast and crew lists, and/or access information.
- **Captioned dialogue:** This allows Deaf or hearing-impaired audience members access to dialogue through text displayed on stage or caption screens.
- **Sign language:** This is often integrated into the performance or with interpreters placed within the space.
- **Touch tours of the set and costumes:** These communicate a clear understanding of design elements of the show, and are catered to audience members with visual impairments, on the Autistic spectrum, or with other sensory concerns.
- **Tactile set interpretation:** This allows an overview of the performance's set and aesthetic using set models, fabric swatches, and tactile diagrams to communicate with audience members who may be visually impaired or have sensory issues.
- **Alternative format programs and information:** This could include Braille and large-print, hardcopy, digital, and contrasting formats.
- **Hearing loops or audio frequency induction:** These are specialized assistive listening systems that work directly with hearing aids.
- **Easy Read Synopsis:** This assistive document provides a simplified summary of the storyline using both pictures and images to assist patrons with learning disabilities.



FIGURE 46 ACCESS LOGOS (GRAEAE, 2019)

Accommodations are used to enhance and adapt understanding and communication, and although the list of potentials is ideal, implementing each accommodation is not always practical for all performances, settings, or companies; nevertheless, the need to differentiate

communication and understanding is critical in inclusive work. Cost-effective or lower-effort ways exist to accommodate information, as demonstrated by South Africa-based theatre-maker Jayne Batzofin in her work with FTH:K and the Chaeli Campaign.



FIGURE 47 FTH: RESOURCES (ABOVE), BATZOFIN PERFORMING IN SOUTH AFRICAN SIGN LANGUAGE (BELOW)

Batzofin models accommodating communication and understanding through physical and visual theatre. FTH:K works with visual theatre and states that, “[w]ithout a dependency on any one language, our work crosses cultural and linguistic divides and calls on audiences to Listen With Your Eyes” (fthk.co.za, 2019). As South Africa’s premier Deaf and hearing theatre company, with the “goal of integrating Deaf and hearing artists, educators and audiences through shared artistic and educational experiences,” FTH:K accommodates for diverse audiences with “work that avoids formal language as its vehicle for communication” (fthk.co.za, 2019). Batzofin has written, conceptualized, and toured works with FTH:K, including *What goes Up* and *Measure Up*. These devised works combined South

African Sign Language, clowning, and physical and visual theatre to accommodate storytelling and theatrical experiences for both Deaf and hearing audiences. Using clowning and simplified Sign Language, the critical aspect of the work is a strong connection with the audience and a need to be in tune with the people who are watching. By creating rapport with the audience, employing eye contact and body language, and integrating key words/ideas into sign language, FTH:K’s work models cost-effective, universal accommodations. In addition to the performances, Batzofin has developed picture books, teacher packets, and DVDs inspired by them to accommodate continued communication and understanding of performance themes (see *Figure 47*).



FIGURE 48 CHAELI CAMPAIGN'S NO FUN CTION ALL ANGUAGE

Batzofin demonstrates alternative, tangible accommodations in her devising and performance of Chaeli Campaign's *"No Fun ction all ANGUAGE"* (a deconstructed version of the medical model of disability term 'No functional language'). The company "looks at how we communicate effectively... When people can't speak, when they don't have the ability to make their mouths make the right sounds, that's the term used to describe the concept... It's about breaking conceptions about how people communicate" (Batzofin qtd. In Smith, 2016). The show was devised through an inclusive workshop process with mixed-ability performers from a variety of Cape Town-based inclusive arts companies, including Unmute Dance Company and FTH: K. The performance addresses different ways to communicate such as dance, sign language, body language, captioned and spoken words, or emotions in a nonlinear series of chapters. Batzofin literally accommodates communication and understanding through the investigation of ways to communicate, "unpacking the chapters through movement and choreography because dance is a medium which transcends language" (Smith, 2016). When speaking about the devising process, Batzofin references company member Christelle Dryer, stating that, "It's not like I have to change the choreography because she's in the wheelchair, she has her own vocabulary, she dances with everyone and it's amazing to have some of my own walls broken down because I think maybe she can't and she'll say: 'Don't tell me what I can't do.'" (qtd. in Smith, 2016). Dryer explains Batzofin's accommodations of choreography as follows: "she uses a theme then allows us to improvise our body movements in relation to the theme. So we generated new movements and material. These were then incorporated into duets or into the larger choreography." This method reflects the use of the strengths of each performer's personal communication styles

to differentiate a “search for meaning and about inclusivity for all members of our society” (Dryer, 2016) both onstage and in the audience.

When adapting and accommodating for mixed-ability groups, Graeae’s artistic director Jenny Sealey recommends the following:

to know what the objective of an exercise is and to consider alternative ways to achieve the desired learning outcome if you have a Deaf [sign language] student, a blind student and wheelchair user student with limited upper body mobility. When giving instructions it helps to be clear about the aim of the exercise and to create the space for people to find their way of achieving this aim (Sealey, 2009:17-18).

Within learning communities, every learner must be seen as an individual with unique insights, needs, history, and understandings (hooks, 1994; McLaren, 1983).

Accommodations can enhance communication and understanding, but for them to be implemented effectively, they must be openly acknowledged, discussed, and often agreed upon within the learning community.



FIGURE 49 ADAPTING FOR INCLUSIVE THEATRE WITH OASIS

## AGREEMENTS AND GUIDELINES

Agreements are created as a collaborative effort by facilitators and participants to establish behavior expectations in line with the norms, rules, and guidelines for the session (Granet, 2013; Robinson, 2011; Bailey, 2010; Kim, 2009). These are ideally created through discussions and debates so participants have shared ownership regarding acceptable behaviors. A shared understanding can increase accountability for adherence to the behavior expectations. For example, the theatre collaboration between the Oasis Association and UCT established the following agreements for their sessions and rehearsals: work together as friends, stay focused, have fun, listen, and respect each other. Oftentimes these agreements are vague and referenced as a reminder when/if situations arise during a session (i.e., if someone is distracting a rehearsal, another group member might mention “Didn’t we agree to stay focused?” or if a group member develops a crush on another member and asks them out, a response might be “Oh—we agreed to work together as *friends*”). In initial sessions, or sessions that do not necessitate creating agreements (such as the seminar on inclusion or a lecture), it is beneficial to go over general agreements or guidelines when working in communities of mixed abilities; this will illuminate topics not often discussed and alleviate some attitudinal barriers to inclusion.

Adkins and Rowe (2019) cite two main attitudinal barriers to inclusion: fear of the unknown and nuts-and-bolts logistics. Fear of the unknown is reflected in many ways, such as avoidance or the concern of language. Throughout this research, and in attempts to teach inclusion in university settings, there is a reoccurring theme of a “lack of previous social contact with persons with learning disabilities”

(Hargrave, 2015:16), which resonates with

the deficiency in “the practical tools or the lived experience to address the attitudinal, environmental, and structural barriers that can exclude the disability community” (Adkins &

*“A MORE COMPREHENSIVE UNDERSTANDING OF VARIOUS PHYSICAL AND MENTAL IMPAIRMENT CAN HELP ALLEVIATE THE AWKWARDNESS MANY PEOPLE WITH NO KNOWN DISABILITIES FEEL WHEN CONFRONTED WITH THE UNFAMILIAR. SINCE ABILITY IS OFTEN NOT OPENLY DISCUSSED, YOUNG PEOPLE (AND ADULTS) HAVE LITTLE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT DISABILITIES. THEY ALSO OFTEN LACK OF ROLE MODELS TO PROVIDE EXAMPLES OF HOW TO INTERACT WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES OR EVEN HOW TO BEGIN DISCUSSING DISABILITIES.”*  
(GRADY, 2000: 135)

Rowe, 2019). These deficits were displayed in survey responses from participants of inclusive theatre workshops at UCT. Participants were invited to share their fears or concerns about inclusive theatre. Replies of many respondents in a pre-project interview reflected fear of the unknown: “I have not had enough experience with people with disabilities,” “I will struggle to cope or understand how to react/act in certain situations,” “I am not well experienced. I might unintentionally hurt somebody’s feelings,” “I want to help and not harm,” and “I have worked in a school for ~~mentally/physically disabled children~~ Neurodevelopmental impaired children. I am concerned about communication as well as violation of personal space [...] being overwhelming. What’s appropriate?”

Often, non-disabled friends, colleagues, and peers are hesitant to start a conversation about accessibility, disability, or inclusion “for fear of offending someone with the words they use” (Adkins & Rowe, 2019). The International Inclusive Arts Network (2017) established “three key reasons we fear using the wrong language”:

1. We are afraid we will hurt the feeling of the person we are talking to or about.
2. We are scared that it will show up how little we know of someone else’s experience, or our internal biases to their experience such as pity, fear, or confusion.
3. We are afraid of what we do not understand.

These key reasons were all reflected in the survey responses, as well in responses to the seminar presentation. Inclusive practitioners and Disability activists acknowledge that “being disabled impacts hugely on who someone is but it is not the only thing that defines them [...] Disabled people self-define their disability but there are some basic guidelines of acceptable language to use” (Sealey 2009:7). Language guidelines amalgamated from the work of inclusive companies (greae.org, 2019; IIAN, 2017; Kempe, 2013; Johnston, 2012; Bailey, 2010) include those presented in *Figure 50* below:

Basic Language Guideline	
✓	✗
Speak directly to a person	Don't speak above/over, or to an aid or interpreter
Use language that respects people as individuals, positive	Avoid Negative or Passive victim words, collective terms
disabled (as a description), person with a disability, person-first language (ie. person with epilepsy, person with short stature)	handicapped, cripple, invalid, spaz, spastic, dwarf, midget, impairment-first language (ie. an epileptic, or epileptic person, cerebral palsied)
People with disabilities, person(s) with disabilities	The disabled, disabled people or disabled as a collective term, the handicapped, etc.
has ...(an impairment)	Suffers from ..., is victim of ...
Non-disabled	Normal, typical, abled, healthy
Learning disabled, has a learning disability, with learning disabilities	Mentally disabled, retarded, dumb, slow, backwards, subnormal, mentally defective
Wheelchair user, limited/adapted mobility, uses a mobility aid	Wheelchair bound, confined to a wheelchair
Person with a mental health condition, mental health service user/survivor	Mentally ill, depressive, etc. mental, insane, mad, crazy
Deaf (with a Capital D when referring to culture or community), person with a hearing-impairment, sign-language user	Deaf and dumb, deaf-mute, the deaf
Blind or partially sighted people, Person who is blind, person with visual-impairments, visually impaired people (VIP)	The Blind
Use a normal speaking voice	Don't patronize, talk down, over articulate or YELL/raise your voice
Everyday phrases to describe daily life, people in wheelchairs can go on walks, people with visual impairments can watch a movie, or be 'pleased to see you' etc.	Don't be too precious or politically correct, being over sensitive will halt you from any conversation
Listen and ask for clarification, repetition, etc. if needed	Attempt to finish sentences for other people, ask insensitive questions like "what is wrong with you?" or "what happened?"
Substitute detailed descriptions such as "near the door you entered", "come toward the sound of my voice" or "with one hand raised in the air". Adapt phrases such as 'walk' around the space to 'move', describe colors/visuals supported with textural or sound references	Be aware of expressions like "over there," "here" or "like this" which require visual orientation.

FIGURE 50 BASIC LANGUAGE GUIDELINES

It is critical to be aware that the “choice of words can become part of a limiting and inaccessible vocabulary, which reinforces labels by creating a comprehension barrier,” but equally important is that “the way in which [facilitators and collaborators ] communicate their tone, body language and speed of delivery will always determine how words are received” (Hatton, 2009:93). Once it is established what words are inclusive or welcoming, agreements can extend to expectations on how to work in environments of mixed abilities. Working practices and environments will always depend on the participants involved at any given time, but this list of guidelines (*Figure 51*) should give some indication of approaches to inclusive practice (graeae.org, 2019;

Sealey, 2009; Sealey et al, 2017; Kempe, 2013; Bailey, 2010; Johnston, 2012).

*“MANY STUDENTS ARE MISLABELED BECAUSE THEY’RE ‘DIFFERENT’ [...] RESEARCH INDICATES THAT STUDENTS ARE OFTEN REDUCED TO THEIR LABELS AND PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS AREN’T LOWERED, WHICH CAN RESULT IN SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY OF FAILURE.”*

(GRADY, 2009: 134)

Agreements allow facilitators to become “role models to provide examples of how to interact with people with disabilities or even how to begin discussing disabilities” (Grady, 2000:135), and to confront the “deep-set level of fear and resistance when bringing the hugely diverse experiences of disability into the arts arena” (Sealey, 2009:2-3). Honest discussion can alleviate fear and tension by unpacking what to say or how to act. Kempe acknowledges that, “it is essential that honest discussion takes place about the preconceptions the group holds regarding people with learning or other disabilities. The discussion needs to be sensitively handled, for what will most likely become evident is [...] the project will be a new experience and likely to change their beliefs, skills and attitudes” (1996:163). The first step to inclusion is discussing it, whereas the next step—or the “nuts and bolts logistics”—identify how to be inclusive and work toward establishing an inclusive culture.

<b>Agreements for Inclusive Work</b>
<b>Presume competence.</b> Avoid making assumptions on intelligence and ability.
<b>Be flexible and adaptive.</b> Improvise solutions. Find ways to make exercises and experiences accessible or accommodative rather than avoiding them altogether.
<b>Ask questions.</b> Ask participants if they need assistance, what are the best or preferred ways to assist. Get to know each other by asking questions, and responding/relating to answers. <i>Can I work with you? What is your favorite...? How are you feeling? Tell me about...?</i> If you have not understood what someone has said, ask for clarification. Use alternative means if necessary (repeating, writing, translating, etc.). Respond to the content of what is being communicated, rather than the delivery.
<b>Be aware of individual needs</b> (communication, access, etc.) and preferences; if in doubt just ask. When possible, advanced briefing of any access requirements will help plan and execute activities.
<b>Plan ahead.</b> Attempt to make any text, worksheets, scripts, presentations, films, etc. available in advance (for translation into sign-language, or Braille, or for additional time or comprehension). Plan the structure of the day/rehearsal/class along with break times, for participants and any access workers involved.
<b>Take risks.</b> Be brave in your creative exploration. Use the disability as a creative possibility rather than an obstacle to be overcome. It's okay to make mistakes.
<b>Offer choices.</b> Choices allow adaptations and self-advocacy. Suggest alternatives, or brainstorm different ways to do things.
<b>Promote participation.</b> Demonstrate; Be an active participant. Volunteer assistance to participants that may benefit from one-on-one support. Try to check-in on energy and pain levels, allow time for breaks, options to sit or lie down as needed. This doesn't need to interrupt the flow of the work; just an awareness of comfort.
<b>Be positive and supportive.</b> Use positive reinforcement, be gracious and thankful. Use encouraging words with specifics. <i>That was a great dance move! I like the way we are working together!</i> Focus on every individual's successes, and overcome obstacles together. Ignore any minor behavior problems, and use agreements to re-direct when necessary.
<b>Be proactive.</b> Check for understanding. Break things down into short, concrete steps. Try to be mindful of unobtrusive assistance, such as holding doors open, carrying materials, or clearing obstacles. Reconsider the objectives of all exercises; for example, are exercises with eyes closed really necessary? Can they be adapted or change the focus?
<b>Talk directly to people and maintain eye-contact.</b> Always address the participant when speaking to or about, not the interpreter/assistant/peers/etc. Rapport is naturally built through direct eye or tactile contact, gesture and modelling exercises reinforce the spoken, written or other communication. The proximity during conversations is important to avoid patronizing or talking down. For example, when speaking with a wheelchair user try to either sit at a similar height, or stand with a suitable space to allow direct eye contact.
<b>Allow enough time</b> for communication needs and contributions (this includes time for interpretations, time to process/think, time to respond, time when formation changes from individual to groupwork, any additional time for movement, etc.)
<b>Respect Personal Space.</b> Ensure clear communication about consensual touch, including hugs, guiding, teaching gestures or maneuvering wheelchairs. Always ask if a participant before touching them. If guiding a person, it is good practice to allow them to grab your arm rather than grabbing theirs. Point out any uneven surfaces, obstacles, steps or potential hazards. Try to describe what you are going to do, or if you are leaving (avoid just walking away without notifying a participant).
<b>Be aware of the layout of the space,</b> it's accessibility and notify any changes that may occur. Make considerations in positioning in the room, lighting, sound levels and comfort or climate. This could mean insuring well-lit environments to assist in clear communication, or possibly dimming lighting if fluorescent lights affect the comfort or effectiveness of participants. It is important to warn everyone about any changes in lighting, and use of any blackouts or strobe lighting as necessary. Be aware of positioning in the room, try to always face participants, or ensure there is clean sight-lines to important communication, access to interpreters or captioning, etc. Structure conversations and discussions to ensure everyone can participate, this may involve pointing/gesturing to who is speaking to prevent multiple conversations at once, avoiding covering mouths, writing key ideas on a board, etc.

FIGURE 51 AGREEMENTS FOR INCLUSIVE WORK

## MAIN ACTIVITIES

The main activities within sessions, classes, workshops, or rehearsals use applied theatre techniques to discover talents, build relationships, and create adaptations to create theatre for all regardless of ability. In practice, main activities are routinely underpinned by the participatory techniques of Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed. Specifically, ideas of "theatre as language" (1979:126) use image theatre and forum theatre as a way to "uncover essential truths about societies and cultures" (Boal, 2002: xxii). Boal (1979) describes image theatre as a way to "participate more directly" (1979:135) by expressing views on a certain theme without speaking and instead using the bodies of the participants to sculpt them into one's opinions and feelings. Boal's image and forum theatre and activities that entail "shaping an imaginary event as a way of understanding some aspect of [participants] lives and the world around them" (Taylor, 1998:1) are the foundation of main activities. For



FIGURE 52 IMAGE WORK WITH UCT & OASIS

example, in the seminar and for inclusive lectures, initial themes are often inclusion, access, and ability. Images are brainstormed through the work of a game (i.e., participants move around the room, and when the music stops they should get into groups of # to sculpt an image of x, y, and z). Once the group is familiar with creating images, an ideal image is established and then the opposite of the image. Example images might show dichotomies such as inclusion/exclusion, access/obstacle, and ability/disability, which vary from session (see Figure 52). Boal's next stage is a "transitional image, to show how it would be possible to pass from one reality to the other" (Boal,

1979:135). The value of image theatre is it creates a visual participatory dialogue wherein ways to change are actively brainstormed and rehearsed. The image theatre work is built upon by varied activities depending on the needs of the group and the objective of the

session. They often involve scene work, improvisation, forum theatre, and other forms of what Boal calls “theatre as discourse” (1979:142). Other structures that may be practiced in main activities include the following:

- **Role:** Participants take on characters in imaginative complicity to explore perspectives and issues or to tell stories through attitudes, points of view, or feelings of fictional entities (Prendergast & Saxton, 2013; Bolton & Heathcote, 1999; Morgan & Saxton, 1988).
- **Tableau:** Freeze frame or still group illustrations to present images, ideas, or themes (Prendergast & Saxton, 2013; Boal, 2002).
- **Improvisation:** Spontaneous, creative testing out of ideas, situations, or possibilities.
- **Devising:** Collective creation of scenes or performances through drama processes (Prendergast & Saxton, 2013; Graham & Hogget, 2013).

Whatever activities are chosen for a given workshop, the rehearsal or creative process may need to be modified to allow all participants to fully engage. Each of the aforementioned activities, and the plethora within the cannon of theatre-making or performance, can be adapted through modifications.

## MODIFICATIONS: ALLOWING PARTICIPATION

Modifications are adaptations that allow participation and/or performance. They may be changed according to *what is expected* for participation or offer alternative options when an expectation is unreasonable. For example, it is unreasonable to expect a person who is paraplegic with limited use of their legs to tap dance the same way a person with full control of their legs can. Does this mean a paraplegic cannot participate and tap dance? No, it means that the expectation for *how* they should tap dance must be modified. Perhaps the person can modify a shuffle-ball-change with their hands on a table, drum pad, or a series of snapping fingers. It is critical to understand that effective modifications “keep expectations high while giving [participants] opportunities to experience success in their own terms” (Wooster, 2009:81), and there is “no reason why standards have to fall in order for [experiences] to become inclusive” (Dacre & Bulmer, 2009:138). Modifications are ways to “recognize limitations, understand the nature of disability” (Kempe, 1996). These might



FIGURE 53 PARTNER WORK AT OASIS

include limiting rehearsal time (Eckard & Myers, 2009; Kempe, 1996), allowing places for participants to sit down or rest as needed in the design/blocking (Johnston, 2012), and incorporating breaks, chill-outs, or snacks for blood-sugar and stress

management (Eckard & Myers, 2009; Finn, 2018). In educational terms, modifications often refer to adapting the quantity and output of expectations, and examples could include shorter readings, less material covered, or condensing of complex abstract concepts into clearer terminology. Modifications adapted to fit theatre processes generally modify what is expected from performers or participants and are only limited by the imaginations of those involved, but may include the following methods (McCurrach & Darnley, 1999; Sealey et al, 2017, Johnston, 2012, Saur & Johansen, 2013; Bailey, 2010; Kempe, 1996 Corbett et. All, 2010; Trowsdale & Hayhow, 2015; O’Sullivan, 2016; Eckard & Myers, 2009; Cattnach, 1996; Sherrat & Peter, 2002 Ramamoorthi & Nelson, 2011; Dacre & Bulmer 2009; Peter, 1995):

- **Encouraging participation:**
  - Redirect behavior or allow breaks if overstimulated or frustrated
  - Limit rehearsal time for energy and attention needs
  - Create unique roles to complement personalities/needs/moods
  - Create alternative choices (e.g., tap legs/feet/arms if song or movement requires stomping or kicking; allow body movement; use partners to support balance or mobilization/moving of wheelchairs)
  - Be conscious of sensory and gross motor skills needs (i.e., tape paper to tables to avoid movement if writing or to a wall/easel for ease of access; employ a variety of tools such as large pens, easy-catch balls, ear-plugs, and gloves; and be wary of strong textures/lights/glitter without warning or checking on sensory needs)
- **Limiting the amount of memorization or pressure to perform live by:**

- Use microphones, recording, film, or video for some scenes to alleviate the pressure of memorization or live performance
- Create partner characters, where two people share one part simultaneously
- Fashion creative ways to have a script on stage for “alleviating any concerns about forgetting,” including using the script as a book prop or character choice, writing lines on the floor or walls, or using a photo album and showing the pictures on the wall behind for the audience
- **Breaking things into short, concrete steps:**
  - Demonstrate, model, or mirror directions, blocking, or choreography
  - Provide large-text, easy-read scripts or highlight specific scenes
  - Work in small groups running lines and blocking
- **Creatively using cues and prompting:**
  - Tape the floor to assist with blocking and placement
  - Use specific coded sound cues
  - Employ side-coaching
  - Use fill-in-the-blanks or line feeding
  - Adopt a coded system of drawings and symbols indicating blocking (Johnston, 2012)
  - Create a “big physical action as a catalyst” to the next event, such as a freeze, dance, or game
  - Use signs, cue cards, or voice synthesizers for nonverbal participants
- **Repeating:**
  - This can be in scenes or transitions or through repeating the shape of as many scenes as possible to reduce the amount of blocking that must be retained.

In theatre performance, a model example of modifications for an audience is the concept of sensory-friendly performances (McCrae & Rowe, 2019; Mandell, 2013; tdf.org, 2019). Such performances are modified, dedicated performances with a focus on individuals on the autism spectrum or with other developmental, cognitive, or sensory needs. The goal is “to preserve the integrity of the show so the audience sees as close to the same performance as possible” (tdf.org, 2019). A specific performance is designated as sensory friendly to create a

judgment-free environment and modified for individuals on the spectrum and their companions. Trained staff/volunteers, technical modifications, and preparatory materials provide various day-of supports. The following materials are all modifications: ‘fidgets’ or tactile items that relieve stress for audience members, earplugs, designated quiet areas throughout the space in case of overstimulation, visual signage such as printed character cards, and designated quiet areas or restroom signs.

Preparatory materials made available prior to the performance can assist audience members in comprehension, as well as in preparation for a theatrical experience. These materials may include fact sheets for the caregivers about the accessibility and logistics for the performance, a social narrative, character guides, a visual story, and access to

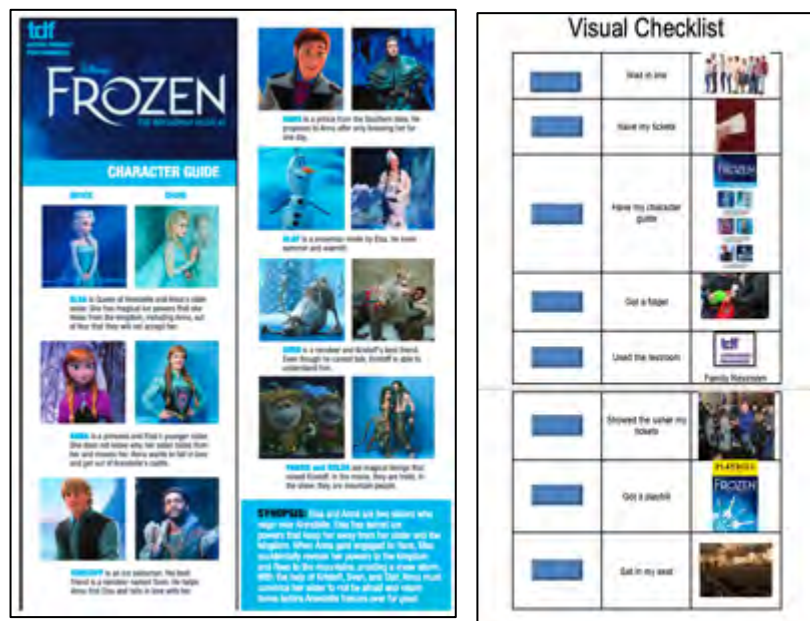


FIGURE 54 MODIFICATIONS FOR TDF'S SENSORY-FRIENDLY PERFORMANCE OF FROZEN (TDF.ORG, 2019)

any music from the performance. Social narratives use pictures and words to detail the experience from the arrival at to departure from the theatre. A character guide is a card with photos and brief descriptions of each character, as well as a short synopsis of the plot (Figure 54). The production design elements are often modified by adapting the sound levels to lower decibels to modify for those sensitive to loud noises, cutting strobe or flashing lights or removing intense lighting stimuli, keeping the house lights at approximately 30% to create safe exits/entrances for audience members who may need a break, as well as alleviating any potential fears. These performances allow participation by modifying the expectations from and for the audience, accommodating communication, and allowing alternative options for audiences.

## REFLECTIONS

A reflection functions “to react to the action and reveal its objectives, its means and its efficacy. When this is done, what perhaps previously did not appear as the theory of action, is now revealed as such” (Freire, 2005:103). Reflection is a point at which progressive pedagogy, applied theatre, and transformation meet. Reflections can be as simple (e.g., one word or movement to describe how you feel about today’s work) or complex as needed within each workshop or rehearsal. Liz Lerman’s (2003) Critical Response Process is “a method for giving and receiving feedback on work in progress, designed to leave the maker eager and motivated to get back to work.” Variations on this process are useful when working inclusively, and reflect the intentions of progressive pedagogy through discussion. Lerman’s method stimulates discussions within rehearsals and workshops, and when applied to education practices it can provide a check for understanding or reflective conversations. For the seminar, notecards were passed out with variations of Lerman’s steps formed into questions: What did you see about inclusive theatre? What did you think? What did you appreciate? What do you want to know or might you do differently? This was followed by the option to add opinions, thoughts, or suggestions. Attendees were invited to share their thoughts and understandings of the seminar by providing written comments and answers to review later.

### Journal, May 2016 (Continued)

*By the end of the seminar I was red with embarrassment, on the brink of a complete panic attack, and rushed to a bathroom stall to cry and hyperventilate. I felt destroyed, and to put it in South African vernacular, the seminar felt like a complete train smash. I was told I had an hour to present, so I rehearsed and planned accordingly, but minutes before beginning I was informed my 1-hour presentation was cut to just 30 minutes. My mind, typical for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, was going a million places at once and accelerating; to make things worse, I had yet to obtain a prescription to refill my ADHD medication. Jamming a well-planned inclusive workshop into half an hour was possible, but the more enthusiastic I became, the more resistance from the faculty members was in front of me. One blatantly ignored me while melodramatically reading the newspaper throughout; another in the front row sighed and rolled their eyes through each step, constantly tapping their wrist watch. Although other post-graduates seemed motivated to participate in the non-lecture presentation, the overall attitude, change in plan, and pressure of performing were just as overwhelming and overstimulating as the flickering florescent lights. This did not feel like a welcoming space, nor a place interested in becoming more inclusive to neurodivergency or*

*altering expected norms. These feelings were confirmed when I read the first comment card: "BE WARY OF THE 'TYRANNY' OF PARTICIPATION BY THIS I MEAN, 'CHOICE' CAN INCLUDE NOT PARTICIPATING." Tyranny? As in the negatively connotated word, synonymous with oppression, cruelty, and bullying? I obsessed over this comment as is symptomatic of anxiety and my own neurodivergent behaviors...*

***"BE WARY OF THE 'TYRANNY' OF PARTICIPATION  
BY THIS I MEAN, 'CHOICE' CAN INCLUDE NOT PARTICIPATING"  
(2016, RESPONSE TO INCLUSION SEMINAR, UCT, MAY)***

The comment script was entirely capitalized and the author's ink was pressed hard into the notecard, which definitely felt like a somewhat hostile attitude. However, this comment accurately encapsulates the core experience of trying to teach inclusion in an inaccessible and exclusive environment. This is an environment, not unlike society, that often *chooses to not participate* in accessibility or inclusion. The social model of disability is the heart of this research and provides a way of understanding how people become disabled due to inaccessible surroundings and attitudes, rather than by their physical impairments or conditions. Specifically, people become disabled when they lack the *choice to participate* due to inaccessible environments, people's attitudes or behaviors, and the way society typically caters to people without disabilities. The environment, attitudes, and behaviors of a university seminar highlight the potential struggles of those with neurodivergent disabilities, and they could at least physically access the space. The social and physical barriers for the wider spectrum of abilities within the university setting declare the following: "Be wary of the oppressiveness—the cruelty, the denomination—of participation in a system that does not want you there, and that can choose not to participate."

Poignantly, this one comment reflects an ablest mentality about the *choice to participate*, as often people with disabilities do not get to choose to participate for lack of adaptations that

***"CARRIE SANDAHL: I WANTED TO ADD A PERSPECTIVE FROM SOMEONE WHO'S IN ACADEMIC THEATRE. IT'S NOT ONLY THE STAGE: A LOT OF OUR CLASSROOMS ARE NOT ACCESSIBLE [SOUNDS OF ASSENT]. AT FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY WE HAVE ONE CLASSROOM WHERE WE DO MOVEMENT TRAINING THAT IS AT THE BOTTOM OF A FLIGHT OF STAIRS. SO I SEE THAT FROM A VERY EARLY STAGE IN A YOUNG ACTOR'S CAREER, THEY'RE GETTING EXCLUDED FROM THE CURRICULUM, FROM THE CLASSROOM AND FROM THE STAGE, BECAUSE OF A LACK OF ROLES AND OPPORTUNITIES." (SANDAHL IN TOLAN, 2001)***

provide equal access to opportunities for participation. It could also be interpreted as an ablest attitude toward mandated inclusion, or the idea that creating opportunities for marginalized communities to participate in some way demeans the acclaim or efficiency of a system and drains resources. Historically, university systems are set up in direct opposition to inclusion, as bell hooks points out: “Educational institutions [...] have been founded on principles of exclusion [...] colleges and universities are structured in ways that dehumanize” (hooks, 2003:46-48). Fellow researchers in inclusive theatre often cite the academic institutions as a barrier to inclusion: “the university itself was often unhelpful and unwelcoming. An incompetent bureaucratic web couldn’t see the value of what was being offered” (Sealey et al, 2017:160).

Perhaps the attitudes presented from some attendees were caused by the hierarchical academic divide between *pure theatre* theory and *applied theatre* theory, or “notions of ‘arts for art’s sake’ versus ‘art for people’s and society sake’” (Elliot, Silverman & Bowman; 2016:481). This dichotomy between *pure* versus *applied* reflects the competitive nature in academia and society, and “competitive education rarely works for students who have been socialized to value working for the good of the community” (hooks, 2003:49). A tension is created due to comparisons of uncorrelated artistic worth, or importance and benefit for the community. The dominant culture of *pure* theatre within the university often marginalizes and degrades the work of *applied* theatre. The work outside perceived professional—or normal—spaces as being viewed as less than. For inclusive theatre specifically, this reflects a complicated “unproductive cycle” as explained by Artistic Director Jenny Sealey (2009:2-3):

When talking to arts colleagues, fellow directors and producers, the reason cited for the lack of professional employment opportunities for disabled artists is the scarcity of adequately trained individuals. Talking to those in the education sector, the lack of real employment opportunities is one of the most cited reasons for the rarity of training offers made to Deaf and disabled people.

Whyman reveals a “paradox of participation” that occurs as “the creators of this theatre express a desire for it to transcend [disabilities], whereas the performance aesthetic and the ethics of the process are determined by the fact that the performers have

[disabilities] at least to some extent” and there may “always be a certain level of dependence, a need for facilitation and support and this could be interpreted as indicating a lack of full equality” (Whyman 2006:9-14). Tim Wheeler of *Mind the Gap* articulates the goals for the future of inclusive theatre by explaining the concept of disapplication (cited in Hargrave, 2015: xii):

My hope for the future is that we are able to make the case for dis-applied theatre. Not as a replacement for the excellent work done within an applied theatre framework but as an option that can, if appropriate, remove the obligation to make theatre with disabled people an attempt to cure or console, or otherwise make political statements [...] Dis-applied theatre would be about telling and re-telling great stories in exceptional ways [...] why not just call it theatre? Good practice, like good theorizing, should not become another way of excluding people.

These cycles and paradoxes add to the status-quo set by the university, and reflect the systems, structures, and barriers set by society. Likewise, they reinforce a false hierarchy and reflect a *choice to not participate* in straying from a culture of ablest, elitist traditions that are fundamentally limited to neurotypical learning, and fail to create any options of accessibility. Systemic exclusion within the university structure is not exclusive to disability; the decolonization movement reflects how systems devalue any perceived difference from the status quo, further isolating marginalized communities. McLaren identifies these systems in education as follows:

when the curriculum favors certain forms of knowledge over others and affirms the dreams, desires and values of select groups of students over other groups, often discriminatorily on the basis of race, class and gender. (McLaren, 2009:86)

The traditional education system becomes extraneous, as marginalized learners (because of race, gender, class, or ability) “become filed away through lack of creativity, transformation and knowledge in this (at best) misguided system” (Freire, 1970:72). This “misguided system” focuses on conformity, on teaching “obedience to authority” (hooks, 1994:4), and on reinforcing the ideals and systems of domination of those in power. These systems of domination can be seen in the lack of diverse writers (women, people of color, people with disabilities, anyone who is not a white, European, Christian man) in many curricula, as well as the teaching styles that dominate classrooms worldwide. Lectures, rote memorization, and

regurgitation of traditional teaching styles support “the assumption that memorizing information and regurgitating it represented gaining knowledge that could be deposited, stored and used at a later date” (hooks, 1994:5). They are remnants of decades of missionary schools that forced religion and English as a dominant language (discrediting indigenous languages), segregation in schools based on race, region, and ability. Within universities, the “higher education system ‘remains a colonial outpost’ up to this day, reproducing ‘hegemonic identities instead of eliminating hegemony’” (McKaiser, 2016). The system is reflective of an outdated enlightenment view of academic ability—“that real intelligence consists in this capacity for a certain type of deductive reasoning and a knowledge of the classics originally” (Robinson, 2008). This view of academic ability permeates the education system from kindergartens to postgraduate institutions; it negates all other forms of intelligence that refuse to conform to the traditional concepts of academic ability. It is a system that does not allow space for those with differences, and one that perpetuates competitive, exclusive education while reinforcing conformity and reinforcing the hierarchy of perceived academic intelligence.

Transformative and progressive pedagogy “establishes the criteria for organizing curricula and classroom social relations around goals designed to prepare students to relate, understand, and value the relation between an existentially lived public space and their own practical learning” (Giroux, 1997: 106). Progressive pedagogies react against the standard hierarchical teacher/student relationship by embracing the experiences of students as well as teachers in a mutual learning/teaching process (Freire, 1970, 1973, 1987, 1998; hooks, 1994; Kincheloe, 2004); they also focus on ways in which teachers can “empower their students through what they teach, how they teach, and the means whereby school knowledge can be made worthwhile and interesting at the same time” (Giroux, 1997:107). Motta and Esteves argue that “new possibilities arise when we learn to cross, to blur, to undermine, or overflow the hierarchical and binary oppositions we have been taught [...] (instead) nurturing critical intimacy” (2014:5). The seminar and discussed topics challenged the university norms, addressed topics of ability and inclusion rarely discussed, and attempted to nurture critical intimacy by blurring hierarchical and binary oppositions of able versus disabled, inclusive versus exclusive, and pure versus applied. Although the risks taken in the seminar initially

failed to be successful overall, the experience highlighted the need to “create locations for academic study precisely so that an unbiased approach to scholarship and learning would not only be legitimized in school and university settings, that would act as a catalyst to transform every academic discipline” (hooks, 2003:45). The exclusive culture of the university needs to change, and a culture of inclusion needs to be created.

Ultimately, by acknowledging both the *tyranny* and *paradox of participation*, inclusive theatre as a form of progressive pedagogy follows the work of Mda by “*naming* their problems, in *reflecting* on them by exploring the reasons for their existence, and in community decision-

making on the course of *action* to take in order to solve the problems” (1993:164). Theatre, as a system of cultural education, is a microcosm of society, and if access to opportunities is ensured, different abilities are accommodated, and expectations are modified, then the way things are done will be adapted and eventually bleed into other aspects of life and society. To transform, society, universities, theatres, peers, and families must make a *choice to participate* in creative problem solving, adapting for the benefit of all.



FIGURE 55 UCT & OASIS GROUP PARTICIPATION

## CHAPTER 4: CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

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*“WITH THE PERSONIFICATIONS OF HIS DESTINY TO GUIDE AND AID HIM, THE HERO GOES FORWARD IN HIS ADVENTURE UNTIL HE COMES TO THE THRESHOLD [...] STANDING FOR THE LIMITS OF THE HERO’S PRESENT SPHERE, OR LIFE HORIZON. BEYOND THEM IS DARKNESS, THE UNKNOWN, AND DANGER; [...] AND POPULAR BELIEF GIVES HIM EVERY REASON TO FEAR SO MUCH AS THE FIRST STEP INTO THE UNEXPLORED.” (CAMPBELL, 2004:71)*

The Children’s Development Center (CDC) of Lagos, Nigeria participated in an inclusive theatre adventure, traveling some 10,480 kilometers over 37 hours, crossing the threshold and several time zones to arrive in Texas for a 10-day quest. The group consisted of 12

members with special needs from the adult and adolescent units, three Nigerian teachers, and their Texas host and author of their story. Over the past three years of “cultural synthesis” (Freire, 1972), the CDC had shared Nigerian culture, food, and education; the opportunity now



FIGURE 56 CDC IN HOUSTON

arose to visit Texas for a cultural exchange trip. In the context of the hero’s journey, Campbell describes *crossing the threshold* as “the first step into the unexplored” (2004:71). This solidifies the hero’s commitment and the departure from the ordinary world; it is when the action begins. After reaching the limits of our *present sphere*, immersed in the status quo of Nigeria, we literally crossed borders to see what else was possible. This chapter places the preliminary design phase of the research as the events and experiences of the Houston trip for planning the routes of subsequent research. Crossing this threshold lays the foundations

and facilitates further border crossings, both literal and figurative, paving the way through processes and mapping strategies to overcome obstacles.

### WHAT IS A MAP?

What is a map? A member of a recent inclusive workshop group answered this as follows:

“Helps you get somewhere. Gives you directions. Routes to different places. Stops you from getting lost. Helps you find your place” (2018, CDC personal communication, March 21).

Anthropologist Tim Ingold suggests that maps are drawn up in the context of storytelling, a way in which explorers describe their journeys (2015:85-87). For Ingold, wayfarers follow sketch-maps “formed through the gestural re-enactment of journeys *actually made*, to and from places that are already known for their histories of previous comings and goings” (Ingold, 2015:87). CDC journeyers discovered Houston by following “a path that one has previously traveled in the company of others, or in their footsteps, reconstructing the itinerary as one goes along” (2007:15-16).

Applied theatre theorist Helen Nicholson uses the metaphor of a map to link pedagogy, praxis, and performance as “narratives of space, place and time in applied theatre” (2005:39). The map is used to “to undertake a journey,” and “names histories and alludes to local legends,” yet fails in noting “their significance nor offering clear solutions about how best to approach or encounter them” (2005:40). Nicholson utilizes the idea of border crossing to engage knowledge, transformation, and education. Applied theatre “operates at the point of intersection between culture, community and identity” (Nicholson, 2005:40), and it is in crossing these borders—the transitions between culture, community, and identity—where unpredictable lessons are learned outside those of the plan.

The CDC, both literally and metaphorically, crossed borders and thresholds throughout the trip. Each day was navigated with plans for partnering with local groups for a workshop or educational immersion practice, a cultural or tourism event, and a community-engaged meal. The educational immersion practices included a variety of trips and visits that illustrate

# TRAVEL ITINERARY

**Purpose:** Cultural Exchange  
**Destination:** Houston, Texas

**Trip Start:** 31/10/2015  
**Trip End:** 9/11/2015

**Friday October 29:** Depart Lagos

**Saturday October 31: Arrival & Day 1**  
 • Arrive Houston  
 • Check into hotel  
 • Welcome Dinner

**Sunday November 1: Day 2**  
 • Visit NASA Space Center  
 • Lunch at NASA

**Monday November 2: Day 3**  
 • Visit Texas Renaissance Festival  
 • Lunch at Renaissance Festival

**Tuesday November 3: Day 4**  
 • Visit The Zoo  
 • Lunch at The Zoo

**Wednesday November 4: Day 5**  
 • Visit Texas BBQ  
 • Lunch at Texas BBQ

**Thursday November 5: Day 6**  
 • Visit Texas Zoo  
 • Lunch at Texas Zoo

**Friday November 6: Day 7**  
 • Visit Texas BBQ  
 • Lunch at Texas BBQ

**Saturday November 7: Day 8**  
 • Visit Texas Zoo  
 • Lunch at Texas Zoo

**Sunday November 8: Day 9**  
 • Visit Texas BBQ  
 • Lunch at Texas BBQ

**Monday November 9: Day 10 and Departure**  
 • Visit Texas Zoo  
 • Lunch at Texas Zoo

**Wednesday November 11: Arrive in Lagos**

## WHAT TO BRING

- (1) Suitcase
- 10 Days of Warm Clothes
- Coat or Jacket
- Passport
- Personal Money
- Snacks + Sweets
- Prescription Medicines
- Camera

+001 281-555-5555  
**Emergency Only**  
 trip@cdcngigeria.org

Students will take turns contacting home throughout the trip, and the Centre will post daily on social media.

FIGURE 57 HOUSTON TRIP TRAVEL ITINERARY

experiences in the American Disability community, including four inclusive theatre workshops: one with Rod Sheffield in an inclusive public high school theatre classroom, another at *Theatre Under the Stars* (TUTS), Houston’s largest professional theatre production company, one more with TUTS’ inclusive musical theatre company *The River*, and finally a day program with the Westside Inclusive Theatre (WIT).

Nicholson states that, “knowledge is produced through interaction with others, and that this

reciprocity between participants generates new forms of social and cultural capital” (2005:39). The knowledge produced in different ways of doing, making friends, and experiencing differing cultures generated new forms of sociocultural capital. Partnering with group homes and disability programs demonstrated how they sustain community living and fellowship while creating work opportunities. At Brookwood, a private vocational training community for adults with disabilities, we learned to garden, paint pottery, play hand bells, and finished the day by cooking a meal with residents of the group home. At Reach Unlimited, a public learning activity center day program, we played bingo and made stained glass objects to sell at their giftshop. We rode horses and learned how to groom after hippotherapy at Happy Cheers Disabled Animal Sanctuary, and attended a Texas BBQ with members of WIT. Trips to places such as the NASA Space Center, the Texas Renaissance

Festival, the city zoo, and several museums bonded the CDC group through informal adventures. Similar to trip itineraries, lesson plans, and rehearsal processes, the plans rarely occurred as expected, and the experience of crossing borders created unpredictable lessons that eventually led to developing the CDC's first public theatre performance.

### Journal, 5 November 2015

*Shola, Anjola, and Funke pile into the seats behind me, jesting about my bus-driving abilities as they shout "SEATBELTS!". We have an almost 2-hour drive to an inclusive theatre workshop with Rod Sheffield's inclusive theatre class, but we are already running late. My GPS map has us barely making it on-time if we leave now. As the last of the group hurries onto the bus, each teacher checks to see that they have the four students they are responsible for. Check. Check. Check. Ready to go. We head out for adventure. The wahala ['trouble' in the Yoruba language] is real today. Funke and Alaji are still refusing to eat anything (not even rice or bread)—they don't like American food. The rest of the group seems pretty happy with the meals, but have been having some unfortunate (and urgent) digestive issues due to the fluoride and chlorine in the water. Due to these issues, residual jetlag and Nigerian culture*



FIGURE 58 CHAOS IN THE BUS IN HOUSTON

*time expectations, we are consistently running late, even with the flex-time I planned in. There are some terrible smells on the bus and we need to make a few emergency bathrooms stops on the way, but eventually we make it. Sheffield greets us and ushers us in for a tour. I do a quick headcount and we're missing someone. Michael. I ask Kola, trying not to panic, if everyone is off the bus. He says he thinks so. I ask Sheffield to proceed with the tour (he knows me very well and can see the panic in my face) as Segun and I run back to the bus praying Michael is asleep or hiding, but he's not there. I panic. Neither of us can remember if we had seen Michael all morning—did we leave him at a gas station? Is he back at the motel? I call the motel and beg the front desk clerk to go knock on the door. She says she can't leave the desk. I try to explain that a nonverbal adult with autism might be in the room alone, and we need to know if he's there; that it was an emergency. She says she "doesn't work with disabilities" and she doesn't "know what to do"; I try to explain that I just need to know if he's there. She says she'll get into trouble if she leaves the desk but she'll transfer the call to the room. The phone rings 7 times and then gets sent back to the front desk. I beg her to go check the room. I am not sure if Michael will answer the phone. She transfers me to his room again, and suddenly I hear a click and lots of "heh, hehehe, heh" laughing and breathing. Michael answered the phone! He was safe but 2 hours away from the group and in a motel room by himself on a busy highway. [to be continued]*

This ethnographic anecdote serves to provide insights into some of the issues within crossing borders, both in travel and in educational experiences. There are a number of struggles, upsets, or issues that continually arise when working in multicultural contexts and with disabilities. In this specific narrative, assumptions, healthy digestion, time restraints, and excitement disrupting responsibility all come into play. Primarily, this portion of the story reinforces various aspects that create the social model of disability, or the idea that the community's social reaction to people with disabilities is "the disabling force, rather than implicating the bodily differences as the true source of disability" (Shuttleworth & Kasnitz, 2004). Michael was excluded because we forgot him; the receptionist refused to adapt her circumstances to accommodate him, similar to institutions, universities, schools, and public spaces. Although we tried to be accessible and inclusive, the amount of resources required was overwhelming. Michael was unintentionally excluded from the group's first foray into inclusive performance, a workshop with Rod Sheffield.



FIGURE 59 WORKSHOP WITH SHEFFIELD

Theatre educator and director Rod Sheffield created a curriculum for inclusive theatre within public high schools based on drama exercises that lead to theatrical performances. The curriculum entertains aspects of educational theatre, DiE, and TiE under the applied theatre/drama umbrella (Landry & Montgomery, 2012; Prentki & Preston; 2009). The program reflects ideal inclusive education, wherein students with and without disabilities

learn together. Inclusive education theorists advocate that “all children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have” (Peters, 2004:5). These ideas echo the concepts of progressive pedagogies with a focus on the learning community and each individual learner. The basis of inclusive education is the idea that learning happens collaboratively; each individual can add to the learning community, but there must be an understanding of the ways in which different individuals learn (Tamor & Peterson, 2001; Peters, 2004; Roman, 2009; Goodley, 2007; Rieser, 2012). Sheffield explained this as follows:

[...] this is a [Theatre Production] course comprised of at least 50% advanced theatre students, and, at most, 50% special needs students. Advanced theatre students with exceptional personalities and capabilities are partnered with students who have special-needs and concerns. They work in a positive, constructive, and encouraging theatrical environment, developing presentation skills and building all students’ self-confidence. (2015, personal communication, 6 November)

The year-long curriculum begins based in drama, defined by Prendergast and Saxton as “akin to what we know as the rehearsal process of performance [...] a collaborative process of



FIGURE 60 DRAMA VS. THEATRE DEFINITIONS

investigation, research, trial and error, negotiation and often improvisation” (2013, xi-xii). Drama-based exercises are “done for the benefit of the group and those individuals within the group. Applied drama is not concerned with making meaning for someone who is outside this process (as in a public audience)” (2013:1). This is similar to the initial work done within the CDC’s task-based drama interventions, as discussed in *Chapter 2*. Sheffield’s goal is to

“assimilate [special needs] students with advanced theatre students and construct lessons challenging and enriching for all” (2015). Drama-based activities such as puppetry, music videos, news broadcasts, and movies eventually focus on “the ultimate goal being to present an inclusive show for all students to perform [...] and encourage special needs students to become actively involved at their campuses” (2015 R Sheffield, personal communication Nov

1). The projects evolve into the definition of applied theatre as “a *performance*, to and with an audience” (Prendergast & Saxton, 2013:xi). Drama is the process that builds relationships, skills, and ideas within the community, wherein theatre is a performance that can display the work done within the dramatic process to others.

The dramatic processes are used as stepping stones in training, community building, and trust. The process is then adapted or further developed through aesthetics and directorial vision to create a devised theatrical performance. Theorist Roger Wooster notes that the performance aspect within an inclusive process is often “the driving motivation without which the process would, in fact, become therapy not theatre” (2009:88). Sheffield also utilizes the performance as a motivating factor, or a form of positive reinforcement to structure learning outcomes. During the CDC’s workshop with Sheffield, we observed a unit he calls “ALIENS” (see photos in *Figure 59* and the lesson plan in *Figure 61*). Sheffield

developed this unit to address “a need in the school for elective courses for special needs students that allows them to actively participate in a friendly, imaginative environment.”

Students work together to create a space creature (alien) from a different planet; through drama they then develop the alien’s character traits, abilities, and obstacles. Ultimately, the

*“THE ADVANCED THEATRE STUDENTS GAIN A GREAT DEAL OF PATIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING OF OTHERS, THE ABILITY TO WORK IN ANY SITUATION AND GAIN COMPASSION—WHICH KEEPS IN CHECK THEIR OWN EGOS. THE SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS BECOME AN ACTIVE PART OF A SCHOOL COMMUNITY. THEY GAIN SELF-CONFIDENCE, RESPECT FOR THEMSELVES AND OTHERS, AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS. ALL STUDENTS’ TAKE PRIDE IN THE COMMUNITY CREATED, THEIR IMAGINATIONS GROW AND CREATIVITY BECOMES LIMITLESS!” (R SHEFFIELD, 2015)*

students explore the ideas of being different/unique, and practice ‘welcoming’ different kinds of ‘characters’ to Earth. Each group presents a scene to the class representing these ideas. In conversations with Sheffield following the workshop, it was clear that both observing and participating in Sheffield’s class was an impactful moment for the CDC group, especially the teachers. CDC participants Shola and Femi were excited about helping choose alien attributes, and all three CDC staff members expressed the possibility of working with drama to create a theatre performance in the future. Seeing and experiencing Sheffield’s students working inclusively together, and then working with our group, allowed them to believe in the potential possibilities of attempting our own work. Sheffield’s alien lesson plan (and the

trip to Houston) ultimately influenced and inspired the beginning of the CDC's first community performance *The Planet of Inclusion*, as well as the subsequent first professional performance *Discovering a Planet of Inclusion* (see Chapters 5 & 7).

<b>Aliens Lesson Plan</b>	
<b>Instructional Goal</b>	Students will be able to create a character, give it a character background, and act at a scene with the character
<b>Rationale</b>	Students learn how to create a character from scratch given very few facts. By having the characters be unique, the students learned everybody is different.
<b>Lesson content</b>	Students thinking to get their characters features. Once done, they will create the character and then a scene with this character.
<b>Instructional Procedures</b>	<p>Prep: teacher prepares a chart much like the Jeopardy board. Behind each number is either: eye ear nose arm leg mouth            The number of each item is determined by how many groups (if there are three groups, you would need 6-7 eyes, 3-4 noses, etc.).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The class is divided into different groups. Each group selection number and then is given that item behind it. Each group will go a minimum of 10 times. The groups take turns picking until all numbers are gone. A group should not end up with a standard set of these items. (1 Day).</li> <li>2. Once they have their items, the group is given a large (6') piece of butcher block paper. They then are to create an alien with the features they have chosen. They may add clothes or hair or whatever, as long as they have the correct number of items above. (1 week).</li> <li>3. Now that the alien is created, the group names him/her/it. The group is now given a standard character background form and must create the background for the alien. This needs to be creative and thorough with all having input. (2 days)</li> <li>4. The group introduces the alien of the class. They then each take turns standing behind the cut-out alien and give it a voice. (1 day)</li> <li>5. The group then creates a short scene incorporating everyone in the group, including the alien. One person in each group will portray the voice of the alien. Rehearsal time is given and then the scenes are presented. (1-2 weeks)</li> </ol>
<b>Evaluation Procedures</b>	Students will be evaluated by their creativity and performance of the scene
<b>Materials and aids</b>	Selection chart prepared ahead of time. Minimum 6' Pieces of Butcher paper (1 per group), Markers/craft supplies
<b>Accommodations</b>	Instructions are repeated often, they are verbal, written and modeled physically. Students are working in groups but encourage each individual to participate and contribute.

FIGURE 61 ALIENS LESSON PLAN (SHEFFIELD, 2013)

## November 5, 2015 [Continued]

*Michael answered the phone! He was safe but 2 hours away from the group—in a motel room by himself—on a busy highway. I call Mark [my dad] and ask him if he can check on Michael and entertain him until we get back. Mark volunteers to drive Michael the lengthy distance to meet us, so we can all continue with our plans. To be honest, I was still a little concerned. To put it kindly, Mark is not exactly comfortable with anyone different from him. He’s had little exposure to anyone on the Autistic spectrum, and even less exposure to any Nigerians. He’s also a tall, loud, intimidating Texan and Michael tends to act out or have a complete meltdown with new people. My mind was buzzing with all the things that could go wrong. A few hours later we arrived at the Renaissance festival entrance to see Mark and Michael sitting on a bench laughing. Mark told me what a ‘great guy’ Michael was, and how they laughed all through the 2-hour drive and ‘checked out the ladies’ while they waited for us. Michael is nonverbal; one of his indications of Autism is echolalia, wherein sometimes (and only sometimes) he’ll repeat the last word or phrase said to him. In my years of knowing Michael he has never instigated a verbal conversation, and generally just laughs at anything—both good and bad—said to him.*



FIGURE 62 MARK AND MICHAEL

Despite my fears (and prejudice) regarding what might happen when Mark picked up Michael, Mark’s lack of awareness of Michael’s verbal limitations and the specifics of Michael’s disability allowed them both to engage during the 2-hour drive. This is not to say that Michael somehow magically became conversational; Mark did not know about Michael’s echolalia and tendency to laugh, and chatted with him (or perhaps at him) the way he would chat to any 20-something man. Michael’s laughter and repetition of Mark’s last words were enough for them to form a relationship during the drive. Mark’s behavior, his social reaction to Michael—welcoming him, explaining the surrounding areas, telling stories, checking out the ladies—disavowed any disabling factors in their relationship. Mark was not aware of Michael’s disability, and thus accepted the echolalia as agreements, responses, and conversation. In this instance, the assumptions made about both Mark and Michael’s behaviors were potentially more disabling than any impairment or characteristic of Michael’s diagnosis. Although Michael was now with us, to be included in experiencing “school days” at

the Texas Renaissance Festival, the disabling factors of assumption continued through a lack of cultural competency.



FIGURE 63 THE RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL

The Texas Renaissance Festival is an annual “museum theatre” fair that “is presented to help people understand a particular time period” (Prendergast & Saxton, 2009:153). Often tied to lesson plans on Shakespeare, renaissance art, or the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, the festival offers performances, characters in-role, and participatory elements such as blacksmithing, games of knights, and an assortment of foods to see the era “come alive.” In planning the trip, it seemed like a fun activity where the group could dress-up, see some shows and participate in a typical American ‘fieldtrip’ experience and tickets were gifted to the group from one of the inclusive partnerships. In reality, the excursion was very confusing for the group from the CDC, as depicted throughout questions during the visit:

*Why aren't people bowing and showing respect to the King as he walks around, and why are they bowing to us and calling us 'my lord'? Is this a village? Why is that man half-horse-witchcraft? What tribes are they from? Why are the Oyibos [white people] so excited about eating cobs of corn (essentially street food in Nigeria)?*

The group experienced applied theatre in the form of museum theatre, TiE, and immersive drama practices throughout the day, but this lacked the cultural efficacy to be a successful

learning experience. Nicholson remarks, “What is learned depends on how drama is used, and educational aims of particular projects, the narratives of the participants and specific social locations and cultural context in which the work takes place” (Nicholson, 2005:50-51). The CDC team had never learned about the Renaissance era; since it is a European (western and colonial) history, it never applied to them. One of the teachers vaguely recalled hearing about Shakespeare but was foggy on the relevance. Auntie Maureen asked if the Shakespearean dresses and codpieces were “traditional American clothes” and what tribes they were from. When explaining that historically America had been colonized by the British, and the relevance of celebrating British history, she noted that Nigeria too was colonized by the English from 1900 until 1960, but “they would never go back in time and celebrate.” Although parts of the day were fun, the renaissance aspect proved confusing and, on some levels, offensive or inappropriate (i.e., witches and sorcerers).

This experience exposed the critical need to consider the cultural efficacy of projects, and illustrated how oversight can unintentionally reflect systems of domination. The assumption that the Renaissance Festival would be pertinent to the cultural exchange experience is an example of ingrained colonialism. Decolonialism is acknowledging, identifying, and analyzing the way domination (both historically and currently) is present, and then actively seeking to address and transform it. This transformation provides opportunities for equality, inclusion, and continued progress. It is acknowledging the oppression as well as the assumptions and causes thereof in order to learn from them (Kanu, 2007; Grech, 2015; Sefa Dei, 2005). Colonial systems of power have “impacted how disability was to be engaged with, and on occasion ‘treated’ when met by the colonizer,” creating “rigid boundaries between those prone to decay and those who were to participate” (Grech, 2015:8). The remnants of colonialism position disability as something to be fixed, hidden, or disposed of; capability theory through progressive pedagogies can work toward inclusion to decolonialize expectations, but the experience must be culturally competent.

### **Journal, 3 November 2015**

*Rozie Curtis meets us outside of the Theatre Under the Stars (TUTS). She welcomes the group and ushers us into the grand lobby: gold and velvet with sweeping staircases of the theatre.*

The group is in awe as she brings us to an elevator and takes us to a large rehearsal room full of mirrors. Mr. Segun tells Rozie that the group hasn't ever done dance and drama; I counter by introducing Funke who is the self-proclaimed best singer and dancer in the group, then Femi, and both Sholas (who love Zumba class), and the rest of our team who have all been doing task-based drama with me. Rozie starts with a few physical warm-ups, and then has us spread out in front of the mirrors. We begin step-by-step choreography; the entire group picks up the moves (more or less) almost immediately. After the workshop, Rozie takes us on a tour of the professional dressing rooms, costume shop, and scene shop, and eventually we arrive on the stage. The impressive 2,650-seat theatre is acoustically designed for touring Broadway productions. We imagine a full house in the empty auditorium as we perform our newly learned song and choreography in the middle of the stage; without musical accompaniment, the group's voices reverberate enchantingly throughout the space.



FIGURE 64 TUTS WORKSHOP

TUTS provides cultural inclusion through accessibility, modified autism-friendly performances, the community inclusive theatre group *The River*, and advocating for inclusive casting, employment, and training throughout the industry. The workshops with TUTS and *The River* created opportunities to practice and realize musical talents and performance abilities within the group, including mime work, musical theatre, instruments, acting, and choreography, as well as the opportunity to observe active inclusive rehearsals. *The River* works with an inclusive group of musical theatre students and participants with disabilities to create accommodated and modified versions of popular musical theatre performances. In peer-buddies and small groups, they use “mediums of dance, movement, and music to create communication channels,” identified by Sandahl and Nash (2008) as “one of the strongest

forms of communication, as well as means of contact with other people and the outside world” (2008:191). Rehearsals and workshops illustrated a variety of concrete ways to modify, adapt, and accommodate in terms of artistic and creative performance. The workshops introduced the concept of musical theatre, and used prerecorded music as the “the main structuring process for the narrative” to “keep a focus upon bodily and emotional response, create atmosphere and sustain engagement from all present in the room” (Trowsdale & Hayhow, 2015:1025). This was particularly successful for the choreography performance detailed in the aforementioned vignette, and became a primary step of future devised performances. Though these skills and experiences were valuable, perhaps the most influential lesson the CDC students took away from the workshops was the belief that they could perform.

#### **Journal, 8 November 2015**

*As a founding artistic director, visiting WIT brought a lot of emotions. It was incredible to see my past friends and students continue the work we had begun together years ago. The immediate sense of family was extended to my Nigerian friends, and it was rewarding to watch how they shared, participated, and engaged with each other. They performed scenes from ‘Aseop’s Idol,’ mixing pop-music, politics, and fables, and peer-buddied throughout a workshop introducing each other. Everyone shared games, scenes, and stories of what they were currently doing. Bailey has a full-time position at a Centre for Autism, Sophie was pushing for inclusive classes as she taught elementary school drama, and Bri was about to graduate from the Texas School for the Blind independent living course. I was both proud and a little nostalgic to acknowledge that WIT had moved on, successfully, when I left for Nigeria. Nikki and Shola [both of whom have unique vocal patterns, often struggle with fine motor skills, and use assistive mobility devices] chatted for a long time. Shola was shocked that Nikki was already a published playwright, with a full-ride scholarship to university and promising future in theatre. Nikki accredited much of her success to the encouragement of her WIT family, being included onstage throughout high school, and her ‘overbearing advocate of a mom.’ Nikki was equally shocked to hear Shola wasn’t allowed to attend school growing up in Nigeria, and that there was no way for her family to advocate for her until she began attending the CDC.*

WIT was created by, with, and for students at a large, inner-city public high school in Houston, Texas. The ‘WIT family’ encompasses every American stereotype; among its members are students from life-skills classrooms with autism, Down’s Syndrome, cerebral palsy, and various learning impairments; also included are graduate alumni heading to Ivy league universities, mainstream students struggling with teen pregnancy and gang affiliation,

students who are refugees, and immigrants beginning to learn English as a second language. Some members read at the university level, some at grade level, and some are still learning to write the letters in their name. The ethics behind the creation of WIT attempt to defy discrimination for all learners, regardless of ability, class, gender, race, and language, through the dramatic process, culminating in performances. The members of the CDC could see the similarities between WIT's exercises and games and those they were learning in Nigeria. Experiencing other interpretations of drama processes was beneficial, reinforcing the belief that inclusive theatre was possible. The camaraderie was clear as students shared successes, struggles and possibilities. Perhaps more significantly, WIT members disclosed their experiences and revealed how inclusive theatre had positively affected their lives. The CDC staff and students began to see that 'playing theatre' could have greater influences outside of the performances, and had concrete evidence of job opportunities, relationships, and achievements.



FIGURE 65 WESTSIDE INCLUSIVE THEATRE

WIT's performances are based on the nationalization of classic texts, a concept coined by Boal (2006). Applied theatre techniques are used to adapt, rewrite, and restructure classic texts (e.g., fairytales, folklore, or Sophocles) to fit the needs, interests, and concerns of the community involved. The performance shared with the CDC used the nationalization of Aesop's Fables to create the performance of Aesop's Idols. Through a dramatic process, classic tales such as the 'Tortoise and the Hare' were adapted to appeal to the life

experiences of a diverse, inclusive community. For example, the Tortoise and the Hare were no longer just running a race, but competing for social media 'likes' and attention from their peers. The fable transformed into commentary on who had the more expensive shoes, how the cheering crowd encouraged them, and how the tortoise (played by an actor who uses a wheelchair) had to tackle obstacles differently than her peers. The universal nature of classic texts, when nationalized in an inclusive theatre praxis, inherently becomes a way to defy stigma while teaching how disability (and ability) is addressed within a culture. Not only do these adapted classical stories illustrate disability culture to the audience, but also in creating the performance, participants experience hands-on ways to modify and adapt learning with and for their peers. The CDC team was enthused by the idea that they too could take well-known Nigerian tales and make them their own.

Within a WIT performance, the most successful example of relationship development is through peer mentoring; that is, the process of pairing members of varying abilities together to achieve outcomes. Inclusion promoted through peer-mentoring allows for all members to be independent of teachers and therapists, thus actively creating authentic relationships (Trowsdale & Hayhow, 2015; Doolittle et. All, 2016; Grady, 2000; Rieser, 2012, Kempe & Tissot, 2012). Hargrave explains that inclusion is more than just the involvement of learners with disabilities, but the goal of inclusion "ultimately raises the question of what we think of the good life for ourselves as human-beings, and whether there is place for people with [disability] in that life [...] not so much what we can do for them, but whether or not we want to be with them. Ultimately, it is not citizenship, but friendship that matters" (Hargrave, 2005:17). Nikki and Shola's immediate kinship and conversation highlighted the benefits of peer relationships and mentorships. The peer-mentor system can reveal possibilities, structure learning, and increase accountability; more importantly, it keeps the work inclusive. Authentic peer relationships last outside of rehearsals, and fulfill Hargrave's goal of building friendships and contributing to the culture of inclusion.

### **Journal, 1 November 2015**

*"Why do the Americans want to go into space? To find God?" Funke raises her hand and asks the retired astronaut volunteering to speak to visitors at NASA Space Center Houston. The astronaut pauses, looks at our group for a moment, and eloquently responds something*

about science, research, and adventure. “But why?” Funke repeats herself. Again, he pontificates briefly about the importance of science for the betterment of humankind. “But why? For God?” Funke angrily reiterates. Most of the group leans forward a bit in anticipation, as former decorated astronaut Colonel William McArthur scans the faces staring back at him. I smile and shrug; Kunle waves, Femi gives him a thumbs-up, and Deji chooses this moment to let out a small but loud screech, to which Alaji shouts ‘Stop that’ and smacks him. Colonel McArthur smiles, nods his head and says: “Maybe for God.” He pauses and then asks: “Do you have a cellphone? The Internet?” Funke nods emphatically. “Wi-Fi, cellphones, satellites, GPS, the Internet. The more we explore through science, the more things we can find to better our world.” It feels as if the entire group sighs in relief, nodding and agreeing that yes, cellphones and Wi-Fi—that is why the Americans go into space.



FIGURE 66 NASA SPACE CENTER HOUSTON

“For the benefit of all” is the motto of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and Colonel McArthur spoke on NASA’s quest for scientific knowledge to better the world. NASA’s motto took on a different meaning during the CDC’s visit, as NASA provided a fully inclusive, fully accessible experience that addressed space through multisensory learning experiences. NASA Space Center Houston is a Certified Autism Center and fully accessible venue; this means they ensure physical access through ramps and elevators, accommodations for visual or auditory impairments (such as interpreters or braille), and modifications for those with cognitive or sensory impairments. We were welcomed by a support team member who offered us wheelchairs and sensory-overstimulation backpacks, informing us of the many modifications and accommodations throughout the center. They

included sensory guides and visual cue vocabulary cards to assist in communication (Figure 67). NASA went above and beyond to welcome and accommodate visitors with disabilities.

Each exhibit or activity offered multiple ways to engage, often multisensory experiences wherein participants could actively touch and interact with equipment or artifacts. The group was astonished by effort taken to provide an inclusive, accessible learning experience, and by a governmental agency, no less. NASA Space Center exemplifies the ideal inclusive culture; it strives to accommodate all communication and modifies participation for all abilities, both physical and cognitive. Each exhibit was designed for the highest level of engagement, “demonstrated through focus, commitment, risk-taking, and sincerity” (Johnston 2012:122), ensuring each visitor could learn, experience, and contribute according to their needs and abilities. True engagement validates differences and facilitates a practice where “participants feel welcome within the organization. This includes sharing information, making introductions, and creating connections to make initial contact less intimidating, and developing resources – social stories, pictorial stories, plain language summaries of resources, and so forth – to facilitate communication” (Hadley, 2020:185).

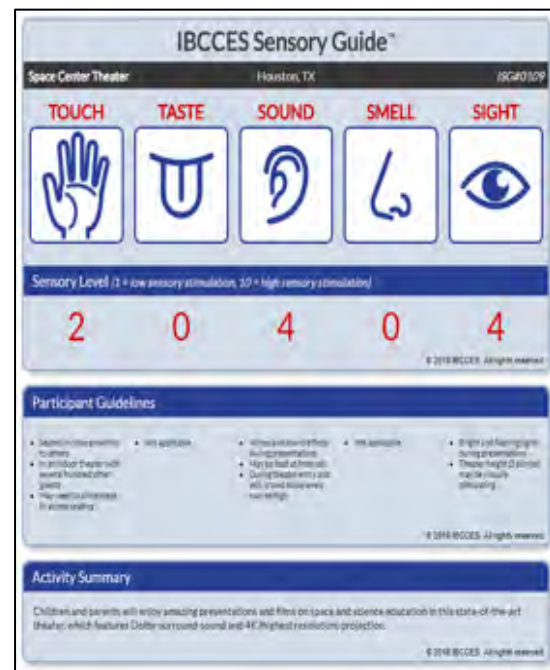


FIGURE 67 NASA ACCESS RESOURCES

## A CULTURE OF INCLUSION

A lot can be learned about personalities, patience, and outlook on long-haul flights, crammed together on buses or simply walking through a park. In Texas, the CDC group bonded through

misadventures, meals, and meeting others within inclusive communities. In addition to literally seeing, feeling, and training in inclusive theatre experiences with Sheffield, *The River*, TUTs, and WIT, grander principles were introduced that inspired the group’s future performances. The alien workshop conducted with Sheffield became an inspiration for the CDC’s first performance, and the idea that drama exercises could be built into theatrical performances opened numerous possibilities for the future. Every workshop encouraged inclusive education, collaborative learning, and the embrace of all contributions (whether ‘perfect’ or not). The potential for success through peer-mentoring, musical theatre, nationalization of classics, and employment opportunities transformed the concept of what theatre could be for the CDC. Cautionary lessons of cultural efficacy and overcoming assumptions were shared at RenFest, NASA, and throughout transitional locations. Furthermore, accidentally abandoning Michael early on instilled the importance of safety, repetitive check-ins, and structured plans. The greatest impacts from the trip to Houston were the formation of authentic relationships that broke down divides between staff/students and the belief in the possibility of creating cultures of inclusion.

The preliminary research gathered from the trip to Houston forms a metaphorical map to guide subsequent theatre projects toward creating inclusive cultures. Disability activist Judith Snow defines a MAP (referring to both literal maps, and the acronym for ‘Making Action Plans’) as “a catalyst to begin a process of change” (Snow, Forest & Pearpoint 1992:57). This trip was a catalyst for change. Snow’s MAP originated in schools to replace medicalized labels of disability with plans of action. The

CDC, crossing the threshold in their heroic journey, similarly needed to leave behind the medicalized labels of drama-as-therapy, and the status-quo of refusing to acknowledge potential. The trip to Houston inspired the group to take a risk, defy expectations, and create their own cultures of inclusion.



FIGURE 68 MAP ASSUMPTIONS (SNOW, 1992)

Metaphorically, crossing the threshold to create a culture of inclusion is a response to the exigencies of life—the marginalization, stigma, and lack of opportunities faced when living with a disability in Nigeria, and countless other communities. Sociocultural and anthropologic literature has defined disability as both an aspect of cultures and a culture within itself (Peter, 2006; Currans, Kupper & Heit; 2015; Mcrae & Rowe, 2019; Nelson & Maag, 2019; Hadley, 2020). Globally, an “ablest culture defines a disabled person” (Grady, 2009:133), and the culture of disability is “constantly told by the dominant culture what they cannot do and what their place is in society” (Charleton, 2006: 225). The beginning chapters of this research related stories from Ayo’s school, Shola’s bakery, and university lecture halls that depict the ordinary world, the status quo, and the urgent need to create new cultures. The creation of an inclusive culture can be analyzed through the “*doing, the how it is done, the for what and for whom it is done,*” established throughout the first section of this research, arguing that the foundations of progressive pedagogy and applied theatre within an inclusive theatre praxis create a culture of inclusion. Thus, the creation of an inclusive culture can transform oppressive systems to provide opportunities for education, advocacy, and potential.

*“IT IS FROM OUR RESPONSES TO THE EXIGENCIES [URGENT NEEDS OR DEMANDS] OF LIFE THAT CULTURE IS BORN. CULTURE IS THE DOING, THE HOW IT IS DONE, THE FOR WHAT AND FOR WHOM IT IS DONE.” (BOAL, 2006: 100)*

In this chapter, the CDC crosses the threshold to create new cultures by partaking in those already created. If *culture is the doing*, then naming problems, reflecting on them, taking risks, and creating relationships is critical to inclusion. Inclusive culture is undertaking transformation through deconstructing and adapting the systems in place. *How it is done* is founded in progressive pedagogy, applied theatre, and inclusive education. These foundational theories advocate practices that “deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world” (Freire, 2005:34). Giroux (1997) and Hicks (1988) illustrate the learning process as traveling in and out of borders (both physical and metaphorical) constructed culturally, historically, and socially around the coordinates of difference and power. Specifically, it is creating accessible places that address physical entrance and attitudinal barriers. Accommodations for communication or

understanding as well as modifications for participation ensure a mutually beneficial community where everyone can contribute.

*For what:* A culture of inclusion defies the “profound cynicism at the core of dominator culture wherever prevails in the world” (hooks, 2003:11); it establishes hope for “designing an optimal system in which every member of society is permitted to develop one’s talents and experience one’s full potential regardless of any particular attribute” (Coleman, 2006:151). A culture of inclusion is created to fight hegemony and the systems of domination, marginalization, and oppression. At the surface level, inclusive theatre practices can transform cognitive skills. Participants and theorists indicate that inclusive drama and theatre praxis have enhanced skills such as confidence, collaboration, teamwork, thinking, literacy, remembering, paying attention, and problem-solving (Lipkin & Fox, 2015; O’Sullivan, 2016; Corbett et al., 2010; Ramamoorthi & Nelson, 2011; Jindal-Snape & Verttraino, 2007). At a deeper level, inclusive theatre works alongside progressive pedagogies in promoting both personal and societal transformation. The manner in which these transformations occur include a process of learning that “encourages self-reflection, critical thinking, dialogue and action-oriented practices” (Sayles-Hannon, 2007:33), “expanding consciousness,” and working toward “authentic” relationships with self and others (Boyd & Myers, 2006). Inclusive cultures, such as progressive pedagogies, react against the standard hierarchical relationship of teacher/student or therapist/patient by embracing the experiences of all participants in a mutual learning/teaching process (Freire, 1970, 1973, 1987, 1998; hooks, 1994; Kincheloe, 2006).

*For whom:* Creating cultures of inclusion is *for the benefit of all*. A culture of inclusion is created beyond the marginalized or dominant cultures; it is for more than people with disabilities, diagnoses, or impairments—it is for the entire community. Snow believes “[t]he Community is denied the talents, gifts, contributions and opportunities of all the people who are excluded” (1992:42). Inclusive cultures are mutually beneficial, providing adaptations and accessibilities that can improve lives and support all members of society.

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## STEP 2: FIND YOUR ABILITY; FIND YOUR SUPERPOWER

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*“THE ORIGINAL DEPARTURE INTO THE LAND OF TRIALS REPRESENTED ONLY THE BEGINNING OF THE LONG AND REALLY PERILOUS PATH OF INITIATORY CONQUESTS AND MOMENTS OF ILLUMINATION. DRAGONS HAVE NOW TO BE SLAIN AND SURPRISING BARRIERS PASSED—AGAIN, AGAIN, AND AGAIN. MEANWHILE THERE WILL BE A MULTITUDE OF PRELIMINARY VICTORIES, UNRETAINABLE ECSTASIES, AND MOMENTARY GLIMPSES OF THE WONDERFUL LAND.” (CAMPBELL, 2004:100)*

Upon leaving the ordinary world, crossing the threshold into the extraordinary unknown, the heroes face a series of quests, trials, challenges, victories, and delights as they build maturity, skill, and confidence. This is how the heroes find their greatest talents and brightest abilities. The second step of *How to be a Superhero: A Guide to Saving the World* compels the audience to “Find your ability! Find your superpower!” The performance draws upon common examples of heroic abilities (see the script in *Figure 70*): the power to fly, to fight, or to disappear. Metaphorically, these powers represent skills learned on the journey: the power of believing in yourself to soar to new heights, the power to defend ideals of inclusion or battle against stigma, and the power to materialize to support your community. The scene continues with images and interactions that feature the talents and interests each performer is most proud of—their

genuine superpowers. From making friends, dancing, fashion, or kindness, to working hard, tie-dying, or baking; these are the abilities the CDC heroes use to rise above expectations, combat oppression, and become visible in the



FIGURE 69 RUKI FLYING IN HOW TO BE A SUPERHERO: A GUIDE TO SAVING THE WORLD

community. This section recounts the “perilous path of initiatory conquests and moments of illumination” from field work in Nigeria, South Africa, and Lesotho.

<p><b>SCENE 2: FIND YOUR SUPER POWER</b></p> <p><b>Maureen:</b> STEP 2!</p> <p><b>Topo &amp; Salina:</b> FIND YOUR ABILITIES! FIND YOUR SUPER POWERS! <i>(all actors search around the stage- looking for a super power)</i></p> <p><b>All:</b> Super powers? Ability? Super powers? Ability? What is my super power?</p> <p><b>Titi:</b> Some Super heroes have special ABILITIES like the ability to:</p> <p><b>ALL: FLY!</b> <i>(Heroes fly around the stage other actors carry clouds/birds/planes. R Kelly "I believe I Can Fly" begins)</i> I believe I can fly. I believe I can touch the sky I think about it every night and day. Spread my wings and fly away I believe I can soar. I see me running through that open door I believe I can fly. I believe I can fly. I believe I can fly</p> <p><b>Topo:</b> Some superheroes have the ability to...</p> <p><b>ALL: FIGHT!</b> <i>("Kung Fu fighting" begins, Kurle, Akinyele and others do Karate routine: Others have swords and fight with the audience)</i> Everybody was Kung Fu fighting Those kids were fast as lightning In fact it was a little bit frightening But they fought with expert timing.</p> <p><b>Maureen:</b> Some superheroes have the ability to...</p> <p><b>ALL: DISAPPEAR!</b> <i>(Shola Alli &amp; Oneyka come to the front and then disappear behind a piece of fabric- everyone reacts by saying: "WOW- where did they go? What happened? Where are they?" Meanwhile they move behind the fabric to another part of the stage and reappear! Everyone says "WOW"- and they disappear again.</i></p> <p><b>Narrator (recorded):</b> Sometimes the ability to disappear is good- you can escape a situation, or reappear when help is needed. But sometimes people disappear because others don't want to see them. Or they disappear because times are tough, or things are uncomfortable or they forget their super powers. When people are ignored, or treated as nothing good come out- that's when they need a hero. A real hero knows when to reappear to save the day! <i>(Shola &amp; Oneyka reappear and join Tosin, Funke &amp; Dora to sing)</i> And then a hero comes along With the strength to carry on And you cast your fears aside And you know you can survive So when you feel like hope is gone Look inside you and be strong And you'll finally see the truth That a hero lies in you</p> <p><b>Titi:</b> We all have super powers- we are all heroes. A hero is anyone who can overcome obstacles and makes the world a better place.</p>	<p><b>Topo:</b> Anyone can be a superhero- they just need to remember their abilities, believe in themselves and find their super power!</p> <p><b>Biola:</b> We are a team of Super Heroes! <i>(everyone cheers)</i></p> <p><b>Maureen:</b> <i>(as she speaks each actor goes to their place on stage, acting out their super power)</i> Emmanuel has the ability of ROCK N' ROLL. Osegwe is the best dancer in the whole of Lagos (Chop my money?) Edem has the power of strength and hard work Akin can solve any puzzle Funke has the ability to sing beautifully Dora has the power of dance Tosin has the ability to make beautiful tie &amp; dye fabric and soaps Shola Abimbola can bake and cook to feed the hungry Femi has the super power of making friends wherever he goes Shola has the power of kindness and makes everyone feel loved Kunle has the power to cheer people up and make them happy Salina has the ability to make beautiful beadwork And Ruki has the power of fashion and confidence</p> <p><b>ALL:</b> FIND YOUR SUPER POWER! FIND YOUR ABILITY!</p> <p><b>Narrtor (recorded):</b> A hero believes in his or her self, everyone can be a super hero when they believe in themselves. Hero's work as a team, and make the world a better place. Super Hero's never give up- they keep trying!</p> <p><b>All:</b> You can get it if you really want You can get it if you really want You can get it if you really want But you must try, try and try, try and try You'll succeed at last</p> <p><b>Maureen:</b> <i>(to the audience)</i> What are your abilities? What would your super power be? <i>(Audience answers into microphone)</i></p>
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FIGURE 70 SCRIPT EXCERPT FROM STEP 2 OF HOW TO BE A SUPERHERO

Campbell specifies how the journey stage brings a series of “symbolical figures” or archetypes, such as allies and enemies, the warrior, the lover, the trickster; and “in their forms we may see reflected not only the whole picture of our present case, but also the clue to what we must do to be saved” (Campbell, 2004:92-93). Pearson (2015) argues that to “awaken the heroes within,” archetypes can function as guides to teach and preside over stages of the journey. This archetypical reflexivity (Mayes, 2008; Pearson, 1998; Villate, 2012), a tool often utilized in education, relies on universal components of the collective conscious to interpret observations, and inform human thought and behavior (Jung, 1990; Campbell, 2004; Pearson, 1998; Mayes, 1999, 2008).



FIGURE 71 POTENTIAL ARCHETYPES FOR ARCHETYPAL REFLEXIVITY

In a systematic review of inclusive theatre research, Jindal-Snape and Vettrano detail obstacles and issues throughout research contexts, most critically the need to “compare different techniques for different individuals and see what changes need to be made to the technique specific to that individual’s needs” (2007:116). In addition, “most studies gave results for the entire group rather than for individuals within the group” (2007:113-114). Arguably, this is due to entrenched concerns of ethics, consent, and privacy inherent in inclusive work, as well as the stigmatizing nature of labelling disabilities. Therefore, to address both concerns, this section employs

archetypal motifs and characters to reflect the needs, nature, and results of individual participants. The mythopoetic link of individual participants with archetypes of Campbell’s heroic journey (i.e., the shapeshifter, the warrior, the herald) creates an individual yet universal analysis.

This section presents the evidence as well as the findings, barriers, and victories that occurred throughout the cyclical research methods and field studies. Ethnographic corroboration from the main Nigerian field study is interwoven with the secondary field studies (South Africa & Lesotho) to support, defend, and reinforce the theories, evidence, and findings. The three phases stipulated in design research—the preliminary design phase, the teaching experiment phase, and the retrospective analysis phase (Bakker & van Eerde, 2014; Drijvers, 2003; Gravemeijer, 1994)—are framed within Campbell’s archetypal themes.

## CHAPTER 5: THE FIRST CHALLENGE

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*“THEREBY, WHATEVER ADVENTURES, MISFORTUNES, DETOURS, AND GRATIFICATIONS OCCUR ALONG THE ROAD—ALL ARE SEEN AS MOVING THE SELF TOWARD LEARNING AND TRANSFORMATION.” (CAMPBELL, XLIV: 2004)*

**Journal, July 2016: Lagos, Nigeria**

*The sun stabs through the open windows of a large community center; the air is stale, humid, and filled with scents of petrol, exhaust, and the sweat of the 300 or so people crammed inside its doors. The community center is surrounded by traffic “go-slows” (traffic jams). Hundreds, if not thousands of drivers, honking horns or yelling out of the windows mix with the sounds of street vendors hawking their wares in a multitude of languages: English, Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa, and a mix of Pidgin. Children in wheelchairs or homemade scooters tap on the car windows, begging for food or money; they are patently ignored or worse, berated. The crowd inside the community center sweats patiently as a father pontificates on the curses of disability and lists all the things his son cannot do. Suddenly, a blur of cellphones are raised*



FIGURE 72 ASTRONAUTS ENTER THE PARENT'S SUMMIT

*and aimed at 5 Nigerian astronauts, donned in green and white papier-mâché helmets, as they take the stage. The crowd goes wild: cheering and yelling as the astronauts begin to train using physical therapy exercises. The audience stands and sings along with the Nigerian national anthem as the astronauts ready for their first countdown to blast-off. Three galaxies, dressed in black capes decked with stars, dance and parade planet-lanterns as the astronauts leave Earth and discover a new planet: The Planet*

*of Inclusion. The crowd cheers as the Nigerian flag is wedged into the sand, and screams with laughter as mysterious space creatures appear, terrifying the brave astronauts. The space creatures are familiar, dressed in colorful Nigerian ankara fabric, but have a surplus of extra arms, legs, mouths, and eyes. The astronauts are afraid at first, but show compassion to the space creatures, and soon the whole group is drumming, dancing, and teaching each other to bake and paint. The audience is shocked, not because of the extraterrestrial experience in front of them but because they have not seen an astronaut with Autism Spectrum Disorder teach someone how to bake. Nor has a space creature with Down Syndrome graced the stage with such incredible dance moves. The first performance of the Children’s Developmental Centre’s Planet of Inclusion ends with a standing ovation, as the astronauts return to earth to share the joy of inclusion (as described in Jaskolski, 2017).*

## THE PLANET OF INCLUSION

The first challenge—“having traversed the threshold, the hero moves in a dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms, where he must survive a succession of trials” (Campbell, 2004:89)—begins the true adventure. The Children’s Development Centre encounters a “landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms” in their first public performance, *The Planet of Inclusion*. After crossing the threshold in Houston, the research returns to Lagos. The vibrant, colorful, chaotic city sets the stage for the first cycle of research and culminating performance. This chapter

begins at the “Parent Summit on Disability” (Akinadayomi, 2016), where the guise of “community-based rehabilitation” (WHO, 2010; Lemmi, Kuper, Blanchett et al 2016) joined the privileged and neglected to challenge



FIGURE 73 COUNTDOWN TO BLAST OFF

stigma and barriers that exclude people with disabilities and their families. The summit acknowledged that “social rejection or avoidance affects not only the stigmatized individual but everyone who is socially involved, such as family, friends, and relatives” (Coleman, 2006:147), and focused on capability theory through the five components of community-based rehabilitation: health, education, livelihood, social, and empowerment (WHO, 2010). Throughout presentations on topics such as nutrition, finances, and understanding disability, shouts of “Inshallah,” “Amen,” or “Praise Jesus” were often interjected. At one point, a mother discussing finances (in relation to her son with Down Syndrome) began to cry and passionately sing a hymn; the majority of the crowd joined her, some “sprinkling naira” (throwing money) as they sang.

*ALL: A LONG, LONG TIME AGO IN A GALAXY FAR FAR AWAY THE COUNTRY OF NIGERIA BEGAN ITS FIRST SPACE PROGRAM TO REACH FOR THE STARS AND ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING THEY SET THEIR MIND TO... (OPENING SCENE FOR THE PLANET OF INCLUSION, 2016)*

The Children’s Development Centre’s first community engaged performance *The Planet of Inclusion*, in contrast to most of the summit, focused on “what *is* possible, rather than limitations” (Lipkin & Fox, 2001:129). The performance was devised through drama-based task analysis from the CDC’s initial theatre therapy program (see *Beginning the Study* in *Chapter 2*) combined with and inspired by experiences from the Houston trip workshops (see *Chapter 4*). The hypothetical learning trajectory for the performance was established through meetings with the Doctor, the CDC staff, and participants. The participant performers included members of the adult/adolescent unit, CDC staff, and volunteer interns from the University of Lagos. There was a need to move away from a medical model and (ethically questionable) implementation of theatre-as-therapy as previously modeled with task-based analysis. Objectives were constructed to move toward a social model of disability motivated in capability theory and community-based rehabilitation. For the Parent’s Summit performance, the objectives were as follows:

- To showcase the tasks, skills, and talents of the adult & adolescent unit, including reading, acting, art, dance, karate, and baking.
- To highlight the recent international exchange trip to Houston.
- To provide entertainment for the summit through a story that addresses inclusion and advocacy for people with disabilities.



FIGURE 74 GROUP PHOTOS FROM NASA TRIP THAT INSPIRED THE STORYLINE

These objectives formulated the hypothetical learning trajectories for the devising process and performance. The ultimate goal was to create a fun, entertaining display of the work, activities, and adventures the group had accomplished, while advocating that “communities

recognize that people with disabilities are valued members, and can make positive contributions to the community” (WHO, 2010).

## THE DEVISING PROCESS

The devising process began with group reflections and storytelling activities inspired by the cultural-exchange trip to Houston, and led to focusing the performance on the idea of the first Nigerian astronauts. The group jointly established a general plot, but the first scenes were devised individually. This was due to the failure of initial attempts to rehearse/devise as a whole, as the group was accustomed to either improvised dance parties or task-based drama work. Those routines needed to be altered slowly and consistently. Ruki, one of the most enthusiastic (and helpful) participants was

inspired one morning, and she individually memorized an opening narration line she had written (“A long, long time ago in a galaxy far far away...”). She created blast-off choreography, which consisted of counting down from 10 to 1, with accompanying movement after a conversation on how astronauts might look blasting-off into space. Once she was confident, she returned to the unit and performed her newly memorized scene. Afterwards, Shola, Femi, and Ijeoma excitedly joined Ruki, who showed them the movements and narration. Theorists often refer to this modification as peer-mentoring or peer-facilitation, which contributes to ownership and allows for participants to be independent of teachers and therapists (Kempe & Tissot, 2012; Corbett, 2015; Saur & Johansen, 2013; Trowsdale & Hayhow, 2015, Doolittle et al, 2016). After a few repetitions, the small group could perform the scene together. Soon the group as a whole began to understand that the



FIGURE 75 RUKI PLANTING THE NIGERIAN FLAG

story they had composed together was becoming a performance, and more participants began to become involved.

Actions, tasks, and activities were added to achieve the set objectives. Improvisation was used in choosing songs to sing/dance, to convey ideas, and to create task-scenes. Techniques acquired in drama workshops with WIT, The River/TUTS, and in Sheffield's inclusive drama classroom (see *Chapter 4*) were combined with the CDC's task-based drama processes. The rehearsal and devising process reflects educational drama theorists' emphasis on the repetition of exercises and building of performances slowly, broken into small achievable steps, to structure and reinforce skill mastery (Cattanach, 1996; McCurrach & Darnley, 1999; Bailey, 2010; Sherrat & Peter, 2002; O'Sullivan, 2016; Peter, 1995; Ramamoorthi & Nelson, 2011). Dramatic role-play created scenarios such as astronauts putting on space gear, how to walk on a new planet, mysterious space creature characters, and experimentation with different tasks and jobs they might do together.

Sherrat and Peter (2002) encourage incorporating existing knowledge and drawing upon practical skills in tasks that are directly within the experience and capabilities of performers with disabilities. To draw on existing knowledge, some aspects of the performance were a direct influence of physical therapies or activities. For example, the performance began and ended with songs routinely used in the morning communications program. The astronauts training consisted of the karate-class warm-up routine and physical therapy stretches. The entire company led the audience in the Nigerian national anthem, a skill perfected through daily assemblies, before the astronauts blasted off. Task-based scenes, such as baking, were built upon previous practices. Skills and routines already prevalent in the daily lives of the group were utilized.

In devising scenes that were completely new to the group, the most effective method entailed an ensemble-based approach, wherein "there are no stars. But rather a group of people sharing and supporting one another [...] wanting to bring out the best in each other" (Lipkin & Fox 2001:124). At times working with the entire group became overwhelming or

distracting, so the performers were divided into teams: the astronauts, the space creatures, and the solar system. Each team had three to five performers from the unit, and one assistant/teacher/therapist. This allowed “structured active participation” (Jackson & Vine, 2013: 5) in rehearsals by modifying one-on-one participation, peer-mentoring, and focusing the tasks needed for each team to practice. Kempe conveys that, “[s]ometimes the whole group might be involved together. At other times they may be working in smaller groupings or even on their own” (Kempe 1996:35). The nature of the scene development reflected the juxtaposition of large ensemble, smaller groups and individuals.

To focus on the talents and abilities of each individual performer (Tomlinson, 1982; Kempe, 2010; Bailey, 2010; McCurrach & Darnley, 1999) and emphasize “possibilities, rather than limitations” (Lipkin & Fox, 2001, 129), each new idea for a scene was conducted in a variety of ways. Some participants benefited from individual devising, where they had the opportunity to lead/teach the group the resulting scene, while others worked best with peer-

mentoring (Grady, 2000:148). Ruki memorized narration lines and established choreography for multiple songs, often leading from the front of the stage. Shola occasionally grappled with mobility and vocal projection but was constantly cueing



FIGURE 76 A SCENE THAT BEGIN AS TASK-BASED BAKING SKILLS

others off-stage, setting props, and keeping the group focused. As an astronaut, she taught the space-creatures how to paint. Osegue, a favorite dancer in the group, functioned as a ‘hype-man,’ with his energy and dance moves immediately boosting the energy of the ensemble. Alone he often became distracted and missed cues, but when paired with Kunle as space creatures he led a pseudo-improvised dance party wherein others would mirror his

moves. Femi conducted a baking lesson with Kunle and Shola assisted Osegue in painting. The talents and skills of both individuals and the entire ensemble were woven together to accomplish the objectives, and “the emphasis here is on what *is* possible, rather than limitations” (Lipkin & Fox, 2001:129).

In addition to partnering participants, rehearsals and performance techniques were constantly modified and accommodated. Visual aids such as color-coded spike tape on the floor; large, printed scene-breakdowns posted on walls; cue-cards; and handheld scripts in



FIGURE 77 OSEGUE LEADING DANCE IN CHARACTER

various formats (verbatim written, easy-read, pictures, or a combination) were applied. Participants often verbally cued or mirrored each other (“Edem, move to your spot!”), side-coaching in character (“Great Dancing Osegue! Keep it up!” or “Come on team, let’s go back to earth!”), and responded to auditory cues from music, sound effects, and narration. The most significant accommodation was the addition of props, costumes, and an ‘official’ sound system; these ‘professional’ attributes encouraged participants and instilled feelings of importance to the performance.

Although multiple participants practiced and memorized dialogue and narration lines, devising ultimately led to a simplified narrated performance. Concerns of audibility and nerves/excitement led to prerecording participants reading narration lines, and then playing them on a speaker mixed with sound cues. Bailey ascertains that, “[m]usic and dance can add variety and depth to an improvisational show as well as alternative avenues for expression for the actors” (2010:312). The use of prerecorded narration juxtaposed with pop music and sound tracking enhanced the performance by allowing performers to focus on engagement

and expression, rather than on the structure of the performance (see the draft script in *Figure 78*). Sound and song also modified participation by providing memory aids and auditory cues. The draft script served as a guide for performers who preferred written prompts or for participants who asked for a hard-copy to practice lyrics, as well as to catch-up interns who were new to a rehearsal. At first glance, the printed script would suggest that the performance is mostly song or narration; however, in the performance these are merely cues enhanced with image theatre tableaux, dance, physical-based nonverbal scenework, and semi-rehearsed improvisation. The music indicated in the draft script is more representative of framework and cues.

<p>Parent's Forum Drama- 6 July 2016</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>All (Singing)</i> Nigeria is a promise land, Africa is our own continent, We are marching on to take our place Above all the nations in the world.</p> <p><b>ASTRONAUTS:</b> A long long time ago in a galaxy far far away the country of Nigeria began it's first Space Programme to reach for the stars and accomplish anything they set their mind to...</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>All (singing)</i> Arise oh compatriots Nigerians call obey To serve our father's land With love and strength and faith The labour of our heroes past shall never be in vain To serve with heart and might The one nation bound in freedom Peace and unity</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Training music begins, Astronauts start doing exercises)</i></p> <p><b>Narrator:</b> These Nigerian Astronauts went through vigorous training sessions...</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(4 Jumping Jacks—Stretch—arms—punch—kick—2 times)</i></p> <p><b>Narrator:</b> Until at last they were prepared for their first big trip to space. 5 Brave Astronauts were chosen to make the first trip.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(ALL ASTRONAUTS SING WITH MUSIC)</i></p> <p>Countdown to blastoff. <i>(marching)</i> Countdown to blastoff. Mission Control to astronauts <i>(hand to ear listening left to right)</i> Space Travel—check Astronauts Ready—check <i>(thumbs up)</i> #1. Space Helmet On #2. Space boots on #3. Safety gloves on #4. Space belts locked #5 Space icecream taste- mmmm- chocolate. Astronauts take one big step to the space craft elevator <i>(big step)</i> Going Up <i>(pointing up &amp; bouncing on knees)</i> Level 1-2-3-4-5 We're going higher and higher <i>(pointing up)</i> 6-7-8-9-10 We made it to the top! <i>(looking around/nodding)</i> Now sit down in your space craft chair. Lock in and ready for countdown to blastoff 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 BLASTOFF!</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Astronauts all blast off and dance, STARWARS music &amp; 3 "star" people bring out planets, dance)</i></p> <p><b>Narrator:</b> After travelling through space for many days, the brave Nigerian astronauts discovered and landed on a brand new planet, which they decided to call it the</p> <p><b>ALL ASTRONAUTS:</b> "Planet of Inclusion"</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(actor holds up a large planet labeled inclusion, astronauts mime landing and exiting of space ship, start to look around/Investigate the new planet of inclusion)</i></p> <p><b>Narrator:</b> The Brave astronauts started to explore the planet.... until they happened upon something they had never seen before mysterious space creatures!</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Space creatures enter- both groups are afraid of each other)</i></p> <p><b>Narrator:</b> At first the Brave Nigerian Astronauts were afraid of the space creatures because they were different from them, and they didn't know how to talk or interact with them.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Space creatures &amp; astronauts shake hands)</i></p> <p><b>Narrator:</b> But when the Brave Astronauts began to get to know the space creatures and showed COMPASSION, they realized that they might look and act different but they all enjoyed some of the same things.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Astronauts show Space creatures how to bake, bead and do art)</i></p> <p><b>Narrator:</b> Soon the Astronauts and space creatures enjoyed a big party and were working together making everyone feel included on the Planet of Inclusion.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Space creatures &amp; Astronauts dance to Space Jam)</i></p> <p><b>Narrator:</b> After many many days of exploring and working with the Space Creatures on the planet of Inclusion, the brave Nigerian Astronauts needed to head back home. So they invited the space creatures to come with them, and spread the joy and success of Inclusion all over the world, space and beyond.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>All (singing &amp; holding hands)</i> We are special, special, Everyone is Special Everyone is special in their own way We are special, special Everyone is special. Everyone is special. Everyone is special in their own way</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>THE END</i></p>
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FIGURE 78 DRAFT PRINTED SCRIPT FOR PLANET OF INCLUSION PARTICIPANTS

For example, Jack Hartmaan's *Countdown to Blast Off* provided auditory cues for blast-off preparation: "Mission control to astronauts, space travel check. Number 1: Space helmets on. Number 2: Space boots on..." (1998). The astronauts were prompted with the preparation steps by the music, which allowed them to engage fully with the choreographed and improvised interactions. Similarly, *Space Jam* by Quad City DJs (1996) provided dialogue and

sound cues for a chase scene where the space creatures and astronauts first meet, and variations on the Star Wars theme song were used as cues for space travel. Trowsdale and Hayhow refer to this use of pre-recorded music as a “main structuring process for the narrative and helps to keep a focus upon bodily and emotional response, create atmosphere and sustain engagement from all present” (2015:1025). Music was critical to the performance and participation within the process, so much so that days without an available speaker often resulted in frustration or lack of engagement. Once the use of music was consistently obtained, the entire group (as well as most of the school’s younger units) would gather near the rehearsal space to participate. Corbett refers to the addition of music within inclusive processes’ capacity to “potentially enhance motivation to participate in the group activities thereby increasing the opportunity to learn from social experiences” (2015:668).



FIGURE 79 SPACE CREATURES ENTER IN PLANET OF INCLUSION PERFORMANCE

*“BUT WHEN THE BRAVE ASTRONAUTS BEGAN TO GET TO KNOW THE SPACE CREATURES AND SHOWED COMPASSION, THEY REALIZED THAT THEY MIGHT LOOK AND ACT DIFFERENT BUT THEY ALL ENJOYED SOME OF THE SAME THINGS.” (THE PLANET OF INCLUSION, 2016)*

Increased numbers of engaged participants resulted in support from multiple aspects of the CDC; as the Parent’s Summit date neared, each unit contributed to the process. Every costume, set piece, and prop was created by members of the company through a variety of

vocational and educational exercises. The costumes were made through applying task analysis to sewing in vocational classes. The space creatures were decorated with extra eyes, ears, and mouths through a task analysis, where body parts for the preschool unit were identified and shapes were cut out with the school unit; subsequently, they were creatively situated on the space creature costumes through a series of games and exercises with both units. Additional music and sound effects were created by company members working on piano and percussion tasks, as well as favorite songs learned or created in all three units. *The Planet of Inclusion* became a collaborative 15-minute performance, supported through recorded narration, a medley of skills and talents, and mix of catchy music that created an inclusive opportunity for the performers and audience together.



FIGURE 80 PLANET OF INCLUSION

The morning of the summit, the group rehearsed at the Centre before heading to the community center. It was assumed that, in typical Nigerian custom, the summit would start much later than anticipated. Upon arrival, some sponsors had already begun to set up, leaving the group without time to practice on the actual stage, which with three large cinderblock steps and quite a shallower depth than expected proved to be an accessibility issue. In lieu of the entire cast rehearsing, each participant walked through their spacing one-by-one and helped mark where they needed their scenes to take place. With people arriving,

a series of banners and the chaos surrounding the community center, it was unclear whether more than a few of the participants would focus or be able to perform. Once costumes were on and the entry music began, all concerns dissipated. Despite a few spacing problems and timing/acoustic issues due to unexpected audience participation and responses, the performance was a success. Everyone had contributed their roles with energy, focus, and enthusiasm, and the performers were celebrated as the community center broke into cheers after the performance.

### Journal, July 2016 (Continued)

*In the commotion following the first performance, Ruki, her mother, and 2 brothers rushed up to me. Her mother, vexed with no smile, asked: “Ah-ah- what juju [witchcraft] did you use on my child?” Her brothers quickly explained that their sister never spoke at home. She sat quietly, alone, and didn’t participate in family events. We turned to Ruki—who as one of the astronauts sang loudly with pride and was instrumental in leading the group throughout the process—and I explained how her daughter is one of the best teachers in the class, an amazingly passionate performer, and how grateful they are that she shares her talents and abilities. “Ah-ah, no, my daughter has no speech,” her mother replied angrily. Ruki was the only astronaut to articulate each of the narration lines; she truly shined on stage. I ask her to tell her family all the work we have been doing. There is only silence and nodding of her head. It appears that the brave, beautiful astronaut is no longer verbal and is obviously uncomfortable with the present conversation (as described in Jaskolski, 2017).*



FIGURE 81 RUKI SINGING PROUDLY

Ruki represents the constant change in appearance and personality of the archetypical shapeshifter, bringing tension, doubt, and transformation to the journey (Campbell, 2004, Pearson, 2015). The “aesthetic illusion” the performers created in *The Planet of Inclusion* formed “a symbolic or metaphoric

*“AT HOME SHE IS VERY QUIET, SHE REFUSES TO TALK OR EXPRESS HERSELF [...] I WAS VERY SURPRISED TO SEE HER THAT BUBBLY. WHEN SHE WAS SINGING AND DANCING, NEVER SEEN HER DO THAT AT HOME. SHE TRIED HER BEST.”*

(REFLECTION FROM RUKI’S MOM)

world where the power to change or reconstruct events belongs to the group” (Cattanach, 1996:2). Unfortunately, the power to change, or as Campbell explains *momentary glimpses of the wonderful land*, were not yet realized in her community. Some parents (such as Ruki’s mom) responded with concern at first, while others correlated with Corbett’s findings that “the uplifting experience of witnessing their child’s success [modified] their perspective and thereby [dampened] parental stress” (2013). Post-performance questionnaires provided to parents, participants, and staff reflected a variety of responses regarding the performance (2016 personal communication, July):

**Maureen:** Initially the play looked like mission impossible because of all the challenges [...] but when the rehearsals started we saw that we were wrong after all. The students were keying in and adapting to the changes fast without difficulty.

**Segun:** The success of this drama has further highlighted the potentials in the students if properly harnessed!

**Pious:** I will attempt more drama because most are excited and derive joy in it and it empowered a sense of belonging and confidence.

**TiTi:** It created rooms to speak and communicate with each other, the differences from the beginning until the end is that they keep rehearsing until they master it.

**Kola:** People with disability too could do what normal people do.

**Fidelia:** Nice to see all the children working together.

**Femi:** I like when the people clapped.

A majority of the participants and staff returned the questionnaires, but only two parents did; furthermore, it was suggested that most of the families neglected to attend the summit, being unaccustomed to or unaware of the effort put forth by the group. The lack of parental

support could be attributed to stigma, a “statement about personal and social responsibility. People irrationally feel that, by separating themselves from stigmatized individuals, they may reduce their own risk of acquiring the stigma” (Coleman, 2006:150). Therapist Maureen Chubamachie explains Nigerian stigma surrounding disability as follows: “To the elite, it is biological, genetic, but to the common Nigerians, the masses, it is a curse, it is evil, it is punishment for the sins of the parents or ancestors. It is believed that they bring bad luck” (personal communication, 2016). The prevalence of the moral model, of sin and curses, justifies why families were not in attendance at the performance. It substantiates why the vast spectrum of disabilities in Nigeria are kept hidden, segregated, often abused, and in extreme cases abandoned or killed (Etieyibo & Omiegbe, 2013; Baba-Ochankpa 2010; McVeigh, 2007).



FIGURE 82 SPACE CREATURES IN ANKARA FABRICS

The CDC’s endeavor to challenge the moral model with the therapies and medicinal influences of the medical model was indicated throughout the summit. Doctors and therapists recommended cures in the forms of various ‘therapies’, homeopathic remedies, and medical treatments. *The Planet of Inclusion* initially grew out of drama interventions based on medical model task-based assessments. Inspired by inclusive workshops, the devising process and performance moved away from task-based dramatherapy and toward the social/cultural ideas of creative expression, community, and individuality. This transformed the medical task-based drama into a performance displaying a message about the social/cultural models of disability. Indirectly, the social model was demonstrated onstage by the inclusive community of staff, interns, and participants performing together, as well as the plot of astronauts/space creatures working together to lessen barriers (see the draft script in *Figure 78*).

Yet, the responses to and reflections on the performance indicated a need to readdress ways to urge the community to defy the moral model of sin/evil/curses. Without ‘therapy’ as an explanation, how else could Ruki have magically transformed onstage? Ruki’s mother’s reaction illuminates the necessity for “people with disabilities [to] have meaningful social roles and responsibilities in their families and communities, and [be] treated as equal members of society [...] improving social participation and improving relationships” (Lemmi, Kuper, Blanchett et al, 2016). Future performances would need to offer the outside community a means of reconstructing their own view of disability, to create what Leighton

refers to as “a fuller ‘personhood’ than [performers with disabilities] are accorded outside the arts project” (2009:108). Each performer would thus need more opportunities to demonstrate their skills.



FIGURE 83 PROPS AND COSTUMES CREATED THROUGH EXERCISES

In the initial performance, the three ‘galaxy’ performers were unintentionally afforded less opportunity than the other groups. Individually, each of the three performers had a lot to offer during the process, but these contributions were minimized in the final performance. This led to a parent (and CDC staff member) getting up on stage during the baking scene and instructing her son (who was not involved in the scene) to go and show the audience he can bake. Retrospectively, the galaxy’s participation (or lack thereof) created an unintentional image of performers “being walked or wheeled through their paces, supposedly acting out a story to an invited audience [...] when maybe they [had] little or no understanding or engagement with what they are doing” (Peter in Kempe, 1996: 56). A longer performance with more attention to each of the performer’s specific skills could alleviate this problem.



FIGURE 84 A MOTHER ENCOURAGING HER SON DURING THE PERFORMANCE

The cultural efficacy of the performance and a community of inclusion with the audience needed to be strengthened. Perhaps without an explanation of the Houston trip, the community did not connect the astronaut plotline to the experiences of the group. Multiple aspects were related to the Nigerian context including costumes, aesthetics, and audience engagement. Their performative nature was successful, but some aspects such as the recorded narration, although devised from the company, lost a specifically Nigerian tone. It was not clear to the audience that this was indeed the voices of the performers, and thus their story. The cultural efficacy would need to be improved in future performances, with more specific voices from individuals, a stronger relationship to Nigerian culture/communities, and a deepened display of skills, abilities, and personalities. Moreover, the audience's unexpected participation in singing as well as cheering must be considered and adapted into a strength. The parents' summit performance was a positive learning opportunity and allowed the group to perform successfully for an audience. A budding inclusive community of participants, interns, and staff was growing, and beginning to entice peers and family members. The discovery of a planet of inclusion was on the horizon, but in order to discover it, the group would need to follow the paths of others in the field of inclusive theatre, to find allies on the journey.

## CHAPTER 6: ALLIES, ENEMIES, AND ACCOMPLICES

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*“FURTHERMORE, WE HAVE NOT EVEN TO RISK THE ADVENTURE ALONE; FOR THE HEROES OF ALL TIME HAVE GONE BEFORE US; THE LABYRINTH IS THOROUGHLY KNOWN; WE HAVE ONLY TO FOLLOW THE THREAD OF THE HEROPATH.” (CAMPBELL, 2004:23)*



FIGURE 85 EDINBURGH FRINGE 2018

A hero is never alone on the journey, as Campbell states. They venture in the presence of the heroes that have gone before. In terms of growth or development, these previous heropaths can provide guidance throughout the journey. Along the path, the “heroes of all time” encounter various archetypes (such as wizards, rebels, or explorers, both allies and enemies) that support or challenge the hero in their path

toward transformation (Campbell, 2004; Mayes, 1997; Vogler, 1998). These archetypes often serve as allies who “lighten the load” or provide a supportive network that develops the hero’s skills. Alternatively, they can be a shadow figure or foil character who represents adverse aspects of the journey, personifies dark inner struggles or serves as a warning of failed transformation (Vogler, 1998).

Within the field of inclusive theatre, the work of practitioners and performances that have gone before assists the research. The absence of documented professional (or community) inclusive theatre companies within an African context necessitates a detour to the crowded cobblestone streets of Edinburgh during the world’s largest theatre festival: the Edinburgh Fringe. The rainy Scottish capital built on steep hills, full of ancient narrow passages, creeping stairways, and winding stone streets is hard to access at the best of times. Add the crowds

and thousands of pop-up venues in attics, basements, living rooms, and even elevator lifts, and the festival is far from accessible or welcoming to people with disabilities.

*“BECOMING AN ALLY IS A STAGED SELF-REFLEXIVE PROCESS, WHICH DEVELOPS FROM SEEING AN UNFAIR SITUATION, TO SEEING THE SYSTEMIC NATURE OF THAT UNFAIRNESS, TO WORKING WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES TO CHANGE THE SYSTEM” (HADLEY, 2020:81)*

Hadley defines the concept of an ally in inclusive theatre as a “director, facilitator, or collaborator who supports a disabled artist’s efforts to participate or pursue employment in the arts” (2020: 179). The best allies work in partnership with disabled artists to combat obstacles in access, produce specific changes, and “support disabled people on their own terms, without speaking for them, over- or under-servicing them, or constraining their capacity to speak for themselves” (2020:185). Much like the allies in the heroic journey, allies within the industry support the growth and transformation of the field. Allyship (Hadley, 2020; 2019; Alick, 2019; Ostrove, Kornfield & Ibrahim, 2019) is a self-reflexive process that considers privilege, active listening, and vulnerability to learn through trial and error. It reiterates the premises of progressive pedagogy (Giroux, 1997; McLaren, 2009; hooks, 1994; Freire, 2005) by acknowledging unfair situations, realizing the systemic, structural, or cultural implications that create them, and then actively and equitably working alongside people with disabilities to create inclusive communities. If allies work to support the heroic journey, then enemies work against it, stifling transformation.

## ACKNOWLEDGING THE ENEMIES

The Edinburgh Fringe is a strong representation of the state of inclusion and accessibility in the theatre world, both professional and amateur. The most intransigent enemy, and the most challenging obstacle, is inaccessibility (in terms of both entrance and attitudes). A systematic quantitative evaluation of the 2019 Fringe program (Edinburgh Fringe Festival Society, 2019) reveals the problem of

inaccessibility within the Fringe and the field of theatre as a whole. Of the 4,342 shows in 2019 (covering theatre, dance, circus, physical theatre, musicals and opera, cabaret and variety, children’s shows, free shows, events and spoken word, involving more than 50,000 performances), 60% were accessible to wheelchair users, and 42% of venues (but only 28% of shows) offered full accessibility (parking, toilets, etc.) Other accommodations for audiences with disabilities included a paltry

<b>Inclusion and Accessibility at 2019 Edinburgh Fringe</b>		
<b>TOTAL SHOWS: 4,342 (50,000+ performances)</b>		
Wheelchair accessible	2,608	≈ 60%
Full access (i.e. venues with wheelchair toilets/facilities)	1,231	≈ 28%
Audio Enhancement/Loop	506	≈ 11%
Closed Captioning	89	≈ 2%
Relaxed Performance	84	≈ 1.9%
Sign Language Interpreted	69	≈ 1.5%
Audio description	13	≈.29% (>1%)
Inclusive Performance	5	≈.11% (>1%)
Inclusive Cast	1	≈.024% (>1%)

FIGURE 86 QUANTITATIVE DATA FOR INCLUSION IN EDINBURGH FRINGE 2019

11% of shows offering audio enhancement, 2% featuring closed captioning, 1.5% offering a BSL-interpreted performance, 1.9% providing a relaxed performance, and less than 1% of shows featuring audio description (.29%). Of the 4,342 shows, only five (a minuscule.11%) described themselves as inclusive, and of those five, only one (.024%) had an inclusive cast (see *Figure 86 & 87*). The Fringe, and the theatre industry in general, needs to address logistical access issues such as ramps, interpreters, or venues, and ideological such as training, production, representation (Gearty, 2019; Hadley, 2020; Sandahl, 2005; Johnston, 2016; Senyszn, 2019; Moses, 2016).

Recently, there has been an increase in accessibility, with a campaign for more accessible venues in 2015, the addition of access ticket services in 2016, sensory packs and changing

*“EDINBURGH FRINGE IS NOTORIOUSLY BAD FOR PHYSICAL ACCESS. I THINK OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS VENUES HAVE REALLY STARTED TO ADDRESS THIS, BUT THERE NEEDS TO BE MORE TO BE ABLE TO ACCESS THE FRINGE.”*  
(GARLAND, QTD. IN MOSES, 2016)

toilet provisions in 2017, and accommodations for personal assistant ticketing in 2018. Accommodations (interpreters, captions, audio description) have seen a steady rise in larger venues (Thom, 2016; Moses, 2016, Gearty, 2019).

In terms of performance, the Edinburgh Fringe is a microcosm for theatre as a whole. It highlights cutting edge new works and classics, professional and amateur, from around the world. It is a testing ground, the forefront of what's next, a leading indicator of what's to come, and an inspiration for artists and audiences alike. However, in 2019, there was just one inclusive theatre cast and only five inclusive performances (with dance accounting for four of them). In 2018, three renowned inclusive theatre companies (Mind the Gap, Birds of Paradise, and Hijinx) presented large-budget professional, inclusive cast shows, and in 2017 both Hijinx and Frozen Light staged inclusive performances. Inaccessibility issues are attributed to various factors, including cost, legality, expectations of professional theatre, and exclusionary environments. Nevertheless, in Edinburgh Fringe Festivals between 2016 and 2019 inclusive theatre accounted for less than 1% of performances. According to the World Health Organization (2020), 15–20% of the world's population lives with some form of disability. Statistically, theatre should reflect that 15%. The disability community remains a largely untapped artist-base, audience-base, and donor-base (Adkins & Rowe, 2019).

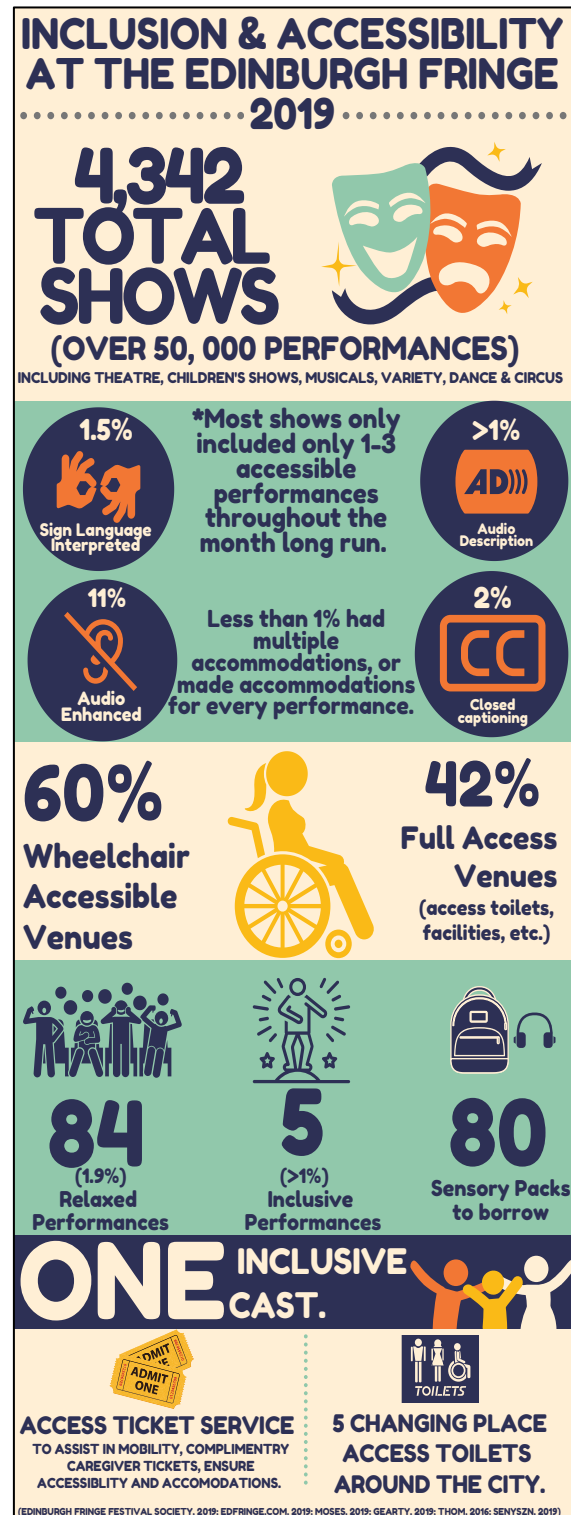


FIGURE 87 PICTOGRAPH FOR QUANTITATIVE DATA ON ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION

*“WE NEED TO BECOME A PRESENCE IN THE THEATRE COMMENSURATE WITH OUR PERCENTAGE IN SOCIETY. THE AUTHENTICITY OF DISABILITY CULTURE IS UNSUPPORTED WHEN MERELY ONE DISABLED PERSON IS IN THE ROOM.” (NELSON & MAAG, 2019)*

## REVIEWING INCLUSIVE WORK

The streets are lined with posters, flyers, and reviews rated from five stars to none, with a performer at every corner begging for audiences, bragging about sold-out shows, and spreading critiques through word-of-mouth. Another obstacle to inclusion is the ethical dilemma involved in reviewing the work of inclusive theatre. Like enemies on the journey, a review, good or bad, challenges a performance, often bringing out the best or making the performers confront dark inner struggles. Inclusive artists advocate for accepting the artistic merit of their work rather than viewing it as “some kind of charity, not artistically interesting or some kind of social pornography where the audience come to watch other people’s misfortune and personal tragedy” (Saur & Johansen, 2013:247). This



FIGURE 88 REVIEWS ON POSTERS AROUND EDINBURGH

is not to dismiss altruistic or inspirational aspects of inclusive performances or examples of disability talent on stage. Specifically, within community or amateur performances, the value of engagement and creating inclusive communities may sometimes outweigh the artistic contributions.

The differing standards regarding professional versus community or amateur work contributes to the ethical dilemma. The main difference between the two is that professionals get paid while community amateurs do not, which contributes to disparities in budgets, skill level, and formal training. Community or amateur theatre is usually comprised of students and volunteers who work collectively for the love of theatre. Due to the voluntary

nature of their efforts, they tend to be more open to diverse participation. Their strengths are often heart, enthusiasm, and passion for performance. In contrast, professional theatres pay for the time and talents of trained or qualified actors, directors, designers, crew, and management. Both types of theatre can show professionalism or a lack thereof, and there are extraordinary amateur performances, terrible professional performances, and everything in between.

*“WE CALL IT INCLUSIVE THEATRE BECAUSE IT MAKES MUCH OF THE SKILLS AND RAW TALENT OF PEOPLE WHO OFTEN GET OVERLOOKED IN TODAY’S WORLD AND GIVES THEM A PLATFORM TO MAKE AND PERFORM STUNNING THEATRE ALONGSIDE ACTORS WHO DON’T HAVE DISABILITIES.”*  
(HIJINX.ORG.UK, 2018)

Inclusive theatre almost always operates at a grassroots or community level initially (Conroy, 2009; Hargrave, 2015; Elkin, 2015). This leaves the work vulnerable to “cutting of strategic national funding” (Conroy, 2009:5), as was the case in 2018 when the national arts agency Creative Scotland eradicated more than £1 million in funding from three major inclusive arts companies (Miller, 2018). Funding reflects ideological barriers to inclusion in the form of the exclusion of disabled artists from training, casting, programming, and production, or it asserts that inclusion is risky, costly, or otherwise too difficult (Hadley, 2020; Sandahl, 2005; Johnston, 2012; Senyszn, 2019). This casts inclusive performances in a “less than” or charity category, reflecting the social model of disability that places societal and cultural barriers as the disabling factors for inclusion.

The dilemma posed by the “charity or social pornography” view of professional or community inclusive performances is that it exploits or objectifies disability for the benefit of non-disabled people (Young, 2014; Liebowitz, 2015; Mitchell, 2017; Pulrang, 2019). It also negates “the critical appraisal of the work *as art*; rather it becomes an extension of an ‘aura’ of social benevolence in which the aesthetic effects are secondary” (Hargrave, 2015:10). This denies the established expertise, aesthetics, and innovations, potentially stifling future transformation or success. Controversially, some inclusive companies campaign to be recognized as professional but do not show professionalism in training their performers or

devising their works. This situation reinforces a charity impression that, consequently, cannot be critiqued by professional standards, which often leads to:

- inflated reviews wherein companies are unjustly praised for subpar work
- irrelevant critiques wherein reviews lack any substance, in spite of the aesthetically innovative work produced, to avoid accusations of bullying people with disabilities
- a complete lack of reviews, to avoid saying the wrong thing for fear of seeming ignorant, offensive, or patronizing
- a “good considering” review that presupposes charity, therapy, or an otherwise nonprofessional production (Kempe, 2001; Hargrave, 2015; Koppers, 2014; Johnston, 2012; Hadley, 2020).

## ESTABLISHING A CRITERION TO ASSESS INCLUSIVE WORK

Frazer (2008) attempted to reconcile these inconsistencies in “normative and frequently oblique standards of excellence” by emphasizing authenticity, engagement, and transformation. Hargrave proposed a “poetics of theatres of learning disability” (2016:15) as a framework to criticize inclusive work, aligned with a dramaturgy of “authentic theatre of disability” (Palmer &

Hayhow, 2008; Hargrave, 2015). These complementary frameworks of critique can be synthesized with Therborn’s dimensions of sociocultural inclusion (see *Figure 89*) to create a criterion for assessing “inclusion” within an inclusive theatre performance. The performances are accepted



FIGURE 89 DEFINITION OF INCLUSION AS OUTLINED IN PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

as art, and the critique accentuates the inclusive aspects that work to transform the current systems. The synthesized criterion (Frazee, 2008; Palmer & Hayhow, 2008; Hargrave, 2015; Therborn, 2007; Johnston, 2012) to assess inclusive work can be articulated as accessibility, authenticity, engagement, transformation, and the aesthetics of inclusion. These are defined as follows:

- **Accessibility:** this means the performance is customized to welcome disability on various levels, including accommodations and modifications for performers and audience members. This includes admittance to the space, the resources to participate, and accommodations and modifications that ensure “the right to experience the thrill of live performance” (edfringe.com, 2019). Accessibility also ensures the right to act and considers needs as dimensions of sociocultural inclusion (Therborn, 2007).
- **Authenticity:** this implies a truthful, genuine display of the abilities of performers with disabilities. It ensures that everyone contributes. The attributes, contributions, and individuality of each performer are valued, not objectified, sensationalized, or forced into narratives of ableism or normalcy. Authenticity is the “essence of being truly in the moment” (Palmer & Hayhow, 2008:41), wherein the personalities of performers “inform and shine through any given performance” (Palmer & Hayhow, 2008:121). Disabilities are not ignored or viewed as obstacles to participation, nor are they the sole attribute of the performer. Authenticity values a “presentation of self rather than [manipulating] the actor as a representational agent” in “faux-normalcy” or inauthentic “disability inspiration” narrative (Hargrave, 2015:227). Authenticity contributes to the sociocultural dimensions of visibility, rights of identity and participation in cultural life (Therborn, 2007).
- **Engagement:** this refers to mutually beneficial relationships created within rehearsals, on stage, and with the audience. Engaged performances model ways in which people of all abilities can work together and, ideally, allow the audience to be part of an inclusive community. This does not mean that the work has to address inclusion or

disability explicitly, but that the performance of the work should involve exposure to and awareness of inclusive environments that involve the audience in a culture of inclusion either directly or indirectly. Engagement guarantees Therborn's dimension of access to social interactions (2007:5).

- **Transformation:** this offers opportunities to improve skills, develop ideas, or reevaluate expectations, artistically or for society in general. It is about changing the systems rather than forcing people into them. It occurs through “shifting knowledge and perception, changing experiences from oppression to emancipation” (Frazee, 2008). This roots the work in “cultural resistance, not cultural rapprochement” (Palmer & Hayhow, 2008). At the personal level, transformation can “develop the actor's own skill base” (Hargrave, 2015), leading to potential transformation in the cultural, occupational, social, and artistic realms. On the aesthetic level, it works by “speaking back to power, pushing the boundaries of existing forms and exploring new forms, [...] challenging and stretching mainstream notions of grace, beauty, lyricism, or craftsmanship” (Frazee, quoted in Johnston, 2012:122). Transformation generates theatre that values diversity and defies cultural barriers while altering the conventional expectations of what theatre “should be.”
- **Aesthetics:** are how the work communicates meaning to challenge existing systems and expectations of performance. It is the transformation of theatrical structure, themes, goals, and conventions to create inclusion rather than “fitting people into” preexisting systems. This approach may include a tendency for nonverbal virtuosity; montage or juxtaposition; exploring the full range of artistic forms (song, dance, art, text, image, etc.); creating surreal, abstract, or figurative worlds to defy the real; and a balance of spontaneity and control to highlight authentic skills, talents, and understandings (Palmer & Hayhow, 2008; Hargrave, 2015). Inclusive aesthetics highlight authenticity, engaged relationships, and accessibility that may contradict conventional “polished” performances. The aesthetics of inclusion determine the dimension of visibility within transformations.

## REVIEWING THE WORK OF OTHERS IN THE FIELD

This section uses Edinburgh Fringe reviews to critique and analyze the work of others in the field of inclusive theatre. The reviews of seven self-described inclusive performances (three amateur and four professional) from 2017–2019 establish previous paths of heroes. Each performance in these reviews was listed and advertised as an inclusive (referring specifically to disability) performance within the Fringe program. In addition to attending a ticketed performance, the reviewers interviewed company members, audience members, and other reviewers to gain an understanding of the processes and companies involved.

As allies, these inclusive theatre companies provide a network of support, define and strengthen inclusive performance practices, and join the battle against systemic barriers. As shadows or “foil characters,” they embody the darker struggles of inclusive work and serve as a warning of obstacles that prevent transformation. To accommodate for works that might vary due to different connections to disability experience, artistic practice, confidence, and access to resources, personal taste and artistic preference for what constitutes “good theatre” are avoided. The focus is on aspects of inclusion within the performances or how the performance works to transform systemic barriers in theatre and society. These reviews are an evaluation of “allyship” (Hadley, 2020) within the inclusive performances, establishing the work of others in the field as allies in the journey. The newspaper review format accommodates a quick-glance description of the performances and organizes the key elements of theatre within each. This allows a richer analysis and discussion. The established criterion of inclusive performance (as detailed above) is abstracted into a 5-Star (★★★★★) system, which is the system adopted in Edinburgh Fringe reviews.

★ **Accessibility**    ★ **Authenticity**    ★ **Engagement**    ★ **Transformation**    ★ **Aesthetics**

### Unwritten ★★★★★

*Authentic. Transformative. Attempts Access.*

Bella Freak & Disability History Scotland  
Written & Performed by Sasha Callaghan, Stuart  
Pyper and David Nicol.  
The Space at Surgeon's Hall. August 4-12, 2017

This “uncensored” verbatim Theatre piece rewrites the secret histories of Scottish education systems prior to mandated inclusion acts. The writer/performers Sasha Callaghan, David Nicol and Stuart Pyper share memoirs of growing up “special,” which to them really meant “second class and shite” (*Unwritten*, 2017). Upon entering the small venue, all three performers are visible on a shallow blank stage. They greet people they know and prepare to begin. One at a time, each speaks or (ironically) reads from a stationary position. Callaghan shares her eloquently written journals, and alludes to institutionalization, speaking with the dead, and disappearing. Her words are interspersed with monotone song lyrics and teenage angst. The “boy without superpowers,” David Nicol, uses sharp wit and dry inflection as he vindicates years of bullying with a late-in-life Asperger’s diagnosis. He laments his lack of “Asperger’s superpowers” other than a plethora of Dr. Who knowledge, and a less than ideal social life. Stuart Pyper, wearing his punk/goth attire, mohawk, and souped-up motorized wheelchair narrates a more positive childhood experience. He recalls races with classmates down hallways and skirting disciplinary action at an integrated but inaccessible mainstream school. Each is passionate and authentic in their storytelling, but the pacing of the delivery and the bare theatrical conventions verge on a rehearsed reading or open-mic session. The performers all cite training in creative-writing but little previous involvement in performance. There is an absence of theatricality or artistic direction in staging, design, lighting, sound, costume, or tempo, with the exception of one moment when the lights turn purple as several lines are repeated and overlapped.

Bella Freak’s core aim is “working towards creating a gold standard for Scotland’s arts festivals to be more fully inclusive” (personal communication, August 2017). The performance includes wheelchair accessibility, a projection/caption of the script onto a screen to the right of the stage and one night with an unintegrated sign language interpreter. Unfortunately, the space is poorly laid out. The captions were barely readable, and the interpreter’s position forced users to either watch her or the performers, but not both. In addition, audio-described shows were advertised but cancelled due to funding, as were additional signed performances. The stories are enlightening, but the work lacks access to resources for accessibility and Theatre-making. The forced cancellation of many accessible accommodations, and lack of support, appears to maintain Bella Freak’s status as “second class.” Their authenticity and stories are not “shite,” and the example being set for full inclusivity in the arts is not ideal.



Figure 91 Unwritten Flyer



Figure 90 *The Flop*, Hijinx Theatre; [www.hijinx.org](http://www.hijinx.org) photo by Jonathan Dunn for Hijinx.org

### The Flop ★★★★★

*Accessible. Authentic. Engaged. Transformative. Aesthetical.*

Hijinx in collaboration with Spymonkey. Devised by the company.  
Summerhall, August 3-26, 2018

“Paris. 1657ish. Impotence is illegal. When a member of the aristocracy is accused of being less than upstanding, his wounded pride leads him towards a monumental and very public flop. But can a cast of total idiots save a show about a flop... from being one?” (*The Flop*, 2018)

Hijinx is not only the company responsible for this musical farce about sexual impotence but also an ideal description of the performance itself: pure hijinks, utter buffoonery, and complete shenanigans. Chaos ensues in this montaged narrative of the Marquis de Langey’s impotence trial, devised in a surreal, episodic, and multimodal manner as scenes jump between French bedrooms and courtrooms, infiltrated with flamenco dancing, tuba playing, a robot, a reoccurring badger suit, and a lot of banana eating. This inclusive collaboration unites three professional actors with learning disabilities from the Hijinx academies and three physical comedy clowning “masters of daftness” from Spymonkey ([spymonkey.co.uk](http://spymonkey.co.uk), 2018). It is a constantly surprising, self-referential mix of music, clowning, pure randomness, and slapstick. The six actors work together, and at times in spite of each other, to create an ensemble dependent piece that “turns the idea of failure, in bed or on stage, completely on its head. And just embraces it all” (Bano, 2018).

At first glance, referring to a show that includes actors with learning disabilities as “total idiots” (*The Flop*, 2018) seems politically incorrect at best and downright offensive at worst. However, the beauty of this collaboration is its authenticity, creating a truly inclusive performance wherein learning disabilities are neither hidden nor spotlighted, and everyone on stage has the equity of idiocy.

The use of Brechtian conventions, including placards, simple sets and costumes, and symbolic props, provided frequent modifications and accommodations for performers and the audience.

Each performer took multiple roles (including playing themselves), often breaking the fourth wall or including the audience. The mix of multimodal performance styles, song, narration, and improv maintained a high energy tempo. The cast also frequently broke character, interacted with the audience, and displayed a wide variety of skills. Improvisation and extemporization were embedded throughout, and the height of authenticity was when perceived mistakes were made: a joke didn’t land, an entrance was missed, or a set prop fell down.

Whereas “polished” performances would potentially gloss over these moments and continue, *The Flop* company were increasingly aware of themselves and took joy in calling out their mistakes, at times trying again or at the very least laughing with the audience. The cast constantly adapted and reacted on stage, turning prop failures or punchline misfires to their advantage. This kind of honesty highlighted the relationships within the company and how they worked together and supported each other. Including the audience in the mistakes and jokes allowed everyone to laugh with the performers instead of at them.

The equity of idiocy was contagious, as the cast treated each other and the audience as people, full of mistakes and inadequacies. Rather than offering a forced message about ability, or a judgmental or preachy critique, *The Flop* glorified mistakes and reveled in the failures of everyone involved. In terms of access, the venue was wheelchair accessible. Specific access performances that included BSL, captioning, audio description, and audio enhancement were advertised. Each performance was relaxed, with advance warnings for audience members with sensory-processing issues, as well as large-print scripts for audience members with hearing impairments. Hijinx’s *The Flop* was an ideal example of inclusivity, creating strong, hard ideals of what inclusive Theatre can and possibly should be.

## I'm Non-Typical Typical ★★★★★

*Authentic. Transformative. Aesthetical. Mostly Accessible & Engaged*

Bedazzle Inclusive Theatre. Written & Directed by Matt Hunt. Greenside at Nicholson Square, August 3-10, 2019

“Differences are supposed to be attractive, aren't they? Opposites attract, that's what they say”  
(I'm Non-Typical, Typical, 2019)

*I'm non-Typical, Typical* is shaped from the cast's verbatim testimonies into a collaged mixed-arts multimedia performance. Writer/director Matt Hunt and choreographer Lisa Cureton craft a high-quality, issue-based piece of original Theatre that aims to challenge audience perceptions of how disabled and autistic people can contribute to the arts.

The company tell their personal stories through an episodic and eclectic performance that highlights social isolation, perceived vulnerabilities, and misconceptions. Video, dance, scenes, monologues, and tableaux depict “not being listened to, being ignored but stared at, being ridiculed, patronized and told to keep quiet”. There are monologues about being punished for being bullied and dramatized group therapy sessions that explore anger. An ensemble ballet is overlapped by a story about a young woman's love for her boyfriend. She tells the audience she is leaving him because “she loves him; she hopes strangers will stop staring at him for who he is going out with”. These juxtapositions allow a variety of voices and forms to be active and reinforce a universal understanding: details may be different, but the message for people with disability is the same.

The company play themselves and their persecutors, well-intentioned teachers, and imprudent counselors as they share their lived experience of being disabled in Britain today. It is not a “feel guilty” narrative or a call for sympathy—they “just want to be heard.”

The empty stage filled with the ensemble of 35 performers dressed in black clothing. The set consisted of stock pieces such as blocks and frames in addition to a large projector screen used to indicate location, mood, and visual accommodations. The venue itself was accessible (though still difficult for wheelchair users), and the use of nonverbal communication and accompanying visual aids allowed a mostly accessible performance. It was a montage of performance styles alternating between monologues, scene work, physical Theatre, and dance, as well as prerecorded videos and slideshows. There was a clear fourth wall isolating the audience, and some consideration in captioning might have been helpful.

One particularly effective transition occurred when ensemble members in faceless suits pushed the storytellers into a series of box-like frames. The individuals thus trapped revealed their individual personalities and defense mechanisms in their imprisonment, throwing tantrums, giving up, knocking, or trying to escape. In addition to monologues, there were some group scenes. These appeared to have a facilitated applied Theatre beginning, wherein performers responded to a scenario such as a group therapy by portraying the patronizing voices of doctors, therapists, or parents.

The cast varied in artistic ability—some were articulate while others misstepped or panicked in the limelight. This lack of polish contributed to the authenticity of the piece and demanded the audience's attention, even when it felt easier to look away. Even with such a large cast, the devising allowed everyone to showcase their talent without it feeling like a middle-school recital. Those more confident had greater

responsibilities while still allowing opportunities for those still learning. There were no apologies or excuses, and by the end, exasperated, the company finally felt obliged to shout. “society has to change!” Each member had a voice in creating culture and a chance to display the power of telling untold stories. Unfortunately, for a free performance, the audience was on the light side, with more people on stage than in the seats, raising the question that without an audience would this perhaps be more therapy than art?



Figure 92 *I'm Non-Typical, Typical*,  
www.bedazzlearts.com, 2019

## From One Heart to Another ★★★★★

*Authentic. Transformative. Inclusive Aesthetics. Engaging.*

The Shed Theatre. Written by John Berry & Directed by Viv Berry.  
The SpaceTriplex BIG. August 6-7, 2018



Figure 93 *From One Heart to Another*

episodic and multidisciplinary performance styles to address her fears and emotions. The result is a colorful, energetic, large-cast community experience reminiscent of Dr. Seuss, both in content and design. The performance is largely structured on parodied original songs and scenes inspired by classic genres, such as westerns, teen-romance, and hip-hop. The inclusive cast of over 40 performers consists mainly of adolescents with a few adults in assistance roles. For mutual support on stage, many scenes were performed as partners, double-cast, or in small groups. The production often modeled inclusive accommodations and modifications through peer partners, modeling, repetition of transition techniques, and using sound or light cues to assist memory. Vignette scenes, large ensemble tableaux, and a variety of skills (yoyos, juggling, instruments, magic tricks, song, dance, etc.) balanced the heavy topics of sickness, loss, and frustration with an exuberant celebration of life.

The sheer number of ideas, songs, and performers led to some underwhelming moments, overwhelming confusion, and issues of patronizing, condescension, and manipulation. The ratio of experienced performers and potentially less-trained partners with disabilities sometimes veered toward belittling, tokenism, or inauthenticity.

“A heart is a lot to hand over—and a lot to take. Kia is about to find out just how big hers is. She needs help. She's fed up with the world. She's growing up too fast, but who can help?” (*From One Heart to Another*, 2018)

Writer John Berry's musical is inspired by stories and experiences from the cast regarding childhood, operations, and organ donations. The plot loosely follows Kia, a young girl growing up, and her heart transplant. Kia falls into a dream-induced alternative reality that uses

Although advertised as a “professional performance by award-winning theatre-makers,” the show fell short in expertise, favoring neither process nor polished performance. As a community youth performance, it was a pleasure to see inclusion and the joy of Theatre create a magical world. Everything from the “art-classique” design of costumes, set, and props to the before/after performance gatherings showcased a loving, inclusive community that valued all contributions. Everyone on stage appeared to be enjoying themselves, and the heart put into the performances was tangible. The opportunity to witness the supportive and celebratory community created through performance was well worth the ticket price.

“Neither ‘mainstream’ nor ‘disability,’” the Shed is “an inspiring alternative theatre made up of an all-encompassing cross-section of the community”. Unfortunately, the venue SpaceTriplex BIG was not accessible by lifts or ramps, although a few performers and audience members somehow managed the flights of stairs into the venue. The Shed provided a BSL interpreter in the far-left corner of the stage, but due to lack of lighting and a large shallow stage, visibility was not ideal. No other access was advertised, but a “relaxed performance” was assured, and perhaps scripts were available on request.

“There are times a polished performance may have to be sacrificed on the altar of inclusion”

(Prentki & Preston, 2009 160)

## Knock Knock ★

*Accessible.*

Hot Coals Theatre.

Devised & Performed by the company.

Assembly Roxy, August 4–26, 2019



Figure 94 *Knock Knock* [www.hotcoalstheatre.co.uk](http://www.hotcoalstheatre.co.uk)

“Two hearts, one cottage and a book with all the ‘answers’... A modern folk story for our times”  
(*Knock Knock*, 2019)

*Knock Knock* is a silent, mimed clowning performance that tells the story of a lonely woodcutter and a nature-loving wanderer with a

“book of answers.” The folk/fairy tale narrative is set in a cottage surrounded by a magical forest. The piece is entirely mimed/nonverbal, accompanied by a classical music score.

There are magical, farcical moments in the highly physical and visual performance as the two soon-to-be lovers manage to miss each other between the trees, and doors swing with comic timing. The clown work and physical Theatre were polished and full of stücks and gimmicks: rice rain on an umbrella, flowers wilting, pants falling down, smoking ovens. The design elements of a magical forest of trees, fairy lights, mushrooms, and an ornate cottage laced with set-dressing were beautiful. Theatre-maker and performer Claire-Louise English explains that to cater to d/Deaf audiences, each sound cue is tied to a light cue. The visual stimulation and nonverbal virtuosity lend themselves to being inclusive for d/Deaf and hearing audiences, but it is not quite an inclusive performance.

The venue itself was wheelchair accessible, but there were no accommodations for visually impaired audience members or any other modifications or efforts for inclusion. The proscenium stage reinforced conventional Theatre expectations: lights down, no sounds or

movement from the audience, and in no way was it a relaxed atmosphere. The distance between performers and audience created a disconnect, more like a silent movie than an engaged performance.

The venue provided was a large 200-seat proscenium stage, with an ideal family-Theatre timeslot at 1 pm, and yet on a ticketed Saturday performance, there was an audience of just 12 people (eight by the end of the show). If Hot Coals had opted for a smaller, intimate venue, still utilizing their beautiful set and clowning gimmicks but transforming the space and ideas, they could have created a multisensory surrounding that included the audience and allowed an exploration of the magic through touch, smell, taste, and atmosphere in addition to the beautiful visual and physical work. It could have been a very inclusive and multisensory performance. Maybe *Knock Knock* was on to something when claiming to be a “modern folk story for our times,” in which case the moral of this story is that although striving to be inclusive, many Theatre and arts groups unintentionally reinforce the status quo and accidentally exclude audiences.

## MIA Daughters of Fortune



*Accessible. Authentic. Engaged. Transformative. Aesthetic.*

Mind the Gap

Created and Directed by Joyce Nga Yu Lee.

Old Lab Summerhall, August 8–27, 2017

Mind the Gap’s fast-moving contemporary collage performance *MIA* brilliantly displays how systems and society fail parents with learning disabilities. *MIA* addresses ablest questions such as “Should people with learning disabilities have babies? Can they do that? Do they even have sex?” with a raw, episodic, hard-hitting “Yes, yes ‘they’ do [...] Just because we have a disability doesn’t mean we can’t have sex and have a family” (*MIA*, 2017). There could have been a danger of preachy, overt lecturing on equal rights, but creator/director Nha Yu Lee avoids a diatribe by weaving eclectic performances from the mouths/bodies/lives of four learning-disabled actors (Alan Clay, Alison Colborne, Anna Gray, and JoAnne Haines). There is no lecturing—instead, there is an ongoing conversation with the audience, run by those who need to be heard.

“They always look at us, we’re like different... You’ve failed, in their eyes you’re always a failure and that is wrong”

– *MIA Daughters of Fortune*, 2017

The cast greets the audience as they enter to take their seats, making small-talk and introductions and asking each person to complete a list of what makes a good parent. Immediately, the cast engages with and challenges the audience to evaluate preconceived notions. After some debate, Clay takes a few of the traits written and creates an impressive improvised rap supported by loop music and DJ equipment. There is no conventional narrative: the performance layers stories and perspectives from the cast and multiple other viewpoints from interviews, film, documentaries, and court reports. Cast members speak for themselves and in-role as society, doctors, and social workers.

The set is simple, and the vibe is new-age Brechtian: a few chairs, a table, a video screen, and lockers filled with props and costumes. The technical aspects of video, sound, and lighting work for mood and access and help focus the message. The non-linear episodes vary in pace, length, and style, including stage work, choreography, music/rap, a sexually charged Britney Spears lip-sync complete with wind blown by a hairdryer, monologues backed by live flute music, and a documentary film accompanied by freshly-made popcorn. The audience participatory gameshow *Don’t Drop the Baby* perfectly displays the universal learning curve when having a baby. Learning styles (for the audience and performers) are accommodated and modified with visual, auditory, and kinetic experiences, reinforcing ideas with projections, scenes, statistics, and practical experience.

The actors execute every scene change, including recorded audio and video, live camera work, special effects, and clean-up. An educational, uncomfortable, but hilarious visual is provided through a live birth simulation using a video camera lens as the baby. A statistic highlighting learning-disabled people who become pregnant and are forced to abort or relinquish their rights is illustrated metaphorically using rubbish on the floor. It is a surreal but authentic montage or a didactic talent show of capabilities, woven with scientific facts, interviews, humor, and statistics around the theme of parenthood. The diversity of skills effectively debates societal expectations and ideas of capability. At times the performers correct, re-do, or fix things, which reinforces the responsibility and capability needed for live Theatre and perhaps parenthood.

The cast of learning-disabled actors could be considered more disability Theatre, but the collaboration and engagement between the cast, audience, director, advisors, and writing team provide strong evidence of inclusive theatre. There is a clear feeling of engagement, connection, and support between the cast, their creative team, and the audience. Accommodations are embedded in the highly visible and multimodal nature of the performance, with voiceovers/audio description entrenched in each scene and key ideas captioned on screens. Access documents are outlined in the program, available online prior to the performance, and include an easy-read format. The venue is wheelchair and audio loop user-friendly, and the performance is designated as “relaxed” with sensory-processing warnings.

This show makes you participate, think, question your preconceptions, and leave feeling overwhelmingly human, energized, and ready to advocate for action. *MIA* harnesses the educational and transformative powers of performance to ask:

Is *anyone* capable of handling parenthood without proper support and education?



Figure 95 *MIA Daughter of Fortune*, [www.mind-the-gap.org.uk](http://www.mind-the-gap.org.uk), 2017 Photo: Maria Spadafora



Figure 96 *My Left Right Foot*, [www.boptheatre.co.uk](http://www.boptheatre.co.uk) 2019 photo: Tommy Ga-Ken Wan

## My Left Right Foot ★★★★★

*Accessible. Engaged. Transformative. Inclusive Aesthetics.*

Birds of Paradise with National Theatre of Scotland

Written & Directed by Robert Softly-Gale

Assembly Roxy Main Stage, August 3-26, 2018



Robert Softly-Gail

“Writer/Director and disability rights activist Robert Softly Gail made every effort to accommodate an audience of all abilities with his ‘musical comedy that pokes fun at the attitudes of non-disabled people’” (*My Left Right Foot*, 2018).

A daring, politically incorrect counterpunch to overwrought disability “inspiration-porn-y” productions, the National Theatre of Scotland, in collaboration with Bird of Paradise inclusive Theatre, create a foot-stomping, wheelchair-rocking musical-within-a-musical about inclusion, representation, and the perception of disability. Access requirements are illuminated upon entering the venue, and there are large-print programs, signs, and announcements about the availability of hearing loops and descriptive audio sets, wheelchair seating, and ramps, all announced and projected on the back of the set. Before the lights dim, an announcement is made clarifying the best seating options (though a little too late in the already sold-out house) for both BSL interpretations and enhanced audio broadcasting, and the audience is reminded of the relaxed environment for sensory needs.

Set within the rehearsal space of a local community drama group, the plot revolves around an able-bodied company preparing for competition by recreating on stage the 1989 Academy award-winning film *My Left Foot* (starring Daniel Day-Lewis as a quadriplegic who “overcomes” his cerebral palsy by learning to paint with his left foot). Not only does “inclusion” win extra points with the judges, but leading-man Grant (John McLaron) is delighted to win awards and acclaim “cripping it up like Daniel Day-Lewis”. New-in-town director Amy (Louise McCarthy) has a breakthrough moment (and accompanying ballad) when she realizes Chris, the quiet backstage hand “with the wonky leg” *actually* has cerebral palsy. To avoid a slew of online attacks, she casts him instead. Romances, showmances, misunderstandings, and a whole lot of un-PC moments ensue, including many conversations being YELLED to accommodate Chris’s physical disability. Music director Gavin Whitworth provides integrated audio description throughout, and Natalie MacDonald seamlessly interprets in BSL as her character (Nat) is practicing for her interpreter license. Jokes for/with/about disability, every stereotype of pretentious Theatre people, and the inaccuracies of non-disabled perception on disability are captioned, spoken, danced, and sung throughout.

It would have been shockingly offensive at times if not for the fact that Softly-Gale himself was born with cerebral palsy. In his director’s note, he mentions his childhood with cerebral palsy and the experience of seeing “a character with the same impairment” when watching *My Left Foot*. Matthew Duckett, who portrays Chris, states, “growing up with [cerebral palsy] I wanted role models, I needed them” and explains how people (therapists, teachers, etc.) were always telling him how to feel. Yet the character Chris is far from a positive role model; he continues to do what everyone else tells him to, and with an almost unnoticeable limp, it feels like he is trying too hard to fit in. By focusing on how ‘regular’ Chris was, Softly-Gale and company negated the experiences of people who might not so easily fit in.

## “Who hasn’t won an Oscar playing the disabled?”

- *My Left Right Foot*, 2018

The wit and humor result in a sitcom view of disability rather than honing in on the authentic. Softly-Gale seemed to fit his story into what producers, actors, and designers told him musical Theatre about disability should be. In 2018, the national funding for Birds of Paradise was withdrawn, but it regained financial support after the media and activists commented on the lack of disability nonprofits on the national funding list. It would have been ideal to use the large budget, resources, and support to include more opportunities for artists with disability in a show about inclusion, either onstage, backstage, or in the house as ushers, ticket-takers, and audience.

The catchiest refrain from the opening number belted out the possibility to “change delusion through inclusion, break confusion through inclusion, find conclusion through inclusion.” This new musical was simultaneously hilarious, offensive, and enlightening, but the “conclusion in inclusion” forced a lopsided, try-to-pass-as-normal disability perspective into the conventional mainstream realm. Although it took risks with un-PC topics, the production lacked the risk-taking to broaden its definition of inclusive Theatre. The audience was perhaps minutely enlightened, but the production failed to include them in the revolution or to make a transformative commentary on where they are as a Theatre community in terms of broader inclusion and representation. With its multiple awards, 5-star reviews, and continued touring, it is hopefully a small (assisted) step in the right direction, rather than merely a way to win critical acclaim and future funding.

## AN ENABLED DRAMATURGY

“Difference is our means and our method” is the declaration used to champion the “IF Platform” that addresses the lack of inclusive performances and practices at the Edinburgh Fringe (Moses, 2016; Ellis-Petersen, 2015, Elkin, 2015). The Fringe encompasses differences of opinion, and what one reviewer finds exceptional, others might find reprehensible. Likewise, what one company deems inclusive, others may find stigmatizing. To address these obstacles, Roulstone advocates for “enabled dramaturgies” as a way to “break down the walls of artistic exclusion” (2010:438). An enabled dramaturgy implies a process-oriented outlining of the principles of inclusive theatre. This includes its conventions, composition, main elements, foundations, and structure. The “differences, means, and methods” of the reviewed performances, and criteria for inclusive performances (accessibility, authenticity, engagement, transformation, and aesthetics), contribute to a developing enabled dramaturgy. The reviewed performances operate as allies in the journey to inclusion through theatre. They reveal the skills and practices that create authentic, accessible, transformative, engaged aesthetics of inclusion in performance.

Inclusive theatre produces aesthetically innovative work (Hadley, 2020; Koppers, 2003; Siebers, 2010; Millett-Gallant, 2012; Johnston, 2012; Hargrave, 2015) that intentionally “upsets the stability of ‘universal’ standpoints in art criticism” (Hargrave, 2015:10) by transforming common perceptions of what theatre is into what theatre can be. In essence, an enabled dramaturgy of inclusive theatre does not attempt to force or “integrate the disabled into classical ideals of theatre, but [rather] reconstruct our notion of theatre and culturally communicated definitions of ability” (Fox & Lipkin, 2001:121). Each of the reviewed Fringe productions reconstructs conventional form and aesthetics of theatre in its own unique way, but a poetics of inclusive theatre can be concentrated into devised, montaged, ensemble-based multidisciplinary pieces that utilize the talents and interests of performers. Each performance displays a “heightened investigation of how one finds a theatrical language to express experiences, particularly those that have been ignored by the mainstream theatre” and “places much emphasis on sound and movement, expressionistic techniques, shared narration, choral work, and split subjectivity. In short, [they employ] many different

forms to dramatically suggest the complexity of life with the disability and disability culture” (Lipkin & Fox 2001:135).

## THE CONVENTIONS OF INCLUSIVE THEATRE

The specific conventions of inclusive theatre function to reconstruct notions of theatre, art, and criticism to address the vast spectrum of abilities. They differ due to specific accommodations and modifications needs and therefore classify as aesthetic choices (Tomlinson, 1982; Kempe, 2010; Bailey, 2010; McCurrach & Darnley, 1999). These choices depend on the interests, talents, accommodations, modifications, or access needs of each participant. What works with one company or performance may not work with another, but due to similar foundations and principles, some conventions consistently occur, as displayed in *Figure 97*.

Conventions of Inclusive Theatre as reviewed at the Edinburgh Fringe							
	<i>The Flop</i>	<i>Unwritten</i>	<i>From One Heart to another</i>	<i>My Left-Right Foot</i>	<i>MIA</i>	<i>I'm Non-Typical, Typical</i>	<i>Knock Knock</i>
Accessibility considerations	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Montage	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Multidisciplinary	X		X	X	X	X	
Ensemble	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Use of Music	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Devised	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Elements of Improv	X		X		X	X	
Audience Participation	X				X		
Dance or Physical theatre, non-verbal elements	X		X	X	X	X	X
Use of personal stories	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Repetition	X	X	X		X	X	
Chorus			X			X	
Visible Supports	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Multisensory	X				X		
Character Roles	X		X	X	X		X
Actors as themselves	X	X			X	X	
Interests and Talents	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Themes around abilities	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Signs, projections or placards	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Minimal set, props, costumes	X	X			X	X	
Breaking the 4 <sup>th</sup> wall	X	X		X	X	X	
Narration	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Reading stage directions	X			X	X		
Multirole or split role	X		X		X	X	
Surreal or abstracted	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Un-polished performance	X	X	X		X	X	

FIGURE 97 CONVENTIONS OF INCLUSIVE THEATRE AS REVIEWED AT THE EDINBURGH FRINGE

## FOUNDATIONS OF BRECHT AND BOAL

The aesthetics of theatre artists Brecht and Boal have a well-defined influence on inclusive theatre, but they are not 'integrated' into it (Landry & Montgomery, 2012:131). Inclusive performances can be defined as emancipatory, as they "transform and challenge stereotypical forms of cultural representation" (Denzin, 2003:16). This constructs a foundation in applied theatre along with a progressive pedagogy that favors the voices and experiences of the community in order to inspire transformation. In the vein of Brecht and Boal, inclusive theatre is radical theatre (Hargrave, 2009; Lipkin & Fox, 2001; Conroy, 2009) that is well-crafted to capture the attention of the audience as sites of resistance to the status quo.

*"IT IS RADICAL THEATRE BECAUSE IT PUNCTURES THE FORM. IT BLURS BOUNDARIES BETWEEN 'DISABLED' AND 'NON-DISABLED'. IT FORCES US TO PUT THESE TERMS IN QUOTES AND IT SHAKES OUR UNDERSTANDING OF TERMS SUCH AS GOOD OR BAD, NORMAL OR ABNORMAL. IT IS A CONJURING TRICK. DISABILITY APPEARS AND DISAPPEARS WITHIN THIS AESTHETIC. FLICKERING, INTANGIBLE, IT IS SOMETHING FAR MORE ELUSIVE THAN ANY ONE LABEL COULD SIGNIFY: A PURE PRODUCT GONE CRAZY."* (HARGRAVE, 2009:53)

Inclusive theatre, similar to the aesthetics of Brecht and Boal, reconstructs the concept of storytelling through episodic scenes and a semi-fractured or absent narrative (Leighton, 2009; Sandahl & Auslander, 2008; Palmer & Hayhow, 2009; Johnston, 2012; Louis, 2006; Nash, 2008; Finn, 2018, Lipkin & Fox, 2001, Saur & Johansen, 2013). Five of the seven reviewed Edinburgh Fringe performances feature an "episodic nature [...] reliance on movement, music, and constant shifts between the types of dialogue and teamwork occurring [that] has Brechtian underpinnings, with a similar bow towards the audience" (Lipkin & Fox, 2001:131). Consistent with the work of Brecht, the episodic reconstruction serves to engage and transform the performers and audience. In addition to episodic pieces, movement, music, and multimodal shifts, additional Brechtian and Boalian elements utilized in the performances include montage, breaking character or the fourth wall, narration, multi-roling and split-roling, minimal but symbolic use of design elements (set, costumes, props, lighting), the use of projections and placards, freeze frames, and tableaux (Brecht & Willett, 1964; O'Conner, 2010; Neelands, 2000; Dickinson, 2017).

*The Flop* is a prime example of the use of Brechtian conventions and reconstruction of form and content in regard to storytelling. In the production, each performer took multiple roles, including those of characters, narrators, and themselves as actors. This approach allowed multiple voices, as performers were presented in terms of their characterizations and actual selves. By incorporating multimodal performance styles, from mime, physical slapstick, verbal narrative, and abstract surrealism, multiple voices were shown through multiple mediums. The narration of the story switched back and forth, allowing each performer to give their



FIGURE 98 BRECHTIAN CONVENTIONS IN THE FLOP (WWW.HIJINX.ORG.UK)

interpretations. This format provided a surreal framework to showcase a variety of skills and talents. The show seamlessly incorporated a variety of skills and talents from each performer that valued “self-expression (truth) rather than expression arrived at through preexisting vocational frameworks (commodity)” (Palmer & Hayhow, 2008). In addition to acting, clowning, and performance skills, the cast also engaged in salsa dancing, a blinking contest, hauling suitcases, flirting, and playing scales on a tuba. These talents could be perceived as off-topic, but in the course of the performance, the random chaos always made sense and contributed not only to the performance but to the audience’s engagement. In essence, the performance embodied what Hayhow and Palmer referred to as “utterly spontaneous [...] without losing connection with themselves or the audience” (2008:47). As the performance progressed, the fourth wall was deconstructed, and performers spilled into the audience and brought the audience onto the stage. At one point, Hijinx actor Jonathan Pugh was tired of the shenanigans and sat in the audience, encouraging the person whose seat he stole to take his place on stage. At another point, Pugh flirted with audience members and asked for their phone numbers. The audience was asked to clap, sing, or participate in other ways, including a very enthusiastic creation of a robot that included all audience members.



FIGURE 99 INCLUSION TERMINOLOGY AS OUTLINED IN PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

Breaking the barriers between the audience and the performers reinforced the ethos of Brecht and Boal, calling on the audience (and society) to pay attention and act against oppression. The alienation effect of montage and unfamiliar performance styles ensures that the audience pays attention. These foundations permeate each of the inclusive performances.

Accommodations and modifications contribute to a radical and transformative Brechtian-Boalian aesthetic. Attributes such as narration, placards, projections, the reading of stage directions, and repetition are often utilized, visually and aurally, to cue both the performers and audience in inclusive performances. These methods can accommodate what is happening and when, and they can serve to modify participation as a reminder or active form of engagement. They can also modify communication for nonverbal participants, visually breaking up sections or reinforcing main ideas or plot points.

The tendency of inclusive companies to work as ensemble performances reflects the “creation of community within the ensemble and between actors and audience” (Louis in Sandahl & Auslander, 2008:113). The creation of these communities radically functions to disbar ablest notions in society, effectively illustrating a more inclusive social model of disability by displaying active ways of combating socially constructed barriers to inclusion. Ensembles create such communities and can accommodate the needs of each of the performers by working together. It is a similar concept to the

*“THERE ARE NO STARS. BUT RATHER A GROUP OF PEOPLE SHARING AND SUPPORTING ONE ANOTHER. WE ARE INDIVIDUALS WANTING TO BRING OUT THE BEST IN EACH OTHER, EDUCATE SOCIETY AND HAVE A HELL OF A GOOD TIME DOING IT.” (LIPKIN & FOX 124)*

learning communities of progressive pedagogy (hooks, 1994; Giroux, 2009, McLaren, 1998), based on the notion that learning or creating together ultimately benefits everyone.

## STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION

The use of montage creates a “rich eclecticism” (Hargrave, 2015:229) to allow multiple understandings and contributions through a “multidisciplinary piece” (Lipkin & Fox, 2001: 124). This reconstruction allows for the sharing of voices and understandings for the performers and the performance. It directly corresponds to valuing the contributions or experiences in the community, as stipulated in progressive pedagogies (hooks, 1994; Giroux, 2009, McLaren, 1998), and

accommodates diverse learning styles. The use of episodes or montage can also modify the rehearsal and performance process, as it breaks the performance into smaller sections to assist performers and audiences of varying abilities.



FIGURE 100 SKILLS AND TALENTS IN MIA (WWW.MIND-THE-GAP.ORG.UK)

To showcase the variety of talents and abilities available when working inclusively, montage creates opportunities to juxtapose various elements within the performance. Examples of this are *MIA*'s use of dance, DJing, violin playing, controlling live video, and hosting participatory games, and *I'm Non-Typical, Typical*'s use of chorography interspersed with skills and scenes. This reconstruction of form contributes to the idea that inclusive theatre “is focused on finding ways to ensure that each and every individual achieves their potential” (Elkin, 2015). The variety of strategies used (verbal, vocal, physical, media, live, improvisational, and recorded) effectively changes to accommodate the varied cognitive abilities of performers while focusing on their life experiences and stories. While *MIA*, *I'm Non-Typical, Typical*, and *From One Heart to Another* employ a controlled juxtaposition,

performances of *The Flop*, *MIA* and *I'm Non-Typical, Typical* move “toward cultural and creative expression, shifting the aesthetic of performance toward unpredictability, chance, chaos, and, perhaps, the off the moron of ‘controlled anarchy’” (Nash in Sandahl & Auslander, 2008:199). The latter shows’ surreal, eclectic, montage style reflects work “taking place in other areas of avant-garde performance for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century” (2008:199) but differs in its manifestation due to reconstruction through “the ‘surreal’, ‘illogical’ world of the disabled actor” (Hayhow, quoted in Hargrave, 2009:44).

## SURREALISM

The surreal or illogical world of the disabled actor is not an insulting judgment or a commentary on rational thought, but rather the unfiltered, authentic, unconscious understandings that often characterize varied cognitive abilities. The terms surreal and illogical refer to the connections made through modifications within inclusive environments to honor each participant's unique understanding and contributions. Out of context, these



FIGURE 101 SURREALISM IN I'M NON-TYPICAL, TYPICAL  
(WWW.BEDAZZLEINCLUSIVETHEATRE.COM)

contributions may seem random or illogical, but within the creation of an inclusive performance, they build authenticity and engagement, as illustrated in a scene from *The Flop* when the Marquis speaks literally about his fear of performing in public during his impotence trial. Adam C. Webb casually mentions that his greatest fear is that a large badger is stalking him. In the performance, the entire cast breaks character to reflect on what things would scare them more than performing in public, with Webb continuously referring to the badger. Later in the performance, when the Marquis is forced to perform, a large badger begins

stalking him from backstage. Out of context, a badger would seem completely illogical in a French farce, but it actually reinforced the authenticity of experiences, symbolizing an intersubjective fear while simultaneously adding comic value to the performance.

Leighton states, “realism, with its expectations of recognizable structures, acting skills and reliance on reproducing the performance was an unattractive option as the participants would be likely to ‘fail’ this normative test” (2009:100). *From One Heart to Another* uses the framework of a dream to rationalize surreal and illogical understandings. The dream-state justifies multiple genres of performance such as melodrama, spaghetti western, cartoon, video game, and horror tropes, as well as the multiple casting of each role. While surrealism in *The Flop* and *From One Heart to Another* follows a concrete narrative, in *MIA* it is evidenced nonlinearly. In *MIA*, themes of parenthood and sexuality are reinforced by the performers’ surrealist interpretations of birth, sex, and responsibility. Illogical and yet appropriate, these themes manifest in games with the audience, interspersed improvisations, and an episodic structure that shifts between narration and dialogue, movement, music, and play.

The use of modifications or accommodations within each performance for clearer communication, retention, or participation—such as blatantly cueing each other, breaking the fourth wall, starting over, or commenting on what’s happening—lends itself to surrealism. *My Left-Right Foot* maintains the conventional form of musical theatre realism, but its access accommodations reconstruct its presentation. Integrated access throughout the performance via sign



FIGURE 102 SIGN LANGUAGE AND CAPTIONING IN MY LEFT RIGHT FOOT  
(WWW.BOPTHEATRE.ORG.UK)

language, imbedded visual description, captioning, and the use of political incorrectness sheds light on conventional theatre’s shortcomings and lack of access needs. The candid

visibility of access accommodations (captions, sign language, etc.) contrasts with the satirized ableism, creating a surreal but accurate depiction of potential inclusion in the arts.

## DEvised PERFORMANCES

Each performance reflects the reliance on devising work within an enabled dramaturgy, and the shows embody diverse techniques for creating thematic content within inclusive work. The lack of appropriate literature available, and the need to represent the voices of the community, contributes to the need to create or reconstruct content. A majority of the inclusive pieces reviewed were initially devised through Boalian or applied theatre techniques that focus on authenticity. *MIA* and *I'm Non-Typical, Typical* created content based on the lives, understanding, and experiences of the performers. The series of monologues, stories, and film used in both performances can be categorized as “human material, not fancy ideas, not cool abstractions of facts” (Heathcote, 1997) that display the “human condition [...] their attitudes, their philosophy, their ideas, [...] to use them as they really are” (Prentki & Preston, 2009: 202). The focus on life experiences is “loosely organized around the prioritized topics [...] introductions, everyday activities, pastimes, likes and dislikes, abilities [...] to communicate the experiences through a variety of strategies, verbal, vocal and physical, and media, live (improvisational and seldom recoverable) and audio and video recordings” (Leighton, 2009:100). *Unwritten* used the journals and free-writing of the performers. *From One Heart to Another* began with community stories of hospitals and organ transplants and enhanced them with musical content. These diverse methods ensure authenticity, visibility, transformation, and engagement within the inclusive process and performance. They share the actual inclusive cultures of the company with the audience by presenting the performers’ own stories. In contrast, *The Flop* and *My ~~Left~~ Right Foot* favored the Boal-derived nationalization of conventional texts and embellished the performance for cultural efficacy with personal traits and real-life experiences.

“FOR THE MAJORITY POPULATION TO EFFECTIVELY UNDERSTAND OTHER GROUPS, THEY NEED TO SEE ACCURATE DEPICTIONS OF THESE GROUPS. FOR THE MINORITY POPULATIONS TO BE A PART OF THE LARGER SOCIETY, AND NOT FACE DISCRIMINATION BASED ON NEGATIVE STEREOTYPES, THEY NEED TO SEE THEMSELVES IN A VARIETY OF ROLES.” (KIDD, 2016:28)

*My Left-Right Foot* uses classic stories or folktales within the inclusive performance. The use of such material can be relevant within an enabled dramaturgy, as traditional stories and folktales performed with “actors with disabilities help us challenge the metaphors about disability that permeate our culture and dramatic literature” (Eckard & Myers, 2009:69) when used in an inclusive way. However, *My Left-Right Foot* satirically cautions against works that “position disabled people as symbols of pity, tragedy, morbid fascination, or inspiration” (Hadley, 2020:179). *The Flop* and *My Left-Right Foot* create performances using preexisting narratives as an adaptive interpretation of Boal’s nationalization of a classic text (1993:163). Both productions are inspired by preexisting narratives (the history of impotence trials and the film *My Left Foot*), but they maintain authenticity by creating narratives that adapt, rewrite, and restructure the story into something new. The use of classic texts adapted through the perspective of an inclusive cast becomes a means of defying stigma through the representation of new perspectives. It creates a commentary on the universal presence of a spectrum of abilities throughout cultures and histories. This play provides representation in the form of “stories in which disability itself is not the focus of conflict, but rather disability forms the landscape upon which universal issues are debated onstage” (Johnston, 2012:39).



FIGURE 103 MY LEFT RIGHT FOOT (WWW.BOPTHEATRE.CO.UK) PHOTO BY: MIHAELA BODLOVIC

## MUSIC

The most influential element within each performance was the use of music, both prerecorded and live. It was employed as a storytelling device (i.e., lyrics in *My Left-Right Foot* and *From One Heart to Another*), a way to showcase talents (i.e., *The Flop* and *MIA*), and a modification in the form of cues, transitions, and establishing mood (in all productions, but notably in *I'm Non-Typical*, *Typical*, and *Knock Knock*). Music within inclusive performances can reconstruct theatrical language, deepen the performance of self, and tackle stereotypes (Dolittle, et al., 2016; Brodzinski, 2010; Kempe, 1996; Bailey, 2010; Sherrat & Peter, 2002; Sandahl & Auslander, 2008; Lipkin & Fox, 2001, Wooster, 2009).

Musical skills such as playing instruments, DJing, sound-tracking, or lip-syncing allowed actors who may have struggled verbally to communicate. The use of live music (such as singing in *My Left-Right Foot* and *From One Heart to Another* and instrument playing in *The Flop* and *MIA*), as well as advanced choreography (such as the ballet in *I'm Non-Typical*, flamenco and salsa in *The Flop*, and musical theatre in other productions), presented opportunities to tackle “the stereotype of disabled persons as less than fully competent” (Hargrave, 2015:10) by showcasing exceptional talent.

In *MIA*, actress Anna Grey performs a highly charged rendition of Britney Spears’ “Hit me Baby One More Time” rather than wrestling with a verbal explanation of lust and sexuality see *Figure 104*). The articulate (and sultry) performance simultaneously displays Grey’s love for pop culture, her innate sexuality, and her dance abilities, while

“MUSIC HAS ALWAYS BEEN A FUNDAMENTAL COMPONENT”  
(BROWN, 2012:142)



FIGURE 104 GRAY DANCING TO BRITNEY SPEARS IN MIA (WWW.MIND-THE-GAP.ORG.UK)

reminding the audience that love, lust, and attraction are universal qualities. The pop music of Britney Spears effectively “demystifies some of the pervasive cultural notions about learning disability” (Hargrave, 2015:10). MIA dismisses the idea that people with learning disabilities are asexual and tells stories of wanting to feel attractive and have sex or relationships. Pop culture songs and icons (such as Britney and Elvis) give weight and expression to the performers and tap into universal feelings (Brodzinski, 2010). Music choices can concretely value individual voices and contributions, allowing the participants to speak for themselves, albeit sometimes through interpretations of others’ lyrics. Using music in inclusive performance can raise aspirations, encourage agency, and voice personhood. The camaraderie of well-known songs and the familiarity of musical tropes allows the audience to engage with the performance through music, foot-tapping, singing along, or just relating to the universality of the experience.

Most significantly, each performance relies on music, which is “the main structuring process for the narrative[s] and helps to keep a focus upon bodily and emotional response, create atmosphere and sustain engagement from all present in the room” (Trowsdale & Hayhow, 2015:1025). Employing music in the productions is simultaneously an aesthetic choice, a reconstructed form, an accommodation, and a modification to ensure understanding and communication and accentuate ability.

#### IMPROVISATION AND SPONTANEITY

Many of the performances feature an element of improvisation, some more direct than others (Saur & Johansen, 2013; Johnston, 2012; Bailey, 2010; Cattanach, 1996; Kempe, 1996; McCurrach & Darnley, 1999; Doolittle et al.; 2016; Elkin, 2015; Campbell, 2013). The need to accommodate individual needs as they arise directly correlates with the improvisatory nature of inclusive performances. Indirect improvisations were present in the adaptations made to support each performer, such as in *Unwritten*, *From One Heart to Another*, and *I’m Non-Typical, Typical*. Due to the authentic nature of performances, improv has to be flexible for the needs of the performers or the audience, and it will differ from day to day, performance to performance.



FIGURE 105 SPONTANEOUS MACHINES IN THE FLOP (WWW.HIJINX.ORG.UK)

*MIA* and *The Flop* directly implement improvised moments with the audience to support engagement and accommodate any unplanned situations (bad moods, dropping lines, broken props, etc.). Using improvisation to accommodate problems on stage or address the realities of performance reflects the importance of authenticity in inclusive theatre and honors the “concrete experiences of individual artists rather than abstracted beliefs about learning disability” (Hargrave, 2015). Creating a predictable frame that incorporates improvised moments reinforces self-expression, authenticity, agency, and engagement. Examples of this include Alan Clay’s audience-inspired rap in *MIA* and Jonathan Pugh’s interactions with the audience in *The Flop*. In *I’m Non-Typical, Typical* and *The Flop*, cast members were asked scripted questions in performance, but their authentic responses were spontaneous and changed nightly. Improvisation and spontaneity can alleviate the pressure of memorizing, repetition, and being line-perfect. While conventional standards of excellence may “privilege refinements, praising a polished performance” (Johnston, 2012:122), inclusive theatre frequently uses an unpolished “rehearsed improvisation approach [...] in which each participant is respected and valued” (Johnston, 2012:32). That is not to say an unpolished performance should be considered unprofessional, sloppy, or unskillful, but rather that an improvisatory approach combined with flexible accommodations and modifications reflects a

lived experience of inclusion. This method alters expectations, as the performance may not be the same every performance—it is a fluid, living community.

Rather than ignore “mistakes” (in performance or society), the spontaneous celebration or acknowledgment of them in *The Flop* and *MIA* humanizes the performers. It displays the dynamic relationships between the actors and between the actors and the audience. In turn, this flexibility develops a community within the performance where it is okay to ask questions, be confused, and laugh together. The creation of this community and the improvised modeling of camaraderie and theatrical labor promote social transformation. Without directly saying so, these performances urge the audience to engage with people of all abilities and reconceive their perceptions of who can or cannot be laughed at, with, or about. It was impossible to know which mistakes were improvised and which ones were scripted.

## ALLIES, ACCOMPLICES, AND ARCHETYPES

These performances model rich ally relationships, wherein equitable contributions from all participants are apparent and celebrated. The most successful allies were demonstrated when the company performed as accomplices rather than solely in support roles. The idea of an accomplice describes “the attitude/approach of an ally who works in partnership with disabled and otherwise diverse people to subvert oppressive systems from within” (Hadley, 2020:189). For instance, *The Flop* consisted of four Hijinx actors partnered with four from Spymonkey. They worked in partnerships that depicted reciprocal relationships on and offstage. Smaller cast sizes allow a collective approach in the devising process that enables everyone to listen, share, and contribute to shared ownership. The performance of *The Flop* was “owned” by the group as a whole and was not the product of a director or playwright. The strong sense of personal power, joy, pride, and community on stage indicates strong ownership, agency, and voice within the company. Ownership occurs when participants are afforded partnership and agency to contribute their thoughts, ideas, or experiences authentically (Freire, 1996; Howell & Heap, 2001; Heathcote, 1995; Denzin, 2003; Brodzinski,

2010; Prentki & Preston 2009; Canby et al., 2009; Hargrave, 2009). Allied relationships, working as accomplices toward a common goal, create transformation through empowerment, engagement, authenticity, and community.

## ENGAGEMENT CREATES ALLIES AND COMMUNITIES

The most inclusively successful of the reviewed productions displayed relationships on stage and created relationships between performers and the audience. The actors formed relationships and became allies in the journey to creating inclusion. Hijinx's *The Flop* and Mind the Gap's *MIA: Daughters of Fortune* included vibrant collaborations between learning-disabled and non-disabled artists and created opportunities that showcased the talents of disabled performers and invited the audience to be included in the celebrations.

Opportunities to involve the audience (through audience participation, breaking the fourth wall, or incorporating games) allowed audience members to fully engage in the inclusive process. The cast of *MIA* built relationships with the audience through active participation in the form of questionnaires, game shows, and sharing popcorn with the audience. *The Flop*

*WE WANT PEOPLE'S UNFAMILIARITY WITH DISABILITY AND THE FEAR OF INCLUSION TO BE REPLACED BY BRAVERY—A COMMITMENT TO TRYING NEW THINGS, BEING CREATIVE, AND ADOPTING A TRIAL-AND-ERROR MENTALITY. (ADKINS & ROWE, 2019)*

utilized ensemble relationships and furthered engagement through audience participation and improvised participation, breaking the fourth wall in direct conversation and sitting with the audience. Both shows utilized a different aspect of authenticity by portraying actors with disabilities in roles and stories

wherein their disability was irrelevant (such as doctors, court wardens, and gameshow hosts). This form of representation can serve to normalize disability within cultures and frame it as an authentic part of any society. The act of watching performers with disabilities challenges metaphors about disability that permeate culture and dramatic literature. The positive portrayal of disabled characters within fictional stories reinforces ideal inclusive environments, hopefully leading to strengthening socially valued roles within society outside the performance (Saur & Johansen, 2013; Eckard & Myers, 2009; Johnston, 2012; Conroy, 2009; Nash, 2008). In all the productions, holding true to authenticity and engagement

created opportunities for performers to utilize their voice, agency, and authority to defy stereotypes and generalizations.

### COMBATING STEREOTYPES, OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

Hargrave argued that a primary function of privileging inclusive performances as art “raises the aspiration of the artists and is a concrete way of tackling the stereotype of disabled persons as less than fully competent” (2016:10). Inclusive theatre avoids stereotypes, generalizations, or misrepresentation by developing nuanced, true-to-life characters and supporting the authentic voices of the cast. This works both ways—accepting inclusive theatre as valid, worthy art encourages artists to continue creating and inspires others to participate. Conversely, if inclusive performances only receive inflated charitable critiques, or are denied critiques altogether, it effectively stifles growth and improvement and limits potential. This situation reinforces stereotypes and generalizations about people with disabilities as ‘different’, unable to function as professionals, and living as poor, helpless, childlike, pitiful patients in need of rescue or inspiration-porn (Leighton, 2009; Johnston, 2012; Kempe, 1996, Hargrave, 2009; Eckard & Myers, 2009; Finn, 2018, Koppers, 2003). An effective way of combating these oppressions is by humanizing disability and building empathy through authenticity and engagement within performances. The reviewed performances that were most successful in their engagement and authenticity, such as *MIA*, *The Flop*, and *I’m Non-Typical, Typical*, utilized the true stories, lives, and understandings of the performers along with their talents and interests and found opportunities to model successful ally relationships and form a relationship with the audience.

*“WE AS THEATRE ARTISTS CAN MODEL WHAT AN INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE FUTURE LOOKS LIKE; A BETTER FUTURE. AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, WHO IS REPRESENTED IN THE ARTS COMMUNICATES VALUE—OFTEN LITERALLY WHO GETS TO HAVE THEIR VOICE ON STAGE MIRRORS WHO GETS TO BE HEARD ON THE WORLD’S STAGE. THE FUTURE IS HERE, AND IT IS ACCESSIBLE.”*  
(ADKINS & ROWE, 2019)

In each of the performances, authenticity and engagement transformed the notion of the perceived heroes of the story and defied the status quo. In terms of authenticity, pieces that worked toward “sharing a personal perspective on the world” (2010:113) through personal stories (i.e., *Unwritten* and *I’m Non-Typical*,

*Typical*) or personal perspectives (i.e., *MIA* and *The Flop*) challenged stereotypes by humanizing disability. Disability was humanized through the genuine experiences, talents, and attributes of the performers to “the point that others without disabilities can relate their own experiences and their parallels” (Lipkin & Fox, 2001:128). In all of the performances, the opportunity to build empathy was evident on stage between the performers, the production team and within the context of the characters. The audience was allowed to participate, listen, and experience perspectives, thereby creating a relationship between performers and audience members. *I’m Non-Typical, Typical* is a strong example of authenticity through narrative, weaving “different personalities and interests of the acting company” often “Intercut with autobiographical details about the performers [...] their personal experiences [...] their personal styles acted as impulses behind the more fantastical elements of the work” (Brodzinski, 2010:113). The performers balanced authentic stories and experiences with ensemble choreography and multimodal mediums such as scene work, monologues, and film. The relationships formed through the rehearsal process were highlighted on stage, but the relationship with the audience remained isolated as spectators. Devising work specifically for inclusive theatre to transform stereotypes is a critical tactic, “since the available scripts of disability—both in daily life and representation—are frustratingly limited and deeply entrenched in the cultural imagination” (Sandahl & Auslander, 2008:3).



FIGURE 106 ADDRESSING STEREOTYPES IN MY LEFT RIGHT FOOT (WWW.BOPTHEATRE.CO.UK)

*My Left-Right Foot* combated stereotypes and misrepresentation by tackling the ideas directly. The performance used satire to illustrate misconceptions based on ableist ideals, including the need to yell or over-articulate words when speaking to anyone with a disability or showing someone with a limp dancing. The production boldly used politically incorrect terminology (“spaz it up”) to bring awareness to the ridiculous nature of generalizations.

They openly mocked the tendency for theatre groups to cast non-disabled actors in disabled roles for awards and acclaim. Statistically, between 75% and 95% of characters with a disability are portrayed by non-disabled actors (Adkins & Rowe, 2019; Woodburn & Kopic, 2016; Ramos, 2020). By casting an actor with cerebral palsy to play a character with cerebral palsy, the performance actively worked toward representation and raising aspirations. Moreover, the critical importance of the National Theatre of Scotland pairing with an inclusive company to stage a fully-funded production on inclusion that actively sought to emphasize accessibility (interpreters, captions, hearing loops, etc.) raises the expectations of the genre. The carefully embedded aspects of accessibility worked to challenge notions that creating accessible pieces is too difficult or costly while modeling various accommodations for the audience. This allowed an accurate representation of what a fully accessible performance could look like, actively working toward reconstructing what inclusive theatre could be.

*“ENABLED DRAMATURGY IN ITS FULLEST SENSE AWAITS A MORE ENABLING SOCIETY, BUT CAN ALSO BE A PROTAGONIST TOWARDS THAT.” (ROULSTONE, 2010:438)*

The dramaturgy and aesthetics of inclusive theatre are created and performed to reflect inclusive communities and how they are created, not only on stage but in society as a whole. Founded in parallel with the radical social action theatres of Brecht and Boal, inclusive theatre works to reconstruct these notions rather than fit inside them. Its composition, themes, goals, and conventions directly reflect or model ways to create inclusive societies, both on stage and in the world. The sustainment of inclusive aesthetics strives to eventually create a world in which the need for inclusive theatre becomes redundant (Sealey et al., 2017; Palmer & Hayhow; 2008), with inclusion becoming the rule rather than the exception.

## THE SHADOWS OF THE ALLIES

Within the heroic journey, allies often shift between archetypes and motifs. According to Pearson (1998, 2015), each archetype brings a task, a lesson, and ultimately a gift. Each performance could be described as an archetype, whether the jester of *The Flop*, the caretaker of *From One Heart to Another*, the sage wisdom of *MIA*, the rebels of *Unwritten*, or the wizardry of *My Left-Right Foot*. Together, these archetypal allies set tasks of engaging in

inclusivity and transformation. In performance, they teach ways of accommodating and modifying for accessibility, modeling the dramaturgy and aesthetics of inclusive theatre. As allies, they gift authentic stories, reciprocal relationships, and transformed expectations. At the same time, archetypal reflection cautions against the shadow figure, the opposing sides of archetypes that personify dark inner struggles or serve as a warning of failed transformation (Pearson, 1998; 2008; Mayes, 2008; Vogler, 1998). The over-protective caretaker, the manipulating magician, or the distracting jester potentially hinder transformation (Vogler, 1998). The shadows of the allies embody the internal struggles of the heroic journey and warn against failed transformation.

Shows that lacked in-depth consideration in certain aspects of the criteria (accessibility, authenticity, engagement, transformation and aesthetics) reveal shadowed elements. *I'm Non-Typical, Typical* succeeded in authenticity, transformation, and aesthetics but neglected to engage the audience through participation or discussion. The opportunity to allow audience members to participate in inclusion, rather than just observe, was overlooked. *My Left-Right Foot* provided the highest quality of accommodations and engaged the audience to reflect and transform theatre spaces. However, the opportunity to include, employ, or transform multiple performers with a disability was confined to one actor and the director/writer. The potential to see representation of disability on stage was limited, as were opportunities within the venue in terms of employment (ushers, ticket sales, etc.) or representation. It was unclear whether the audience was laughing at the theatrical stereotypes or realizing their own possible infractions of inclusion. *The Flop* involved the

“paradox of participation”, wherein the desire to transcend disabilities distracted from the brilliance “determined by the fact that the performers have [disabilities]” (Whyman, 2006:9-14). *Unwritten* was successful in its uses of authentic stories and portrayals of disability, and it attempted to create as much access as financially possible. However, due to lack of funding

*“WE’RE FACED WITH THE ATTITUDE THAT, AS THEATRE MAKERS, OUR WORK IS NOT AS HIGH QUALITY AS OUR NON-DISABLED PEERS AND WITH THIS COMES A LACK OF RESPECT FOR WHAT WE ARE CREATING. DIPLOMACY IS THE KEY BUT WE SHOULD NEVER MAKE ARTWORK FEEL OF LESSER VALUE. IS EXTREMELY VALUABLE TO EVOKE CHANGE IN THEATRE AND INDEED THE WORLD IN WHICH WE LIVE” (SEALEY, ET AL. 2017:173)*

and support, the production's projections and accommodations were ineffective and set a poor example of budget accommodations. Some shows lacked accessibility for their cast, not just the audience. Others succumbed to forcing performers into "expectations" of theatre rather than attempting to transforming the system.

Hadley cautions against faux-allies and "allies of convenience" using this terminology to define non-disabled artists attempting to "secure funding or production opportunities for themselves, without intent to afford disabled people more control or credit than usual, or even continue in this area if and when funding trends move to another focus" (Hadley, 2020:184). Authenticity, engagement, and transformation are replaced by demeaning "works that assert the potential normality of disabled people to fit-in" (Schininá, 2004) through forcing people into existing social orders. Faux-allies become puppet-masters who use actors with disabilities for financial gains, as props, or to seek praise by making a difference in the lives of unfortunate individuals. The resulting inauthentic theatre risks "reinforcing the perception of good theatre as rote-learning or 'representation' of a role, whilst effectively forcing actors with learning disabilities to produce theatre that is quite alien to them and is even misrepresentative of their world view and perceptions" (Palmer & Hayhow, 2008:54). It is condescending, manipulative, and effectively removes ownership and agency from artists and inclusive communities.



FIGURE 107 DIRECTING FROM THE AUDIENCE

Examples of faux-ally moments occurred more clearly in the larger community/amateur companies included in the reviews. However, it could be argued that each performance

contained questionable shadowed moments of being spoken over, objectified, or used as a gimmick. The complications of incorporating a multitude of voices, talents, and ideas can result in fewer opportunities to present them and a greater tendency for a director or playwright to organize or censor them. Some allies or advocates may not have been adequately educated or experienced in disability, thereby potentially speaking for, in lieu of, or over the disabled artist. This well-meaning ventriloquism, when the “less empowered are given a voice by those who are more privileged [...] may be motivated by benevolent intentions, but ultimately may lead to a double silencing,” wherein the privileged only “speak and listen to themselves through the mouthpiece of those they would seek to empower” (Brodzinski, 2010: 116).

Dramaturg Brad Rothbart clarifies the implied “well-meaning” view as an ablest way of saying, “I have no belief in you whatsoever, no faith that you will ever achieve anything of importance, so I will not hold you to any standard, and whatever you do I will applaud” (Rothbart, 2015). An indication of this was seen in the constant standing ovation after every inclusive performance, regardless of what occurred onstage, the contributions, or the artistic merit displayed. In some performances that lacked access to resources such as “editors, staging, costumes, opportunities to refine work through workshops and peer collaboration” (Frazee, 2008), it is unlikely that the performers would have been given a standing ovation, let alone enjoyed sold-out venues, if they had not had a disability.

In contrast, some performances had access to quality resources with award-winning theatre-makers, a design team, a large set, a big cast, and detailed costume, props, and light design. However, they created a disservice to their performers with disabilities through low expectations and standards. Specifically, in *From One Heart to Another* most of the performers with physical disabilities were used as pawns, moved around the stage essentially as set pieces. The adult performers constantly manipulated adolescents with disabilities (even when it was unnecessary), and peers without disabilities often distanced themselves or appeared to ignore their disabled partners. Kempe noted that in “seeing a physical or learning disability of their counterparts, participants from the mainstream endeavor to

perform tasks for them. Effectively, this is to [disable] them more” (1996:159). In the genuine enthusiasm for performing, the “participants from the mainstream [became] so engrossed with the drama themselves that they [ignored] the presence of their counterparts with special needs, [took] over the whole activity and so [widened] the gap between the parties rather than building the common ground” (Kempe, 1996:159). Additionally, the story of *From One Heart to Another* was advertised as inspired by personal experiences from the cast of young adult and adolescent performers, which would ostensibly be age-appropriate. Due to the choices of the playwright and director, the actual performance was patronizing and problematic and embodied Kempe’s (1996) caution against:

[Actors with disabilities who] ‘act out’ stories that are not age-appropriate through a mismatch of material even if developmentally the content is at a level they can cope with. This can be exacerbated if they end up being walked or wheeled through their paces, supposedly acting out a story to an invited audience [...] when maybe they have little or no understanding or engagement with what they are doing (1996:56).

This problem was further accentuated by the director’s choice to sit directly in front of the audience, cueing performers and drawing attention to any mistakes. Rather than embracing spontaneous eruptions of creativity, she was visibly upset and distracted by mistakes or interruptions. Neither in costume nor show-blacks, her presence reinforced a condescending, nonprofessional, and “charity” view of the performance. Hargrave warned that a performance must be “pragmatic in the pursuit of quality; that is, the measure of the artwork’s soundness, its fitness for purpose” (2016:228). The failure to train performers with disabilities in the most basic theatre procedures (i.e., project your voice, don’t turn your back to the audience, stay in character) further stigmatizes disabled performers by showing negative or poor representations of potential. Meanwhile, positive reinforcement through standing ovations, positive reviews, and sold-out shows reinforces traditional negative depictions of disability: charity, untalented, unable, childlike. The shadows of allies reinforce the disservice for everyone when inclusive theatre is “more special than real” (Finn, 2018). There is no reason for standards to fall in order to be inclusive (Dacre & Bulmer, 2009; Rothbart, 2015; Sealey et al., 2017; Finn, 2018; Johnston, 2012, Cattanach, 1996).

## TRANSFORMING PERCEPTIONS

*“MANY PEOPLE WHO ATTEND PERFORMANCES BY PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES SAY THAT NOT ONLY HAVE THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF PEOPLE BEEN CHANGED, BUT ALSO THEIR IDEAS ABOUT THEATRE HAVE BEEN CHALLENGED.” (WHYMAN, 2006:9)*

The review, critique, and discussion of inclusive performances using shows from the Edinburgh Fringe as a reference group can be summarized by revisiting Roulstone’s enabled dramaturgy (2010). If an enabled dramaturgy “is about rules and conventions at all, it is not about applying or following them, but about becoming aware of them as they guide making performances as well as looking at them. It is about allowing all of these activities to operate self-reflexively” (Bleeker, 2003: 166). These performances, their praxis, their successes, and their inner struggles guide the journey. Each is on its own heropath, at different stages of the hero journey toward inclusion. The conventions of inclusive theatre as the basis for creating accessible, authentic, engaging, transformative work through the aesthetics of accommodations and modifications are established and exemplified. They are both the allies, the accomplices, and, at times, the enemies of the journey to inclusion. Rules are followed and broken in attempts to transform the systems of conventional performance so that they are accessible for all, encourage authentic representation, and create engaged communities in accessible spaces. Inclusive theatre supports the visibility and representation of all abilities in the hope of creating a more enabling society. The avoidance of “good considering” views of inclusive work effectively argues that inclusive theatre may challenge or reconstruct conventional notions of theatre, but by “privileging the art works as *art*,” it fulfills three main functions: it upsets universal standpoints, raises aspirations while dismantling stereotypes, and discredits cultural notions about disability (Hargrave, 2015:10). In those functions, theatre can move perceptions toward a more inclusive culture. Inclusion, accessibility, and enabled dramaturgies may have a long way to go before they represent the 15–20% of the population within the field of theatre in Edinburgh or internationally. Each of the performances reviewed work toward tackling the overwhelming notion of inclusion. They illustrate potentials and difficulties, upset preconceived notions, and defy stereotypes. Each company represents its own heroic journey toward inclusion, and they ally with each other to teach, learn, and transform.

## CHAPTER 7: THE ROAD OF TRIALS

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*“THERE HE ENCOUNTERS FABULOUS FORCES—DEMONS AND ANGELS, DRAGONS AND HELPING SPIRITS. AFTER A FIERCE BATTLE HE WINS A DECISIVE VICTORY OVER THE POWERS OF DARKNESS. THEN HE RETURNS FROM HIS MYSTERIOUS ADVENTURE WITH THE GIFT OF KNOWLEDGE OR OF FIRE, WHICH HE BESTOWS ON HIS FELLOW MAN.” (CAMPBELL QUOTED IN KEEN, 1971)*

The tests, trials and obstacles of the heroic journey further develop the skills and outlook of the hero. Campbell describes the skills obtained during this stage to better the hero's future and warns of temptations and defeat. The hero may encounter mythical spirits, ogres, friends, and foes, all of which provide growth toward transformation. This stage corresponds with the second cycle of research and documents the developing inclusive praxis and culminating performances in the CDC's quest for inclusion. This chapter narrates the “fabulous forces” that accompany the journey through its highest points and lowest depths. The “road of trials” evolves the CDC's drama program from therapy to community and from community to professional.

### MEETING THE GODDESS

Campbell's heroic journey cycles through barriers and victories, wherein at some point the heroes encounter a “meeting with the goddess” for a “test of the talent of the hero”

(2004:109). Archetypically, the goddess is the epitome of feminine ideals, either a classic ideal of good maternal hope, a misleading temptress, or conceivably both. The strong female figure that bestows opportunity on the CDC heroes after *The Planet of*



FIGURE 108 ON SET AT ONYENOKWE'S SERIOUSLY SPEAKING

*Inclusion* appears in the form of talk-show host and self-proclaimed “Oprah Winfrey of Africa”, Adesuwa Onyenokwe. *Seriously Speaking*, Onyenokwe’s talk show, invited the CDC to perform on their Christmas holiday special along with Nigerian gospel singer Glowreeyah Braimah and hip-hop artist Obiwon. Then excitement was palpable as the group brainstormed ideas, diving into rehearsals with the prospect of performing with stars and broadcasting across Africa.



FIGURE 109 SERIOUSLY SPEAKING HOLIDAY SPECIAL

The group had already been working on a piece for an upcoming rally for anti-stigma laws in Lagos State, which was consequently scheduled for the weekend following the talk show. It was agreed that the newly devised performance would showcase the group's talents and spread the CDC’s message of inclusion to the general public. The performance would have to fit into a ten-minute slot for *Seriously Speaking* but would need to be expandable for the following day’s anti-stigma laws rally. Retrospective analysis of *The Planet of Inclusion* determined that the new performance needed a more explicit focus on “contribution to society” (Akinadayomi, personal communication 2016). To achieve this, it would need to focus on the “role that culture and arts can play in challenging stigma and discrimination directed towards people with disabilities, and in promoting diversity, inclusion and participation” (WHO, 2010:5). In terms of the inclusive theatre criteria established in *Chapter 6* (accessibility, authenticity, engagement, transformation and aesthetics), each component needed a deeper implementation.

To improve authenticity, the devising of the performance was motivated by the personal traits, personalities, and experiences that defined each performer and their talents and abilities. This approach moved the structure away from narrative (like the astronauts in *The Planet of Inclusion*) toward a montage juxtaposition of thoughts, talents, and understandings. The goal was to focus on cultural contributions and explore “the opportunities for participation in cultural life offered to disabled [people in the community] through the example of a performance” (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2011:78). The invitation to perform on the holiday special encouraged the group to focus on the diverse cultures in Nigeria. Scenes would include the Christian and traditional influences of the Igbo and Yoruba, along with the Islamic influences of the Hausa, to represent the diversity of the cast. In an effort to address disability transformation across tribal identities, the performance intentionally avoided Christmas themes and songs in favor of diversity.

Engagement with the audience would be heightened through juxtaposing scenes and images with well-known songs in each language to encourage the audience to join in the song and dance. Accessibility was difficult to control, given the context and lack of funding. Efforts were made to provide ad-hoc accommodations in the form of placards and audience handouts, along with adding modifications for audience participation. The group continued developing its own aesthetics, trusting previous methods of improvised scene work, ensemble imagery, and prescribed choreography, and adding more music as a framework. A self-advocacy model allowed the process to “enable participants to have a choice, to gain skills and insight needed to create performance [...] the key way of achieving this is to rely on the participants’ own judgments and choices” (Terret in Prentki & Preston, 2009:342). Performers selected songs, representations, and themes to address throughout the performance. Collectively, the group chose to take inspiration from the CDC’s motto (despite some reluctance from the researcher-facilitator) and entitled the new performance *Who Needs to be Normal?*

## WHO NEEDS TO BE NORMAL?

The term “normal” is a hegemonic stigma-inducing tool, and in other cultural or international contexts, the motto “who needs to be normal?” might appear offensive, derogatory, and stigmatizing. In Nigeria, it serves as a commentary on the colloquial “be normal” or “he is not normal,” often used to berate those who are different. The devising process for *Who Needs to be Normal?* was similar to that of *The Planet of Inclusion*, but it differed slightly by beginning with conversations and improvisations inspired by stories of stigma and discrimination. The group begin by discussing the motto, brainstorming, and engaging in image work of



FIGURE 110 CDC'S MOTTO: WHO NEEDS TO BE NORMAL?

what it means to be “normal.” One improv activity led by group leader Auntie Maureen is indicative of the protest atmosphere immediately embedded in the performance. She began a call-and-response chant where, in choral fashion, the group would chant, “I might have a disability but...”, followed by participants taking turns providing a response, possibly inspired by the group’s participation in recent community marches for anti-stigma laws. Reflections and declarations of the skills and talents (see *Figure 111*) were posted around the room for inspiration and validation. A combination of task-based scene development, improv, music, and movement developed a process that focused on the group's interests, goals, and talents.

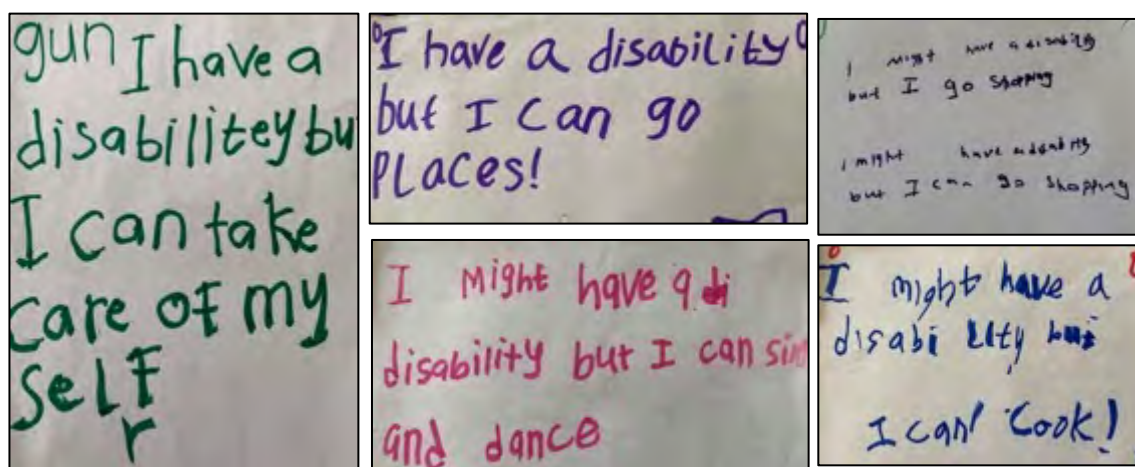


FIGURE 111 DEVISING REFLECTION SHEETS FOR WHO NEEDS TO BE NORMAL?

*“WHO NEEDS TO BE NORMAL? WHO WANTS TO BE NORMAL, WHEN YOU CAN BE  
EXTRAORDINARY?” (WHO NEEDS TO BE NORMAL, 2016)*

Within the framework of the piece, “dance, mime, songs were more dominant than words in telling the story of oppression and resistance. The visual and the sound images carry the burden of the narrative and the analysis” (Prentki & Preston, 2009:266). Vocational and community task-based scenes such as riding the bus, shopping at the market, sewing, and cleaning were woven together with quotes and statements to form a symposium on disability stigma. Music and song provided the main structuring process (Trowsdale & Hayhow, 2008; Brodzinski, 2010; Bailey, 2010; Dolittle et al., 2016; Lipkin & Fox, 2001), as illustrated by the handout script in *Figure 112*. This script was handed out to encourage participation from audience members unfamiliar with the song lyrics and accommodate accessibility for those who are hearing-impaired. It did not include a description of the actions that superimposed the lyrics and narration. Accompanying the songs were a montage of image work, mime, dance, physical scenes, and reconstruction of rituals overlaid with quotes, some of which were improvised while others were rehearsed. The “multidisciplinary piece” (Lipkin & Fox, 2001:124) favored nonverbal virtuosity, surrealism, and montage rooted in cultural resistance as opposed to cultural rapprochement (Palmer & Hayhow, 2008; Hargrave, 2015). It strayed from traditional narratives in favor of a “self-advocacy model” as the performers “set out to identify themselves as a group” and register “their own abilities and weaknesses” (Kempe, 1996:23). Images and scenes were framed within the declarations, “We can go places!” and “We are part of the community!” and ultimately asked the audience to “do the right thing” and treat the cast as “ordinary people [so that] extraordinary things can happen.” The focus on sharing the voices of participants revealed, similar to the observations of Terret, that some participants:

“had spent most of their lives learning to know their place and to only talk when told. Other participants said that they had learned to be silent and that it was less confrontational just to say yes. Therefore, ethically speaking, a self-advocacy model had to be our guiding principle” (quoted in Prentki & Preston, 2009:341).

# Who Needs to be Normal?

A Drama by the Children's Development Centre

**All:** WHO NEEDS TO BE NORMAL? (x3)

**Narrator Voice Over:** Normal is boring. Boring is the life that refuses to love without boundaries. See and love the humanity in each and every one of us, irrespective of our physical appearance, financial status or social standing.....Disability does not diminish humanity. We are all human. This is our world.

**All (song#1 *Do the Right Thing* by Cohhams Asuquo):**

There is something missing in the world today  
it's the one thing that can make the world okay  
and it doesn't cost nothing no you don't even have to pay  
it's about doing the right thing every day.  
cos you are the light  
you are the sign  
you are the only hope keeping hope alive  
do the right thing  
let the world see  
let the light shine everywhere  
and when it seems like no one is watching do the right anyway  
just do the right thing do the right thing all the time  
and you'll be sure to have the whole world singing  
oh oh oh oh oh

**ALL:** WE CAN GO PLACES! (x3) [*making " bus " out of chairs & " motorbike "—BUS SCENES*]

**Narrator Voice Over:** [task-based scenes and identity movement pieces]

Kunle and Akinyele are Karate masters, they train with sensi and hope to attend another international special Olympics to display their skills. Shola Abimbola and Sola All are trained bakers. For years they have been working with Teabreakers to make and sell delicious cookies and cakes. Victoria makes beautiful beadwork and loves to model her work. Femi works at the store 9-7 on the island, stocking shelves, helping customers, bagging groceries and cleaning up. He is always positive and makes friends wherever he goes! Osegue is a wonderful dancer. Ijomea loves to sing at church and shop at the market to pick up food and items for her family.

**ALL:** WE ARE PART OF THE COMMUNITY! (x3)

**All:**(song #2 *Kilan foba de* YORUBA SCENES)

Kilan foba de  
Oba o,Oba alase (x2)  
Oba  
Oba toto bi aro  
Oba o,Oba alase oba  
Oba to re bi osun  
Oba o,Oba alase oba

(song # 3 *Allah Seriki* HAUSA SCENES)

Nago de allah (x2)  
Allah Seriki

(song #4 *Ay ga se ya MaaMaa* IGBO SCENES)

Ay ga se ya MaaMaa (x4)  
O ye wa ne.....  
Aye Mama Ne Jesus....

(Performers share scenes & understandings: "I can work ,I can help my family, I can clean" and more)

**ALL:** WHO WANTS TO BE NORMAL WHEN YOU CAN BE EXTRAORDINARY?

(SONG #5 *Ordinary People* by Cohhams Asuquo)

A child in a distance; playing in the rain  
The sweet sound of water; flowing away  
A construction worker; coming home from work  
Two parents and their children going to church  
Happy little baby; drools on his shirt  
One extra ordinary day...  
Let us have a world of ordinary people;  
Living life the way... God wants us to;  
And if we have a world... Of ordinary people;  
Extra ordinary things... Would happen through me and you

(song # 6 *Heal the World* by Michael Jackson)

Heal the world, make it better place  
For you and for me and the entire human race  
There are people dying if you care enough for the living  
Make it a better place for you and for me

**THE END**



FIGURE 113 FOUR HOURS OF FILMING ON SET FOR SPEAKING SERIOUSLY, TRADITIONAL HEADWEAR AND T-SHIRTS

The songs and soundtracks for the performance purposely emphasized Nigerian culture. The use of task-based cultural song, dance, and drum linked the three major tribes and languages so that a diverse Nigerian audience could participate. Audience members were familiar with the words and movements for songs performed in Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba. In addition, the music of Nigerian singer Cobhams Asuquo provided both the opening and closing numbers. Instead of traditional Christmas songs (to accommodate diverse religions), the group chose

Asuquo’s *Ordinary People* due to its popularity during the holiday season and its relevant message and to honor Asuquo. Asuquo, who was born blind, sets an example of inclusion in Nigerian culture, and his music reflects messages of hope, trust, and making Nigeria a better place. These messages were complemented by costumes, including a *Who Needs to be Normal?* t-shirt, and examples of Nigerian cultural headwear including filas, head wraps, hijabs, geles, kufis, and fedoras.

Final dress rehearsals were conducted at the CDC with staff and other units as audience members, with enthusiastic responses to the work. Students and staff joined in, cheering and verbally supporting the “ability in disability”. Upon arrival at the television studio, the group donned their costumes, performed some warm-ups, and walked through the performance for spacing. The next four hours were spent seated on the stage of Onyenokwe’s set. For this taping, the live studio audience of *Seriously Speaking* consisted of special needs schools,

orphanages, and charity groups from around Lagos, but the CDC was the only group instructed to sit on stage throughout the entire taping.

Concerns about energy levels, toilet breaks, and missed lunches began when producers informed the group that it was performing next. Onyenokwe made a final take thanking the audience, and the group (and audience) were then ushered outside to a parking lot featuring tables, a DJ, and a popcorn machine. A tarp was laid on the ground behind a dilapidated tent, and one camera followed Onyenokwe but no production crew. Outside, Onyenokwe announced a Christmas party for the less fortunate, thanked a plethora of sponsors, and the Christmas music began. Snacks were handed out, a few pictures were taken, and then the camera left. The DJ asked if the group



FIGURE 114 PERFORMING WHO NEEDS TO BE NORMAL? OUTSIDE OF THE STUDIO

was ready to “do the little song now” and incorrectly introduced them as “children from the Development Centre Orphanage.” The performers were neither children nor from an orphanage. Despite the lack of cameras, the inappropriate introduction, the anticlimactic performance space, and a general lack of audience attention (most were eating and talking), the group began to perform *Who Needs to be Normal?* with pride and gusto (see Figure 114). By the end of the first scene, where the cast challenges the audience to “do the right thing,” the entire parking lot was focused on the performance. The diverse group of invited guests (and Onyenokwe herself) joined in with cultural songs and dances and cheered in scenes that

displayed the individual talents of each participant, and everyone joined hands for the finale of *Heal the World* (Jackson, 1991). The performance successfully celebrated a uniquely Nigerian culture of inclusion, built community, and celebrated the voices of the participants.

During the applause, Onyenokwe took the microphone and declared, “*That is not what we were expecting!*” before continuing with praise for the group and expressing gratitude for sharing and regrets that filming had stopped.



FIGURE 115 ONYENOKWE JOINING IN THE PERFORMANCE OF WHO NEEDS TO BE NORMAL

Onyenokwe, the goddess of the journey, had beckoned with promises of visibility, raising the group’s artistic profile, and performing alongside Nigerian idols. Nevertheless, as Campbell warned, “after the first thrills of getting under way, the adventure develops into a journey of darkness, horror, disgust, and phantasmagoric fears” (2004:111). The perceived goddess herself imprisoned the group in stigma, treating them as tokens of charity and stifling transformation. Perhaps she feared her show might be disgraced or ridiculed by a disability inclusive performance. Within Lagos, the CDC is notorious in the disability sector, leading the way in law-reform, community outreach, and educational advocacy. Given the audience of invited guests, it could be inferred that disability charity was the sole reason the group was invited, and the fact that it was a theatre group was incidental. However, this is unlikely given that the group were the only ones invited on stage, and the songs were all preapproved for copyright reasons. Perhaps it was too late to change the line-up or reschedule to the promised timeslot after seeing the group (and their white, American mentor) rehearse. Speculation might surmise that had the group not been accompanied by an “outsider,” they may not have performed at all. The assumptions that the group would not add value to the show, other than as “less fortunate” human props to share the Christmas season, reinforces

the social model of disability, that an “ablest culture defines a disabled person” (Grady, 2009:133). The culture of disability is “constantly told by the dominant culture what they cannot do and what their place is in society” (Charleton, 2006: 225).

In defining this type of stigmatization, Coleman stated, “we behave according to the role expectations of others and change our identity to be congruent with them”. Thus, in the case of stigma, “role expectations are often the same as the stereotypes. Some stigmatized people become dependent, passive, helpless, and childlike because that is what is expected of them” (2006:147). *Seriously Speaking* stereotyped a group of adults with disabilities as children whose talents and abilities were not worth showcasing alongside established artists.

Hargrave argued that “theatre has the potential to radically alter normative perceptions of learning-disabled persons.” These common “(mis)perceptions include: perceived failure of attention (as opposed to a dynamic of attentive and inattentive states); a static and inept social identity; a culturally unproductive and overly dependent way of being that makes such persons burdensome and only of secondary cultural value” (Hargrave, 2015:225). At best, the *Seriously Speaking* experience was a misunderstanding, and it was disheartening to acknowledge that the potential to reach a wider audience had been quelled due to stigma. The group was proud of its performance, pleased with the party, the food, and the overall experience, and the performers were not upset—or perhaps they were oblivious—to the stigmatization that had just occurred. The pure excitement of being on television, the positive response of the audience, and the Christmas party giveaways overshadowed the low expectations and patronization.

Moreover, there was still much to do in preparation for the following day’s anti-stigma rally performance.

*“NORMAL IS BORING. BORING IS THE LIFE THAT REFUSES TO LOVE WITHOUT BOUNDARIES. SEE AND LOVE THE HUMANITY IN EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US. STOP THE DISCRIMINATION, DEFY THE STIGMA! DISABILITY DOES NOT DIMINISH HUMANITY. WE ARE ALL HUMAN. THIS IS OUR WORLD.” (WHO NEEDS TO BE NORMAL?, 2016)*

The rally, free to attend, was pitched to hundreds of parents, schools, politicians, and stakeholders in Lagos and the surrounding villages. The organizers expected over a thousand attendees and had booked a large conference center. In actuality, due to the proximity of the

Christmas holidays, parties, church, and travel took precedence, and the turnout was fewer than 50 people, including the performers, staff members of the CDC, and venue employees. Again, facing a less than ideal audience, lacking even the families of the performers, the group mustered enthusiasm and shone on stage. However, without the positive reinforcement of an audience or engagement with families and peers, the performance felt underachieved. Hatton (2009) observed that “working towards a performance outcome [...] is a significant means of counteracting labels and promoting individualised identities,” but if there is no one to witness these counteractions, how successful are they? The disappointment arising from performances of *Who Needs to be Normal?* led to a general feeling that, in the Nigerian context, the drama program might be a failure in terms of combating stigma. Cobhams Asuquo, whose songs inspired much of the performance, encapsulated the feeling:

We even find different terms for failure [...] we sometimes call it the Nigerian factor; so if something isn't working the way it should we shake our heads and we automatically blame it on the Nigerian factor [...] then we move on with our lives. But see, by excusing failure and blaming it on some systemic flaw, we miss the opportunity to scale through those seemingly insurmountable obstacles to elevate ourselves and elevate others (Asuquo, 2013).



FIGURE 116 THE 'BUS SCENE' TO A NEAR-EMPTY AUDIENCE AT THE ANTI-STIGMA RALLY

The insurmountable, systemic obstacles and flaws that affected the group's performances are indicative of those faced when attempting to create cultures of inclusion: stigma, under-

appreciation, stereotypes of “less-than”, society failing to see potential, and general disengagement with disabled communities.

### THE ABYSS, THE CENTER POINT OF THE JOURNEY

Campbell’s heroes move through the temptations of the goddess toward the center part of the journey where darkness and failure often occur: the abyss. Campbell explains, “Every failure to cope with a life situation must be laid, in the end, to a restriction of consciousness. Wars and temper tantrums are the makeshifts of ignorance; regrets are illuminations come too late” (2004:111). The producers of *Seriously Speaking* were unaware of the potential and talents of *Who Needs to be Normal?* and thereby left with regrets after insight. The families, peers, and potential audience of the group at the anti-stigma rally lacked consciousness of the efforts and transformations the group had endured. The ‘makeshifts of ignorance’ were directly related to the perceptions of disability in society and a result of the group’s lack of perception. We raised expectations for ourselves and our community and assumed that others would believe in us. The group had descended into the abyss.

Despite feelings of failure, the praxis and culminating performances of *Who Needs to be Normal?* benefited the development of the group. The devising process was elevated, as was the group’s professionalism and the cultural efficacy of the performance. The group was learning how to work together, refining its performance styles, and increasing its ownership. The illumination of individual voices created stronger authenticity within the piece, as did the personal connections of culture. The group was empowered to choose its own songs, themes, and images through individual contributions and group curation.

The audience was encouraged to participate via handout scripts and familiar songs, heightening the engagement between audience and performers. To spread engagement further in future performances, audience members would need to participate, breaking the barriers between stage and seats. The aesthetics of audience participation and community



FIGURE 117 WHO NEEDS TO BE NORMAL?

connections were developing but could still be improved. The performance honed a montage and eclectic approach that benefited each performer's individuality. Some staff members and participants questioned the lack of narrative and voiced concerns about the cultural competency of a drama with no storyline. There was particular concern surrounding how future audiences could be enticed to attend a performance defined by "disability stories" (Y Akinadayomi, personal communication, 2016).

Rationally, the process is more important than the actual performance, as many theorists have argued (Prendergast & Saxton, 2013; Johnston, 2012; Kempe, 2013; Lipkin & Fox, 2001; Palmer & Hayhow, 2008). The process established "a sense of social cohesion [...] simultaneously empowering the individual by encouraging self-expression, by emphasizing the process over products". This is not to say the performances themselves were "without value, it's simply limited potential if it is the only value" (Johnston 2012:33). The engagement in relationships between performers was enhanced due to more time spent together. For some of the group, *Who Needs to be Normal?* marked their second performance together, in addition to the

*"THERE WAS A TIME WHEN I WOULD HAVE SAID IT DOESN'T MATTER ABOUT THE PRODUCT, IT'S ALL ABOUT THE PROCESS, BUT I THINK THE IDEA OF PRODUCT DRIVES THE PROCESS. WITHOUT THE END, WITHOUT WORKING TOWARD SOME EVENT OR SHARING PEOPLE LOSE INTEREST – IT'S SOME STRANGE HUMAN CONDITION THING THAT WE LIKE TO SHOW WHAT WE'VE DONE – IT'S A KIND OF RITUAL."* (JERMYN, 2004:41)

performance workshops during the Houston trip. Authentic, reciprocal relationships between staff, intern volunteers, and participants thrived as they worked together to devise and perform. This rapport manifested as in-jokes, electively spending time together outside rehearsal or work, and increased empathy with other facets of the Children's Development Centre. During class, therapy, or life-skills training, staff worked more equitably with participants, recognizing signs of anxiety or distress and modifying expectations to address any issues. Rapport and relationships transformed expectations, reactions, and energy throughout the Centre.

As the performances approached, a shared excitement and supportive environment encompassed the Centre. The boost in the performers' confidence and the pride felt within the Centre were substantial. The joint effort of performance gave prominence to individuals' diverse contributions, including the office personnel's role in alerting the parents, Oseque's dance moves, the cheers of the school unit, the doctor scheduling radio interviews and Mama baking pies to feed the group during the rally. Everyone worked together, increasing engagement and transformation on stage, within the Centre, and among the audience. Reflecting the findings of various researchers (Franks, 2014; Sherratt & Peter, 2002; Corbett et al., 2010; O'Sullivan, 2016; Bailey, 2010; Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2011; Jindal-Snape & Vettraino, 2007), participants underwent transformation in elevated social skills, specifically in self-confidence, self-advocacy, group-belonging, communication, trust, physical and verbal expressiveness, risk-taking, problem-solving, focus, and concentration. These findings correlate with Jindal-Snape and Vettraino's indication of the potential effectiveness of theatrical processes to enhance social-emotional development within inclusive communities (2007:115).

Retrospective analysis determined the need to establish an audience-base, continue elevating cultural and individual aesthetics, and advocate for the work to encourage high expectations. We would need to perceive and respect ourselves as professionals so that others could too. Other obstacles to address included audience accessibility and

expectations, strengthening the individual contributions of participants, and encouraging professional and cultural acceptance.

*“ONE THING THAT COMES OUT IN MYTHS IS THAT AT THE BOTTOM OF THE ABYSS COMES THE VOICE OF SALVATION. THE BLACK MOMENT IS THE MOMENT WHEN THE REAL MESSAGE OF TRANSFORMATION IS GOING TO COME. AT THE DARKEST MOMENT COMES THE LIGHT.”*  
(CAMPBELL, 1991: 37)

## THE POINT OF NO RETURN

The cycle of the heroic journey reaches a pivotal turning point—surrounded by perceived failures in the darkest abyss, the hero must choose to rise or be destroyed. It is the point of no return, a rebirth and a revelation. The hero faces that symbolic moment when “death and resurrection is a model for the casting off of the old life and moving into the new” (Campbell, 1995:171). At this moment, the hero reestablishes their reason for the journey. For the heroes of the Children’s Development Centre, the abyss of *Who Needs to be Normal?* almost destroyed the theatre program, but out of the darkness came an opportunity to apply to the Lagos Theatre Festival.

At the end of 2016, the British Council instituted the first Lagos Theatre Festival Fringe to complement the established Lagos Theatre Festival. It aimed to “foster community inclusion and networking between the Nigerian performing arts sector and the rest of the world” (O. Osafire, personal communication, 10 November 2016). This opportunity emerged to resurrect the hopes of a theatre program and led to the establishment of Nigeria’s premier inclusive theatre company. The “long and really perilous path of initiatory conquests and moments of illumination” (Campbell, 2004:100) involved in cyclical research culminated with the CDC’s first professional performance. After debate and discussion, the team chose to perform at the festival with *Discovering a Planet of Inclusion*, a resurrected and reworked performance based on *The Planet of Inclusion* and *Who Needs to be Normal?* The integration and renewal of the pieces allowed greater authenticity, accessibility, engagement, and transformation onstage and in the audience.

The revitalized performance was framed within the group’s aspirations, imagining a world where “everyone can be anything they want to be” (DAPOI, 2017). The group shared their dreams of becoming a teacher, baker, musician, and astronaut. The focus then shifted to a montage surrealist dream of Nigeria’s first astronauts discovering a planet of inclusion, with additional space creature scenes built from *The Planet of Inclusion*. The space creature/astronaut sub-plot was expanded with the space creatures returning home to travel “all over Nigeria, spreading the love and joy of inclusion” (DAPOI, 2017). The lengthened scenes adapted parts of *Who Needs to be Normal?* to depict Nigeria’s diversity and the talents, skills, and cultures of the performers. When the astronauts and space creatures declared, “we are part of the community!,” the costumes of the space creatures dissolved into those of Nigerian citizens (replacing masks with traditional headgear, etc.). Throughout the performance, the audience was invited to participate via narration, pantomime tropes, and handout programs. They joined in the national anthem, warned the astronauts of impending danger, cheered, and celebrated through cultural song and dance. The finale involved the performers joining and greeting the audience.



FIGURE 118 POSTER FOR DISCOVERING A PLANET OF INCLUSION

## Field Notes, March 2017

*A list of obstacles that occurred the week before our first professional performance:*

- multiple cases of Malaria
- [one participant] ran away from home with a stranger from church
- the doctor's mother-in-law passed away
- the entire CDC staff was too busy to rehearse as they were planning and cooking and sewing for an elaborate Nigerian funeral
- we sold 511 tickets for a venue with 200 seats
- a portion of the ticket money disappeared and then reappeared
- two radio interviews
- the British Council producers no-showed three times to dress rehearsals then cancelled our performance because they (without seeing it) thought it wasn't up to professional standards
- a passionate verbal confrontation at the British Council headquarters leading them to reinstate our performance
- dress rehearsal with British Council at CDC
- dress rehearsal at the venue
- Femi getting into a physical fight with a security guard at the venue
- Shola fainting due to heat on stage
- the Doctor's mother-in-law's funeral
- a Nollywood actress (attending said funeral) decided to be in the performance the following day...

Although rising from the abyss, the real message of transformation had yet to come, and the journey of the CDC was far from over. There were still dragons to slay, and “surprising barriers passed—again, again, and again” (Campbell, 2004:100). *Discovering a Planet of Inclusion* resulted from the analysis and development of the previous research cycles and teaching experiments (see *Chapters 2, 4, and 5*). The victories and barriers of the two previous performances were assessed through the criterion established in *Chapter 6* (authenticity, engagement, transformation, aesthetics, and accessibility) and then combined, modified, adapted, and improved with audience participation, engagement, authenticity, and new scenes. The previous performances were evaluated and revised to increase inclusivity using Therborn's five dimensions of inclusion as a basis for developing social inclusion indicators such as visibility, consideration, access to social interactions, rights, and resources to participate in society fully (2007:5).

The clout of the British Council and acceptance into the prestigious theatre festival directly improved visibility. The Centre was encouraged to support the performance, and with

knowledge of past experiences, take control of the narrative presented. Marketing materials, ticket sales, and a prestigious venue altered the group's expectations and sense of the opportunity's importance. It was no longer just a community event to showcase the CDC's efforts but a potential professional debut that might provide employment, fundraising, and



FIGURE 119 NEW CAST MEMBERS IN COSTUMES SEWN BY ABIMBOLA

networking opportunities. As asserted by other theorists in the field, higher expectations lead to improved performance (Coleman, 2006; Sealey et al., 2017; Dacre & Bulmer, 2009; Wooster, 2009; Johnston, 2012). Upon the unveiling of marketing materials (flyers, posters, and numerous large banners posted around Lagos) and letters to families and caregivers requesting assistance with ticket sales and attendance, the group's rehearsals were immediately enhanced by increased focus and excitement. A guaranteed audience and the potential media coverage in reviews, articles, and Fringe documents increased visibility.

Visibility—the process of being noticed—was enhanced by increasing the number of cast members, with participants enlisted from the adult/adolescent unit and the university interns at the Centre. The addition of peer interns “offered a vision of ways in which learning disabled and non-learning disabled can work without status and hierarchy” (Wooster, 2009:89). Each participant was given the opportunity to share a talent, skill, or scene at their comfort level. For most, this involved spotlight scenes or moments throughout the performance. The contributions of those who preferred less extraverted participation were given in the printed program or delivered through narration. For example, Abimbola preferred to blend in as a chorus member but excelled in sewing costumes. Therefore, in both the program handout and the abilities scene, the costumes she had sewn were

specifically showcased (see *Figure 119*). New costumes also aided visibility by allowing the personalities, tribal affiliation, and characters of individuals to be recognized.

### Field notes, March 2017

*Freedom Park, formerly the colonial-era Broad Street Prisons, sits amidst the hustle of downtown Lagos island as a hub of nightly entertainment. A series of venues, food stands, historic prison cells, and a crocodile pond surround a large, wooden main stage in various stages of disarray. The CDC bus pulls right up to the edge of the stage, parking in the graveled audience area so we can unpack props, costumes, and performers for our official dress rehearsal. Most of the group assists in setting up the stage or sits anxiously waiting for instructions. From a distance, an armed security guard starts shouting abuse and threats, as Femi's familiar voice responds with "Fighting. FIGHTING. Bad Man, BAD MAN. I will fight you." Immediately we run toward the altercation and quickly get between Femi and the security guard. Auntie Maureen goes to the guard and tries to calm his anger while I hug Femi and begin our fill-in-the-blank ritual chant: "Femi is a [blank].*

*Femi is a good man. Femi is a [what?] A good man." Femi continues pushing toward the yelling guard with clenched fists. After a lot of tactile pressure, plenty of eye contact, and deep breaths, Femi finally calms down enough to fill in his part of "good man" and gives me a smiling thumbs-up. He is now enthusiastically shouting "Femi is a GOOD MAN" at the security guard with two thumbs up. Thankfully, Mr. Segun arrives and dissipates the guard's anger with some small naira and a vague explanation as Femi, Maureen, and I return to the stage. Crisis averted.*



FIGURE 120 REHEARSAL AT FREEDOM PARK

Femi reflects the warrior, an archetype that teaches how "to set goals and develop strategies for achieving them, strategies that almost always require the development of discipline and courage" (Pearson, 2015). The warrior's task is to prove their worth with the gift of courage.

Femi, one of the astronauts in the production, tends to fight when overstimulated with new things or in reaction to aggression or bullying. This reaction, flight or fight, is not abnormal in life, but it is hard to anticipate what or who might overwhelm Femi. His propensity for shouting “I will fight you” to unsuspecting strangers is a recurring potential crisis. The task at hand is an imperative onstage dress rehearsal at the venue, in front of the British Council producers who wield the power to cancel a performance that does not meet their standards. The excitement and anxiety associated with the new location, costumes, and changes to routines were overstimulating for the entire group.



FIGURE 121 FEMI'S QUINTESSENTIAL THUMBS-UP

Femi, as a strong 31-year-old man, often works unpacking boxes in a local grocery store. He is ever-helpful at the Centre, mopping floors, carrying heavy loads, and lifting peers in and out of wheelchairs. In rehearsal and daily life, he is consistently kind with a near-constant smile or supportive thumbs-up, and he is keen to dance, sing, and participate. When visitors enter the CDC, Femi is the first to greet them as he introduces himself using his full name, shakes their hands earnestly, and informs them exactly of the number of days remaining before the next holiday. This is not the first time Femi has had a confrontation with a security guard, as people unfamiliar with his quirky friendliness often mistake his actions for suspicious or aggressive behavior. This is a common

phenomenon worldwide, with some studies reporting, “Disabled individuals make up a third to half of all people killed by law enforcement officers” (Perry & Carter-Long, 2015). Whether the provocation stems from a new situation, a spilled drink at lunch, or a peer aggravating him, calming Femi down by repeating “Femi is a good man” while trying to make eye contact

often deescalates the situation. The positive reinforcement helps remind Femi of the social skills tasks he has worked on at the Centre and gives him a way of communicating his feelings. Once he feels a comfortable level of support, he responds by filling in the blank with “good man,” and further conversations can then take place. Other responses, such as grabbing Femi or telling him what to do or what not to do, often have the opposite effect and result in an altercation and potential breakdown.

When overstimulated in rehearsal, Femi had the option of walking around the Centre or assisting with facilitation by holding the Bluetooth music speaker. Accommodations for Femi included clear documents (such as scripts, schedules, and questionnaires), reviewing the schedule for new experiences several times to prepare him, and allowing for time to touch and explore unfamiliar things such as new places and costumes. His contributions in performance devising often came from one-to-one conversations or in artistic and written reflections, because in group discussions Femi tended to repeat verbatim what the person speaking before him had said.

Modifications for Femi included specific positive reinforcement built into the show. After the astronaut’s blast-off, the team had a Femi-inspired high-five session, and when he exited a scene, a peer-buddy in the ensemble area would give him a thumbs-up to remind him where to sit. Femi’s cool-down phrase was embedded in a scene that



FIGURE 122 ENGAGING WITH THE AUDIENCE

showcased the individual talents of each participant. After Femi had shown his cleaning and carrying skills, the narrator mentioned his grocery job and ended with, “Femi is a...”, upon which Femi and the entire company and familiar audience members shouted “good man”

with a thumbs-up, a particularly effective and heartwarming moment. In both devising and performance, Femi preferred to be partnered with a peer-buddy or part of a small group that would allow him to mirror others or participate in choral narration. He memorized lines flawlessly and quickly learned choreography, but speaking, improv, or acting alone were often unsuccessful and frustrated him. Peer-participants would side-coach Femi to remind him what was happening, and the floor was taped with spots to enable him to find his place. At the end of the performance, Femi (with some of his peers—see *Figure 122*) went into the audience during the last song to greet people and introduce himself. This modification appealed to his desire to greet strangers and was a way of increasing community engagement and social relations.



FIGURE 123 CONSIDERATION IN COSTUMING

These modifications and accommodations accentuate Therborn’s dimension of consideration, with “one’s needs and concerns taken into account” (2007:21). Additional accessibility, accommodations, and modifications were considered throughout the praxis and performance. For example, a ramp was configured to allow a dignified entrance for Oneyka’s wheelchair. Her costume—a space-creature-turned-Nigerian-citizen—exhibited an “aesthetic of access” (Sealey et al., 2017) in that it allowed her to participate in character fully by turning her wheelchair into a spaceship. Considerations of needs

and concerns throughout rehearsal included snack breaks, options to sit-out or participate at differing levels due to participants’ moods, persistent check-ins for safety and consent, and posting clear but flexible schedules. The group was scheduled to perform two shows at the Fringe, with a two-hour break in between. Due to the disposition of many participants, considerations were made to ensure the provision of lunch, water, and a cool place to rest. The potential for some participants to become overwhelmed shaped pre-show reminders into three achievable concepts: “The audience wants to see your beautiful face, not your bum,” “Be loud,” and “No matter what, keep going, don’t stop!” Concerns regarding

audience and family reception were abated by emphasizing professional standards and developing a storyline “in which disability itself is not the focus of conflict, but rather disability forms the landscape upon which universal issues are debated onstage” (Johnston, 2012:39). The specific considerations for developing and showcasing each individual brought awareness to skills and interests previously unknown.

### Field notes, 4 March 2017

*Kunle indigently sits on stage, microphone in hand as the audience begins to trickle in. The 15-minute compromise between a “Nigerian” start time (2–4 hours after the posted time) and adhering to a schedule is in the hope that extreme latecomers will be just in time for the second performance. Kunle’s black fedora, reminiscent of the past prime minister, is symbolic in the struggle to unseat him. Right now, he is “Oga on Top”, ready to welcome the audience and instruct them of their role.*

*Moments before we start, a Nollywood actress and friend of the Doctor, saunters on stage to ask about her role in the performance. At a funeral the day before, it had been expressed that the starlet would grace us with her acting abilities for the performance, but truthfully we had hoped she’d no-show. How do you add a whole person to a performance they’d never seen in the space of a few minutes? Luckily, a quick Google search provided a vaguely metaphorical poem connecting the stars and potential, and the actress agreed to read it after Kunle’s introduction. With a considerable number of seats taken, Kunle begins in the role of a typical Nigerian pastor welcome by yelling, “Hello children!” and “Hello people!” until the audience gives a response, to which he counters, “Are you happy? Are we happy? Happy Christmas!” At this point, I gently interrupt, placing my hand on his shoulder and reminding him of his current job and that it is, in fact, the month of March. Throughout rehearsals, Kunle often got distracted with amens and hallelujahs, and the three-minute introduction would balloon into a fully-fledged sermon of sorts. Although I prefer to remain in the background, he’d only amicably refocus with a comical back-and-forth exchange indicative of our friendship. Together we introduce the CDC and the group and ask the audience to participate in typical panto-esque call-and-response throughout the performance. Kunle ends powerfully with “Thank you, and enjoy the show!” bowing to applause, waving as he marches offstage to change into costume. Upon hearing the Nollywood actress’s voice instead of the intro music, he charges back on stage, abruptly takes the microphone and announces, “it’s not your turn,” and kindly ushers her offstage.*



FIGURE 124 PASTOR KUNLE WAITING ON STAGE

Kunle is generally soft-spoken and easygoing, but he can be stubborn. He is a calm presence and generous with hugs, sharing a snack or a mischievous eye-roll when situations verge on



FIGURE 125 KUNLE'S INTRODUCTION

the ridiculous. Throughout previous performances and devising, he favored ensemble roles, often positioning himself in the back row of dances or group numbers and blending into the background. In devising scenes, he was offered options to shine—for example, would he like his own dance, a hip-hop rap, or maybe a chance to show off his karate moves? All of which he turned down, frequently

with a shake of his head and a smirk as he pressed his forehead against yours, making direct eye contact as if to say, “look, none of this *orishi rishi* [shenanigans in Yoruba]”. Unbeknownst to the team, church was a highlight of the week for Kunle, and he sold many tickets to members of his congregation. Shortly thereafter, during a dress rehearsal, Kunle uncharacteristically refused to put on his costume. After a series of unsuccessful attempts to solve the problem, he became angry and decided to watch from the audience. Once the sound system was turned on, Kunle grabbed a microphone and began an improvised homily to the surprise and delight of his peers. Henceforth nicknamed Pastor Kunle, he would only agree to rehearse if he could deliver the introduction, after which he happily rejoined the cast.

Kunle fulfills the archetype of “the herald or announcer of the adventure [...] representative of the repressed instinctual fecundity within ourselves” (Campbell, 2004:48). He embodies the potential often overlooked, the surprise proclamations that occur when inclusion empowers choice and social interactions. Kunle worked best after choosing the role he wanted to characterize, but this does not imply that he did not work as a team. As a space creature, he supported his peers, letting Osegue take the lead with dance moves and helping

maneuver Oneyka’s wheelchair around the stage. At some point, this was no longer sufficient for Kunle—he realized his repressed productiveness and wanted to share his gift. Offering choices in how to participate was a modification that led to Kunle assuming the role of introduction herald. Other participants also engaged with this modification, choosing to videotape or handle the music for a rehearsal or become peer-mentors.

Like Kunle, Emmanuel chose to be an engineer, like his brother (see *Figure 126*) in the performance. He thrived when given specific responsibilities such as handing out props or making sure others were in the correct spot on stage. Both he and Ruki were dominant peer-mentors who provided modifications for others by side-coaching, cueing, or modeling movements. Assigning specific responsibilities also contributed to the ownership

*“WHAT THESE WORKS CELEBRATE IS THE UNIQUENESS OF THE INDIVIDUAL THAT MIGHT ULTIMATELY OVERRIDE THE QUESTION OF VIRTUOSITY IN THEIR PERFORMANCES.”*  
(HARGRAVE 2009:49)



FIGURE 126 ENGINEER BUILDING THE SPACESHIP

of the company as a whole and allowed for moments of self-advocacy. Schnapp and Olsen (2003) observed that communication and the empowering experience of group participation within a drama praxis are effective in developing self-advocacy. Shola was responsible for reminding the group to take water breaks rather than being singled out by her need to rest occasionally. Edem was in charge of carrying the boxes of props on stage, and Akin (a fan of puzzles) was responsible for putting the set together. Everyone was responsible for checking their props or costumes and reminding their partners to do so too.

Specific jobs functioned as a positive reinforcement and modification. For example, Funke was allowed to hand out snacks at the end of rehearsals if she had participated without yelling at others. Emmanuel could take photos with the camera during dress rehearsals or choose the music during warm-ups if he completed every scene-change cue. Positive reinforcement after a productive rehearsal also came in the form of choices: should we celebrate with a high-five, a hug, or a fist-bump? Would you like a celebratory lollypop before or after lunch? Should we have a sweetie after every rehearsal or a donut party at the end of



FIGURE 127 AUDIENCE INTERACTIONS

the week? Many of the positive reinforcements involved treats, which satisfied Nigerian cultural expectations of bosses (i.e., the facilitator) thanking staff (i.e., the participants) with food on Fridays. In many case scenarios, a lollypop mid-break could provide the gratitude and sugar-spike needed to finish a long rehearsal.

Therborn referred to “access to social interactions” (2007:21) as the third dimension of inclusion. Social interaction was achieved on various levels, most critically through the rapport and bonding among the Centre participants, therapists, interns, and families. Bailey asserted that “sharing experiences create a

sense of belonging to the community as a whole” (2010:38), and many theorists stipulate that the devising praxis, rehearsal, and performances contribute to community building (Tomlinson, 1982; Lipkin & Fox, 2001; Wooster, 2009; Johnston, 2012; Kempe, 1996; Hargrave, 2015; etc.).

The performance encouraged social interactions through audience participation in typical pantomime tropes (singalongs, audience call-and-response with the characters, acknowledging the audience’s presence, bringing audience members on stage, and bringing actors into the audience). Lougher stated that “pantomimic devices [...] are an inclusive and enjoyable form of theatre that unites audiences in a sharing of experience” (quoted in Wooster, 2009:85). Kunle’s introduction introduced these devices, as did a handout booklet provided for accessibility. At the end of the performance, actors joined the audience during a somewhat gushy rendition of Michael Jackson’s *Heal the World*, which resulted in the audience standing and swaying with the cast, many of them holding hands and singing along. Afterwards, following a bow and applause, the participants moved into the audience to greet and thank them.

Therborn stipulated the “right to act and claim, including rights to be different, rights to access quality and accessible social services (housing, education, transportation, health care, etc.), and right to work, right to participate in the cultural life.”



FIGURE 128 OPENING SCENE OF DISCOVERING A PLANET OF INCLUSION

(2007:21). *Discovering a Planet of Inclusion* fulfilled this dimension literally and metaphorically through performance and the act of performing. The opening scene began with a reenactment of the march and chant for anti-stigma laws for citizens with disabilities (see *Figure 128*). The cast then imagined an inclusive world that highlighted the dreams of company members. This scene was representative of the ongoing fight for rights and job

opportunities while simultaneously contributing to the right to participate in cultural life and find employment.



FIGURE 129 A MUSICIAN, A COOK, A BAKER IN REHEARSAL AND PERFORMANCE

The opening accommodated different performers through the use of a microphone, written placards, and both visual and sound cues. Every participant, regardless of their place on verbal or social spectrums, was motivated to speak into the microphone. It was a recurring, somewhat magical accommodation that inspired communication, as participants who rarely spoke would do so with a microphone in their hand. To ensure everyone was understood, placards were used to reinforce the messages (see *Figure 129*).

The devising process created four teams within the performance: astronauts, space creatures, Nigerian citizens, and a flexible chorus ensemble. The entire group was on stage throughout, with benches and chairs forming a physical modification for those needing to rest in the background between scenes. The floor was taped with various colors and shapes to assist in spacing and blocking. Many of these accommodations and modifications allowed communication and participation for the entire group, both on stage and in rehearsal. Taped lines on the floor, mirroring, partner-work and small groups, breaking things into sections, and multiple ways of disseminating information ensured that everyone understood and could contribute in different ways. There was a conscious attempt to display skills and also present hopes, dreams, and potentials. For instance, to accommodate speech deficiencies, actors announced their dream jobs into the microphone accompanied by a placard featuring the job title (*Figure 129*).

The use of accessibility, modifications, and accommodations throughout the performance attempted to satisfy

Therborn's fifth dimension of inclusion, "resources to fully participate in society" (2007:21). This was the most challenging dimension to ensure and evaluate due to the unpredictability of society. Therborn

*"THE COMBINATION OF EXTERNAL AUDIENCE MEMBERS WHO WILL WITNESS PREVIOUSLY MARGINALISED GROUPS AS EXPRESSIVE AND CREATIVE INDIVIDUALS, AND FAMILIES, STAFF AND CARERS WHO WILL SEE THEM ADOPTING NEW ROLES, REMEMBERING LINES, EXPRESSING THEMSELVES PHYSICALLY AND WORKING AS A TEAM DISRUPTS INCAPABLE ASSUMPTIONS ATTACHED TO [...] DISABILITY DIAGNOSES".  
(HATTON, 2009:93)*

cautions, "even if some people have rights to access, without adequate resources, they cannot participate fully," an incident confirmed when Victoria's family failed to bring her to the venue on time for the first performance. The Centre provided resources (letters, maps, schedules) and group transportation to the venue. When Victoria failed to appear, phone calls revealed that no one in her family was willing to bring her. Victoria and the CDC made multiple attempts begging family members, and her uncle finally agreed to bring her. They arrived at the end of the first performance, limiting Victoria's participation to only one performance. Afterwards, the uncle expressed his shock, regrets, and gratitude, stating, "[the family] did not know Victoria could be such an important role," saying that if they had known, they would all have attended.

The performance attempted to provide resources to encourage participation, but the audience's actions or reactions could not be controlled. Some audience members were completely engaged and full of praise, with one even crying throughout the performance. However, not all audience members arrived on time, nor did they all engage, and one left after realizing the show involved people with disabilities, citing their "discomfort" with the theme. Wooster (2009) stated that inclusive performance,

like any piece of theatre, is subject to the expectations of those who are watching. Those watching an inclusive theatre company might be registering a different response dependent upon whether they were a parent, a carer, a relative, a friend, a teacher, a [citizen with a disability] or a member of the Arts Council. Each of these will bring their own prism through which to receive the production (2009:85).

The audience (and participants) were provided with programs that included an easy-read/pictorial plot summary, introductions to the participants and Centre, pictures from the devising process, and disability resources available in Lagos. The program provided literal resources (advocacy and inclusive education courses, local therapists and support groups, upcoming events, etc.) as well as catering to cultural expectations and recognitions customary in Nigeria (a published booklet as a keepsake/gift, with public declarations of gratitude and mentions of names/families as is customary in many Nigerian social events).



FIGURE 130 CULTURAL EFFICACY IN A CROWDED BUS & BAKING AND PAINTING SCENES

The scenes adapted from *Who Needs to be Normal* established stronger cultural efficacy as a resource to participate in society and sustained authenticity. Upon returning to Nigeria, the astronauts accompanied the space creatures around the country, modeling community participation. As their journey continued, the space creatures removed their masks and

pieces of their costumes and ultimately formed a joint community. These scenes capitalized on the use of cultural languages, rituals and dance forms, community settings, and everyday situations (e.g., an overcrowded bus, a market, a church service, and interactions with law enforcement and family).

On a larger scale, resources and consideration included increased job training and vocational opportunities. Idealistically, each participant could arguably be considered a professional performer, as they were paid (minimally) with the distribution of ticket proceeds. Despite a few minor glitches, the group was treated as a professional theatre company with professional expectations, including stipends, dressing rooms, production meetings, and access to Fringe festival benefits.

Performing, and performance did not seem like a viable vocational resource for the Centre, and there was a need to continue improving other jobs skills. Throughout the process,



FIGURE 131 CONSIDERATIONS IN TRAINING, PAINTING, SEWING, ETC.

activities involving carpentry (building benches and stools, painting), tailoring (sewing, cutting patterns, fitting), arts and crafts, baking, retail, and hospitality (selling tickets, money exchanges, folding programs, etc.) were considered, resourced, and further developed. These skills heightened the ownership of the piece, as every detail was created by and with the team and improved skill development throughout the unit. The common goal of presenting a professional performance inspired effort and quality from participants, staff members, and the entire community.

In response to earlier concerns about participants “being walked or wheeled through their paces [...] when maybe they [had] little or no understanding or engagement with what they are doing” (Peter in Kempe, 1996: 56), responses in reflections provided concrete evidence of understanding and engagement. When asked to write or draw their favorite moments of the process or performance, nonverbal or limited-response participants contributed pictures of spaceships, the Nigerian flag, a space helmet, planets, and stars unaided (see *Figure 132*). Other responses from the audience and families included the following (personal communication, March 2017):

“This was the first time I witnessed my 30-year-old son involved in a programme. He was doing everything, not just attending. How is this possible!”

“It is good to discuss about stigma to discourage discrimination especially when it comes to employment. The play portrayed the mind of the society towards people with disability.”

“The drama tries to express that there are potentials in us, the society should not rule us out that we cannot contribute.”

“In my words, Planet of Inclusion was all inclusive, entertaining, educating and informative. It was a statement that should be taken to other parts of the nation.”

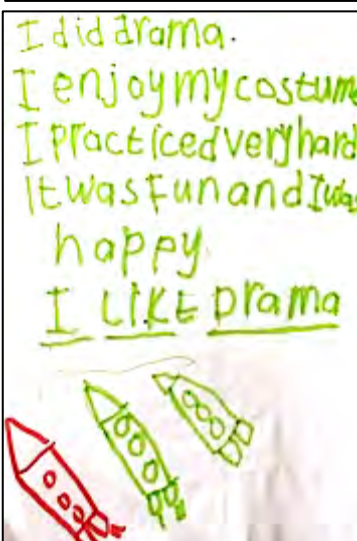


FIGURE 132 MODIFIED REFLECTIONS FOR 4 DIFFERENT PARTICIPANTS

“[The play] helps to change people’s attitude towards people with disabilities [...] it really impacted so much on the students.”

“It was all about exposure, experience and sense of belonging. We can always do better and we hope to have more of these exposures and experiences.”

“The students learnt to believe [sic] that they can make valuable contribution to society”

“It enhanced their self-confidence, they realized they are being appreciated and supported. Those whose parents attended were quite elated.”

“I believe that the drama taught the public that the disabled community is filled with real-life people with feelings who can do what normal people can do and have a fulfilled life [...] it showcased the goodness and greatness the disability community had to offer.”

*Discovering a Planet of Inclusion* addressed each of Therborn’s five dimensions of inclusion. The praxis involved within the research cycle grew from a pseudo-therapeutic medical model of a task-based drama praxis to a community performance provoked by the moral model. Continued development produced a professional performance that commented on and modeled social models of disability in Nigeria. The resulting performance documented “moves away from therapeutic paradigms, [...] toward cultural and creative expression, shifting the aesthetic of performance toward unpredictability, chance, chaos, and, perhaps, the oxymoron of ‘controlled anarchy’” (Nash in Sandahl & Auslander, 2008:199).

Throughout the research cycles and the CDC’s journey toward inclusion, the vision of inclusion and engagement has increased exponentially at the Centre. Life-skills and task-mastering skills have risen. The amount of teacher and therapist turnover has decreased, and staff are more engaged in lesson planning and assessments. Staff, teachers, and therapists have noted increased excitement in planning sessions and lessons, challenging the students and resulting in more scenes being added to the performances. The school and preschool students are forming bonds and relationships with their peer-mentors in the adult unit through observing performances and workshops. Parents have expressed their pride and their support for the program, some asking for the intervention performances to spread to the younger units. Perhaps most notably, the adults and adolescents involved in the performances show increased signs of confidence, community, and self-advocacy throughout

the Centre and curriculum. Since its debut performance, the adult unit has established Nigeria's first disability-inclusive theatre group recognized by the British Council and the Lagos Council for Arts and Culture. Performances have continued at theatre festivals, government meetings, conferences, and schools around Lagos. Furthermore, the exposure and social interactions have resulted in several group members obtaining regular jobs at a supermarket, tailoring apprenticeships, and a partnership with a local caterer. The group is continuously growing and seeking ways to develop further and opportunities to perform—"in short, a community has been established that is a microcosm for the kind the ensemble hopes to create in the greater [...] area and beyond" (Lipkin & Fox 2001:127).

At this point of the heroic journey, the team has risen from the darkness and collected boons and elixirs of theatre, empathy, and community. They are arguably on the road back to the "ordinary world" to share these gifts with their communities. For, as Campbell foretold, "the returning hero, to complete his adventure, must survive the impact of the world" (Campbell, 2004:209). The world created at the CDC argues that theatre can and does transform a community to create a culture of inclusion by releasing the participants' inner potential, talents, and existences. The CDC is uniquely inclusive in Nigeria, but the elixir of theatre and the boons of inclusivity are recurring throughout the research and in each field site. The following chapters detail comparative heroic journeys in Lesotho and South Africa to further evidence, analyze, and discuss the dark moments, temptations, boons, and elixirs of the quest toward inclusion.



FIGURE 133 DISCOVERING A PLANET OF INCLUSION COMPANY

## CHAPTER 8: DARK MOMENTS AND TEMPTATIONS

*“THE MOMENT YOU DOUBT WHETHER YOU CAN FLY, YOU CEASE FOREVER TO BE ABLE TO DO IT.”*

(J.M. BARRIE, IN PETER PAN)

### Journal February 2018

*Imagine being on a cross-continental, overnight economy flight on your first trip leaving your home continent (possibly ever, but definitely without your parents). You're wedged in the middle seats, and the in-seat entertainment is broken. The person behind you believes that pressing harder on the screen attached to the back of your seat somehow correlates to the functioning... After a long and restless night, 11+ hours of flight time-you arrive at an airport to await more hours of layover-exhausted, overwhelmed, and anticipating that this is only the first of some minor inconveniences that may occur on the adventure ahead. This is the state of the Hijinx “Able to Act” team*

*upon my first introduction to them at the Johannesburg airport before we boarded our flight to Lesotho. The Hijinx team consisted of two facilitators from Hijinx (Jon Dafydd-Kidd and Amy-Lou Gregory) and four professional actors from the Hijinx Academies (Gareth, Victoria, Justin, and Laura), each of whom happen to have Down syndrome. Jon and Amy look a bit overwhelmed.*

*Victoria's nerves have made her sick a few times through*

*customs. Justin is preoccupied by his dashing new travel clothes. Gareth has a slight altercation with a bathroom attendant (cultural misunderstandings), and Laura grips a small stuffed rabbit with anticipation as she postulates what she will teach the “babies at the orphanage.”*



FIGURE 134 HIJINX ABLE-TO-ACT TEAM ONBOARD, WWW.HIJINX.ORG.UK, 2017

Upon embarking on the hero's journey, past the threshold into the unknown, heroes eventually face the abyss of temptation and dark moments. These dark moments are investigated through a comparative heroic journey of Hijinx inclusive theatre during a cross-cultural inclusive theatre project. This chapter journals the heroic quest of the Hijinx *Able to Act* team, to discover how to escape the abyss of temptations and dark moments in creating

a culture of inclusion through theatre. It argues that building rapport and forming community circumvents darkness and leads to effective and affective inclusive performance. In addition, this chapter contributes an objective view of cross-cultural inclusive theatre research and professional development through working with other facilitators.

*“THE BASIC STORY OF THE HERO JOURNEY INVOLVES GIVING UP WHERE YOU ARE, GOING INTO THE REALM OF ADVENTURE, COMING TO SOME KIND OF SYMBOLICALLY RENDERED REALIZATION, AND THEN RETURNING TO THE FIELD OF NORMAL LIFE” (CAMPBELL, 112-113).*

## HIJINX IN LESOTHO

Before delving into Hijinx’s adventures in Lesotho, it must be noted that this chapter focuses on some of the dark moments and temptations of a highly successful cross-cultural project. The positionality of writing from the research perspective of an outsider (as a guest observer on the project) allows a deeper investigation of moments often overlooked when balancing the responsibilities of a facilitator and/or director. As an American expat with previous experience teaching and living in Lesotho, I was holding a support role (with no facilitation, directorial, or performance expectations), which created a unique perspective in which to objectively analyze the project.

### THE CALL TO ACTION AND CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

This journey begins with the Welsh half of the Hijinx *Able to Act* team as they travel to the landlocked kingdom of the sky in southern Africa, Lesotho, “a place where disability is perceived as a curse, where babies with a disability are abandoned at orphanages” (Hijinx.org.uk, 2019). The team’s plan was to partner with local young people from Machebang College to devise and tour an inclusive performance that would “change perceptions of disability, so that society can see beyond the disability to the talent, charisma and extraordinary ability of people who are not neurotypical” (hijinx.org.uk, 2018). Devising workshops with the *Able to Act* team culminated in performances of *KE LABALABELA HO BA (I aspire to be)*. The process and performances unpacked themes of process-based devising, cultural efficacy, and community within creating a culture of inclusion through theatre.

Wales-based inclusive theatre company Hijinx is separated into three divisions (see *Figure 135*), each of which ally and advocate for inclusive cultures. Hijinx is a “professional theatre company [...] who tour small scale theatre” that “always include actors who have learning disabilities” (hijinx.org.uk, 2018). Most of Hijinx’s professional productions are collaborations with “some of the most well-respected theatre companies working in the UK” such as



FIGURE 135 DIVISIONS OF HIJINX, (AS SUMMARIZED FROM HIJINX.ORG.UK, 2019)

Spymonkey (as reviewed in *Chapter 6*). The professional touring company is fed into by the Hijinx Academy: the “only professional performance training course for actors with learning disabilities in Wales.” The non-professional community branches of Hijinx include Odyssey, an “inclusive community group for adults with and without learning disabilities who share a passion for performance.” The *Able to Act* team equally participates in all three divisions, as its members are all facilitators or students within the academies and have participated in both professional and community performances. All divisions of Hijinx helped to raise funds and awareness for the Lesotho trip, with substantial individual efforts contributed by the four Welsh actors and their home communities. Additional funding came from the Welsh government and Arts Council of Wales, with a majority of the logistics facilitated through Dolen Cymru Wales Lesotho Link, a charity partnership between the two countries.

It was difficult to find professional theatre practitioners who were available to collaborate in Lesotho. This is not to infer that Lesotho lacks vibrant arts and theatre scenes, merely that the timing and funding led to the collaboration being somewhere in between community-based and professional. Hijinx traditionally collaborates with other professional theatre companies; in this instance, the Hijinx team were the professionals, and Machebang college

provided four Basotho students. The students had some drama training but lacked professional experience. The breakdown of the *Able to Act* team consisted of six Welsh Hijinx professionals (two Hijinx facilitators and four Hijinx actors), four Machebang drama students from Maseru, and one supporting American theatremaker and educator with experience living in Lesotho.

*“IN THE FOOTHILLS OF THE LESOTHO MOUNTAINS THERE IS A LARGE BLACKBOARD PAINTED ON TO THE SIDE OF A BREEZE BLOCK STAND-ALONE ROOM. AT THE TOP OF THE BOARD ARE 12 INCH HIGH CRUDELY PAINTED WHITE LETTERS SPELLING OUT ‘KE LABALABELA HO BA’ (I ASPIRE TO BE) AND THEN A SERIES OF DOTTED LINES WHERE PEOPLE ARE INVITED TO FILL IN THE BLANKS. THE BOARD IS EMPTY FOR LACK OF CHALK, IT IS HOPED, RATHER THAN FROM LACK OF AMBITION”. (HIJINX.ORG.UK, 2019)*



FIGURE 136 KE LABALABELA HO BA LESOTHO

### MEETING THE MENTOR(S): THE DEVISING PROCESS

The first week included devising, engagement, and rehearsals at both Machebang College (located within the capital city Maseru), as well as visits to the village of Pitseng to the Phelisanong Centre for Children Disabled Double Orphans. By the second week, the *Able to Act* team planned to have a complete inclusive performance titled *KE LABALABELA HO BA (I aspire to be)*. The performance would then tour to community and cultural centers around Lesotho.

Hijinx’s “unashamedly ambitious” (hijinx.uk.org, 2020) mantra complements the 1-week timeframe to devise and produce a full inclusive performance. The starting point for devising, as well the marketing and fundraising, was based on the aforementioned wall (see *Figure 136*). The mural, painted in English and Sesotho, was first seen during a 2016 Hijinx scouting trip and inspired initial development with the Hijinx academies prior to arrival. Devising inclusive theatre performances allows opportunities for authenticity, engagement, and

transformation that all participants can contribute to and understand (Leighton, 2009; Palmer & Hayhow, 2008; Bailey, 2010; Canby et. All; 2009).

Hayhow and Palmer stress the “importance of preparation and getting to know the actors, of building rapport and trust within an ensemble company” (2008:6). In order to develop trust and the ability to work together, a devising process often begins with basic drama games (Bailey, 2010; Wooster, 2009; Corbett, 2015; Sealey et All, 2017; Cattanch, 1996; Kempe, 1996; McCurrach & Darnley, 1999). These introductory games serve as warmups and encourage trust-building, inspiration for future scenes, and development of relationships.



FIGURE 137 MIRRORING-PARTNER ACTIVITY,

In order to maximize efforts, Hijinx facilitators began the first session by introducing the Machabeng students to Hijinx methodologies. Together, they performed introductory activities such as physical warmups, sign-language-based name activities, and mirroring-partnered choreography (see *Figure 137*). Mirrored-partnering is an often-used rapport-building activity (Palmer & Hayhow, 2008; Bailey, 2010; Trowsdale & Hayhow, 2013; Boal, 2003), as it gauges creative potential and endorses nonverbal communication. Hayhow and Palmer emphasize mirroring can build rapport by “simply allowing things to be ‘okay,’ validating and responding (without, instead, judging what an appropriate response might be

or look like) and following the lead of the individual” (2008:63). There is a temptation in the devising process to begin work immediately and start creating a performance. Throughout the project, it becomes apparent that the more rapport is built, the stronger the engagement and authenticity become. The reception, and in turn the transformation of the performance, also deepens with stronger relationships between participants.

The devising method facilitated by Hijinx facilitators consisted of a series of physical theatre exercises theorized by Graham and Hoggett, modified by their own Hijinx-based practices. This type of devising relies on “setting tasks” to “allow your performers to offer as much creative input into the devising of choreography without burdening them with responsibility of creating the whole show.” These tasks are “as simple as they can be. They are bite sized and self-contained [...] They come together [but] never set out to encapsulate the whole production idea or solve the entire demand of the text. They’re merely building blocks, created to support more blocks” (2014:15).

The first activity the group worked on was a combined adapted version of Hoggett and Graham’s chair choreography and hymn hands. Each Machebang student was paired with a Hijinx actor and tasked to devise a sequence of movements based

on an established structure (see *Figure 138* for specifics and clarification). The sequence was repeated and rehearsed cyclically until the flow became seamless. The facilitators played

**Simplified Instructions for Combination  
Hand Hymns/ Chair Choreography Devising Exercise**  
(modified by Dafydd-Kidd & Gregory, 2017 from Graham & Hoggett, 2014).

1. Split the group into partners
2. Facing a partner, decide who will go first. The person going first has two choices: put their hand on their partner (sticking to shoulders, head, hands or knees) or put their hand on themselves (shoulder, head, hand or knees). They chose 3 movements.
3. After the first partner has chosen 3 movements, the second partner adds 3 of their own movements. They have three choices: put their hand on their partner, put their hand on themselves, or remove the hand from themselves or from their partner (still focused on hands, shoulders, head, knees).
4. Now together the pair should have 6 movements, this is sequence 1.
5. Repeat sequence 1 on a loop until it becomes muscle memory; count the movements out loud at first if necessary.
6. Once sequence 1 is established, add a 2<sup>nd</sup> sequence. Ask partners to add 3 more movements each. Within this sequence there is a choice to add a bend, push, pull, a remove or a turn in addition to touching their partner or their own (head, shoulders, knees, hands).
7. Both sequences together should result in a 12-step movement. Vary the pace and the music. Ask partners to focus on one focal point, to focus on varying points, to add emotion or remove emotion. Try the sequences with a variety of music styles.
8. Watch the sequences as duets and as group pieces. What stories emerge? What happens when the pace, focus or emotions are varied?

FIGURE 138 SIMPLIFIED INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMBINATION HAND HYMN/CHAIR CHOREOGRAPHY-DEVSING EXERCISE

music tracks as the performers fell into the rhythm. Each partner group was lined up, facing full front, and instructed to maintain a focused stare on a fixed focal point (illustrated in *Figure 139*). This led to an abstract, non-verbal physical partnered scene that from an audience perspective could represent a variety of messages. The performers working in unison to the beat of the music simultaneously conveyed a routine mundaneness, a mechanical relationship but also a simplistic beauty.

The juxtaposition of partners consciously moving in unison with their counterparts could provide a visual metaphor for race (Black/White), culture (Western/Global South), ability, or age among other relationships. There was an equality in space and movement and in routine and precision, but there was also a contrived aspect: a lack of authenticity. The exercise (in its initial state) conveyed an uncomfortable detachment, forced relationships, and complicated comparisons. The partnering felt forced: these partners did not yet actually know each other—they were strangers placed in the same space. The placements of hands, arms, and shoulders often felt culturally questionable, raising questions of whether it would be appropriate to touch the knee of a stranger or someone else’s head, never mind the insider knowledge of historical and cultural implications of a White stranger touching the hair of a Black woman.



FIGURE 139 HYMN HANDS EXERCISE

The facial expressions came across as confused, blank, and potentially bored from the students (but routine for the Hijinx actors, who were familiar with the exercise). The facilitators were excited and inspired by the implications of the larger picture envisaged. It was unclear if the performers could conceptualize the intentions, even when groups were removed in order to view it. Later in the process, this same exercise developed into an expressive scene of communication, support, and friendship—but retrospectively, its initial conception visually and physically displayed issues that were about to arise within the process.

### THE FIRST CHALLENGE

In observation, the Machabeng students became increasingly uncomfortable. They had theatre training in school but no exposure to devised or nonverbal physical theatre. Their primary expectations of theatre could be summarized in the form of classics such as Shakespeare or Fugard, pop-culture American musicals, and traditional cultural Basotho folk performance—a fact that was illustrated in the rehearsal space of the college’s theatre, a traditional proscenium that was set for the upcoming annual folk production (see *Figure 140*). The difference in stylistic and cultural expectations of performance is extenuated by the conventional stage set for a very literal storytelling folk narrative. The set, costumes, props, and storyline were

symbolic but clear and specific. The linear narrative was interwoven with traditional Basotho song and dance, as is a customary performance style at Machebang.



FIGURE 140 REHEARSAL AT MACHEBANG

Contrarily, the devising and performance style of *KE LABALABELA HO BA (I aspire to be)* intentionally relied on an abstract, nonverbal, and physical performance. There was no set, no costumes, and the storyline worked in “montage or juxtaposition, not narrative”

(Hargrave, 2015:227). The students, accustomed to memorizing lines and playing characters in sequential scenes, initially struggled to understand the purpose of rehearsing the game-like activities set. It was clear there were barriers to their authenticity and that they were merely doing what they were told within the exercises without fully understanding.

To compound their discomfort with devising physical theatre, the Machebang students had no experience with disability. In subsequent conversations, all four mentioned that they knew no-one, nor had they previously interacted with someone with an intellectual disability (personal communication, 2018). One expressed, "I wasn't comfortable ... I didn't understand before when I saw them because we are never with people with disorders" (N Leigha 2018 personal communication, 18 February). The "lack of previous social contact with persons with learning disabilities" (Hargrave, 2015:16) often leads to uncomfortable feelings that can result in participants leaving the program or not fully engaging with the work. Unclear expectations and uncomfortable feelings must be addressed in a safe, supportive atmosphere. In order to address this obstacle, Kempe recommends to "be clear about the responsibilities to respect each other and to be reliable." All participants should be "encouraged to trust the drama and talk about their own feelings" but maintain a "freedom to drop out of the project [...] students need to be aware of the implications of this in terms of their own self-esteem and the way the decision could be read by others" (Kempe, 1996:164).

At the end of the first sessions, there was a quick check-in with the Machabeng students to assess their feelings regarding the upcoming devising and rehearsal trip to Phelisanong as well as their feelings about the project. Their responses were vague and hesitant, both for fear of saying the wrong thing or offending the visiting guest facilitators.

#### **Journal. February, 2018.**

*On the 3 hours to Pitseng, some memories are shared of Hijinx's scouting trip to the Phelisanong Centre for Children: Double Disabled Orphans in 2016. Heartbreaking images of children lying on floors, with seemingly not enough caregivers, teachers, clothes or food. Dark,*

*lonely, decrypt rooms where “abandoned orphans” lacked a bright childhood: the feeling of hopelessness as they left. Nerves started to build as we bumped down the last miles of a dirt road. As we exited the bus, hundreds of brightly-clad uniformed school children rush to gather in front of the main building. Mass chaos: they cheer, and wave as they line up with space for wheelchairs and mobility assistance. Thatch-roof cottages, tin-roof school buildings, and gardens perch on the steep slope of the mountain—the Phelisanong Centre for Children seems more like a fairy-tale Neverland hidden deep in the Lesotho mountains, with the lost-boys of inclusion, Wendy-houses, and adventure. Our group is ushered onto a stage-like patio. There is a round of welcome songs and thank you speeches, brief and vague introductions. So many smiles. We are toured around the property with impromptu play- dance parties, ball games, tag, hugs, high-fives, and other joys of childhood.*



FIGURE 141 ARRIVING AT PHELISANONG

Phelisanong, a truly magical Neverland of inclusion, is a community founded and led by a group of disabled and HIV-positive villagers. “Phelisanong” means “together we work for life” in Sesotho, which is apt, as residents, staff, and children maintain self-sustaining vegetable gardens, orchards, and livestock. They also run the inclusive primary school, which is attended by children from surrounding villages as well as residents of the center (www.phelisanong.org, 2018). Phelisanong was nothing like the team expected. While touring the children’s dormitories, classrooms, multipurpose spaces, and clinic, we were told that changes had occurred due to funding and support from Wales and the United Kingdom. We were also introduced to a few American Peacecorps volunteers, a retired Welsh physiotherapist, and a large group of visiting Welsh secondary students playing instruments with a group of children. In the 2 years that had passed since the scouting-trip visited, the new inclusive primary school, accompanied homes, and center had a great deal of support from Western nonprofit organizations.

The library, which also served as the rehearsal space while at Phelisanong, was packed with dust-filled textbooks. Libraries in rural Lesotho can be a sarcophagus of well-intentioned Western charity. They are often volunteer-built buildings, with painted murals from heart-filled travelers, filled with an eclectic sort of outdated textbooks, slightly torn children’s stories, and perhaps a broken computer or two. Metaphorically, the idealism of a library would create both a community space and a chance for continuing education: a gift that keeps on giving. In reality, the library at Phelisanong is kept locked, and the residents know they are not permitted to enter except special occasions. The books are rarely (if ever) allowed to be used for fear of theft or destruction—an analogy for service projects who lack



FIGURE 142 STUDENTS WATCH REHEARSAL FROM OUTSIDE THE LIBRARY

cultural competency or favor good intentions over socially conscious intentions. This implores a discussion on the temptations and ethics of service projects and touchy-taboo subjects that often arise in applied theatre and outreach. Terms such as “White-saviorism” (Cole, 2012; Aronson, 2017) or “voluntourism” (King, 2016) encapsulate paternalistic ideas of privileged Westerners stepping in (often misinformed) to save (perceived to be) poor, suffering communities. Nicholson cautions, “good intentions about ‘helping’

others in ‘need’ may be construed as patronizing or authoritarian, contributing to keeping ‘others’ on the margins rather than taking center stage” (2005:30), the repercussions of which can lead to failed projects, exploitation, dependence, or inferiority and situate communities as places in need of heroism without empowering the heroes within.

Poignantly, these are the specific things that Inclusive theatre works to deconstruct (see *Chapter 6*). Barriers of condescension, manipulation, less-than or charity mentalities

contribute to stereotypes or misrepresentations that ultimately further marginalize disability (Finn, 2018; Dacre & Bulmer, 2009; Sealey et al, 2017; Johnston, 2012; Rothbart, 2015; Hargrave, 2015; Leighton, 2009; Kempe 1996; Eckard & Myers, 2009; Kupperts, 2003). The question therefore arises of how applied theatre practitioners, educators, or good-intentioned altruists can counteract ethical problematics of service projects. The answer, if viewed through the lens of progressive pedagogy and critical theory (Giroux, 1983; Kincheloe, 2005; McLaren, 1983; hooks, 2003), is for “people come together to speak, to dialogue, to share their stories, and to struggle together within social relations that strengthen rather than weaken the possibility for active citizenship” (Giroux, 1997:106). This aligns with methodologies of applied theatre and is complemented by sharing a performance that investigates “finding out what connects us, reveling in our differences” (hooks, 2003:197). In order to avoid the ethical problematics of service work, it is essential to question the motives behind the project, questioning the benefits for the engaged community; whether the project is socially conscious, culturally competent, and sustainable; and what is necessary to know and learn about the community and their culture, in order to address the systemic causes of oppression and exclusion (Bex & Craps, 2016; Cole, 2012; Allen, 2001; Aronson, 2017; King 2016). By instigating progressive pedagogical methods, exchange projects can work to address systemic oppression by challenging the sociocultural aspects that lead to exclusion. Hijinx and the *Able to Act* team aimed to challenge these structures through the medium of performance and community building.



FIGURE 143 GREGORY CONDUCTING A WORKSHOP AT PHELISANONG

The motives for visiting Phelisanong were multifaceted and directly correspond to the motives behind the *Able to Act* project as a whole. The team wanted to meet, learn from, teach, and engage with the community and in doing so, gather stories and experiences to inspire a devised performance. The resulting performance would return to celebrate the culture of inclusion being created within the Phelisanong community and shared in various contexts around Lesotho. Nicholson discusses “reciprocal altruism” in “acknowledging that there is a reciprocal relationship between altruism and self-interest, between practitioners and participants, performances and audiences” (2005:33). Hijinx aspired to engage in order to learn from and return to Phelisanong with a gift of performance. Hopes of future *Able to Act* projects would continue reciprocal altruism through building relationships, support, training experiences, and raising awareness.



FIGURE 144 WATCHING REHEARSAL AFTER A WORKSHOP AT PHELISANONG

The reciprocal nature of the project is further emphasized through an exchange of knowledge and skills. While the *Able to Act* team rehearsed in the library, two of the facilitators ran workshops in the center with students and teachers (see *Figure 143*).

These workshops incorporated the same games, exercises, and techniques that the performers

were using throughout the devising process. Most significant was the use of mimetics—or “physically-based, non-verbal communications”—that emphasizes “imitative play” (Trowsdale & Hayhow, 2013). The workshops allowed opportunities to contribute, and the “significance for such playful, follow-my-leader type copying is profound for children with learning disabilities” (2013:75). Students could see their contributions and the activities they had learned in the performance.

Workshops were not only fun and engaging to build relationships but the hopeful first steps of a more sustainable future endeavor. A rebuttal to arguments against service projects is that every group must start somewhere: through reciprocal altruism, the relationships needed to create sustainable, successful programs can be established.

Reciprocal altruism can potentially “disrupt social hierarchies and ... displace individualism with forms of citizenship that are more overtly social and collective” (Nicholson, 2005:33). In effect, by teaming with the local Machebang students, Hijinx sought to build socially conscious and collective citizenship. Socially conscious intentions respect the independence of communities and strive for not only inclusiveness but also mentorship and leadership. Hijinx’s purpose in Lesotho was not to tell the Basotho people how to create inclusive communities; Phelisanong was already doing that on a local level. Yet by sharing, advocating, and appreciating the work



FIGURE 145 GARETH AND HIS FRIEND RETHABILE

being done, the project worked to change the perceptions of abilities in Lesotho and back home in Wales. In addition to building rapport, and obtaining inspiration, the Hijinx team sought to share their passions for performance as well as their authentic selves with the community. Gareth immediately made a friend who followed him throughout the day and waited for him at rehearsals. Later, in reflection, Gareth commented on how touched he was by the young lady and how important it was to “be seen and seeing them” (personal communication, 2018).

Mamello Mokholokoe, who runs Phelisanong Orphanage, repeatedly commented that it was the first-time volunteers with disabilities had visited the center and how inspirational and

important it was for her children. This speaks to the “importance of adult disabled role models for young disabled people” (Sealey et al, 2017) as well as the importance of representation in general. Laura shared songs in Makaton (sign language) with a large group of preschoolers, Victoria played hand-clapping games, and Justin was tackled in a large-scale rugby game. Significantly, this was a reciprocal opportunity for the group to serve others rather than be the ones being served. It was an opportunity to be mentors and role-models as well as experience and share with another culture. The representation of employed, professional actors with disabilities who had the opportunity to tour internationally was a source of many conversations throughout the day.

Only two Machabeng students were present on initial trips to Phelisanong, and both were hesitant or uncomfortable to jump into the inclusive community. On the return drive home, one expressed that they “never would believe a place



FIGURE 146 VICTORIA TEACHING A HAND GAME

like [Phelisanong] could exist [in Lesotho]” (personal communication, 2018 February 13). The self-sufficiency model of communal farming in collaboration with the inclusive primary school was in and of itself an empowering inspiration for the team. The children from the primary school played and participated together in complete equity and inclusion, everyone was involved. For the two Machabeng students, the visit “proved that inclusion was possible in Lesotho.” This change of perspective became increasingly obvious when the group returned to Maseru and continued the devising process.

## ALLIES AND ENEMIES OF THE DEVISING PROCESS

After returning from the first trip to Phelisanong, the Machabeng students seemed divided in their enthusiasm. The two that had ventured to Phelisanong and witnessed inclusivity were fully engaged, showing up on time, participating, asking questions, and pushing their comfort zones. They brought ideas and concepts for scenes to rehearsal: Refiloe taught Justin a version of gumboot dance (an iconic in Lesotho, see *Figure 147*), and Ntsietso created a movement piece based on the aforementioned wall. The time spent together added to the devising process and the authenticity of the performance. The other two students, however, began pulling away, producing excuses for missing rehearsals and only engaging with each other during breaks. This is a

reoccurring “dark moment” within developing inclusive practices. Kempe states the importance of “consistency of attendance” as people “need to feel sure that they want and are able to undertake such commitments” (Kempe, 1996:164). Lack of consistency



FIGURE 147 GUMBOOTS DANCE

and commitment sends a

message that the community being created is less important to those absent, which can lead to hurt feelings and lack of trust. Part of building trust and rapport includes “basic non-theatrical activities such as eating together, taking journeys together, dancing, even just ‘hanging out’” (Hayhow and Palmer, 2008:63). The more sessions were missed, the clearer the disparity in rapport-building became. It was often during tea breaks, sharing cookies, or walking to the tuck shop that performers could engage and talk with each other on more personal levels. Rapport and trust are critical parts of a devising process: they ensure a comfortable and productive rehearsal period that in turn creates authentic performances.

Barriers to authenticity include being unsure, self-consciousness, anxiety, or a lack of socialization (Palmer & Hayhow, 2008; Johnston, 2012; Hargrave, 2015). Throughout the

devising sessions, these barriers slowly became more prevalent. Primarily, this was due to a limited amount of time to build rapport, trust, and understanding which led to uncertainty, anxiety, and self-consciousness, mainly on the part of the Machebang students. The concepts of physical theatre, non-verbal theatre, inclusion, Down syndrome, and intellectual or developmental disabilities were never specifically addressed, nor were the students (or Hijinx actors) asked to share their previous experiences in theatre and drama or working with mixed-ability communities. This oversight was more due to the temptation to begin creating a performance and concern for time constraints. It may partially be accredited to the tendency of the inclusive practitioners to overlook awkward beginnings that occur when not everyone is equally comfortable, knowledgeable, or open to working inclusively.

The deliberate avoidance of discussing ability in Hijinx's methodology exposes an ethical gray zone within inclusive theatre: what Palmer and Hayhow refer to as the "ethical problematic of informing" (2008:165). Equality (treating everyone the same) questions if or why a disability should be acknowledged, informed, or discussed at all. It could be inherently unequal to stipulate disabilities for some participants. Furthermore, the social model of disability declares social barriers as the disabling factor rather than impairments. Yet, favoring equality over equity (wherein every individual is treated based on their personal needs) fails to acknowledge the support required (in this case, for the Machebang students). This is another temptation in inclusive processes. In this moment, the facilitators were confident in ensuring the support needs of the Hijinx actors but overlooked the Machebang students who required additional support. Kempe illuminates dark moments when "all too often people with disabilities suffer from poor self-esteem because they perceive able-bodied peers as being wholly successful. By actually working together, [...] they might see for themselves that their peers are also sometimes limited and need support." (1996:165).

*"IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT HONEST DISCUSSION TAKES PLACE ABOUT THE PRECONCEPTIONS THE GROUP HOLDS REGARDING PEOPLE LEARNING OR OTHER DISABILITIES. THE DISCUSSION NEEDS TO BE SENSITIVELY HANDLED, FOR WHAT WILL MOST LIKELY BECOME EVIDENT IS THAT THE STUDENTS WILL NEED CAREFUL SUPPORT AND ATTENTION DURING THE WORK: FOR MOST, IF NOT ALL OF THEM, THE PROJECT WILL BE A NEW EXPERIENCE AND LIKELY TO CHANGE THEIR BELIEFS, SKILLS AND ATTITUDES."*  
(KEMPE 1996: 163)

It reached a point wherein those engaging with the performance and devising and those who were increasingly unengaged became too uncomfortable to ignore. To work toward what progressive pedagogics call a “meaningful community,” the group needed to dialog by “moving through fear as we begin to learn new ideas, new ways of seeing the world, as we confront differences with no need to annihilate them” (hooks, 2003:197). The team held a debriefing session to reflect and discuss inclusion, define disability, and reflect on the devising process thus far. The following definitions of inclusion were contributed by the group that had visited Phelisanong (2018 personal communication, February 17):

**Gareth:** [discusses his friend at Phelisanong] It’s important, all the time.

**Refiloe:** Being with you guys. Just walking around, I heard some comments about you guys being disabled, and like—they weren’t positive. [Pause/Sigh] Here in Lesotho, disability is not considered good—it’s not a common thing. I think seeing us work together might shift some mentality.... People are just seeing what is on the outside, and they prejudge people with disabilities and didn’t actually think—they’re people and they have desires and stuff just as average people do.

**Justin:** It’s getting to know people, show backgrounds—easy to show girls [pauses, smiles cheekily and corrects himself]—uh, to show friends skills learned, friendship.

**Ntietso:** It’s everybody—shows that everybody has rights... [pause] ...don’t limit... [hesitates] It’s everyone is like everyone else.

**Refiloe:** It’s... [pause] We all rely on each other: we coexist. Exclusion leads to depression, loneliness. It’s the right to have relationships with other people.

**Victoria:** It’s sticking together [...] making each other happy as well—encouragement.

**Laura-Tilly:** It’s difficult with people—it’s all about learning... [pause] ...a new life, a work space.

**Amy:** [in regards to inclusive theatre] If we can be as good as—or better than—“professional” expectations, then it’s not about disability or stigma or performances just about disability. The performance stands on its own, which in effect comments on inclusion and ability.

Openly discussing disabilities contradicted the “problematic of informing” (Palmer & Hayhow, 2008:165) and allowed an honest conversation of fears, concerns, understandings, and aspirations. It was necessary to move forward in the process and begin to strengthen the

group through “finding out what connects us, reveling in our differences; [the] process that brings us closer, that gives us the world of shared values, a meaningful community” (hooks, 2003:196). Machabeng students reflected their understanding of disability, their fears for performing inclusively in front of their schoolmates, and their insecurities with physical theatre, to which facilitator Gregory suggested, “in many ways [working inclusively] these guys [referring to actors with disabilities] are the teachers because they are so open and not self-conscious about their bodies, [unlike performers without disabilities who might be] too self-conscious, in your head, self-obsessed with our bodies” (A Gregory 2018, personal communication February 15). The discussion opened opportunities for growth within the team and allowed “individuals [to] acknowledge their own vulnerabilities and limitations, and recognize that their dependence on the network of social relations is emotionally, culturally and politically productive” (Nicholson, 2005:36).

#### TESTS AND TRIALS IN THE DEVISING PROCESS

Devising continued by setting with game-like activities, such as a relay race incorporating a variety of movements or a freeze game. Some of these activities would later be further developed into a scene while others functioned to build trust and comradery. In this manner, the “moves come from what the performers find they are capable of through the specific tasks set” (Graham & Hoggett, 2014:16). For example, one devising exercise involved performers crossing the stage while making eye contact. Once this was mastered, new levels were scaffolded to the task (pause when in proximity to another performer, adding a greeting). In lieu of a verbal greeting, the task was further developed by creating a greeting wherein each performer presented their birthdate using an “imaginary



FIGURE 148 DAFYDD-KIDD FACILITATING DEVISING GAMES

telephone pad in the air.” This created movement pieces that were based on “heightened reality and can be routed in everyday situations and most poignantly be performed by everyday characters” (Graham & Hoggett, 2014:87). The enlargement of an imaginary telephone pad moved around the room, as performers were encouraged to “use their personalities within movement and not lose themselves behind the physical theatre mask” (Graham & Hoggett, 2014:87). Laura pressed her imaginary numbers forcefully with a full-open palm, Justin used many levels incorporating his arms and legs, and Refiloe used her head. This exercise was repeated and built upon: each performer could choose to use their choreography to greet each other or respond by repeating another’s choreography. The result was a nonverbal scene that modeled various forms of communication and miscommunication and highlighted relationships, personalities, and inclusion and exclusion.

*“THIS IS NOT ABOUT EXPOSING PEOPLE’S LIMITATIONS OR PUTTING BAD ACTORS AND BAD DANCERS ON STAGE. THERE’S SOMETHING ABOUT THE PROCESS THAT EACH HAS TO GO THROUGH CAN BE EXHILARATING AND ENLIGHTENING”*  
(GRAHAM & HOGGETT, 2014:39)



FIGURE 149 GARETH WITH NUMBERS MODIFIED

Gareth kept forgetting the order of his numbers, so the exercise was modified for him by writing the numbers on his hand in marker (*Figure 149*). This simple modification relieved Gareth of the stress of remembering and added personality to his movements as he continually checked his hand. Dafydd-Kidd, in his role as lead facilitator, often used tasks and challenges in collaboration with positive reinforcement and constructive criticism with phrases such as “Justin, I like the energy you are displaying on stage, but you are distracting from other performers. I want to *challenge* you to try and work with other people and not focus solely on your own performance” (2018, personal communication, 16 February). Dafydd-Kidd favors a positive affirmation,

followed by a critique, followed by a challenge to address the critique. To ensure agency, participants were permitted “forfeits” to self-assess whether they wished to participate or modify their contribution.

Each scene for *KE LABALABELA HO BA* was devised in this manner as a series of games and tasks that built upon each other. The accumulation of tasks developed into nonverbal scenes and were then accompanied by music, an “aural wallpaper, an element for the performers to work alongside” (Graham & Hoggett, 2014:28). The music is “the most essential of influences, not just in terms of creating soundtracks ... but as a tool for setting up the rehearsal environment, inspiring theatrical scenarios, offering inspiration through lyrical and compositional content, [and] providing structure for improvisation sessions” (Graham & Hoggett, 2014:26). The scenes were arranged and rearranged into a variety of sequences and tested with a variety of musical tempos until the creation of a “complete piece of physical theatre” that examines “aspirations for young people living in Lesotho and also challenges perceptions of people living with disability” (J Dafydd-Kidd, 2018 personal communication). An abstracted story developed, as sequences were connected and repeated into a series of moments that symbolically built a community. Interconnected moments of physical theatre (such as moving in unison, singling one member out, interacting or not interacting, greeting each other) created a metaphor of the social model of disability. The performers' actions and attitudes ostracized one member of the company (Justin). Then, through interruptions, avoidance, and eventually one-by-one connections, an inclusive community was created. The climax occurred with a shared gumboots dance, which transformed into a group movement piece that embodied each individual's aspirations. Each game-based scene became symbolic ways to show relationships, encourage one another, and embody aspirations for the future.

The discomfort surrounding disability had been addressed within the group, but the conversation failed to acknowledge the possible discomfort with the mode of working and performing in physical theatre. The group was continuously asked to “trust the process” of devising, but the Machabeng students struggled with how the physical theatre devising fit into their perception of theatre and performance. The abstract game-like scenes lacked the

elements they and their communities perceived as theatre, and they could not recognize what they were being asked to do in the performance. Without a previous exposure, understanding, or appreciation of physical theatre that could develop physical literacy for reading the performance, the activities came across as games executed to music rather than their conception of theatre. Both Wales and Lesotho have rich traditions of storytelling through choral singing, but the music chosen for the “aural wallpaper” was a European “art electropop folktronica synth.” Notwithstanding the gumboots dance, the physicality of the piece was more Western than African or Basotho. This lapse in cultural competency heavily weighed mentoring opportunities toward the Welsh perspective. The temptation (and pressure) to produce a fully devised piece for performance struggled to fully honor what the Basotho culture could offer the process.

#### Journal. February 14, 2018

*Valentine’s day. We had planned to go on a “group date,” but unfortunately, a torrential rain storm kept us locked up inside. During dinner at the guest house, an all-male group of travelers at a neighboring table kept staring at our group, making inappropriate comments, and attempting to buy Amy a drink. As they became more inappropriate, Gareth offered to “defend” Amy—but it was Victoria and Laura who finally told the guys to “bugger off.” Justin, oblivious to the awkwardness, started to chat about how much he loved dating, how he loved ladies, and Valentines. When he didn’t receive any response, he shifted to how much he*



FIGURE 150 JUSTIN AS THE LOVER ARCHETYPE

*“absolutely loved” whatever was being served for dinner. During rehearsal reflections, Justin always had similar responses—he loved the facilitators, he loved his gumboot dance, he loves the music, he loves the performance [...] Eventually, Jon requested that Justin either explain exactly why he “loved” each thing or choose another phrase.*

Justin epitomizes the archetype of the lover (Pearson, 2015; Vogler; Campbell, 2004). His ever-present humble-bragging and lady-loving attitude show his *love for being in love*; it is likely that if there is a

lull in conversation, he will mention that he *loves* playing the bass guitar, he *loves* being onstage, and he *loves* the UK soap opera Hollyoaks (which, conveniently he had a role on). Justin's love and compassion contribute to the devising process forming the basis of the loose storyline. Through montage and surrealism, Justin tries to share his "love" with others, and they avoid him until Refiloe begins to respond by sharing a gumboot dance, leading to the group sharing experiences together. Justin's authenticity (both on stage and in rehearsal) fulfills the "lover" archetype. His borderline obsession with love also highlights a sensitive dark moment that often arises with inclusive work: how to address appropriate social behavior and manage feelings and boundaries.

Justin developed an infatuation with one of the project participants but lacked the social or emotional maturity to manage these feelings. This began to become a problem within rehearsal, as he was only engaging with his romantic target and not with the entire group.

This could be uncomfortable in any situation, when peers do not want to accept or mislead romantic advances or upset their friend.

Nicholson (2005) suggests that "establishing dialogue as an embodied pedagogy requires considerable sensitivity and awareness of

*"IT IS IMPORTANT TO ENCOURAGE SUCCESSFUL PAIRINGS [...] SIMILARLY, DISCOURAGE INAPPROPRIATE COUPLINGS WHERE THERE COULD BE FEELINGS OF A SEXUAL NATURE DEVELOPING."*  
(MCCURRACH & DARNLEY, 1999:36)

issues about personal space, physical contact and appropriate boundaries" (2005:59). Justin's emotional and physical safety outside of the theatre space was also a concern as in other contexts, inappropriate behavior could be dangerous or misconstrued. This dark moment is often complicated by mixed signals of appropriate behavior, especially in theatre, where people are often overly affectionate with each other. Society itself struggles with issues of appropriate behavior and consent, as was the case at the Valentine's dinner. These moments test the true inclusivity of the praxis, as they are moments that can either continue stigmatization or allow opportunities to grow.

In such situations, there is often a temptation to ignore the behavior, avoid the person, or worse, insincerely humor infatuations as to not upset a participant with a disability. These

reactions are reflective of society treating those with intellectual disabilities “as forever childlike, and innocent, and with that, happy, non-sexual and dependent” (Whyman, 2006:10). This is a dangerous disservice to all involved. It breaks trust within the community and perpetuates generalizations that participants cannot be treated as equals or that they cannot understand how their actions could affect others. Using progressive pedagogy to address these biases and establish appropriate boundaries, the group opted for an open discussion about feelings and relationships. Allowing participants to share experiences (in and out of the project) in which they may have felt uncomfortable, had unrequited crushes, or lost friendships changed the focus to universal issues of consent, comfort, and respecting boundaries. These discussions addressed the group as a whole rather than singling anyone out. With Justin specifically, facilitators also had a private conversation with him regarding his feelings and the group reestablished a code of agreements for collaboration. By not ignoring these issues, they resolved themselves quickly. Within inclusive collaborations, it is necessary to directly and truthfully discuss social expectations to avoid reinforcing negative behaviors.

## THE ORDEALS AND REWARDS

**Journal, February, 2018**

*A Maseru thunderstorm is the perfect combination of high altitude, violent heavy rains, dangerous lightening, howling wind, and ground-shaking thunder. The entire city is plunged into pitch darkness, with blackouts and loss of electricity. It had already been a long and stressful day of final rehearsals, and the inability to charge dying phone batteries and lack of cell-service made things worse. The team went to bed exhausted. A huge crack of thunder, a scream, and a flash of lightning revealed a terrifying Hitchcockian silhouette in the doorframe. It was Victoria amidst an anxiety attack. She can't sleep due to the storm and her fear of the dark. As clever, kind, and wonderful as Victoria is, she quickly tends to default into fear and panic. The storm denied her opportunity to call home: she was homesick, anxious and terrified of the dark. Throughout the night, we huddled together telling stories with 1% phone battery lighting the couch. Every time she almost drifted off to sleep, another crash would send us back to the beginning.*

The devising process and performance can be intimidating, exhausting, and even frightening. The unknowns of the journey, such as how an audience might respond, are hard to predict, especially in cross-culture projects. The stormy night prior to the first performance was filled with concerns: Will everything go as planned? Will the audience understand and enjoy it?

Will the speakers be loud enough? What if all the Machabeng students fail to appear? Although still tweaking the performance, *KE LABALABELA HO BA* was set to present at the end of Sunday morning's service at the Sefika Evangelical Church. The 5-day tour of performances chronicles the ordeals and rewards of Hijinx's quest for inclusion. Hayhow establishes performing as a way to "develop awareness and acceptance that others are watching/witnessing" (Trowsdale & Hayhow, 2013). This was the goal for the performances:



FIGURE 151 PERFORMANCE AT SEFIKA CHURCH

awareness and acceptance. However, much like the storm, awareness and acceptance are forces of nature that cannot always be harnessed.

In front of a congregation of hundreds, the first public performance was a lesson in cultural competence and audience expectations. The performance was grappling with issues of authenticity and engagement, and two Machabeng students showed signs of insecurity and discomfort. The group warmed-up in the parking lot and then entered the church energized and ready to perform. Due to an unfortunate misunderstanding, they endured more than an hour of church services conducted in Sesotho. At the end of the sermon, the large

congregation prepared to close, when the pastor introduced the team. The congregation had already spent multiple hours in the pews, and the performers' nervous energy had now waned toward exhaustion. A typical guest presentation at Sefika would be expected to last around ten minutes, and full-scale performances are usually performed in the evenings or in lieu of a full sermon. During the nonverbal, abstract performance of over 30 minutes, the audience continually tried to applaud at what they imagined to be the end. The performance kept continuing. It was difficult for the audience to see due to sightlines or hear the music in the back of the church. After an uncomfortably silent 25 minutes, a deacon signaled to the facilitators to "wrap it up" and the group ended abruptly prior to the rehearsed conclusion. Prayers offered to close the service demonstrated a general sense of misunderstanding. Members of the congregation felt the performance was about working together as "Black Africans and White people" and frequently how age and youth need to work together (M Hlalele 2018 personal communication, February 18).



FIGURE 152 FIRST PERFORMANCE AT SEFIKA CHURCH

Ironically, the *Able to Act* Welsh portion of the team was based on the "decision to tour [Lesotho] with a production involving visibly learning-disabled actors [as] a bold and courageous act" (Hijinx.org.uk, 2018). The actors with Down syndrome, a highly identifiable disability with distinctive facial and physical features, were rendered invisible within the Lesotho context. The cultural competency—or "the complex understandings of identity, which include understandings of difference" (Moor e, 2012:33)—of the first performance was ineffective. Simply put, the audience failed to recognize disability because the majority

had never seen or encountered someone with Down syndrome and therefore only identified White actors and Black actors. Kidd affirms, “for the majority population to effectively understand other groups, they need to see accurate depictions of these groups” (2016:28). In addition, the performance was introduced as a drama, but in consideration of the “ethical problematic of informing” (Palmer & Hayhow, 2008:165), the audience was not informed of any disabilities or inclusive practices. The desire for the performance to “transcend [disabilities], whereas the performance aesthetic and the ethics of the process are determined by the fact that the performers have [disabilities]” (Whyman, 2006:14) complicated the authenticity and engagement. The performance was not dance nor drama by conventional expectations, and without an understanding of the inclusion or nonverbal physical theatre aesthetics, the message was lost. There was no time to discuss disability or inclusion with the audience after the Sefika performance to enrich understanding. A post-performance reflection with performers revealed some barriers to authenticity that may have affected the performance and concerns for the next performance for their peers at Machabeng (2018, personal communication 18 February):

**Mo:** before I was a bit—I don’t know what to call it—I wasn’t comfortable. [...] I am very nervous because I attend church here. So, I wasn’t performing my best. I know many people in there.... I wasn’t nervous about what they would think, but I didn’t want to perform.

**Refiloe:** My peers ... there will be confusion a bit because of the nonverbal part.... I know they will clap, but I don’t think they will understand exactly what is behind, unless we talk about it.. [pause] ...the fact that we’re on stage with people with disabilities... [pause] ...I don’t know. I think they will be shocked at first—it’s just the way it is.

**Mo:** There are a few people at school [...] I think it’s understanding. I didn’t understand before when I saw them, because we are never with people with disorders, so most of them make fun of them, and I think it’s going to be difficult to keep them quiet especially at school. But some understand. I don’t know what to call it—maybe it’s humility.

**Ntiesto:** I think they will view it in a different light after, because they aren’t used to seeing it and we work so well together during the performance. Them seeing us work together might actually change their mentality about people with disabilities, they might view us as the same—it just depends on the maturity of the people.

**Refiloe:** The fact that we’ll be acting together is going to be sort of a “how is that possible?” I don’t think they will believe. They will be expecting something like normal

theatre with words and stuff. The fact that we're not using language will confuse them a bit.

Similar to Sefika, the subsequent performance at Machabeng was foreshadowed by these concerns and was problematic due to issues of authenticity and engagement. The learners at Machabeng were required by administrators to attend the performance, despite it being on the first day of their midterm holiday. Also in attendance was the Senior Citizen's Association of Maseru, some of whom had been present at Sefika. The audience sat in silence throughout the performance, prematurely clapping at what they perceived was the end. The proscenium space set expectations of a conventional theatre performance. A post-performance

discussion revealed discrepancies within understanding and cultural competency. The retirees saw a performance about racial discrimination, acceptance, and working together in different cultures: "not needing to know a language to communicate."



FIGURE 153 PERFORMANCE AT MACHABENG

The Machabeng students in the audience criticized the nonconventional aspects of the performance, questioning its professionalism, purpose, and artistic merit. They expressed "feeling angry at first because I didn't understand, then sympathy and sadness" and statements such as "what was the message? I didn't know what to think." When disability and inclusion were specifically referenced by facilitators, statements shifted towards "well-coordinated activities," concentration, and open-mindedness (2018 personal communication, February 20). In attempts to encourage conversation about inclusion, the performers partnered (a Machabeng performer partnered with a Hijinx performer) to chat in small groups of audience members. At this point, the majority of non-performing Machabeng

students immediately left the venue. The retirees asked questions about the group and conversed with the performers. It was unclear if the rapid exit by the students was due to discomfort, lack of respect, or the desire to return to their holiday plans.



FIGURE 154 POST-PERFORMANCE DISCUSSION

*“INCLUSIVE THEATRE HAS TAUGHT US A GREAT DEAL, ABOUT THE VALUE AND BEAUTY OF DIVERSITY; YOU HAVE TAUGHT US HOW TO EMBRACE DIFFERENCES WITH LOVE, CARE AND JOY.... AS PEOPLE WE ARE ALREADY UNIFIED THROUGH BREATH, AND AS SUCH, WE THEREFORE HAVE NO REASON TO EMBRACE FEAR AND ANGER; OR TO DWELL ON BLAME OR JUDGEMENT, WHEN WE NOTICE DIFFERENCES IN OTHERS.” (M HLALELE 2018 PERSONAL COMMUNICATION, FEBRUARY 20)*

The “problematic of informing,” cultural competency and conventional theatre spaces, and expectations of the first performances raise the following questions: if the audience is unaware that half the company has a disability, does it negate what is exceptional about the performance? If the physical theatre style is culturally unfamiliar to the audience, does it overshadow the intended message? The issues of audience engagement, respect, expectations, and competency correlate with the CDC’s abyss and dark moments depicted in *Chapter 7*. The balance of transcending disability but being determined by disability is a common *abyss* of the journey to inclusion. The way out of the abyss for Hijinx suggests a *rebirth* in future performances, each of which occurred in nonconventional, outdoor spaces for audiences familiarized with inclusivity.

The return to Phelisanong and subsequent performance was a resurgence of the rapport, authenticity, and engagement for the entire project. The performance was surrounded by the audience and ended with a carnival celebration of games and festivities. It was the first time the entire *Able to Act* team was present at the inclusive “Neverland” in the Lesotho mountains. A tent was erected with chairs surrounding a large field, with students, staff, residents, and local villagers attending to watch the performance. Unlike at Sefika and

Machabeng, the audience reacted, commented, and engaged with the behaviors onstage. During the gumboots dance, the entire audience kept the beat, danced, and sang along. The ending scene of celebration involved the entire audience moving to the music and cheering.



FIGURE 155 PHELISANONG PERFORMANCE

The audience was unaccustomed to expectations and barriers of conventional theatre and inherently understood the nonverbal performance styles. They booed when Justin was isolated by others onstage, cheered when Refiloe began to accept him and celebrated with the group as he was welcomed into the community onstage. Audience members who had attended workshops mirrored choreography from their seats and rushed to participate with the performers at the end. The authenticity and engagement of the performance increased with every scene. The Machabeng students, previously insecure or self-conscious, began to fully commit in front of the audience. They stopped being serious or anxious and began to have fun onstage. It was a celebration of inclusion, and the audience had the opportunity to see themselves, their workshops, and contributions within the performance. The performance did not merely celebrate inclusion but created an inclusive community

“represented in affirming positive images” (Kuppers & Marcus, 2009:151). Unlike the previous audiences, there was no need to explain disability or inclusion at Phelisanong.

Post-performance, the entire team played and celebrated with the inclusive community at Phelisanong. Significantly, the *Able to Act* team was finally cohesive in their engagement, playing games and celebrating inclusion together. It was at this point that a clear transformation of authenticity,



FIGURE 156 LAURA PLAYING WITH BUBBLES AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

awareness, and engagement became prevalent in the performers. It was a crucial point in the journey, through “acceptance, engagement, and responsibility to the work and the group: it [was] the initial action of empathy” (Morgan & Saxton, 1987:24). If Phelisanong is a Neverland of inclusion, then after finally experiencing its magic together, the entire team believed in inclusive communities. They had seen them, participated in them, and celebrated them. The power of believing in inclusion directly influenced the following performances and interactions of the team. The performers themselves now believed in the relationships and symbolism within the performance and manifested it through facial expressions, focus, and reactions. There was a clearer projection of pride and intention, which replaced previous feelings of self-consciousness or doubt. The rapport, engagement, and joy created at Phelisanong continued in the remaining performances at Sentebale and Morija. The audience at Sentebale, a nonprofit that works with vulnerable Basotho children reacted similarly:

*“I’VE LEARNT TO BE MORE COMPASSIONATE AND ACCEPTING OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, THERE IS SUCH A NEED FOR THIS PROJECT TO CONTINUE IN LESOTHO AND ALSO START IN OTHER COUNTRIES TOO.”*  
(M. MAZAZU 2018 PERSONAL COMMUNICATION)

engaging, reacting, and celebrating inclusion throughout the performance. By the end of the performances at Sentabale, with one day left of touring, the group walked arm-in-arm back to the bus.

The final day of the project and performances at Morija Cultural Center reflects key ideas of agency, ownership, and advocacy. The morning performance for over a thousand primary students was neither perfect nor a complete failure. Learners that gathered near the small platform were engaged and joined in cheering, clapping, or singing throughout the performance. The sheer number of students and spaces in the audience left many learners



FIGURE 157 RAPPORT AND RELATIONSHIPS

unengaged, spread throughout the large yard, not paying attention, or being disrespectful. With little to no mention of inclusivity or disability, it was unclear if the students had any understanding of the inclusive performance in front of them (other than a nonverbal performance). After two incredible performances (at Phelisanong and Sentebale), the team was overwhelmed and disappointed after the first Morija performance.

The second (and final) performance was for approximately 50 young women from a secondary school. Throughout the performance, the young women were reasonably engaged and polite audience members. Upon finishing the performance, Nitiesto spontaneously stood up and led a conversation about disability, inclusivity, and how those topics formed the basis of the piece. She passionately shared her experiences to encourage the learners to advocate for inclusivity. Following the discussion, some of the young ladies from the audience were inspired to participate and requested to teach the team a game. Comradery (and a bit of chaos) ensued, as Nitiesto and the audience members held their own inclusive workshop. Victoria, thriving in the engaging atmosphere, immediately took to their song and game and afterward offered to reciprocally teach a Hijinx game. "Everybody learned something. There was real exchange" (A Gregory 2018 personal communication February 23). This was the gift

of theatre and the rewards accumulated during the journey: reciprocal altruism, authentic allies, and accomplices in inclusion—the empowerment of ownership and agency.



FIGURE 158 LAST PERFORMANCES AT MORIJA

### THE ELIXIR: THE GIFTS OF THEATRE

Helen Nicholson idealizes the gift of theatre by stating that “it offers an opportunity for an ethical praxis that disrupts horizons, in which new insights are generated and where the familiar might be seen, embodied and represented from alternative perspectives and different points of view” (2008:167). Nitiesto (and in many respects, the group as a whole) was empowered by new insights and confident to use her voice to ensure the learners understood the concept of inclusion. The performance and inclusive praxis were “effective in learning and living contexts to improve self-awareness, empathy, understanding and togetherness” (Trowsdale & Hayhow, 2013:74). In an act of reciprocal altruism and cultural competency, she (and they) disrupted horizons and exchanged experiences to work together toward a culture of inclusion. They formed relationships (onstage, in the bus, with the

*“REFLECTING ON THIS GIFT YOU HAVE EXPOSED US TO, HAS REQUIRED US TO DO SOME DEEP INTROSPECTION INTO HOW WE RELATE TO OTHERS WHO WE REGARD AS ‘DIFFERENT’. YOU HAVE TAUGHT US THE MEANING OF TRUE UNITY.”*

*(M HLALELE 2017 PERSONAL COMMUNICATION)*

audiences) that embodied alternative perspectives. Relationships are fundamental to inclusion and cultural competency: they provide a foundation for transformation by understanding expectations and attitudes. Nitiesto could relate to the attitudes and expectations of the audience as she had once been a secondary student in Lesotho. She desired to gift the relationships she had formed, challenge attitudes, and subsequently build others' knowledge.

Progressive pedagogy recognizes that community-built relationships are “based on mutual recognition” in seeing each other as “whole human beings with complex lives and experiences rather than simply as seekers of compartmentalized bits of knowledge” (hooks, 1994:13-15). The audience was given the opportunity to see the performers as whole human beings, to hear from Victoria and Nitetso of their adventures over the previous week, and to experience the performance they created together. Through theatre praxis and performance, the group had grown mutual recognition for each other through performance, rapport, adventure, and overcoming dark moments. Nitiesto's agency in addressing her peers in a discussion about disability is reflective of her growth and experience throughout the project. Victoria (who days earlier was tortured by nerves for the performances) was the epitome of bravery and confidence during the impromptu workshop, which speaks to the importance of supportive, empowered relationships. Alone, neither might have had the confidence to stand in front of an audience and share their authentic selves: their hopes, skills, and aspirations. Yet, supported by the team and their mutual experiences, they began to cross borders of society, culture, and ability.

*“TO BE HUMAN IS TO ENGAGE IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS AND WITH THE WORLD. IT IS TO EXPERIENCE THAT WORLD AS AN OBJECTIVE REALITY, INDEPENDENT OF ONESELF, CAPABLE OF BEING KNOWN” (FREIRE 2005:3)*

Freire stipulates that people “learn social and political responsibility only by *experiencing* that responsibility” (2005:32), and the *Able to Act* project provided opportunities for all participants to experience and celebrate inclusive

cultures. Throughout the journey, the more inclusive the team became (forming authentic relationships, engaging onstage and off), the more they transformed the performance and

the audience's experiences (participating in the performances, workshops afterward, discussions). The participants experienced a "shift of consciousness that dramatically and irreversibly [altered their] way of being in the world" (O'Sullivan, 2002:xvii). The journey to these transformative shifts was replete with risk, fear, and doubt, of temptations and dark moments. When committed to the journey of inclusive work—through building rapport and supporting the community—much like a Maseru thunderstorm, these moments passed and allowed inclusion to shine.

## THE RETURN: THE ROAD BACK HOME

Journal February 2018.

*On the road back to the guest house, Gareth generously offers some of his pocket mints to everyone else in the van. He is a man of big emotions: generally, these are positive encouraging and accompanied by the best high-fives imaginable. It's rare he isn't offering words of praise or support with a "Good one, Kate!" or a "High-five. Right." Gareth can put a smile on the face of anyone he meets, transforming even the most stressful times into a pleasant experience. But sometimes, these high-hearted emotions are contrasted with immense lows, or a bit of cheeky revenge. If you trick him into waking up early once, be wary of a cold-water surprise in your bed the next morning. Or if you ask a question that veers on too-personal about his benefits, be prepared to get the silent treatment for an undisclosed amount of time. Although, these moments never seem to be hateful; more-so casting any strong emotion he feels back onto its source. One of the last evenings, Gareth's mood was distressingly down. After much prodding, homesickness, exhaustion, and nerves were all ruled out. Gareth was concerned about his heart. His dear friend, a fellow prominent long-time member of Hijinx, had unexpectedly passed away a few months prior due to a heart condition. Gareth was worried that he too might suddenly leave his family and friends. Gareth, along with the Hijinx team members reflected on what their lost friend would think of Lesotho, on past performances together and how at the funeral, everyone seemed to be saying "do you remember the time [the departed friend] was Peter Pan?"*



FIGURE 159 GARETH SPREADING JOY

Saying goodbye—whether at the end of a project, the parting of relationships, or the loss of a friend—is painful. This night’s melancholic memories could partly explain Gareth’s emotions nearing the end of the trip, alongside having to say goodbye to new friends and adventures. Gareth represents the jester archetype: he brings joy and trickeries and lives in the moment. The shadow side of the jester is getting stuck in grief, or lost in joyless moments (Jung, 1990; Pearson, 2008). This touches on the last, rarely discussed, “*dark moment*” in inclusive theatre and creating inclusive cultures. Due to the nature of some disabilities—such as heart conditions, life-expectancy, or health complications—there are increased risks of loss and grief in the community. In a quest to heal after the untimely loss of Gareth’s Peter Pan-playing-friend, Odyssey (the community outreach division of Hijinx) devised *2<sup>nd</sup> Star to the Right*. Director and facilitator Jon Dafydd-Kidd was encouraged to work towards how the community could process loss and move forward as a group by “celebrating the idea of self, but exploring what happens in Neverland once Peter is gone” (Dafydd-Kidd 2017 personal communication). The large community cast (30+ participants of all ages) performance does not actually touch on the death of Peter Pan; instead, it weaves scenes from students and community members to explore a post-Peter Neverland, the community left behind. The end of the *Able to Act* project asks a similar question: what about the community left behind? As the performers end their heroic adventure and return home to their ordinary worlds in Wales or Machebang, what is the project leaving behind, in the community and in each of its performers?

*“WE DON’T WORK WITH LEARNING DISABLED AND/OR AUTISTIC PEOPLE BECAUSE IT’S THE RIGHT THING TO DO (WHICH IT IS), OR BECAUSE EVERYONE DESERVES ACCESS TO A RICH CULTURAL LIFE (WHICH THEY DO). WE WORK WITH THEM BECAUSE OUR UNDERSTANDING OF HUMANITY IS ENRICHED WHEN WE VIEW THE WORLD FROM A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE.”*  
(HIJINX.ORG.UK, 2020)

The community left behind after the *Able to Act* adventure is not unlike a return from Neverland to the real world. The magic of inclusion and adventure dissipates, and segregation, stigma, and struggles still exist; but the community has experienced relationships that have transformed perspectives and understandings. The Machabeng students had become complicit in advocacy for inclusion by their engagement, relationships,

and interactions. They were not only allies for disability but accomplices in the act of inclusion. The Hijinx actors returned home with the confidence of adventurers and stories to share of Lesotho greater than “babies abandoned at orphanages.” Together the group had taken risks, overcome obstacles, and obtained the elixir of inclusive theatre to create inclusive communities. What the project left behind was a network of “everyday heroes equipped to solve local and global problems” through small actions and a little bit of courage (Zimbardo, 2011a). Dafydd-Kidd reflected on the project:

Over two weeks we became a family, and everyone has bonded exceptionally well. What we do hope, very strongly, is that we can work towards a future where we can invite them to Wales, where they can experience a deeper, more ingrained style of inclusive theatre which they can in turn bring back and do in Lesotho and that we can return and work with young people in Lesotho with disabilities” (2018 personal communication).

Each “hero” of the *Able to Act* team functioned archetypically throughout the journey: they were explorers, creators, and caregivers. At times, they shapeshifted, becoming everyman, lovers, jesters, sages, and magicians. Each began or continued their “personal hero journey one good deed at a time, while learning how to be effective change agents able to cope with and remediate problems in their families, schools, workplaces, communities, and nations” (Zimbardo, 2011b: 406). Each participant and audience member had an opportunity to “view the world from a different perspective” (hijinx.org.uk, 2020), develop empathy, and believe in the creation of an inclusive community. They became the heroes of their own story and illustrated how other “kinds of people” can be the heroes of the story.

Through theatre, they proved that “[a]nyone can be a hero at any time an opportunity arises to stand up for what is right and just, and to speak out against injustice, corruption, and other evils.” (Zimbardo, 2011b: 405). Whether or not this ideal is possible, the essence of what was left behind in the community was aspirations for the future.

*“I HAVE A DISABILITY AND THE TRIP TO LESOTHO HAS TAUGHT ME THAT IT’S IMPORTANT TO SHARE IT WITH PEOPLE.”  
(V. WALTERS 2018 PERSONAL COMMUNICATION)*

The journey of Hijinx and the *Able to Act* team models what creating inclusive cultures through theatre can look, sound, and feel like. It provides opportunities to be reciprocally altruistic, to build relationships, and learn with and from each other. In the Welsh language, the word *dysgu* means both teaching and learning, and that encompasses the methodology of the journey—the constant exchange of both teaching and learning. A quest for inclusion—whether in Lesotho or Nigeria, Cardiff or Houston—follows similar paths: a call to action, forging relationships, and overcoming challenges and dark moments. Allied to the devising process, these are building blocks to creating inclusive cultures: steps toward breaking down the systems and structures that lead to exclusion. They cannot be completed in a day, 2 weeks, or even years—but through community-building, relationships, and representation, they are steps forward.



FIGURE 160 THE ABLE TO ACT TEAM

## CHAPTER 9: APPROACHING THE ULTIMATE BOON

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*“EACH ONE OF US CAN MAKE A CONTRIBUTION. TOO FREQUENTLY WE THINK WE HAVE TO DO SPECTACULAR THINGS. YET IF WE REMEMBER THAT THE SEA IS ACTUALLY MADE UP OF DROPS OF WATER AND EACH DROP COUNTS, EACH ONE OF US CAN DO OUR LITTLE BIT WHERE WE ARE [...] EACH ONE OF US CAN BE AN OASIS OF PEACE.”*

(SOUTH AFRICAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST DESMOND TUTU, 2007)

### Field Report, September 2017

Outside the “Oasis Association Group Home for Adults with Disabilities,” located in the southern suburbs of Cape Town, South Africa, Savannah, Kim, and Robert are huddled together under an umbrella in a torrential rainfall. Robert is sharing stories about his awful day: the bus was late, his family canceled their visit this weekend, and—to make matters worse—his socks are now soaking wet. Kim and Savannah commiserate: Savannah is feeling equally defeated since she has just failed a test, has too many school assignments due, and her car was burglarized. Kim messed up at work, twisted her ankle, and had a fight with her best friend. As they walk together into the building, a similar downtrodden energy fills the make-shift rehearsal space with stories of bad news, bad friends, and bad luck. Despite the respite of pre-rehearsal tea and biscuits and a rousing warm-up game of “save the world,” the Oasis team continues to lament about the problems of this very bad day. Instead of ignoring said problems at the group check-in circle, the team attempts to rid the negativity by calling out all the issues in their world: pollution, abuse, hunger, crime, bad friends, traffic, and robbery.



FIGURE 161 MEMBERS OF THE OASIS LEAGUE

Campbell refers to such problems as a “succession of trials” (2004:89) that heroes must face throughout their journey. Once they have been tested and challenged, found friends, faced enemies, developed skills, and gained gifts, the heroes find themselves transformed and ready to return to save their world. Many quests culminate with an approach to attain the

“ultimate boon,” a timely benefit or magic elixir to restore their world (Campbell, 2004; Pearson, 2015). The theatrical journeys towards a culture of inclusion within this section have revealed various boons: relationships built, talents revealed, communities engaged, aesthetics perfected, as well as trials in assumptions, lack of support, setbacks, and superstitions. The praxis developed within these cycles of design research has aligned with criteria established from others’ work in the field and juxtaposed with similar cross-cultural projects to detail the allies, enemies, obstacles, dark moments, and temptations involved in creating cultures of inclusion through theatre. This chapter approaches an ultimate boon: a timely benefit in the form of a trial-run collaboration and a test of the inclusive praxis through a joint performance project with the Oasis Association (Oasis) and University of Cape Town (UCT).

An eclectic group of UCT theatre students (a mix of aspiring theatre-makers, actors, teachers, and community facilitators) partnered with residents of the Oasis Association for 6 weeks of devising workshops that culminated with the performance *The Oasis League*. The performance encompassed approximately (on any given day) twenty-six participants, mirroring the complexities of race, economic status, disability and opportunity within the South African context. The racial percentage of the participants is approximately 58% White, and 42% Persons of Color (a vernacular term used within the context). This ratio reflects an on-going struggle of racial inequalities, decolonizing views of disability, access to tertiary education and care services within South Africa (as the participants are represented from their institutions: UCT & Oasis). The stories and experiences drawn from this project (and subsequent UCT–Oasis collaborations) depict approaches of empathy, reciprocity, and accountability, thus uncovering the ultimate boon of inclusive performance. The collaboration tests the

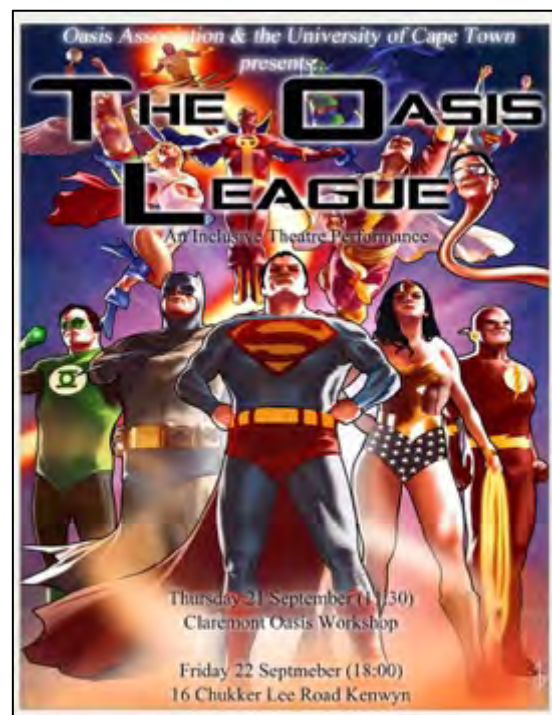


FIGURE 162 POSTER CREATED BY A PARTICIPANT FOR THE OASIS LEAGUE

established inclusive praxis framework (check-in, agreements, warm-up, main activities, and reflection as established in *Chapter 3 Meeting the Mentor(s)* and further developed through subsequent fieldwork in *Chapters 4, 5, and 7*). Accessibility through accommodations and modifications are described in case studies, and the culminating performance addresses the criteria for inclusive performance recognized in *Chapter 6* (accessibility, authenticity, engagement, transformation, and aesthetics). A unique feature of the Oasis collaborations is the consideration of theatre-focused participants (UCT students) and the outcomes they experienced by their participation in inclusive performances.

Following the check-in mentioned in the field report above, the group divides into pairs and teams. Despite some age differences, it is almost impossible to distinguish the UCT students from some of the residents. Discussions, images, improvisation, and exercises inspire laughter and problem-solving as the small groups create and share performances: bad days and dance parties, hiking and recycling, DJ Ghostbuster's Michael Jackson tribute, and an epic teatime battle for biscuits. The result is *The Oasis League*: an eclectic mix of scenes that depict ordinary situations and everyday events with heroic twists. The praxis, and in turn the culminating performance, can be described as "heightened forms of everyday human activity" stipulated by Hayhow as playing, pretending, and performance. This, consequently, "emphasizes the centrality of social interaction (for everything happens in the context of the group) and offers [participants] opportunity and freedom to test, shape and develop their capabilities" (Trowsdale & Hayhow, 2013).

*"PLAYING IS WHAT WE ALL DO AS CHILDREN, PRETENDING IS IN ESSENCE AT THE HEART OF EMPATHY – IMAGINING WHAT IT IS LIKE TO BE IN SOMEONE ELSE'S SHOES, AND PERFORMING IS BEING CONSCIOUS OF BEING WITNESSED DOING SOMETHING IN FRONT OF ANOTHER."*

(TROWSDALE & HAYHOW:2013:75)

The group first engaged in play, (in warm-up games such as "save the world") but moreover in Hayhow's definition of play that creates "languages beyond verbal [...] interaction and communication with others" and "develops and enjoys a sequence of activities" (2013). To

The Story	
1	Scene 1
	Super Heroes Enter
	There were problems!
	Oasis League!
	We will Save it!
2	Scene 2 (Red)
	Ladies enjoy tea and biscuits.
	People are hungry.
	Fight over biscuits.
	Superheroes share.
3	Scene 3 (Blue)
	Everyone has a bad day.
	Dancing Duo brings tissues!
	Everyone dances!
4	Scene 4 (yellow)
	Friends are hiking, climbing and swimming.
	There is rubbish everywhere!
	Superheroes recycle.
	Drive to Oasis to recycle.
5	Scene 5
	DJ's Interrupt with Bad News.
	Call the Oasis League!
	We will save it!
	Performers bow & applause
	Thoughts and reflections
	The End.

FIGURE 163 VISUAL SCRIPT FOR THE OASIS LEAGUE

do this, Boal’s methods of image theatre and mirroring—as well as improvised dance—freed the participants and allowed them to shed their troubles and enjoy the activities together. Through improvisation, roleplay, storytelling, and reenacting each other’s stories, the group pretended together. Pretense took the forms of scene work, lip-syncs, and the creation of superhero personas, allowing unique talents and abilities to blossom in both the real and imagined worlds. Ultimately, these exercises lead to three performances, wherein each participant performed for each other, their peers at the group home, and colleagues at the protective workshop. In each performance, the audiences witnessed the talents and voices as well as the inclusive community being created.

### CASE STUDIES FROM THE OASIS LEAGUE

Each group or partnership developed play, pretending, and performance in different ways through the use of individual voices, music, role-play, and games that offered the freedom to “test, shape and develop their capabilities” in inclusive theatre and inclusive community. Case studies and excerpts from qualitative arts-based data are detailed to establish strategies and stories of the experience.

## CASE STUDY 1: WE WILL SAVE IT!

An epic soundtrack begins as a league of superheroes enter (in slow motion), led by Justin (aka DJ Ghostbuster). He moonwalks across the stage with a near-perfect rendition of Michael Jackson choreography, accompanied by his partner Kat. The DJ–host pair is responsible for guiding the performance as “[p]re-recorded music is the main structuring process for the narrative and helps to keep a focus” (Trowsdale & Hayhow, 2015:1025). Each team uses music, but Justin and Kat accentuate the importance. Due to unexpected health concerns during the workshop process, instead of the anticipated larger team, Justin and Kat paired together and took charge of music, sound cues, and set decor. Kat, who “prefers to work within a group rather than lead it,” used her interest in art to create posters and props with Justin and prompted sound cues on a visual script (see *Figure 163*). They were

responsible for music cues from an iPhone connected to a Bluetooth speaker. Justin taught Kat the entirety of choreography for *Bad*, recorded video and photos using the iPhone, and provided a plethora of Michael Jackson costume pieces. Together they led the opening song “We Will Save It,” a rendition of Queen’s (1977) *We Will Rock You* with the words changed to reflect the themes of the performance. The modification of using the tune or background track of well-known songs was utilized by a few different participants. Kat and Justin also decided to

**DJ Ghostbuster:** (record scratch) We interrupt this broadcast with an important announcement. All the problems in the world are piling up. Traffic. Bad Friends. Sickness. Hunger. Crime. Abuse. It’s getting BAD. *Really BAD.*

**[MUSIC CUE:** verse and chorus of Michael Jackson’s *Bad* (1987) begins “You know [it’s] bad, [it’s] bad you know it. Really really bad...and the whole world has to answer right now. Just to tell you once again-[it’s] bad.”

**DJ Ghostbuster:** Who we gonna call? (*groups shout their names: The Dancing Duo? The Biscuiteers? Recycle man!*)

**EVERYONE:** [in unison with accompanied hand movements] THE OASIS LEAGUE! We will work together, as friends, stay focused, have fun, listen and respect each other in order to...SAVE THE WORLD!!!

**[music cue:** to the tune of Queen’s (1977) *We Will Rock You*]

(*Stomp. Stomp. Clap. X3*)  
The World is Scary, We need to help it!  
Who are we gonna call?  
SUPERHEROES!  
Abuse Everywhere. We all care!  
So we better get out there.  
We will. We will Save it!  
We will. We will. Save it!



FIGURE 164 DJ GHOSTBUSTER’S BAD IN THE OASIS LEAGUE

adapt Michael Jackson's (1987) *Bad* by changing "I'm" to "It's" to fit the context of the story (see ending in *Figure 164*).

Using known melodies gave a framework to be creative and alleviated the stress of having to create or learn entirely new pieces while highlighting the voices and music preferences of participants. Music played an instigating role in much of the devising, rapport, and development of the project. Doolittle refers to "recreating excerpts from pieces of favorite popular culture [...] with more personalized expressions" (2016:244) as an effective modification in inclusive work, and this is seen with Justin and throughout multiple case studies. It allowed Justin to showcase his Michael Jackson obsession and dance skills while contributing to the already established storyline. Kat and Justin's teamwork is a strong example of experiences of reciprocal "peer-to-peer teaching as dramaturges and mentors [...] to develop capacities in performance, creation, direction, and critical observation" (Doolittle et al; 2016:244).



FIGURE 165 DJ GHOSTBUSTER HOSTING THE AFTERPARTY PARTY

*"MOREOVER I WAS MOST FEARFUL OF HOW MY OWN PREJUDICES, INFORMED BY THE KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR DISABILITIES, MIGHT HAVE CLOUDED MY INITIAL PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THEIR SKILLS."*  
(KARAFISTAN, 2004:266)

The collaboration of these capabilities was not always successfully implemented. For example, at the beginning of the project, Justin had boasted repeatedly of his DJ skills and invited many UCT participants to his bedroom to "check out his equipment." Due to ethical and professional standards, all guests to the Oasis home were discouraged from entering private areas. This upset Justin, and he repeatedly asked if he could retrieve his DJ equipment from his bedroom. Justin was inclined to embellish frequently in check-ins and reflections, which lead to an oversight in the magnitude of Justin's DJ prowess until dress rehearsals. Due to assumptions formed around Justin's collection of late-1990s memorabilia and his confessions that he was

not allowed to bring his equipment to the workshop, it was assumed that his DJ equipment was perhaps a karaoke machine or small stereo system. The group agreed the iPhone and Bluetooth would be used for the two workshop performances, but Justin could set up his full DJ equipment for the closing performance with families invited to the group home. Justin negotiated heavily for the opportunity to DJ and host a dance party afterward. Upon setting up for the final performance, to the shock and amazement of the group, Justin unloaded three road cases of professional DJ equipment: mixing tables, amps, speakers, microphones, and even some LED lights. Unfortunately, preconceived notions of Justin's ability and equipment were detrimental to the performances, for had it been recognized earlier, it would have been more fully incorporated into the performance.

Justin and Kat compensated for issues in communication and understanding by specifying the importance of specific tasks. Justin's enthusiasm for the project often waned due to concerns of "not being cool" in front of his colleagues and staff members at the workshop. The opportunity to be a leader with responsibilities (such as the narration roles of DJ Ghostbuster, leading the group entrance and bows, or having input on choosing house music) allowed Justin to voice his concerns and participate: he was empowered by his role within the team. The relationship built with Kat emphasized accountability and provided an opportunity to help her (and the UCT students) achieve high exam marks for the project. It also allowed him to support his peers at the group home, ultimately challenging his insecurities. Kat reflected that "Justin was easily distracted and I found it challenging to pull his focus back. At one point, however, we started to bond and it was easier to focus on getting some work done ... we could come up with some ideas together as a duo team" (Berner, K. 2017, personal communication, September 4). Leadership allowed Justin to build empathy and rapport without forcing him to participate outside of his comfort zone, encouraging reflection on ways to counteract the potential negativity from his peers. Ending the project with a celebration dance party hosted by Justin celebrated his unique contributions and resulted in him having the opportunity to be the life of the party.

## CASE STUDY 2: THE TEA LADIES AND THE BISCUITEERS (RED TEAM)

“Lean on me, when you're not strong. And I'll be your friend. I'll help you carry on”—Bill Wither’s 1972 classic, *Lean on Me*, is belted by tea ladies wearing matching fascinators as the ensemble behind them sets up a tea table. Estelle, one of the ladies who lunch, refuses to fade with the music cue and completes another couple of verses of the song solo. Her friend, Francis, beckons to her with the poshest of accents from a seated chair. She improvises: “Ohhh Estelle, darling, won’t you join us for biscuits and tea! How I love tea! Do you love



FIGURE 166 THE RED TEAM

biscuits?” Successfully shaken from her *Lean on Me* trance, Estelle joins the others at the table to add her opinions on biscuits, especially chocolate biscuits. Estelle is apt to fixate on one topic, often chocolate biscuits, learning how to drive, or a specific song. Once Estelle becomes captivated with her topic-of-the-day, she often becomes disruptive in her pursuit: it is near impossible to refocus her to other tasks. The team initially found it difficult to incorporate her unpredictability into their performances. Best practices included a flexible use of improvisation and what Kempe identifies as “questioning skills to engage the partners in the work”

(1996:161): “Do you want to sit down? What would you do if someone stole your biscuits? Would you share them?” As a modification, rehearsed improvisation and side-coaching through performed questions allowed Estelle to participate and voice her opinions while maintaining focus on the scene. The “rehearsed improvisation approach ... [adopts] a

collective inclusive approach, in which each participant is respected and valued, with members contributing their particular blend of responsibility, trust, and willingness” (Johnston, 2012:32).

The red team was originally intended to be two separate teams of five, including Kat and Justin, but their unexpected absence led to combining to a large team of eight. Struggles in maintaining focus and ensuring input from all team members further divided the team into complementary smaller groups (the Tea Ladies, the Biscuit Eaters, and the Biscuiteers). Unintentionally, the Tea Ladies contained more dominant, spontaneous personalities, reflected in practices of framed improvisation, elaborate lip-syncs, and side-coach questioning. The Biscuit eaters Were an independent partnership whose rapport and fondness of spy movies flourished through a conventional approach to creating performance. This included workshopping comic banter on their desire for biscuits and a “mission impossible” inspired movement piece. The duo was self-motivated, continuously adding and adjusting in each rehearsal.



FIGURE 167 TUG-OF-WAR AS PHYSICAL THEATRE

In order to connect the Biscuit Eaters’ consistency with the unpredictability of the Tea Ladies, a devised structured-but-spontaneous chase scene ended with an actual game of tug-of-war. The modification of a box of biscuits with a hidden tug-of-war cloth allowed a physical theatre, safe, pseudo-improvised visual of a fight between the two groups (Figure 167). The

use of games for scene building (Sealey et al, 2017; Cattanach, 1996; Kempe, 1996; McCurrach & Darnley, 1999) is an often-applied devising technique, but keeping the game structure within the performance created a modification for participation. The specific activity of a competitive performed game on-stage bypassed any possible distractions that may have occurred during the scene. Both groups actively struggling to win the game provided an authentic portrayal of concrete motivations and seamlessly built tension for the entrance of the hero-team, the Biscuiteers.

The Biscuiteers, a hero trio, was facilitated by professional cheerleader Kutloano. Her partners were less verbal, and the typically more reluctant team members. In contrast to the flexible improvisation of the rest of the group, the Biscuiteers favored “structured active participation” (Jackson & Vine 2013: 5) in the form of sharp, choreographed moves

complemented by choral speeches. At the beginning of the workshops, Kutloano struggled to balance her enthusiasm, appearing patronizing to her group and setting low expectations for her team. She actively reflected: “I was overthinking a lot [...] I think I can work on communicating better—being more clear and lowering my tempo a bit.” She was encouraged to work with her strengths and share her interests (such as cheerleading) with her partners while reciprocally learning from and about them. Once she stopped trying to facilitate in the style of others

*“THIS WEEK, WE IMPROVED ON OUR PIECES TO THE POINT WHERE THEY LOOKED ASTRONOMICALLY BETTER. INTERESTINGLY, THIS IMPROVEMENT DIDN'T REQUIRE ANY DRASTIC CHANGES. SMALL SHIFTS (LIKE ADDING A TUG OF WAR OVER THE BISCUITS IN ONE SCENE, OR INVOLVING A BLUE FABRIC TO INDICATE WATER) NOT ONLY SERVED AS MORE VISCERAL STIMULATION FOR EACH PIECE, BUT EVIDENTLY ALSO MADE THE PERFORMANCES AND REHEARSALS MUCH FUNNER [SIC]”*

(F SHOLTO-DOUGLASS, 2017 PERSONAL COMMUNICATION, SEPTEMBER 11)



FIGURE 168 BISCUITEERS GROUP CHOREOGRAPHY

and honored her own strengths, she noted that “once we did less talking and worked with our bodies more, energies went up. The plan changed a lot, but fit better” (K. Headbush 2017, personal communication, September 1). The red team exhibits Doolittle’s notion that

mixing identities and abilities happen not only in the improvised sections; the choreographed scenes “leveled the playing field in a different way [...] Peer to peer coaching—working together on getting the steps and formations exactly right—furthered collaboration within the cast. Unison sequences enacted and expressed inclusion differently (2016:249).

In addition to choreography within the red team, unison choreography with the entire cast reinforced ideas of inclusion and the possibilities of participation within the larger group and society. These full-cast numbers were modified with taped colored lines on the floor for spacing, group mirroring, as well as visual placards for clarification and prompting (see *Figure 169*). A mix of group and individual opportunities allowed everyone to be involved. A reoccurring note in early workshops was “not everyone needs to be *the focus*, but everyone needs to be included” (fieldnotes, 2017)—the red team demonstrated this balance.

### CASE STUDY 3: RECYCLING AND HIKES (YELLOW TEAM)

“Come on, get in the car Nikki!,” Anathi shouts as he gently gestures to Nikki’s empty position for their car scene. Somewhere between the chaos of a physical theatre adventure hike (crossing mountain, swimming in streams, stumbling upon a major pollution problem), the intervention of superheroes racing to clean it up, and the mad dash to the Oasis recycling

center, Nikki was overwhelmed and forgot what she was doing. A momentary look of fear crossed her face, but in a brief second, Jerome threw his arm around his friend’s shoulder, and Kylie cheered “*Klim in die kar, Nikki! Jy kan*



FIGURE 169 GREASE LIGHTING AT OASIS

*dit doen. Vasbyt!*” as Brenden started up the car. Nikki smiled as she joined them bumping along to “Greased Lightning.”

Nikki can say many things without saying a word. As a strong member of the Oasis recycling team, a good friend, a lover of cats, and an enthusiastic performer, she tends to use nonverbal communication, facial expressions, body language, and proximity to others to convey her thoughts and feelings. This is not to say Nikki cannot speak; her mother tongue is Afrikaans, and when needed, she responds in English or Afrikaans (depending on the situation), but her personal preference is nonverbal. During rehearsals, Kylie often adapted tasks for Nikki by explaining them in both English and Afrikaans. Before the performance at the workshop started—as the company was getting into costume, running scenes, or rehearsing some last-minute adjustments—Nikki sat silently in an audience chair. Her facial expression, usually a warm smile or perhaps a questioning smirk, was uncharacteristically blank. A single tear ran down her face. When asked what was wrong, Nikki remained silent with no verbal or nonverbal response. Bilingually, her team questioned her. Was she

*“I WAS REALLY OVERWHELMED BECAUSE I WANTED TO BE ATTENTIVE TO EVERYONE. AS WELL AS ENSURE THAT THE STORYLINE WAS RELEVANT. IN THE END, THE STORY WAS NOT WHAT I EXPECTED BUT I THINK IN WHAT MAY HAVE APPEARED TO BE A FAILURE TURNED OUT MUCH BETTER THAN I EXPECTED. I LEARNT THAT IT'S GREAT TO PREPARE BUT YOU HAVE TO BE PREPARED FOR IT TO SHIFT.” (FISHER, K. 2017 PERSONAL COMMUNICATION, SEPTEMBER 4)*

nervous? Upset? Having a bad day? Nikki continued a blank stare and solitary tears in response to each of these questions. “Do you want to perform in the drama, or would you rather just watch?” Nikki finally responded with her trademark smile and a simple nod in the affirmative. “You want to just watch?” No response. “You want to perform?” Smile and nod.

Nikki, Anathi, Jerome, and the yellow team reinforce practices established by previous case studies: they relied on a framework of music to cue and focus; they performed play in the use of games and mirroring; there was a mix of improvisation and planned choreography; and of most importance was rapport, interests, and talents. The unique strength of the yellow team was in their positive reinforcement and “forever supporting and hyping each other all the time” (M. Mkhize, 2018 personal communication). They excelled in inclusive transitions, and seamlessly melded individual moments together through friendships. Instead of smooth choreographed scene changes, they would simply talk, encourage or remind each other:

“Kim, can you please help me move this table? Did you work at the bakery this morning?” “I love this part—Brenden loves to drive!” or “Michael, great dance moves! Are you ready to watch Justin?” The use of communication to enhance collaboration and performance, within the scenes and transitions resulted in a continuous “moving energy, like a ball in the constant state of movement, the players acutely conscious of everything going on around them while keeping their eye on the ball” (Spolin, 1963:xvi). Throughout the other team’s performances, the yellow team functioned as ensemble members adding a “constant hype” through reactions, cheers, applause, or background sound effects. When lines were dropped or cues missed, there were no whispered coverups, just the team working together to support each other. Roulstone refers to “the glories of imperfection” (2010:432): the team filled in any potential awkward, imperfect moment or gap between scenes with explicit support and positive reinforcement. Their “mutual support of the inclusive ensemble ... with each member bringing what they can to the process” (Wooster, 2009:85) functioned to accommodate individual stories and modify participation through prompting and support and as an aesthetic choice to showcase the community.

The yellow team’s own scene balanced showcasing individual talents and supportive ensemble work by disrupting “the traditional heroic narrative with an episodic, review-like structure” that was committed to the “creation of community within the ensemble and between actors and audience” (Sandahl & Auslander, 2008:113). A choral chant accompanied an ensemble physical theatre hike of rehearsed improvisation through the mountains. Upon discovering the mountainside covered in garbage, the audience and ensemble were invited to actively race to pick up and sort recyclables. All non-participating ensemble members cheered and provided background music. After the clean-up game, the Jerome (also known as Recycling Man), accompanied by a puppetry



FIGURE 170 RECYCLING CLEAN-UP GAME

ensemble, flew in to relay the importance and ease of recycling at the Oasis recycling center (his and many participants' real-life job). The team formed a car for Brenden to drive to Oasis, as his brother Michael impersonated his personal idol, Danny Zuko from *Grease* (1978).

Throughout the process, the brothers were inseparable. They share a family resemblance, both have similar enthusiastic quirks when they are enjoying a task or activity, and both wear their emotions on their sleeve. They are always the first to welcome and the last to say

goodbye: their passion for performance, friendship, and activity is contagious. Michael, the elder to the two, has a love for all things rock and roll and fancies himself “a Danny Zuko [from *Grease the Musical*] or a Michael Jackson”



FIGURE 171 MICHAEL AND BRENDEN SWIMMING THROUGH A RIVER ON A HIKE

(2017, personal communication). Michael wows the audience and his castmates with slick Greased-Lightning dance moves that would put John Travolta to shame. In lieu of rigid dance steps (that resulted in frustration), Michael “improvised in the midst of a crowd (in both rehearsals and performances); he moved more assuredly and seemed to become more profoundly expressive. His immersive and self-realizing dancing created an affective force, [that] not only transforms him, but also has potential to transform those who watch him” (Doolittle et. All, 2016:249). Michael’s strengths are his energy and showmanship. He has yet to sidestep the limelight, and no matter who is in his group, Michael finds a way to shine.

Brenden, the younger of the brothers, is slightly less outgoing and prefers to perform in groups. What Brenden lacks in showmanship, he compensates with his limitless lavish positive reinforcement for others. His pure joy on stage—especially cheering on and

supporting his castmates—is an art in itself. After any run-through or performance, Brenden is ready with words of encouragement, praise, and gratitude for everyone onstage (and off), and rehearsal often cannot continue until Brenden has made sure everyone knows how talented, kind, funny, or special they are. Sandahl comments, “what I find remarkable about disability community is the intention and effort to include all of the people to the fullest extent possible” (Sandahl, 2002:26). This is fortified in a participant reflection that summarizes the yellow team and Oasis projects as a whole:

The participants always tried to help each other, when one person was not able to read for example, another would assist them. Sometimes this would result in a spontaneous banter or loud verbal exchange. This allowed for the entire process to be spontaneous and ever-changing. We were often surprised by members suddenly joining in at various places or others wandering off whenever they pleased. It made the performance fluid and fun rather than stagnant and rigid. (K Berner, 2017, personal communication).

#### CASE STUDY 4: THE BEST WORST DAY (BLUE TEAM)

Savannah takes detailed, meticulous, color-coded notes. She checks-in, sends reminders, makes lists, and keeps rehearsals on track. She is always early to class and the last one to leave. She offers rides, snacks, and hugs to anyone who looks like they might be struggling. A self-proclaimed “Type-A” personality studying to be a drama therapist, she reflects that she “chose to audition for the Inclusive Theatre Company under a misunderstanding of what the



FIGURE 172 SAVANNAH ASSISTING JEROME AS RECYCLING MAN

process actually was and I am immensely better for it” (S. Brueton, 2017 personal communication). Through her reflections, and observations, it is clear that Savannah is passionate about “helping others” and is constantly anxious that she might be ill-prepared, too much, too little, condescending,

or somehow doing harm. This self-imposed anxiety accumulated throughout the process, as she was constantly concerned that she “was letting the group down.”

On the rainy day that began this chapter, Savannah was in a rough state due to the stresses of school, social life, and anxiety. She reflected “I didn't want my personal experience to ruin the experience of the day for the rest of my group , but I tried my best to push through” (2017, personal communication, September 12). Instead of pushing through, she was encouraged to share these concerns with her team and—much like she asked them to share about their bad days—reciprocally share her feelings. Throughout the process, Savannah

developed from an advocate (someone who believes in the idea of inclusive work) to an ally (someone who actively works toward inclusivity through support and planning). Self-reflections and personal relationships further lead to a “concept of allyship, as a skilled practice,

*“I DIDN'T WANT TO HAVE LOW EXPECTATIONS AND HAVE THAT PREVENTING MY GROUP FROM DOING WHAT THEY CAN DO.”*

(BRUETON, S. 2017 PERSONAL COMMUNICATION AUGUST 31)



FIGURE 173 BAD DAY VENT SESSION INCORPORATED INTO PERFORMANCE SCENE

pursued over time, in partnership with disabled people, [which is] more useful than the concept of the ally, as the person who advocates for or supports disabled people” (Hadley, 2020:184-185). When she stopped *trying to help* her team—instead joining the team at their same level, sharing realities instead of a well-put-together façade—the relationships changed. Kim and Robert, specifically, were empowered to comfort and support her as she had done previously for them: their relationship became reciprocal. The partnerships

Savannah and the blue team developed shifted the balance of power from *helping others* to becoming a partner or an accomplice in the lives of a community. Hadley describes the idea of accomplices, or allyship as “specific skills, deployed in specific contexts, to produce specific changes, in partnership with disabled people [...] skills to support disabled people on their own terms, without speaking for them, over- or under-servicing them, or constraining their capacity to speak for themselves” (Hadley, 2020:185). This became the basis for their scene.

The blue team, as accomplices in an inclusive culture through inclusive performance, worked at their own pace, and provided a plethora of ideas to discover what worked best for everyone on a given day. Karafistan refers to this manifestation of art imitating life as “whatever is brought into the working room, be it an emotion, problem, piece of music, or object, can potentially be utilized in the creative process” (Karafistan, 2004:268). Some days that involved games or blocking choreography; other days it was a dramatized vent session to



FIGURE 174 RECIPROcity IN SUPPORTIVE DANCE PARTIES

let out emotions or an impromptu dance party. Their final devised scene began with semi-rehearsed, semi-improv monologues around a table about their bad days. The comic but authentic crying session is interrupted by an appearance of Jesse and Tinkie, the dancing duo.

Both on-stage and in real life, the duo was empathetic to others, constantly full of joy and cheering up their peers up with a wink, smile, or hug. Both Tinkie and Jesse communicate nonverbally, so to adapt, they chose the cheer-up song (Abba’s *Dancing Queen*) and led the group in a choreographed, but flexible, structured dance party.

Prior to the first performances, Tinkie was ill and Jesse was (ironically) heartbroken: she didn't want to perform without Tinkie. Understandingly, the rest of the group brainstormed alternatives, but when the time came, Jesse jumped into the performance. As her character distributed tissues and the dancing began, the smile on her face grew and the joy returned to her body language. Luckily, by the final performance, Tinkie was feeling better and the Duo could spread joy together again.

The scene's uncomplicated premise depicted concepts of true inclusion and reciprocity: not only was everyone in the group *included*, but they were also equitably valued and able to contribute to support each other. Together, the scene concludes, they have taken refuge from this distressing day and found ways to turn it around. Each individual shared their interests, stories, passions, and talents, and the remnants of faults, failure, or frustration melted into movement pieces of flying superheroes and adventures in working together. It is a mutually beneficial process: everyone benefits, whether it be creative contributions, learning a new skill, being validated in a passion, or making a new friend. The workshops and performances always end with a customary closing reflection circle in which there are accolades of gratitude and critiques of ending too soon. On multiple days, Robert would conclude for his blue group that this was "*the best worst day*"—the oxymoron, or contradictory contrasting concepts that form a relationship, proclaiming a deeper level of truth.

## POSTCARDS FROM OASIS: A CONCLUSION

The *Best Worst Day* and the *theoretical experiences* in case studies of inclusive collaborations between UCT students and the Oasis Association are not the best examples of inclusive performance. They are not the best stories from the collaboration or even the best resulting performances of the collaboration (the following year's *Postcards from Oasis* as pictured in *Chapter 3* was aesthetically more developed). Nor are they indicative

*"WE GREW TO BE ABLE TO TELL WHEN ANOTHER MEMBER OF THE GROUP WAS FEELING UNCOMFORTABLE, OR WANTED TO SAY SOMETHING, AND THERE WAS A BOND THAT WAS FORMED BETWEEN ALL OF US."*

(K. KVEVLI, 2018 PERSONAL COMMUNICATION)

of the worst moments; these case studies omitted traumatic moments such as when participants were grieving, fell ill, or became aggressive or when students misled, manipulated, and revealed ableist superiority after weeks of inclusive practice. These projects were not perfect but rather what Hargrave refers to as “a laboratory, imperfect yet aspirant, for the prescription of less prescribed social identities” (2016:227): they were *perfectly imperfect*. The case-studies serve to reinforce and rephrase theories, examples, and practicalities of creating a culture of inclusion through performance. They are not the full picture, merely a postcard into the artistic practices that symbolize a moment indicative of inclusive philosophy. At the risk of reduction or sounding trite, describing the inclusive praxis on a postcard would entail a series of oxymorons: perfectly imperfect, exclusively inclusive, weirdly normal, a flexible structure, individual collaboration, or a chaotic routine. An oxymoron is the epitome of inclusive work, contrasting concepts that form a relationship exploring the truth. More than any other trait, it is relationships—creating them, developing them, and sharing them—that underline and connect the basis of the work.

An *exclusively inclusive* approach reinforces the reciprocity of participation; being in the room is not enough—everyone contributes and supports each other equally at their pace and comfort level. The idea of reciprocity is further apparent in the post-performance workshop. Part of the exam requirement for the UCT students was a post-performance workshop with the audience (a task conceived for theatre-in-education groups who did not devise with a community). The UCT students planned “post-show education workshop” (Sealey, et al,

2017:145) activities and explained to the Oasis team that it was part of their exam marks and they could choose to participate. After the applause of the first performance, the UCT students began the audience workshop. Members of the Oasis performers, concerned



FIGURE 175 POST-PERFORMANCE WORKSHOP

that their UCT friends might not receive the highest of marks, immediately began to assist by encouraging their peers in the audience to partake, exclaiming the talent of the group to examiners, and jumping in to lead well-known

*“EVERYONE ONE OF US IS DIFFERENT IN THEIR OWN WAY [...] OUR TALENTS OR/AND INTERESTS THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS AND FOR THE OVERALL PERFORMANCE. [...] EXPLORED ALL THE IDEAS THAT WERE THROWN INTO THE SPACE.”*

*(M MKHIZE, 2018 PERSONAL COMMUNICATION SEPTEMBER 9)*

activities. O’Toole (1992) discusses how audience participation shapes the performance and gives new layers of meaning. This was especially seen in the Oasis post-performance workshops. The opportunity to facilitate audience interaction—for both the UCT students and the Oasis members—was empowering as it validated their knowledge, skills, abilities, and relationships while simultaneously broadening the inclusive community (Brodzinski, 2010; Sandahl & Auslander, 2008; McCurrach & Darnley, 1999; Elkin, 2015). Sharing the experience with peers, staff members, family, and friends is “extremely valuable in initiating and encouraging action, as well as giving the opportunity [...] to be treated as of equal status” (Tomlinson, 1982:77). It was not an inclusive performance nor an inclusive workshop because people with disabilities were merely *included*; it was inclusive because the community created, valued, benefited, and supported its members equally—regardless of ability. There was reciprocity through mutual benefits and mutual respect.

*Exclusively inclusive* also applies to the ensemble focus of the devising workshops and performances. For some participants, particularly those focused on individual performance studies, learning to work as an ensemble was “a life-changing experience [...] It’s easy to fall in the trap of being self-centered or to want to shine in a performance but here I learned to take a step back and understand that it is not about me” (Godlo, A 2018, personal communication Sept 6). Others noted that “this is the most selfless form of theatre [...] integral to theatre training. So much of theatre training is centered upon individualistic improvement and can become rather egotistical, so being forced to step out of the limelight is vital for the development of any actor [...] It was so important to be part of a drama process which created theatre for, and with, others” (Harrison, A 2018 personal communication). The ensemble approach leads to a team of *individual collaborators*: each participant contributing

their personal talents, interests, personalities, or ideas. Rather than a lead or star, the focus is on the relationships and community, yet individuals are not “caught up in a group story” and can “still own their own stories” (Brodzinski, 2010:113).

The performances and devising praxis are built by *flexible structures*. A repetitive specific structure (warm-up, main, reflection) and clear learning objectives (established through group agreements) are constant. Within those constants, each category is flexible to what or how they are achieved. Tasks are modified, methods are adapted, and techniques are accommodated, depending on the needs of individuals, the group, or the general atmosphere of the day. One participant explained the flexible structure as “an abandonment of appropriateness and rather an engagement with the intuitive lived bodily experience [...] instructions given were left open for one’s own interpretation, instead of being closed off with extremely specific directions which would ultimately end up excluding someone, one way or the other” (Jacobs, 2020).

“ONE MIGHT OF COURSE WONDER HOW DULL  
THE WORLD WOULD BE AND HOW BEREFT OF ANY  
ART IF ALL HUMAN BEINGS DID EXPERIENCE  
STRUCTURE IN EXACTLY THE SAME WAY.”  
(KEMPE, 2011:168)

The performances themselves followed a *flexible structure* and became a *chaotic routine*. A reflection from a theatre-making-focused participant referenced how his group “grew comfortable with unpredictability ... [and started] thinking beyond patterns” (Lockford & Pelias in Prendergast & Saxton, 2013:19). He further explained,

“Every rehearsal process was different, even the performances. [...] if there was a mistake, other performers would step in to perform a moment which was initially assigned to another performer in the segment when the performer had forgotten or gotten distracted. We responded in the moment in order to enhance the flexibility of our reaction to spontaneous occurrences, and understood that when choices are made, they were not the only choices available” (M. Molekoa, 2018 personal communication).

The “improvisatory methodical approach, based on the individual actor’s skills and expression, not on a pre-given script” (Saur & Johansen, 2013:250) and used to modify

performances, was accentuated throughout devising and performances (for example, modifying for Estelle with the Tea Ladies specifically or Michael's *Grease* choreography). The structure was constant,



FIGURE 176 GREASED LIGHTNING AT THE GROUP HOME

but its implementation and execution were open to interpretation and flexible to the needs of the group.

It is *weirdly normal*—as critical as inclusion is, its implementation can be applied to any artistic medium, curriculum, or subject matter. Whether Shakespeare or ballet, stage design, physical theatre, or musicals, collaborating inclusively encourages society and the university to open up to more diverse concepts of ability and to transform expectations to be representative of diverse cultures, identifications, abilities, and collaborations. At the start of the Oasis project, many of the university students expressed concern, anxiety, and fear about working with adults with disabilities: “I was really scared I was gonna say something or do something that would negatively impact everyone” (K. Kvevli, 2018 personal communication August 16). Another discussion revealed that university peers *clearly misunderstood* and imagined that inclusive theatre was “impossible for people that do not have experience,” and the groups were repeatedly questioned “if it was not hard, tiring or annoying” (M. Mkhize, 2018 personal communication). All participants were constantly encouraged to work towards their strengths and interests: to share their personal preferences in theatre or performance with the group, although most, if not all groups reflected that in early rehearsals, they copied the workshop and facilitation styles that had been modeled for them rather than develop their own style, to their group’s detriment. Once they began to share their own strengths or styles, the *normal* tools they used throughout their performance training (i.e., Kutloano’s use of precision choreography, Kylie’s bilingual dialogues, Anathi’s physical theatre, Frances’s

improvisation skills, etc.), they relaxed and began to transform their personal performance styles into inclusive works of art.

One reflection concluded that, similar to every UCT rehearsal, when “we set activities that were below the standard of our Oasis participants, the energy was low, and many people

*“DESPITE GOING INTO OASIS WITH A GROUP MENTALITY OF TRANSACTIONAL KNOWLEDGE – THERE WAS A SENSE THAT WE THOUGHT WE POSSESSED ‘THEATRICAL’ KNOWLEDGE AND WERE THERE TO HAND IT OVER – I STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT WE CAME OUT OF THIS PROCESS LADEN WITH SO MUCH MORE LOVE, AFFECTION AND KNOWLEDGE THAN WE COULD HAVE ANTICIPATED.”*

(A HARRISON, 2018 PERSONAL COMMUNICATION SEPTEMBER 10)



FIGURE 177 EXAMPLES OF GROUP CHOREOGRAPHY

became disinterested and a little miserable. If we went to Oasis with interesting, challenging ideas, the energy levels rose instantaneously, and all of our participants rose to the challenge, which gave rise to really lovely theatre” (Harrison, A 2018 personal communication).

Notwithstanding a new location and group of performers, inclusive theatre was not different from other group performance projects throughout a drama degree.

Reisinger states that “transformation takes place where one can engage with the unknown: with unfamiliar places, people and their activities” (2013:28). The new experiences of applied inclusive theatre—outside of the known structures of the university and rehearsal spaces—made the possibility of experiencing new and different ways of being more achievable. One participant noted, “thinking outside of the box and allowing my pre-conceptions of

what theatre is to break down [...] Rather than over-simplifying the theatre practices we use, we should create and develop theatre designed for and influenced by our Oasis group members” (F. Sholto-Douglas, 2017 personal communication August 31).

*“ONE TIME THIS BOND WAS MOST NOTICEABLE WAS DURING COSTUME SELECTION. AS I STOOD THERE AMONGST THE RACKS OF CLOTHES, I SUDDENLY REALISED THAT I HAD TRULY CONNECTED WITH THESE AMAZING PEOPLE. I COULDN’T WAIT TO SHOW JEROME HIS CAPTAIN’S HAT BECAUSE I KNEW HOW HAPPY HE WOULD BE. LIKEWISE, I COULDN’T WAIT TO SEE TINKY IN HER HULA SKIRT, OR LORNA IN HER PIRATE HAT, OR ESTELLE WITH HER TAXI-DRIVER CAP...”*

*(K KVEVLI, 2018 PERSONAL COMMUNICATION SEPTEMBER 9)*

The juxtaposition of real-world problems with elements of super-heroic magic could arguably, and literally, be considered *magical realism*. The performance

incorporates authentic stories interwoven with surreal imaginations and spontaneous eruptions of creativity (Hargrave, 2010; Palmer & Hayhow, 2008), which address the critical issues in creating inclusive cultures. The inclusive process balances realistic views of the modern world with magical elements of an idealized inclusive society (both imagined and realized). The very presence of a spectrum of abilities sharing the stage in and of itself is magical, as it can “challenge the metaphors about disability that permeate our culture and dramatic literature (Eckard & Myers, 2009:69). Moreover, the inclusive praxis creates a figurative magical realism. The projects showcased real moments of the magic in an inclusive community: a brief utopia of accountability, relationships, and opportunities. This enchanted experience integrated the magic of real inclusion; the mere rethinking of procedures; and slight adjustments for accessibility, accommodations, and modifications—not the complicated costly charitable events that systemic structures refuse to undertake. The real magic of inclusion, as referenced by participants, is like most things in life—it is as easy or complicated as one chooses to be. There is magic in its simplicity and “everyone could easily adapt to be more inclusive” (S. Brueton; 2018 personal communication).

More fittingly, perhaps, than using oxymorons to articulate creating inclusive cultures through theatre—the “weirdly normal,” the “chaotic routine,” the “exclusively inclusive”—is the concept of relationships. The individual self-contradictory terms of an oxymoron are not

what makes it effective, it is the relationship between them. The relationships formed within inclusive practices are the foundation of transformation (Franks, 2014; Kidd, 2016; Leighton, 2009; Gurgens & Rasmussen, 2010; Sandahl & Auslander, 2008; Kim, 2009; Ineland & Sauer, 2007). It is the relationships formed that allow for inclusive work to become *weirdly normal*, eventually spreading outside of the classroom or theatre and into society. Relationships formed within the praxis allow collaboration, teaching methods for making an accessible inclusive society by adapting, modifying, and accommodating the perceived *normal* to differing needs. Throughout the UCT collaborations, multiple participants (approximately 20% of the students involved in qualitative data collection) have maintained an inclusive focus on careers in the form of master's dissertations, advocating for inclusive casting, group-home employment, facilitation of inclusive dance companies, and employment within special-needs schools. This is evidence that opportunities in inclusive praxis can contribute to the standardization and representation of inclusion within pure or conventional theatre spaces as well as greater society. Reinders notes, “[u]ltimately, it is not citizenship, but friendship that matters” (2002:5).

*“WHY NOT JUST CALL IT  
THEATRE? GOOD PRACTICE, LIKE  
GOOD THEORIZING, SHOULD NOT  
BECOME ANOTHER WAY OF  
EXCLUDING PEOPLE.”*

(TOMLINSON IN HARGRAVE,  
2015)

Inclusive theatre, by its very nature, is a contradiction in terms. In the manner that an oxymoron in literature often uses self-contradiction to reveal a paradox, an inclusive theatre label reveals a paradox. The very need to label a performance as inclusive when referring to the involvement of varying abilities is counterproductive to the inclusive movement. The absurdity lies in attempting to advocate for inclusion in all aspects of society, whilst stipulating a “special” or “different” kind of performance and praxis. “There’s no need to label this form of theatre. To do so is isolating, and places the work on the periphery” (Hodgkin qtd. in Kempe, 1996:114), which is specifically what inclusion is working against. Tomlinson (1982) articulates the paradox of inclusion as follows:

To fight for his individual rights, a disabled person has to relinquish his more cherished desire – that is, to be seen as just another member of society. It is conventional to condemn the labeling or lumping together of disabled people. And

yet the only way to fight for rights against discrimination is to accept this label and try to organize an effective political lobby.

The fight for rights against discrimination reestablish the idea of a cyclical heroic journey. The trials and tests of a hero's journey serve to compare the special world—its different conditions or inhabitants—to a so-called ordinary world. While in an inclusive community, it is imperative to recognize individual differences, for the Oasis team, there was a more positive purpose in promoting commonalities. The boon collected from Oasis is best

described by the South African ideal of *ubuntu*: “the profound sense that we are human only through the humanity of others; that if we are to accomplish anything in this world, it will in equal measure be due to the work and achievement of others”



FIGURE 178 SAVING THE WORLD AT OASIS

(Mandela, 2008 in Stengel,

2010). The oneness of humanity, stated by Desmond Tutu as “[w]hat you do affects the whole world. When you do well, it spreads out; it is for the whole of humanity”

(2007). Inclusion is only inclusive in the context of others, through relationships and the impending spread throughout society. One possible way to create inclusive cultures is building relationships, sharing stories, and mutual beneficial artistic collaborations that model inclusivity in performances and allow participants to become accomplices in inclusion.

The heroic quests toward inclusion have thus far unfolded the obstacles and victories, tests and trials, and allies and accomplices of the research field sites. Within the Nigerian context, therapeutically task-based workshops developed into community performances, which in turn lead to the establishment of a professional theatre company and the occupational opportunities it entails. These journeys have illuminated ogres of oversight, complications of audience expectations, and the witchery of stigmas. Professional inclusive theatre companies

battled faux-allies, inaccessibility, and daunting reviews in Edinburgh to establish a criterion for inclusive performance. The Hijinx *Able to Act* team slayed similar dragons of cultural competency, dark moments, and temptations in the mountains of Lesotho. At Oasis, participants formed a network of heroes in Cape Town to grasp the boons of inclusion. The commonality of each site has been the establishment of rapport, telling of stories, sharing adventures, and adapting the aesthetics of theatre to distribute understandings with the greater community through theatrical performances. The final stage of the journey is the return to the ordinary world to bestow these gifts on the community.

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## STEP 3: SAVE THE WORLD

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*“THE ADVENTURER STILL MUST RETURN [...] BACK INTO THE KINGDOM OF HUMANITY, WHERE THE BOON MAY [CONTRIBUTE GREATLY] TO THE RENEWING OF THE COMMUNITY, THE NATION, THE PLANET, OR THE TEN THOUSAND WORLDS.” (CAMPBELL, 2004:179)*

In the final stage of Campbell’s heroic journey, the hero must return to the ordinary world, transformed by the experience, to share what he has learned with others. The “boon that [the hero] brings restores the world” (Campbell, 2004:228). One by one, the heroes of the CDC return to the stage: Tobi, Femi, Kunle, Shola, Osegue, Ruki. Their capes flowing in the humid Lagos breeze, they begin to sing, as the drums of Cohbam Asuquo’s power ballad *Stronger than Before* (2015) ring through the venue:

*Though our tribe and tongue may differ.  
We are still one and the same.  
With one hope, one heart, one future.  
With one pride, one love, one name.  
We have the power to change Nigeria.  
We alone can set us free,  
But it starts with dedication.  
Yes, it starts with you and me.*



FIGURE 179 TOBI CALLING OUT TO THE AUDIENCE

The music fades as thirty-one heroes of all ages, tribes, and abilities call out to the audience: “How to Be a Superhero!” They have come together—students, teachers, peers, and families—to activate their abilities and to release the heroes within themselves and each other. This section returns the research to its beginning: the final battle of the last performance of the research cycles. Tobi stands at the edge of the audience, and cries out: “Are you ready to save the world?”

This thesis has journeyed through the heroic quest to release the heroes within each participant to create a culture of inclusion. The journey initiated in the *ordinary world*, heralded by a call to adventure to address the systemic oppression, stigma, and marginalization of the social constructs of disability. Initially, the *refusal of the call* challenged ideas that theatre could create cultures of inclusion. *Meeting the mentor(s)* of inclusive education, progressive pedagogy and applied theatre encouraged the implementation of a task-based drama for life-skills development within the Nigerian context. The *threshold* was crossed when the CDC ventured to Houston, and then created *The Planet of Inclusion*, their own community performance inspired by the trip. Allies, enemies and accomplices were encountered in the work of others in the field, on the stages of professional and amateur inclusive theatre. Tests, trials, victories and dark moments occurred throughout the journey, and within comparative quests in Lesotho and South Africa. Stigma and the social construct of disability lowered expectations, stifled opportunities and denied the art of the possible—the ultimate obstacles for the heroes. Overcoming the abyss of stigma, belittlement, and perceived failures developed an inclusive theatre praxis to inspire community inclusion. Empathy was forged, representation was increased, and visibility was encouraged through the *ultimate boons* of storytelling, relationship-building, and transforming and engaging all participants through theatre. The heroic cycle returns to its beginning- the final battle and enlightened return. The three steps (see visual script in *Figure 180*) of *How to Be a Superhero: A Guide to Saving the World* are revisited in this final chapter to

How to be a Superhero: A Guide to saving the World	
<b>Scene 1</b>	
	Super Heroes Enter
	Nigeria! Time for change is now!
	How to be a Superhero?
<b>Scene 2</b>	
	Step 1: Choose a Good Name
	Champion
	Freedom
	Ability
<b>Scene 3</b>	
	Step 2: Find Your superpower!
	Fly
	Fight
	Disappear
<b>Scene 4</b>	
	Step 3: Save the World
	Problems
	Save the World Game
	Heal the World
	Performers bow & applause
	The End.

FIGURE 180 VISUAL SCENE BREAKDOWN FOR HOW TO BE A SUPERHERO

summarize the study. These steps illustrate how the projects support the essential questions, acknowledge constraints and implications inherent in the findings, and suggest recommendations for the future.

## THE FINAL BATTLE

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*How to Be a Superhero: A Guide to Saving the World* represents the final battle of the CDC's journey to inclusion. It is the "enlightened return" (Campbell, 2004) of the research cycles and concludes the journey toward inclusion, empowerment, and transformation of the community. The premise of the performance follows Zimbardo's declaration that "we're a team of ordinary people and we believe every person has the potential to be a hero." By answering the call to adventure, growing stronger, and facing challenges, everyone has the power to change the world (2011a).

The eclectic, montaged, and devised performance embraces the lessons learned throughout the journey, and connects the developments from the research cycles and field sites. The theme was inspired by work in Cape Town, and *The Oasis League* inspired the initial devising praxis. Members of the CDC chose to follow the hero path of the UCT–Oasis collaboration but adapted, nationalized, and remodeled motifs to fit their community. The result was a guide to "saving the world" written by, with, and for a group of superheroes, using their unique aspirations, abilities, perspectives, and contributions. The use of music as a structuring device was employed to voice authenticity, modify participation, and increase engagement. The juxtaposition of surreal montages included images, songs, scene work, dance, rituals, games, and task-based drama exercises, likened to those from *Discovering a Planet of Inclusion* (Chapter 7) and from the Hijinx *Able to Act* team (Chapter 8). The segmented surrealism of each scene explored solutions to problems in the world (corruption, hunger, discrimination, etc.), as a "team of heroes teaching the world what it takes to be a true Super Hero; all you need to do is put on a cape!" Accommodations, modifications, and accessibility were motivated by previous performances, and the work of others in the field (such as Mind the Gap, FTH:K, Graeae, and others discussed throughout the research). Visual schedules,

captioning, easy-read programs, access materials, a “relaxed performance,” and encouraged participation were utilized throughout.

The audience was engaged through songs, games, and participation to transform the community into a culture of inclusion through performance. Transitions between scenes allowed direct communication between the audience and participants, who asked questions such as “What would your superpower be?” The direct interaction between audience and performers assisted in building relationships, encouraging authenticity and empathy. It allowed the audience to actively engage with the concept of inclusion by learning from the actors how to be a superhero. The performance metaphorically answers the research question: How can inclusive Theatre practices release the heroes within to transform a community to create a culture of inclusion?

### STEP 1: CHOOSE A GOOD NAME.

The first step, “Choose a Good Name,” (in the performance, and in *Chapters 1, 2 and 3*) addressed the power in names and how labeling and stigma have the power to “build people up or tear them down.” The scene compares to the aim of this research, which was to weave authentic voices and perspectives of participants without succumbing to problematic labels or patronizing stereotypes and to investigate how theatre could build inclusive cultures. Onstage, a network of heroes is called into action: “we have the power to change Nigeria ... it starts with you and me.” Victoria leads the ritual of



FIGURE 181 REHEARSING THE NAMING CEREMONY

a Nigerian naming ceremony, designating the characters as “Champion,” “Freedom,” and “Ability.” The performers also name themselves and they include the audience by asking what their superhero name would be. The naming ceremony illustrates Zimbardo’s (2011a) affirmation:

We all are born with the capacity to be anything [...], anything that is imaginable becomes possible, anything that becomes possible can get transformed into action, for better or for worse [...] and we get shaped by our circumstances—by the family or the culture or the time period in which we happen to grow up.

Throughout the journeys of the research cycles, participants have learned to *champion* for themselves and each other. In *Chapter 1*, Ayomide rose above his teacher’s declarations that “he cannot learn” and became a teacher in the preschool classes. Kunle advocated for his preaching talents, and encouraged audiences to participate. In Lesotho, Ntietso *championed* engagement for the *Able to Act* team (*Chapter 8*), and in Cape Town, members of the Oasis League (*Chapter 9*) cheered each other through public performances. In each field context, inclusive theatre practices built a network of heroes to *champion* cultures of inclusion.

These networks allowed opportunities for freedom, visibility, and consideration as well as the resources to participate in life and culture. In Nigeria, it was the *freedom* to be part of the community, to impart the skills learned in the center, and to share their identities onstage. Ruki felt the *freedom* to be the bubbly, energetic performer that her mother did not realize existed, and Femi found the *freedom* to befriend the audience. In Lesotho, Laura had the *freedom* to be reciprocally altruistic as she taught nursery rhymes to the children of Phelisanong. Gareth was liberated by crossing borders to share his high-fives and heartfelt fears. The UCT students at Oasis were freed from the competitive, egotistical barriers of pure theatre to connect with new friends in performance. These experiences exemplify the progressive pedagogy of inclusive projects, as a “practice of freedom” wherein learners, teachers, and facilitators are asked to share and to “grow and are empowered by the process” (hooks, 1994:21). For participants without disabilities, the liberation from their prejudices of “disability” put a name, a face, and a relationship to the concept of inclusion. The idea of transforming systems for inclusion became more important, authentic, and valid by having a name (a person, a friend, an accomplice) in need of those transformations.

“Ability” and “disability” are named and referenced as a dichotomy in each field site. The name chosen throughout this research is “inclusive”—inclusive theatre, inclusive education, cultures of inclusion. The name “inclusion” releases inner heroes by identifying the joint effort, the network of heroes, and the entire community needed for transformation. It also names the social barriers, medicalized labels, and cultural stigmas attached to disability as the disabling factors. Inclusive theatre practices release the inner heroes of participants by creating opportunities to name and rename themselves and their roles in the community, activating unheard voices, and removing labels or expectations. The performances of inclusive applied theatre allow the audience and participants to name the problems and work to create solutions through creating community, rapport, and relationships.



FIGURE 182 FLYING TO NEW HEIGHTS, RISING ABOVE EXPECTATIONS

## STEP 2: FIND YOUR ABILITY, FIND YOUR SUPERPOWERS!

The second step continues a montage of scenes with the team of superheroes transforming as they “believe in themselves” (with Ruki flying through the sky, see *Figure 182*). The team finds their talents and shares their abilities onstage, and throughout *Chapters 5-9*. The scene begins with portraying the superpowers of flying, fighting, and the ability to disappear. These imagined powers symbolize the findings and implications of the research cycles. Arts-based

participatory action practice as research developed an inclusive theatre praxis that allowed participants to *rise above* expectations and stigmas. Each performance reached *new heights* that addressed the needs and rationale of the study by adding to the documentation, investigation, and modernization of inclusive theatre understandings. Participants' talents, engagement, and creativity *soared* with inclusive casting, training, and experiences.

The creation of cultures of inclusion in Nigeria, Lesotho, and Cape Town allowed participants to *fight* for inclusion, to battle the status-quo of oppression, and to defend their rights to be heard. In the performance of *How to Be a Superhero*, Akin led the group in showing their karate and stigma fighting skills. Tobi led another team of heroes into the audience, wielding foam swords for battle. The chaos of the battle created a joint moment of fun, as the performers and audience battled stigma together with laughter and bravery. Authentic engagement was experienced through audience participation. Battles for authenticity, engagement, or transformation were won in each of the field sites and were experienced in small victories: the change of perspectives, a new friendship, or acknowledging past



FIGURE 183 FIGHTING FOR INCLUSION

misunderstandings. That is not to say that the research, the quest for inclusion, or the journeys were perfect; they were full of unfulfillment and fiascos. Not every battle was won, nor was every moment successful or even inclusive. The systematic quantitative reviews of inclusion at the Edinburgh Fringe (*Chapter 6*) documented the *fight* for accessibility, modifications, and accommodations within established professional and amateur theatre companies; it is clear that those battles must continue. The battle to

resist temptations and dark moments in Lesotho and the battle for recognition in Nigeria and South Africa all are ongoing.

Despite successes, efforts, or boons of inclusion obtained, the returning heroes “to complete [their] adventure, must survive the impact of the world” (Campbell, 2004:209). Inclusion is a never-ending battle, and progress is often offset by limitations, apathy or gaps in application. Limitations to the study include social barriers placed by society, a lack of previous research studies within the contexts, conflicts that might have arisen from cultural bias or close friendships with participants, and time constraints. Transformation takes time, and inclusive cultures are created gradually; they work to “build the social habits of heroes, to build a focus on the other, shifting away from the ‘me’ and toward the ‘we’” (Zimbardo, 2011). The research is limited by the recurring fiascos, expectations, and social barriers that it attempts to transform.

*“A GOOD LIFE IS ONE HERO JOURNEY AFTER ANOTHER. OVER AND OVER AGAIN, YOU ARE CALLED TO THE REALM OF ADVENTURE, YOU ARE CALLED TO NEW HORIZONS. EACH TIME, THERE IS THE SAME PROBLEM: DO I DARE? AND THEN IF YOU DO DARE, THE DANGERS ARE THERE, AND THE HELP ALSO, AND THE FULFILLMENT OR THE FIASCO. THERE’S ALWAYS THE POSSIBILITY OF A FIASCO. BUT THERE’S ALSO THE POSSIBILITY OF BLISS. ” (CAMPBELL, 2004:133)*

A recurrent fiasco experienced was the inability to turn people away or to say “no” to participants, which often led to almost unmanageable group sizes. During the *How to Be a Superhero* devising process, the CDC director (in the name of reciprocal altruism or perhaps recompense) insisted on the addition of 12 students from a local government center, Atunda-Olu for the Physically and Mentally Challenged. Unlike the CDC’s own school-age students, those from Atunda-Olu were previously unknown to the staff and participants. A tension arose among staff members and CDC families that questioned why “our own children” were not included, as well as stigmas regarding underfunded government programs that lack hygienic, structured, or disciplined environments. Ultimately, the inclusion of Atunde-Olu allowed the CDC participants opportunities to teach others and widened the community of those involved, but highlighted issues of compound stigmatized exclusion. The inability to decline participants occurred throughout the Nigerian field site, with famous

actresses, new interns, and staff members added throughout the processes. The acquiescence of additional participants also occurred in Cape Town with Oasis (originally a total of 16, 8 UCT and 8 Oasis participants quickly became 24 Oasis participants with 8 UCT students). One implication of this trend of including more participants is that there clearly are not enough inclusive projects available to those in need. Another implication of this trend is that the quality of authenticity, engagement, and voices is affected by the number of contributors. The constant addition of new participants raises questions and ethical challenges of inclusion and how to maintain high standards without being exclusive. A goal of this research was to help give voice to inclusive communities, but there were limitations in the responses (interviews, journals, questionnaires, etc.) of many of the participants. Onstage and in rehearsal, personalities and viewpoints shined, but in collected qualitative data, responses were often limited to simple “it was great!” or “so much fun!” from audiences and participants. Attempts to achieve deeper responses were often abandoned by respondents, or clinical descriptions of logistics (rather than critical feedback, emotional reactions, or engaging with nonconcrete experiences- such as “We did a performance.”). These responses are possibly indicative of difficulties in nonverbal/nonwritten communication, cultural expectations, fears of offending, and preconceptions of respect/politeness.

Other implications, limitations, or fiascos throughout the research include a complete lack of funding balanced with high cultural expectations of the aesthetics of performance. In Nigeria, the cultural expectations of performance often involve elaborate dress (onstage and in the audience), gifts, pamphlets, and giveaways. The CDC had no budget for any kind of theatre program, and thus most of the productions were pieced together through donations, repurposing, and self-funding. Economic, health, and political crisis in Nigeria often affected engagement with the audience and performers, which fluctuated with teacher salaries, safety, and community reach. Similarly, the collaboration with UCT and Oasis and the Hijinx *Able to Act* team in Lesotho were limited by budgetary constraints (or lack of funding completely) and relied on facilitator contributions or borrowing—or in extreme cases, forfeiting experiences.

Due to the time commitments, only those employed by the Centre could participate. Access to the Centre's art therapist, dance teacher, and sewing instructor provided some artistic facilitation; most of the directorial approach was vested in the researcher and facilitator and is thus reflected in many of the performance choices. Reflection and self-awareness attempted to ensure power and choice were dispersed to participants to ensure that ownership of understanding was prevalent in performances. Time constraints, lack of funding, and ease of organization occasionally resulted in defaulting to a more directorial approach. The time constraints for both Oasis and Hijinx *Able to Act* could be argued as limitations and strengths. The well-defined time allotment (2 weeks in Lesotho and 6 weeks with Oasis) reduced opportunities to build rapport, break down barriers to authenticity, or develop the highest caliber of performances. It also energized participants to work passionately towards the deadline and provided boundaries, expectations, and urgency to build cohesion. Strong bonds were formed through the joint goals of working towards the impending performance, which encouraged participants to support each other. In fighting for inclusion, battles were lost or won in the systems, the time and monetary constraints, or the sheer number of participants battling to be heard.

The "find your ability" scene incorporates a particularly emotional moment when Shola, and Onyeka disappear, addressing how discrimination can make people disappear in society. Shola, the hesitant baker in *Chapter 2*, initially *refused the call* but later taught her friends and peers to bake onstage. In Houston (*Chapter 4*), Shola shared her obstacles, and the social barriers in living with a disability in Nigeria. Throughout the journey, from crossing the threshold in Houston to each of the performances in the research, Shola was a brave, resilient participant. She endured the condescending goddess, fainted on stage during rehearsal and aspired to be a professional baker (*Chapter 7*). She faced challenges and obstacles of accessibility throughout, but remained a constant support for her peers in the Centre. Her disappearing scene was devised from a conversation that had taken place in rehearsal (2018 rehearsal notes, January 5):

**Kate:** *If you could have any superpower, any power at all, what would you choose?*

**Shola:** *Disappear* [she slumps down in her chair, and covers her face]

**Kate:** *Oh, like become invisible? What would you do if people couldn't see you?*

**Shola:** *No. Disappear. Go away.*

Shola embodies the definition of a hero, as someone who “has the ability to make a difference in improving the human condition—through acts of kindness, generosity of spirit, and a vision that always seeks to make others feel special, worthwhile, understood and embraced” (Zimbardo, 2011a). To hear that she wished to disappear was one of the most poignant moments in the process. She has been involved in every step of the journey, and personifies the heart and soul of the team. In a later written reflection, she elaborated on the ability to disappear, and her words were recorded and used in the performance:

Sometimes the ability to disappear is good—you can escape a situation or reappear when help is needed. But sometimes people disappear because others don't want to see them. Or they disappear because times are tough, or things are uncomfortable, or they forget their superpowers. When people are ignored or treated as nothing good come out—that's when they need a hero. A real hero knows when to reappear to save the day!

These words were amplified on stage, while Shola and Oneyka disappear behind a black cloth. An ensemble begins to hum the melody of Mariah Carey's (2001) *Hero*, a song specifically chosen by Shola repeatedly to represent herself. As the monologue finishes, Shola



FIGURE 184 SHOLA REAPPEARING TO SAVE THE DAY

and Oneyka reappear as the lyrics of *Hero* are sung by the ensemble. In their reemergence, glitter is thrown over the two as they spin and dance with beauty, pride, and confidence. Stigma, fear, society, or even sickness or lack of support makes people disappear. In Lagos, many of the participants are kept away from the

community, similar to the group home at Oasis and the community of Phelisanong in

Lesotho. This research, and its performances, allowed the participants to appear—to illuminate their authentic selves— in their culture and society. Inclusive theatre performance creates visibility, representation and opportunities for people of all abilities to appear in their community.

The objective of this research was to examine effective ways to create, teach, and encourage dimensions of inclusion through theatre to challenge the status quo of both theatre and society. The adventures chronicled reveal the “superpowers” of the inclusive theatre praxis: building rapport, sharing stories that create empathy, revealing talents, engaging community, offering alternative perspectives, and transforming systems to be mutually beneficial and reciprocally altruistic. The “find your abilities, find your superpowers” scene ends with images, scenes, and displays of the everyday skills and talents of the participants: baking, sewing, sweeping, and more. Osigwe led with his awe-inspiring dance skills, Femi shared his power of making friends, while Funke and Abimbola showed their skills of making soaps, beadwork, and tie-dye. The findings of the research are reflected in the scene, and align with Zimbardo’s call to “Think big, but start now by doing small, constructive, daily social and political actions that in concert are the stuff of Everyday Heroism.” (Zimbardo, 2011b:407) The small, constructive, daily actions are relevant to transforming the field of theatre, and society, towards a more inclusive culture.

*“WHILE THE IDEA OF BEING INCLUSIVE CAN BE OVERWHELMING, THE ACTUAL PROCESS OF INCLUSION IS MADE POSSIBLE ONE PERSON, ONE ACCOMMODATION AT A TIME.”*  
(ADKINS & ROWE, 2019)

### STEP 3: SAVE THE WORLD

This research is not claiming that inclusion or inclusive theatre can save the world, or make social barriers, stigmas, or superstitions disappear. It has shown that amplifying the voice of quiet heroes, building networks through experiences, performance, and education can “empower ordinary people of all ages and nations to engage in extraordinary acts of heroism” (Zimbardo, 2011a). It has shown that creating performances together builds empathy, reciprocity, accountability, and confidence; that engaged relationships—onstage

and in rehearsals—can reveal talents, and transform a community for the creation of a culture of inclusion.

These stories work to demystify the idea that being inclusive (like being a hero) is a rare, elite, or incomparable trait, unattainable for the ordinary person. Campbell and Zimbardo argue that “[h]eroes come in many forms, young and old, male and female, who are mostly ordinary, everyday people whose acts of heroism qualify as extra-ordinary” (Zimbardo, 2011b:404). The “banality of heroism” (Franco & Zimbardo, 2006) argues that everyone has the potential to be a hero. Likewise, the “banality of inclusion” could argue that anyone can ensure the voices, opportunities, and engagement of marginalized communities. This research has characterized heroes and heroic situations in creating inclusive cultures to combat the “trap of inaction—sometimes known as the ‘bystander effect’ [...] motivated by diffusion of responsibility” (Franco & Zimbardo, 2006), when people witness oppression or inequality and assume someone else will help. Inclusion is everyone’s responsibility, and efforts to be inclusive—whether it be seeking accommodation, making modifications to practice, holding a door open, requesting a ramp, adding captions to a performance or guaranteeing accessible casting, themes, and venues—are for the benefit of all. Inclusion may not save the world, but it empowers the voices, relationships, and communities that can.

## THE FREEDOM TO LIVE

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The last phase of the hero’s cycle is the freedom to live, wherein the hero is the “champion of things *becoming*, not of things become” because “nothing perishes in the whole universe; it does but vary and renew its form. Thus, the next moment is permitted to come to pass” (Campbell, 2004: 225). The final phase is a never-ending quest to become knowledgeable, seeking and bringing enlightenment to the community. Each of the participants—and all of the field sites—are in the process of *becoming*. Theatre—and the inclusive praxis—has provided engagement with others to discover new perspectives and identities for growth in themselves and their worlds. This work spans numerous pan-African communities, from inclusive theatre on the stages of Nigeria combating disability stigma, to rising aspirations

and celebrating inclusion in Lesotho, to leading UCT students in finding an Oasis of inclusion within group homes and their own artistic practices. These experiences generated a plethora of proud and inspiring moments in research, and what “these stories suggest is that every one of us can be a hero” (Zimbardo, 2011a). Acts of heroism and acts of inclusion can be learned, taught, and modeled. However, quite possibly the most illuminating moment personally was after the research had completed:

### **Personal Reflection, November 2019**

*Upon returning to Nigeria from final PhD preparations in South Africa, the CDC greeted me with a surprise performance of their own. Against All Odds told the story of Hope and her journey towards inclusion in the community. Together for 6 years, we struggled to create opportunities by devising performances and touring shows that defied stigma, addressed injustices in Nigeria, and highlighted their stories, talents, and passions. My purpose and identity in Nigeria was being part of that community. Yet, here I was, watching a beautiful, articulate performance that they had created without me. We had shared, learned, and grown together, and I recognized the techniques and devising exercises we had used in past performances, now modified and adapted to fit the new performance. What was once ours, was now beautifully and uniquely, theirs. The teacher in me was beyond delighted, but the artist started to worry—what now, what next, what if?*

Implications for future research would explore what can be done to ensure sustainability within inclusive projects, and the after-effects for participants. The CDC has since continued producing performances in Nigeria, but how long they continue and whether they fall into the traps of manipulation is unknown. Currently, Ruki works as a teacher’s assistant at the CDC and her newfound confidence often leads the younger units in song and dance.

Abimbola is employed by a local tailor, and the skills she learned sewing costumes are now helping to pay her fees at the CDC. Kunle continues to preach anytime a microphone is available, and his family expressed their church community has asked him to help with announcements. Michael’s parents have asked the CDC to assist them in finding a wife.

Osegue, Oneyka, and Shola continue to bake, dance, and socialize at the center. Femi held a position as a greeter and stock assistant at a local grocery store but has since left the CDC.

Attempts by staff members to check on his well-being have been in vain, and we worry about his current situation.

Hijinx aims to return to Lesotho and continue developing their partnerships, but how, when, and what that entails is unclear. Gareth continues to support those around him with high-fives and words of encouragement. Laura and Justin both had lead roles in Hijinx’s latest

award-winning professional collaboration *Into the Light*. The UCT–Oasis collaboration added to the university’s applied theatre and learning through theatre courses, but upon the completion of this research, continuation is doubtful. Oasis is keen to continue working with the university, and Michael, Kim, and Justin remain in contact with their UCT friends via social media. Savannah is currently enrolled internationally in a Master’s program in dramatherapy and works at a group home for adults on the autism spectrum. Other UCT participants have opted to continue applied theatre studies, designing community-engaged performance projects that have focused on inclusive practices.

What’s next, what if, what then? These questions are answered with a return to the cyclical nature of the hero’s journey, for as soon as one adventure ends, another call begins. Within the quest for inclusion, “the hero-deed is a continuous shattering of the crystallization of the moment. The cycle rolls: mythology focuses on the growing-point” (Campbell, 2004:289). The future of this research lies in the hopes of continuing growth, beginning new adventures, and inspiring new horizons in inclusion. The field of theatre—in academia or performance, applied or pure, professional or amateur—is on its own journey towards inclusion, amidst a never-ending battle against the status quo, to include diverse understandings of ability, gender, race, class, sexuality, age, or culture. This research extends, analyzes, and updates existing literature regarding theatre practices with people who have disabilities. In its aim to address the altruistic and academic needs for the study, it contributes to the literature on inclusion, within culture, education, and theatre. Documentation of case studies, seldom-heard voices, experiences, and perspectives add to the current literature on theatre and social change, through documenting, analyzing, and exploring concepts of inclusion and disability. Discussions and depictions of ways to accommodate, modify, and adapt theatre practices for accessibility are included; both the successes and the struggles argue that inclusion is possible across the field of theatre. By applying anthropological concepts of disability with the social model of disability to investigate ways theatre can defy stigma within Nigerian, Basotho (Lesotho), and South African contexts, it contributes to the literature on cultural understandings of disability, stigma, and inclusion.

The performance of *How to Be a Superhero: A Guide to Saving the World* ends, as does the hero's journey, as an adventure in connecting the world of the unknown with the world of the known—for the two are mirror images. Campbell explains: [the] “key to the understanding of myth and symbol—the two kingdoms are actually one. The realm of the [unknown] is a forgotten dimension of the world we know. And the exploration of that dimension, either willingly or unwillingly, is the whole sense of the deed of the hero” (2004:188). Femi, Shola, Kunle, Osegue, Ruki, and the network of heroes onstage breakdown the deed of the hero: *“Do the right thing. Let the world see. Let the light shine everywhere. And when it seems like no one's watching- do the right thing anyway.”* The ordinary world—and that of inclusion—is one and the same. An inclusive world is not special, unique, or mythical and neither is inclusive theatre. It is simply the world and merely theatre or performance, but a world or a performance that appreciates, mutually benefits, and allows access to all kinds of people. The heroes of the CDC personify the need for inclusion, visibility, representation, consideration, and access to cultural life. They symbolize the call for inclusive cultures, not merely so every person can see themselves as the hero of the story, but so that society understands that all people can be the heroes of the stories.

*“IF YOU WANT TO CHANGE THE WORLD, CHANGE THE METAPHOR. CHANGE THE STORY.”*

(CAMPBELL, 2016)



FIGURE 185 THE CAST OF HOW TO BE A SUPERHERO: A GUIDE TO SAVING THE WORLD

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