

**VOLUME 1**

**THESIS**

**The School Production – To be or not to be?**

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## Abstract

School theatre productions are performed throughout Australian secondary schools each year. Currently Broadway model musicals are often performed as the content of these school productions. The examination of the secondary school production involved in this research focuses upon a Victorian coeducational government secondary school's collaborative rewrite, rehearsal and performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Drawing from literature in Drama in Education, Theatre in Education, Applied Theatre, Australian Curriculum documents, Pedagogy, Authentic Learning, Extra-curricular education and Creativity, the question, 'The school production – To be or not to be?' Deals with the very nomenclature of the school production by examining the following two questions:

1. What are the experiences and benefits for the students involved in the authentic model of school production?
2. What is the teacher's experience while working on an authentic school production?

A hybrid of two qualitative methodologies has held a lens up to both the student and teacher experience within the making of a school production. Firstly an off-centred ethno-drama was employed, where students wrote their own ethno-drama script for performance; this appears within the thesis as an annotated script. Secondly auto-ethnography was used to examine my experience as a teacher and researcher, dealing with the demands of running a school production. A reflective journal provides insights into the latter methodology. Student perspectives and backstage experiences were also recorded and are presented in the results chapter.

The results of the research were threefold:

- Students involved in this authentic model of school production experienced a sense of achievement not previously felt in their education.
- The teacher's experience and the complexities required by this position, while fulfilling are also taxing.
- This model of school production offers the marginalised student a voice and real sense of belonging and connectedness.

The authentic model of school production as outlined in this research offers participating students a genuine learning experience that empowers and celebrates their contribution. The significance and impact of their involvement and commitment transcends traditional school curriculum, reaching beyond to a wider community.



## **Student Declaration**

### **Doctor of Philosophy Student Declaration**

#### **Doctor of Philosophy Declaration**

"I, Gillian Schroeter, declare that the PhD thesis entitled The School Production – To be or not to be? Is no more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work".

Signature

Date

# THE SCHOOL PRODUCTION TO BE OR NOT TO BE?

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## **AVANT-PROPOS**

*I am a performer, I could write my thesis in moments upon a stage. This is a performance in intricate words. I want to find the colour, the right canvas and the brush to paint the myriad of colours that were danced and sang and spoken aloud, that fell upon ears that heard, lips that laughed, hearts that burst and eyes that cried. I don't want to tick the boxes, I want to hang a painting that reads like the performers who tiptoed the moments of the script between themselves, that shouted the lines and twirled like magical fairies through the night air, that lifted and twirled and slipped and fell and were caught by their counterpart in time to make the moment magical again.*

# CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

I am a fervent enthusiast of the school production and the benefits it can bring students involved. My research is concerned with the journey of one school production written, directed and produced by me with a group of secondary school students, bringing into focus the capacity the school production has to be a vehicle for creative and authentic learning.

While the production can be explained in terms of *Theatre in Education* and *Drama in Education* it remains somewhat of an enigma in terms of literature pertaining directly to it. It can only be conjectured that the production in its current state has a place within many Australian secondary schools but doesn't necessarily have a place in a timetabled curriculum or in formal pedagogy.

*The School Production, To Be or Not To Be?* casts light on the possibility of an authentic model of school production as a dynamic learning vehicle for creativity and connectedness. It shows how the production supports collaborative and meaningful learning while questioning the practice of the reproduction of American culture through the performance of Broadway shows and musicals in our schools, which I refer to throughout as the Broadway model.

Johnny Saldana asserted,

It is my job to cultivate my students' potential to experience and explore a virtual catalogue of qualities that are central to our humanity. I facilitate and nurture the inherent capacity that all my students have to live, think, question and play dramatically (Saldana 2001).

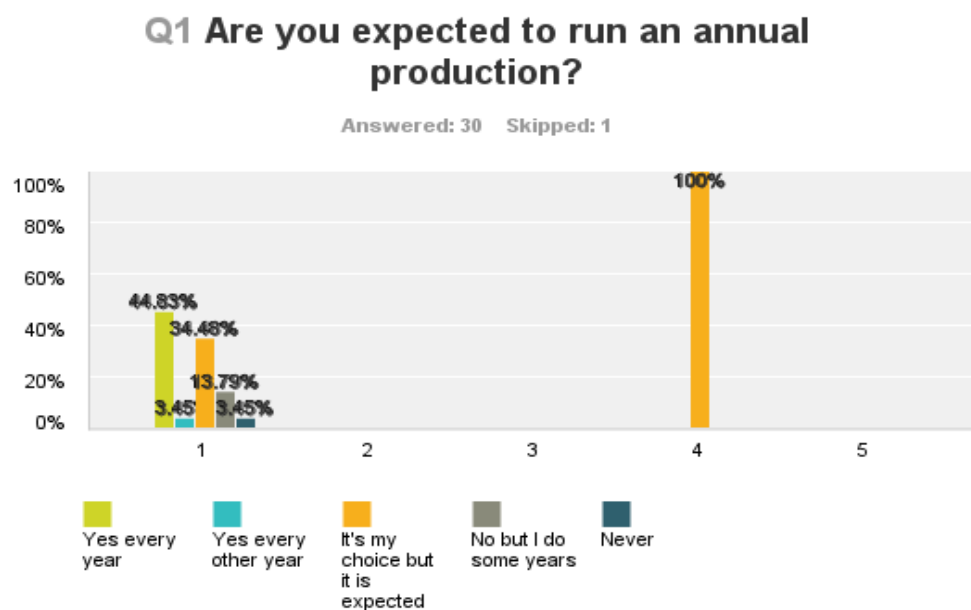
The authentic model of a school production calls for this cultivation. In an authentic school production, the process and the theatre show are not measured by how closely they resemble a Broadway show but by how the students engage and collaborate in a positive and supportive learning environment to create a show that they can call their own. Too often in the Broadway model production students are pushed and pulled to fit roles that they cannot identify with or master. Professional musical performer roles have been written to be performed by actors, singers and dancers who have had rigorous specialised training and often years of experience in the theatre. I had to ask myself, why would I, as a secondary school teacher, perpetuate the practice of asking students to replicate the work of highly trained professionals?

The Australian school production is a part of common secondary school structure and currently most commonly takes its place as an extra-curricular activity. There are both positives and negatives

associated with the school production's extra-curricular status. Being extra-curricular allows for some level of freedom from timetabled curriculum in so far as time spent on the production, content, participation, assessment and reporting, and it breaks down the usual age barriers placed upon timetabled curriculum.

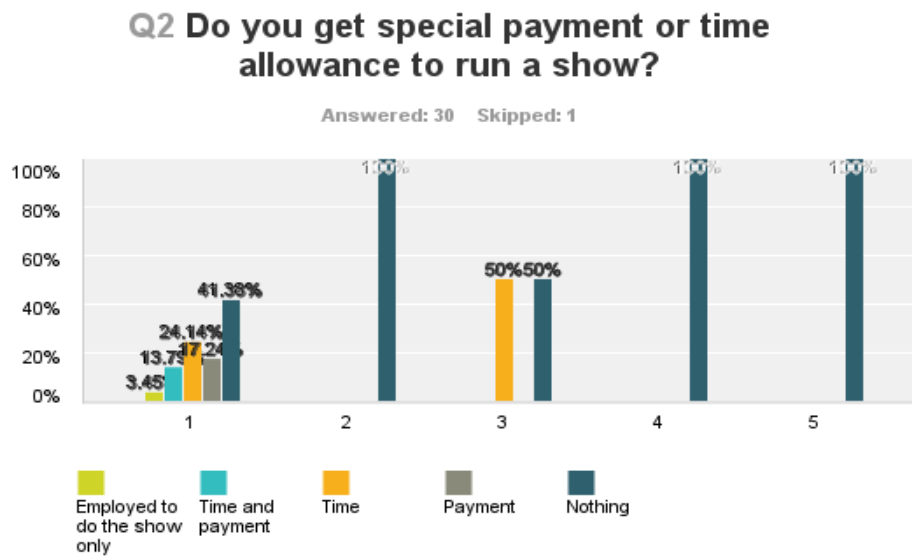
The fact that it is not timetabled sets up the obvious negative effects: the teacher's role is also that of the extra-curricular teacher and there is often little to no funding to cover this role. Students work in their free time and neither teacher nor students are duly compensated for the immense teaching and learning that comes from involvement in a school production. I conducted a short survey prior to undertaking this project to inform myself about what is expected of school production teachers. The results indicated that of the thirty production educators surveyed all thirty reported they were expected to run a school production in their own time and all thirty reported they were not duly compensated for their work.

### **CHART ONE: EXPECTATIONS ON TEACHERS TO RUN SCHOOL PRODUCTIONS**



**Q1 – Are you expected to run an annual production?** 100% of teachers stated that they are expected to. This was both explicit and unsaid, but the expectation was there.

## CHART TWO: CONDITIONS FOR RUNNING SCHOOL PRODUCTIONS



### In Q2 – Do you get special payment or time allowance to run a show?

We see 50% of teachers are given some time allowance and 50% of teachers some special payment with no teachers receiving both.

This can be attributed to the traditional hierarchy in education where the Arts sit firmly at the bottom (Robinson 2010). In Australian schools the Arts do not get equal recognition with the Maths, Science and Language/Humanities subjects. Initially the ‘arts were entirely left out of the national curriculum’ (Gibas 2013). Although now in the Australian curriculum, its initial omission and more recently the damning review of the Australian Curriculum (Donnelly & Wiltshire 2013) are indicators of the marginalised position of the Arts in Australian education. In contrast Ewing asserts,

The Arts have the potential to promote self-understanding and illuminate the advantages of viewing the world from multiple perspectives. There is, therefore, a need for educators, arts practitioners and students to consciously explore the blurring of boundaries between the arts disciplines and to explore multidisciplinary initiatives, while maintaining respect for the integrity of each (Ewing 2010,7).

The aim of this research is to share the experiences of the students and teachers involved in an authentic school production in an endeavour to understand the educational benefits gained from participation in the school production. The study also uncovers the unique experience of a production teacher qualified to teach students in the performing arts and thus raises five main questions concerning the practice of running a school production:

1. What is the content of the production being performed?
2. Where is the student voice?



3. What is the experience for teacher and student?
4. What are the benefits of being involved in a school production?
5. What is the nomenclature surrounding the school production?

## **SIGNIFICANCE**

The study contributes to our knowledge of school productions in the Australian secondary school sector. It focuses on the student/teacher experience in making and performing an authentically imagined school production that proactively encourages student creative involvement and collaboration. This collaboration is concerned with a common goal; however it allows each student to grow in a manner that enhances their personal learning goals and experiences.

Secondly it contributes to our knowledge of the teacher's responsibility in running the school production, informing us of the teacher's experience and the skills required of a school production teacher. The research uncovers the immense pressure placed upon the teacher and the disparity in recognition for not only the teacher's work but the students' achievements within the school's curriculum.

Finally it uncovers the need for a new discourse of performance in education that teeters upon the fringe of Drama, Process Drama and Theatre in Education. Whilst embedded in the literature of these three areas, it finds a niche of its own as the school production in education, and in doing so calls for a body of work to inform the practice.

## **IN CONTEXT**

The research was born from a sense of frustration and disparity between industry practice and school practice in the performing arts, particularly with that of the school production. In examining the school production it could not be found that the term was included in any Australian curriculum documents, yet upon secondary school websites and in local news it showcases student achievements. The school where this production was made, in Clarity College was no different, the school production was advertised in both paper and online community news: 'This year Clarity College have been working on a theatrical production with a difference' (Helen 2012). Production photos feature upon schools' galleries showcasing the students' achievements, yet nowhere can the school production be found in any curriculum documents. The Australian Curriculum states: 'the Arts includes five Arts subjects. These are Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music and Visual Arts' (ACARA 2013). The culmination of these arts results in the school production, yet the school production is not mentioned or identified within the Australian curriculum. How are these subjects, therefore, brought together and managed to produce a school production?

As schools are running productions and there is no place for the production within the stated curriculum, questions about student learning and values underlying the production arise:

- What skills do students learn?
- What knowledge do learners construct through their participation in a school production that emerges from the voices and experiences of the students themselves?
- How do we situate this learning in the curriculum?
- To what extent do we value the school production in terms of ‘traditional’ learning (e.g. literacy and numeracy)?

In addition to these questions the following question asks one about the competitive nature of Broadway school productions, where students compete to get lead roles:

- Is there potential for the school production to be a collaborative, rather than a competitive, process?

These questions arose for me in my practice as a drama teacher and performance artist running school productions. My initial response to the very first Broadway production I was expected to run in my teaching career was to question the notion of having students perform mainstream dominant cultural performance material. Instead, I started working with original scripts that allowed students to explore their own voice. I continued to do this on a yearly basis for the next twelve years. The production at Clarity College observed throughout this thesis is a refurbished Shakespearean script, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The term refurbished is taken from the Shakespearean script *Macbeth* where the term ‘furbished’ means gleaming, shining and renewed. Previous to my arrival school productions at Clarity College had been reproductions of popular Broadway musicals.

My approach to the script writing can be likened to that of a bird building a nest. Each year the bird builds a new nest in which to create life and action. When I announced that the production would be an original, (a new nest) a wave of shock seemed to filter through the school.

*It was a Monday morning, three students approached me as I made my way to the staffroom, “We are not doing an original! Are we?” (Cody) To which I responded by reiterating the day and time for the meeting to discuss the matter. “Um we don’t do originals, we think it’s a bit of a slap in the face!” (Emily) Again I reiterated the meeting time. “Please tell me you are not thinking of an original!” (Rose) I didn’t even have to think of my response. Why were these students so against original works?*

Just as the students were shocked by the news of an original production, I too was shocked by the response! It didn’t end there! At recess the music teacher caught me by surprise in the staffroom.

*“Hi Gillian, look I think you have tried but I’ve had kids complaining. I just don’t think it’s going to work. I don’t think these kids can do it! And they’re used to Andrea! You have to realise that she was very experienced in musicals, she wasn’t just a teacher- she had studied it at university first.” I could barely think. I couldn’t believe what was happening. The idea that I had no experience seemed to be a given,*

*the idea that students can't be creative disturbed me and the idea that the person I would be working on the production with could not understand the possibilities, initially this all shocked me deeply. After work that day I cried. I cried for the students who didn't have or want a voice and I cried for the fight I had in front of me. The next day I went to school with a compromise. Shakespeare. I intended the students would rewrite the script and add their music. (Taken from my reflective Journal)*

Resounding in my mind were Cousin's reassuring words,

*If we as a society, would like a theatre which is exciting, one which is constantly changing, constantly raising consciousness and making us think, we must ensure that our future theatre practitioners understand the full extent of its powerful potential. However if we keep students within the confines of the mainstream and the traditional school play, we can only hope that they encounter other theatre forms later on in their lives. If not, mainstream theatre will certainly continue to be upheld (Cousins 2010, 92).*

I quickly had to revisit how I could work on a production with the students so that they could still feel some sense of ownership. Just as some birds refurbish nests, I would embark upon refurbishing *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Chosen for its tendency to lean towards music and magic and the underlying theme of realising dreams, this refurbishment ultimately meant students would still have the opportunity to write and make decisions about their script based on their ideas and reflective of their worlds. I had to understand that this model required participants to adopt an impermanent script for their school production which left them feeling vulnerable to criticism from their audience – their community. This idea is further explored in the Journal chapter.

After this initial glitch students signed up to become involved in their school production in a number of areas including onstage, backstage, sound and lighting, music and administration. Students then auditioned within their area(s) of interest for example, dance, acting and singing. While the auditions were not used in the traditional sense as a process of elimination to find the 'best' talent, they were instead used to gauge students' abilities and therefore their needs and talents. These auditions explored the students' abilities in coordination, reading, speaking, singing and following instructions.

The participants involved in *A Midsummer Nite's Dreame* were students enrolled in Years 7-12, aged between 12 and 18 years, attending Clarity Secondary College in a rural country town in Victoria. Student and teacher experience is at the centre of the research. Further explanation can be found in the Methodology chapter.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The theory of Theatre in Education which focuses on the 'partnerships that were developed between theatre companies and school authorities to establish programs of theatre-based education' (O'Farrell 2002), Drama education (ACARA 2010), the foundations of Applied Theatre (Prentki and Preston

2013) and Curriculum and Pedagogy (Lovat and Smith 1995) have been drawn upon to place the production within the school and practice of theatre and drama in education.

The theatre practitioners understood to be important for the study of drama in secondary schools, as outlined in Burton's *Living Drama* (Burton 2001), were drawn upon in placing drama curriculum within the production. Process Drama was also examined as a rehearsal process and informed script writing and workshopping (Heathcote and Bolton 1995). Understanding the pedagogy surrounding the production allows us to gather a position or placement of the production in this time and moment in education.

## **Pedagogy of a School Production**

The idea that 'the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressors' (Freire 2005, 45), can be applied to the school production teacher when examining the critical pedagogy of a school production. The school production offers the potential for students to have an active voice, to explore this voice and to learn through it. As a teacher with a background in Performance Studies, I was not willing to listen to the 'dominant narrative' (Langhout and Thomas 2010) that marginalises children's voices. The idea for me of imposing roles of rigidity upon student performers is oppressive. The alternative (authentic model of school production) offers students the opportunity to be creative and embodied learners with a voice through performance pedagogy (Perry and Medina 2011).

This authentic model of school production is what is at the centre of my research. The idea that a production can be authentic has been examined and the idea that productions should be authentic is urged throughout the thesis. The definition of authentic learning in the school production is a form of learning that is both real and tangible. It is learning that is meaningful to the individual so much so that it has an impact on that individual's engagement and ability to learn. Through engagement in the authentic school production, education of the whole person comes into focus. The Broadway model of school production is referred to as a comparison throughout the thesis. The Broadway model approach to the school production is commonly adopted throughout secondary schools. The well-known musical requires a different approach than that of the authentic model production. It requires a common and dominant culture to be adhered to. As this is the case, the following question must be raised: Why do production teachers assign a dominant narrative through school productions and potentially repress student potential in the process? While this is not what the thesis seeks to answer, in exploring the authentic model of school production the thesis poses this question time and again.

Transcending this oppressive overtone of the dominant narrative in our school productions offers potential to unleash great creative output from otherwise marginalised young people. Creativity has been hailed the saviour of broken education systems by Robinson (2010). Creativity encourages

children to have a voice and take ownership of their learning (Doyle 1993). The productivity involved is the key in ensuring students' voices are heard.

Prior to understanding an authentic model of school production we must first address the reason for our schools staging a school production. Outlined below are the reasons I have heard from teaching staff for selecting a Broadway model show. These comments or reasons raised questions that required answering in understanding the possible pedagogy of the school production.

**TABLE ONE: REASONS FOR SCHOOL PRODUCTIONS**

Reason	Question
<b>Showcase students' talent.</b>	Can this be achieved while allowing students to create a production through a modelled method?
<b>An annual event that is loved, respected and expected.</b>	Can a different model of the production also be loved? Should we aim for a model that enhances student learning as well as being loved? And how sure are we that audiences expect Broadway shows?
<b>To offer the extended community our school's abilities in the theatre.</b>	Can this be shown through using an authentic model?
<b>An extracurricular activity that our school believes is great for our students.</b>	Can this extracurricular activity involve a component of students having a voice?
<b>To reproduce popular well-loved musicals such as Broadway musicals, which will mean we'll get a better audience.</b>	Can this reproduction include the students thinking and making aesthetic decisions? Does well-known Broadway show mean better audience? Or does it just mean a bigger audience? If an audience is seeing a show that they've already seen does this make them better in some way? Is there any evidence that fewer people will attend an original or semi-original production?
<b>An extracurricular activity that allows students to make close friendships.</b>	Is there a way that the production teacher can foster this happening in a manner that supports collaborative learning?
<b>An opportunity for our Drama and Performing Arts teacher(s) to show their abilities in the theatre and to showcase the performing arts of our school.</b>	Is it possible to leave the creative process up to the Drama teacher? Do you know the capabilities and qualifications of the teachers involved in the school production? Why is this proof of the teacher's ability if they have represented a script?

The subsequent answer to the following overarching question has framed my investigation into the pedagogy of the school production.

Can the nature of how students engage with the production enhance students' learning?

To fully understand this we must first understand the factors that contribute to the engagement of students in a school production

- School – The school community, where it is located and socio-economic status will have an impact on student engagement in the school production. Extracurricular activities are not immune to socio-economic status issues, the capacity to access transport and the cultural support required can interfere with a students' ability to successfully engage in extracurricular activities (Mahoney 2003).
- Principal – The Principal in a school has a final say over the content of a school production. Their support is very important in so far as funding, and time for the teacher to do the work required; they set the tone for how a school production is revered in a school (Reichman 2001).
- Teacher's vision – The production teacher's ability to have an aesthetic vision and the qualifications to run a theatre show with children that will develop them in many ways (Lewis and Rainer 2005, 2012).
- Time constraints – How much time is afforded to the teacher and the students to conceptualise a show and rehearse prior to performance (O'Toole 2009).
- Students' prior knowledge – The students' understanding of what is involved and what is expected of them as well as their knowledge of acting, dancing, singing, tech and the general running of a large scale theatre production.
- Finance and facilities – these will shape to a degree how a production may look; they can also open opportunities for creativity around not having something that may be required.
- Space – The space in which the students meet and rehearse will have a huge impact on how they work. The space in which the production is presented is also a consideration as to how the action can be played (Collins and O'Brien 2003).
- Choice of play-script – will ultimately shape what the students are likely to do and learn.
- Teachers willing to help – this can mean the difference between having a camp or not, or having one show or five shows. The adults who are willing to donate their time shape so much of the student experience, right through to the costumes and set (Hornbrook 2002).

- Family support – is very important for students to feel that they can manage the demands of a school production, to be able to make it to every rehearsal and to know that their family will come to see their performance.
- Socio economic demographic – How much families can afford effects how much financially can be spent on the show. It also requires the teacher to consider when the rehearsals can be held due to transportation for students from school to home (Ainsworth 2013, Wenthe 2007, and Shumow 2009).

I refer throughout the thesis to the school production as the school production so as not to confuse this theatre show for any other. The nature of the production is dependent upon the school's expectations along with the teacher's vision and expectations.

Teacher's time constraints and relevant experience and expertise are further considerations, along with students' time constraints, prior knowledge and experience. Student time constraints, however, do not necessarily prevent students from becoming involved in the production. It is noteworthy that a student spending time on extra-curricular activities does not mean a negative impact will befall the student. Rather it has been found that 'highly engaged and intrinsically motivated students take a particularly disciplined approach toward learning that extends beyond a desire to simply understand class content and/or receive a better grade' (Lawson and Lawson 2014). This is further explored in the Literature Review chapter.

Other more practical contributing factors will be: finances, space and the initial aesthetic choice of play-script. Evidently there are many variables. Furthermore, the following contributing factors need consideration:

- What previous props, sets and costumes does the school have?
- What technology is available?
- How many teachers are willing to get involved and what is their experience and expertise?
- What time allowance will a teacher receive?
- What is the experience of students?
- How supportive are families?
- What is the socio-economic demographic of the cohort?
- What community networks are in place?

These variables, along with the teacher's outlook and expertise and the content of the school production are the keys to positive and productive engagement (Christenson, Reschly, and Wylie 2012, Hopkins, Craig, and Munro 2011). These practical considerations need not be definitive of why choices are made around the school production content. The question raised is how far is a pedagogical belief compromised by practical concerns? Is it simply the case that the practical

concerns have overridden the pedagogical concerns involved in a school production because no one has stopped to think about it?

Initially the school decides whether there will be a school production. Staffing decisions are made based on needs. A school offering a production affords students an opportunity to participate. The model of school production can vary greatly, from a school that prescribes the show produced, to the school that supports originality. I have experienced both these extremes. In my first year of teaching I was prescribed *The Rocky Horror Show*. I however, chose not to do the show and instead made possibly one of the most important choices of my career; I chose to redo a show that a mentoring teacher had written with his students, *Season's Restaurant*. Aside from the material being far more accessible to students, I was given creative licence to change anything in the show to fit with the cohort with whom I was working.

The second instance was during my time working on this project at Clarity College. Initially I was informed of an imminent Broadway-styled production. The students and community had come to expect an annual Broadway show. I questioned whether this was a good enough reason to do a school production that is Broadway based. The principal stated that, "A Broadway show teaches children about the theatre and they get to know and understand about what theatre went before them." This clumsy way of referring to experiential learning (Kolb 2014) disregards the possibilities that a production can do this without representing dominant American culture and assumes that Broadway shows somehow teach children about theatre.

I disagreed with this statement, knowing that my own involvement as a student in a Broadway show taught me very little about the theatre and nothing about the history of the theatre. It is the teacher, who teaches about the theatre and history of theatre. The Principal's assumption leads me to question how educators, particularly those in positions of power, understand how children learn within a production. The notion of applying the content of the musical to a student cohort is not unlike subject-based teaching. In a subject we teach content to students but this doesn't mean students will learn. The determining factors involved in student learning through the school production are the choice of content or development of content, how the content is collaboratively learnt through development, and the physical circumstance involved. This experience prompted me to focus on the following three attributes: the content, the children involved and their relationships to each other, and the sense of community and collaboration that developed.

An awareness that the creative, collective, student communally-owned content, and delivery of this content, along with my performance and teaching expertise, allowed me assurance that the school production would flourish. This led me to question the very notion that we must adopt the dominant or popular culture (Giroux and Simon 1989) so as not to threaten the hegemony of a white middle class culture at the expense of the oppressed (Freire 2005) in our pursuit to ensure some form of



imagined success. In other words we should not have to run Broadway productions in schools so that a notion of mainstream dominant performance culture is upheld and those who are invested in this culture can in turn feel safe in knowing that the dominant culture will be upheld. The following question required investigation:

- Why was the alternative difficult for others to accept?

Furthermore this prompted me to question:

- How do we measure the success of a school production?

Underpinning this question are several others:

- If the school production is measured by upholding dominant culture, what does this have to do with the children's education which the school represents?
- Does the Broadway school production have any place in Australian schools? And if it does - who makes these decisions and why?
- What is the agenda of the school production?

The reasons for the Broadway model of the school production, offered in the above table, give some insight to the questions above. It seems to me that if the agenda of the school production is to emulate popular or dominant culture, then the validity of the Broadway model production must be questioned. If 'it is through our stories that we come to know ourselves and what we stand for' (Wanna 2009) then there is a sense of urgency for the authentic model of school production in Australian schools. There is a safe and silent assumption that curriculum is main-stream, collectively imagined and upheld by governments, schools, teachers and parents (McLaren and Kincheloe 2007).

I view this outlook as oppressive and fear that as long as schools and educators decide to struggle with a model of education that is outdated, this notion of the mainstream curriculum being broken will continue. There are glimpses of ways for teachers to break the mould of the imagined mainstream. The model of an authentic school production as examined throughout this thesis offers us insight into teaching in 'A Brave New World.' A perfect example of current curriculum taking a brave new approach is the Principles of Learning and Teaching document (PoLT). These principles call for a curriculum where:

1. The learning environment is supportive and productive
2. The learning environment promotes independence, interdependence and self-motivation
3. Students' needs, backgrounds, perspectives and interests are reflected in the learning program

4. Students are challenged and supported to develop deep levels of thinking and application
5. Assessment practices are an integral part of teaching and learning
6. Learning connects strongly with communities and practice beyond the classroom (DEECD 2013).

The authentic model of school production fits into a pedagogy that adheres to these six principles, yet in my experience the school production is explicitly shunned by the core and mainstream subject areas. Why? What is it about the school production that calls teachers from the more traditional subject areas to devalue this creative and connected learning? My postmodern performance studies equates to a radical protest against dominant culture in the assurance of a critical pedagogy through the teaching of the school production and offers those students involved a different way of learning through creativity and connectedness. Not only did teachers and principals resist the authentic model of production, students resisted.

This student resistance became of great significance for this research. Students felt they were being denied the chance to be a part of a big well-known show, which to them equated to being denied the privilege to shine in a big show, the opportunity to get the lead role and be better and more important than their classmates. The teacher's resistance is considered further in the Journal and Conclusion chapters as a projection for future investigation into the effective education of teachers who engage in theatre productions.

## **Research Methods**

The making of an authentic school production process is examined through Ethnodrama (Saldanna 2005) in particular it is used in understanding the student experience. However this particular project called for an extension of ethnodrama in that the parameters of a traditional ethnodrama didn't fit with the manner in which the drama came about. Where, traditionally, the researcher writes a play script about what they observe to be the subjects' experience, in this instance the subjects (or the students) collaboratively wrote the play script with the researcher based upon their understanding of how their worlds intersect with that of a Shakespearean play, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

## **Research Questions**

The following four research questions are born out of a frustration of the current model of Broadway school productions that are commonly performed in Australian schools. The questions are explored in particular throughout the chapters and answered in the conclusion. The answers to these questions give us a picture of the possibilities of an authentic model of school production and outline the benefits of such a model. They explore both the teacher and student experience in reaching an understanding of what the authentic school production offers students and requires of teachers.

1. What is the current place of the Australian secondary school production in curriculum?
2. What are the student experiences and benefits in being involved in an authentic model of school production?
3. How are these experiences affected by the process undertaken in the making of a school production?
4. How is the teacher/artist positioned within the school production?

## **Data Collection**

The data collection was based upon a qualitative approach. Field observation, focus groups, researcher journal, participant journal and video documentation informed the research findings.

All interactions around the production were documented in my journal. I recorded moments that popped up in the staffroom, conversations in the hallway and backstage as well as the rehearsals and meetings. The reason was to give a full view of the teacher's position as production coordinator and what this means. This also enabled views of the students around their experiences in an authentic school production. This is particularly shown through the Student Perspectives chapter and the Journal chapter.

All videos were watched back after rehearsals and meetings and a record made of the content. All initial journal entries were made in one journal and reflected upon in a second journal, weeks later. This allowed me to gather perspectives of what had contributed to me viewing things in the light that I had in the initial journal. This thought process is explored as hot cognition in the first journal and Autoethnography in the second journal.

I transcribed the videos myself as soon as I could. At times I decided not to transcribe but rather to summarise due to time constraints. I would go back and read the summary when retrieving data and then find the footage and transcribe parts if I was to use them within the thesis.

## **Analysis**

Data was collected over one year. It focused on the students' and teacher experiences involved in refurbishing a Shakespearean script as a school production. The analysis was to hold a looking glass up to the process rather than the product which the name, the school production, implies I might. In analysing the students' perspectives and their contribution to developing an authentic production I was able to analyse very rich data that was self-reflexive and insightful. To document what happened and how, and then to question why and what can we learn from this, required me to analyse information first as a participant, then as a teacher and simultaneously as a researcher.

## **Thesis Structure**

### **Chapter 1**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter the main research questions are posed and the authentic school production project is introduced. The reasons for the research being undertaken are mapped and the cultural context of the research is identified.

### **Chapter 2**

#### **Performative Education**

Chapter 2 explores performative education literature that provides an educational framework to understand the school production and the research about it.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Methodology**

The methodologies of Ethnodrama and Autoethnography are drawn from in order to frame the methods and procedures used in running an authentic school production.

### **Chapter 4**

#### **Student Perspectives**

A glimpse of the students' perspectives involved in the school production, based on case studies, focus groups and students' verbal and written comments.

### **Chapter 5**

#### **Journal in Three Parts**

A reflective journal in three parts (reflective journal, hot cognition and Autoethnography), which reveals the teacher and researcher's perspectives.

### **Chapter 6**

#### **Script – A Midsummer Nite's Dreame.**

An annotated, collaboratively written script with analysis.

**Chapter 7****Backstage Case Studies**

Behind the scenes snippets of student experiences backstage.

**Chapter 8****Conclusion.**

The main research questions are addressed. Limitations and suggestions for further research are noted.

## CHAPTER TWO PERFORMATIVE EDUCATION

What is the school production? The school production occurs in varied states, usually as an extra-curricular activity and can offer educators a unique insight into the possibility of authentic and creative learning, through real world opportunities in the theatre. I refer to two models of the school production, the Authentic and the Broadway model. It is important to understand these two models to understand the potential of the school production.

The Broadway model is where the students reproduce well known and popular musicals and it is very product driven. The Broadway show is, 'accepting the world for what it is rather than imagining what it might become' (O'Connor 2007, 36). In contrast, at the forefront of this research is an authentic model of school production that requires imagination for what the world might become. The authentic model is a microcosm of an imagined world that encompasses students' ideas, voices and understandings of their own worlds. This thesis is concerned with the process of the authentic model, one that is rich in creativity, one that brings the students' voices to the vanguard and expects students to take on roles of responsibility and meaning.

The authentic school production takes its meaning from Authentic Learning. Just as Authentic Learning is 'used in solving problems-problems that are meaningful, challenging and complex' (Glatthorn 1999, 5), the authentic production requires students to make meaning from complex and challenging problems. The authentic school production is a collection of intricate problems and possibilities that present themselves throughout the process of bringing a stage production to life. The students are placed at the centre of the experience in order to take on the challenge and responsibility of the aesthetics and logistics of their annual school production. The result is challenging and the learning is enriched for both teacher and student. The authentic model is imagined, written, directed, choreographed, performed, managed and experienced by the students and their production teacher and assistant teachers.

The following literature review will consider writing on authentic learning, the arts, different forms of theatre and drama experienced in schools along with: the production for social change, embodied learning, contemporary performance practice, the teacher and creativity, extracurricular education and the principles of learning and teaching in dominant culture. The envelope that follows this chapter contains further performative education related reading. The colour coding, reading and pictures of these articles is explained within this envelope. These may be considered appendices and are located after the appendices in the digital version of the thesis as is the explanation.

## The Arts

The Australian Curriculum Document states, 'Although Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music, and Visual Arts are described individually in The Arts, students require opportunities to study and make artworks that feature fusion of traditional art forms and practices to create hybrid artworks' (ACARA 2013, 28).

The praxis of a school production is informed by the pedagogy of the 'Arts,' as outlined in the Australian Curriculum: 'The Arts Foundation to Year 10 comprises five subjects: Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music, and Visual Arts. Each subject focuses on its own practices, terminology and unique ways of looking at the world' (ACARA 2013a, 3). In particular, the school production draws from Drama pedagogy. While the remaining four Arts' strands from the Curriculum Documents are important to the production, Drama, as a subject, is most like the authentic school production in so far as it asks students to create works that are performative including movement, voice, acting and theatre skills (Bird and Sallis 2014) and therefore integral to understanding the school production.

The school production, (regardless of how it is made) expresses, entertains and challenges. So does Drama. The Australian Curriculum document states: 'Drama is the expression and exploration of personal, cultural and social worlds through role and situation that engages, entertains and challenges' (ACARA 2013b). The authentic model of production, requires students to explore themselves, their cultural and their social worlds in the writing and staging of the school production, and so aligns well with the subject of Drama. In contrast, the Broadway model of production is more akin to Theatre Studies. Theatre Studies is only offered as a Victorian Certificate of Education VCE subject (VCAA 2013) unless creatively taught through the Drama and Media methods. 'In VCE Theatre Studies students interpret play scripts and produce theatre for audiences' (VCAA 2013, 5).

This is similar to the Broadway model school production, although the students are not necessarily directly involved in interpreting the play-script, as this may be done for them by the teacher/director. While the school production primarily resembles Drama pedagogy, it does include the remaining four art strands (ACARA 2013a). Music requires students to learn specific scores, master and perform these pieces. It also requires students to 'communicate ideas and dramatic action in a range of forms' (ACARA 2013a, 7). The authentic school production requires students to do this at a very sophisticated level, encouraging them to compose their own original scores that compliment and bring meaning to the action of the production. This level of work requires students to work across curricular areas with dancers and actors. Visual Art requires students to 'plan and design art works' (ACARA 2013a, 8).

In the authentic school production this occurs in conjunction with the needs of the production. For example, students design and make sets, using their skills acquired in visual art. Media Arts is similar with visual arts in that students design work that enhances and supports the action of the play.

Dancers are called on to use 'expressive skills to communicate' (ACARA 2013a, 8) ideas that are involved in the play. Drama is central to the action within the authentic school production in writing a script. Drama brought the words to life through workshopping ideas, these ideas acted as springboards for music, dance, visual arts and media arts to become involved to enhance the work.

Without drama the authentic school production would not be. Yet without dance, music, visual art or drama the authentic school production is still possible and this is the main reason that I have located the authentic school production within literature concerned with drama education. The secondary reason is that in my experience and based on the experiences of thirty drama teachers surveyed, it is usually the drama teacher in the school who is expected to produce and direct the school production.

The authentic school production requires the arts to intersect through collaboration across the arts curricular to design and make work that is multifaceted. In this particular project students collaborated across the disciplines in the making process to perform original works. The authentic school production calls for students to be choreographers, directors, composers, artistic designers and media artists. The school production is a model of hybrid artworks and requires further explanation surrounding its literary framework; the Arts as outlined in the curriculum do not completely encapsulate our understanding of what a school production is.

To gather a more rounded view of what the school production entails we can look outside the school to theatre practice. Theatre in Education (TiE) research (Nicholson 2009; Jackson and Vine 2013b; Guner 2012; Cooper 2004; Winston 2005; Sefton-Green 2000; Wooster 2007; Hennessy 1998; Wright and Garcia 1992; Persephone 2003) and Applied Theatre research (Prentki and Preston 2009; Dawson, Cawthon, and Baker 2011; Hughes and Wilson 2004; Conrad 2004; O'Toole 2009b) offer a more in depth understanding to the school production. In understanding TiE, Applied Theatre and the evolution of these alongside Drama in education, a robust framework within which to navigate the literature relevant to the school production becomes conceivable.

## **Classroom Drama**

Classroom Drama is concerned with making meaningful works of art and prescribes to theories in acting and pedagogy to do so. Drama educators such as, O'Toole (2009a), Clausen (2000), Tourelle (2013), Neelands (2013) and O'Mara (O'Mara in Gallagher and Neelands 2014) all offer drama educators an array of strategies for drama in the classroom and ways to think about Drama Education. In contrast Burton (2001) and Bird and Sallis' (2014) texts are perhaps some of the most broadly used



teacher and student texts applied in Australian secondary drama education, along with Clausen (2004), Tourelle (Tourelle and McNamara 1998) and Banyai (2005) who all offer teachers resources from which to teach Drama. All of these texts focus on the acting theories that have been established through theatre experimentation.

To an extent our past theatre practitioners' works have thus become our theory underpinning drama education in schools. Practitioners such as Stanislavski (2013), Grotowski (2002), Artaud (1958), Brecht (1986), Boal (1979) and Brook (1989) have sculpted the face of acting and offer actors a creative language to describe their craft. These practitioners, however, do not deal with the real lived experience of a young person engaging in original drama today as most of them are dead and none of them have experienced being a Twenty First Century secondary student. They do, however, provide students with a history of acting theory grown out of practices in the past, which informs our understanding of the world of performance. This rich history offers us a perspective of the stage upon which our acting can be structured. Alongside the theories of acting, students also need the opportunity to be creative in expressing their ideas and worlds.

Being creative and expressing ourselves through performance can be transformative (Wise 2002). The idea that students need a script or a method to make Drama, perhaps comes from some need for the subject, Drama to be included in the curriculum or valued in Western education. O'Toole and O'Mara assert that there remains a suspicion between the Arts in education and curriculum due to the permanence associated with the status of curriculum. They go on to cite Stake, who highlights the somewhat forgotten impermanence of the child at the centre of this organised curriculum (Stake in O'Toole and O'Mara in Bresler 2007) Shakespeare celebrated creativity and freedom (O'Dell 2002; Styan 1967; Holland 1997; Halio 1988; Congress et al. 1983; Bulman 2003). His works were made according to the time and took into consideration the actors, who often had to be prepared to improvise or cue read their parts. Yet, in teaching, we frequently turn our backs on the models of creativity and freedom of expression that his works required.

This gap between what Shakespeare advocated in his actors and writing his scripts and drama education in schools is a peculiar one. Along with Shakespeare the following arts practitioners celebrated creativity, Wilson asserts, 'Generally speaking, we Arts educators have yet to grasp the implications of the enterprise that Duchamp and Warhol set in motion, let alone incorporate it into our curricula' (Wilson 2003, 217). In other words Arts Education is no different to that of Museum culture when it comes to Art. The analogy with the school production is clear: the traditional school production (the Broadway model) also supports a museum culture, rather than making a new cultural performance that integrates young peoples' worlds. In contrast, Gallagher (Gallagher and Service 2010) supports this notion of theatre as a way forward, stating, 'theatre opens up a capacity to manoeuvre across borders and develop capacities for functioning in diverse situations' (Wilson 2003,

240). This crossing of borders requires creativity and the ability to permit freedom in the creative pursuit.

## **Drama in Curriculum**

The national curriculum places Drama as a strand of the Arts in education (ACARA 2013). As a guide, the curriculum outlines stages for students to develop in the area of Drama. As students develop in these areas, they also develop community and communication skills. Just as in other subjects, Drama is known to offer more than the actual subject matter. Literature supporting the process of dramatic arts in our schools has been well noted for its positive effects on students' outcomes (Anderson and Dunn 2013) and community involvement (Wagner 1999b; Prendergast and Saxton 2013). The recognition of Drama as a subject that has a positive effect on student connectedness to their worlds and in-turn recognises that creativity has a positive effect on our learners. This allows us to understand why Drama is an important component in the creative curriculum.

Drama has been 'knocking at curriculum's door' (O'Toole, Stinson, and Moore 2009a) since 1950 and has achieved a place within the curriculum. In the 90's, Drama, as a subject, was taken seriously enough to become a VCE scoring elective (however it is still scaled down when adding up the current Australian Tertiary Admission Ranking (ATAR score) (VCAA 2014). Furthermore, Drama, along with the other VCE Arts strands, Music, Dance, Theatre Studies and Visual Arts are showcased each year to the Victorian public in the annual Top Acts and Top Arts. It seems ironic that the domain of subjects showcasing VCE achievement may be scaled down, therefore affecting a student's ATAR score. This is either the Western suspicion that O'Toole and O'Mara express around the Arts in education. Or in this day and age could also be looked upon as blatant prejudice for the students who choose to do the Arts.

Dominant Curriculum Education does not cater to or acknowledge their predominant learning styles. I foreshadow here this subtle devaluation of the Arts subjects at this level which is indicative of the Arts in curriculum. Often the reasoning for including Drama in the curriculum will be for its social development (Gupta 2007; Vygotsky 1997; Wagner 1999a; Somers 2008; O'Toole, Stinson, and Moore 2009a; Teoh 2012; Nicholson 2005; McCammon 2007; Dolan 2005; Boal 2013), rather than its academic rigour or aesthetic value. Academic rigour seems to be a measure of validity in learning in our schools. Unquestionably the arts require a great deal of it due to the desires for academic rigour in search of status within curriculum (Stankiewicz in Bresler 2007). The thought that the Arts can only be assessed in terms of this rigour is placing a cage around creative and expressive development and thought. The Arts offer humanity, they require empathy, aesthetic value, collaboration, wonderment, creativity, presence, critical thinking and reflection; the Arts make sense of other curriculum (Stone 2007).

While the arts develop and allow students to explore their humanity, the notion of reducing Drama and Theatre purely to the purpose of fixing our social problems is one that is rejected by Daldry, where theatre and Drama education can ‘be used as a tool’ (Daldry 1998, x) for betterment. He goes on to state that using Drama as a means for social development is like the wearing of a mask (Daldry 1998). The mask conceals the performer’s expression just as the social development conceals Drama’s academic qualities. While a production may bring about social change or raise social and cultural questions, it is important that we don’t place the rigidity of that framework upon the creative process.

There is a place for theatre that is geared to therapy and social change and it is important to understand this attribute in understanding the theoretical framework in which the school production resides. It is important that we understand Drama as both a form of expression and as a measure towards social change. Must the two be separated? The reliance of one upon the other is evident, particularly when the betterment through Drama education carries with it a hatred of feminine nurture (Grosz 1994) and therefore does not gain the pragmatic status of the more heady (Robinson 2010) subject areas.

When I completed VCE Drama in 1991 my Drama report was outstanding (***See Appendix 1 Drama Report***) however I was not afforded a score for my outstanding work and THE Group 2 subject, Drama was not included in my then, Anderson or ENTER score (Beswick et al.1984), for all of my hard work and study I did not get recognised. While I studied alongside students who took predominantly male dominated subjects such as Maths and Science, I was penalised, as were others. An anonymous blogger stated, “I didn't get a score (too many humanities) but I got into sculpture at RMIT - which I then ditched after one year. Marks schmarks” (juicenewton 2007). I still passed with a greatly reduced score for which I had to work twice as hard for, which sounds too much like the working mum scenario (Gould 1997; Gerson 2009; Howe 2000). While we have come a long way from such blatant sexism in education curriculum this subtlety remains. It is indoctrinated in our society, it improves, but it remains and while it remains, students who have so much to offer will be penalised.

## **Drama and Production for Social Change**

A study that examined theatre and drama as a powerful tool for social change is Melbourne University’s, ‘Risky Business Project’. This examined how drama supports students. It found of selected children engaged in drama therapy in mainstream schooling, that participants exhibited, ‘emotional and behavioural improvement’ (Karkou 2010, 124). These improvements could be

attributed to theatre focused on social change (Boal 1979; Vygotsky 1997). The DICE project is another example of Theatre in Education where, 'social and moral problems are analysed through action with the participants' (DICE 2010, 12). This cross-cultural study aimed, 'to compare theatre and drama activities in education in different countries' (DICE 2010, 10) allowing educators to understand how their craft benefits learners in a global context, while observing a range of themes; some of which considered how student learning and experience could be enhanced through the Performing Arts.

Another very well-known approach to Drama used as a medium within education for betterment is the work of Dorothy Heathcote (Heathcote and Bolt 1996). Heathcote's, *Mantel of the Expert*, offered betterment to education as a whole through the concept of Process Drama. Process Drama is essentially improvisational (Bowell and Heap 1996), and beneficial to the learner academically and socially while also supporting the development of problem solving skills.

While drama and theatre are, by nature, tools that offer betterment and solutions to our problems, these are not their sole, or even their most critical purpose. Of course Drama can be used for evil too, however in an educational context this is not the case. Drama and Theatre offer life skills through self-expression and an intellectual and physical place in which to explore self, others and existential ideas (Wooster 2007; Jackson 2002; Somers 1996). Furthermore, Drama and Theatre collectively build knowledge and understanding of students' worlds (Schonmann 2011; O'Toole, Stinson, and Moore 2009b). Students who engage in Drama develop as performers, learners and people in imagined worlds through dramatic form and convention (Heathcote and Bolt 1996).

Daldry (1998) asserts that students 'deserve an insight into dramatic form and convention' (Daldry 1998, x). Consistent with this thinking, Wright (2007) notes:

'Because of its emphasis upon participation, communication, reflection and the negotiation of reason and emotion, the meta-process of learning to learn is made particularly accessible through drama. Consequently, the philosophical and pedagogical processes employed in drama education should be of interest to all education researchers, particularly those in advocacy positions' (Wright 2007, 45).

Likewise, the authentic school production emphasises similar learning and for this reason the authentic school production should be of interest to all education researchers. Drama in education, like the authentic school production, contributes to our knowledge of performative education. Performative education discourse also includes discourse of the performative nature that is brought into schools.

## Theatre in Education, Applied Theatre and Drama in Education.

While Ackroyd suggests that, 'Perhaps there is an assumed status distinction between drama in education and applied theatre' (Ackroyd 2007, 3), Taylor asserts 'the term 'drama' did promote a division from theatre practice which we are still trying to unravel today' (Taylor 2000, 5). In understanding these different types of educational theatre, we can further understand the school production. Theatre in Education broadly refers to theatre made for young people, by adults and performed in schools. TiE allows for 'techniques of participation' (O'Toole 2009b).

Harris positions Theatre in Education under the umbrella of Applied Theatre (Harris 2012), however theatre in education can also be understood as a series of progressions and developments. More to the point the 'rhizomatic' (Harris 2012, 179) notion that resiles from Deleuze and Guattari's, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) fundamentally understands the interconnectedness and networks that create and develop an intricate system of layers or 'strata' and while 'content and expression intermingle' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) it does not mean that all performative education terms such as: Drama in Education (DiE), Theatre in Education (TiE), Theatre for Development (TfD), Playback Theatre necessarily fall under the umbrella of Applied Theatre. Schonman questions, 'are we being stifled by applied theatre and drama?' (Schonman 2005, 31) There are cohesive articulations that inform us of the development of drama and theatre in education. Theatre in Education may have originated from TfD, focused in Africa by Kidd back in the late 70's and early 80's (Byam 1999), where his research looked at theatre as a way of developing students in Africa.

This work was inspired by the theatre practitioners, Augusto Boal and Bertholt Brecht (Epskamp 2006). Brecht wrote about the alienation effects in writing, directing and acting which have informed TiE (Brecht and Willett 1964). Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed deals with the notion of theatre for development, a theatre that gives the oppressed a voice (Boal 1979). In understanding these articulations it is also important to understand the degree that each articulation represents in the moments of individual performance. As stated previously, Theatre of the Oppressed has been used as TfD in Africa as a means for development.

However, one example of this, The Eritrea Community-Based Theatre project (Salhi 1998) is fraught with a supposed marginalised voice that is in fact the government's voice. The idea that the government funded project was specifically one ethnic group's voice, Tigrinya – the ethnic group in power in Ethiopia raises alarm bells. If this was a theatre that gave voice to the people then wouldn't it be named the Ethiopian Community-Based Theatre project? The very notion that all theatre operating under the umbrellas of 'Theatre for Development' or 'Theatre in Education' are in some way good is something that we should be cautious of.

Ackroyd (2007) makes a link to Africa when considering the origins of Applied Theatre suggesting, that Applied Theatre forms might be as ancient as theatre itself. The idea that all of African theatre can be generalised and reduced to form our understanding of what we have developed to be Applied Theatre is thought-provoking. I spoke with an African artist from Ethiopia to gain his understanding of theatre and drama in his country, his response was:

*“Drama is life, it is the blood in your veins and the heart that pumps every breath you breathe, it is the man and the woman and love and birth, it is a renewal of the rains, a building of the home, it is understanding the world where we live. If you ask me what is theatre? It is not in a building, with curtains that could feed a hundred children; it is on the dirt where you born, with the fire that drives you. We don't know this idea Drama or Theatre like that - in our villages it is life. And even for the white woman like you too it is life - when I saw your performing, it is life. This idea for the theatre and drama in our schools comes with the Western influences. But we still have what is really Drama in our heart and we know everything else is some other thing that is not exactly life. Our ceremony, our cultural moments like yours, wedding, healing, birthing and passing – this is not theatre- even we not have word for this just we have the same English like you, theatre is clean and it is too organised. When we celebrate life our rituals they are not theatre, they are every breath of our community” (Hussen 2013).*

This idea of looking to what happened in Africa to make links to the development of drama, theatre and performance by Schechner in the 70's brought the discourse about these performative states away from the hegemony of the Western product driven genres (Okagbue 2013). This notion that 'drama is life' resounds with Schechner's work. Whereas the idea that Applied Theatre can be directly linked to the same is problematic. Applied Theatre uses theatrical concepts and techniques that are planned and clean and product driven. It is used in education to develop something; an understanding or healing, dealing with an issue and it has a product driven aim (Prentki and Preston 2013). It may involve students or it may have students question the content and respond.

Like Applied Theatre it is understood that TiE encourages performance that allows students to become involved (Lazarus 2012). Wooster outlines the development of Theatre in Education from the 1970's to today and notes authentic teaching is central to TiE. He points out that a universal definition of TiE is difficult to identify, stating that 'there are those who will insist upon the active participation of children whilst others will be satisfied if the theatrical event has an educational goal' (Wooster 2007, 25).

Applied Theatre on the other hand refers to theatre that is applied to education as a means of understanding and growing (Conrad 2004). O'Connor's Teaspoon of Light project, which involved working with the children of Christchurch, New Zealand after the 2011 earth quakes, required him to apply theatre work for children to learn and heal through. This theatre was applied to support children

who may have experienced trauma as a result of the earthquakes. He phrased questions based on professional performer's work that was viewed by the students to engage them in a process of self-discovery, understanding and healing (Jackson and Vine 2013a). The authentic school production differs in that it requires students to perform the work, through a workshopping process and pose the questions for themselves to make meaning of their worlds through the creative process. Contemplating the term 'school production,' within the mix of this body of discourse, reveals the possibility of another dimension to the literature.

The school production model involved in this thesis, deals with students making theatre in education to express their social and cultural experiences, through engaging in writing and performing their work. Likewise, Drama in education which is a subject within the Australian Curriculum Document, deals with the students' learning of Drama as a subject in the classroom, development of their performance skills and learning to make meaning of the theatre (Burton 2004; Hornbrook 1991; Fleming 2003; Warren 2002; Lewis and Rainer 2005, 2012).

The school production does not fit neatly within any of these discourses, yet could be understood to borrow from each. Like Drama, the school production involves student performers, who develop their skills in the theatre (Hornbrook 2002; Baldwin 2009; Cross and Reynolds 2002; Kempe and Ashwell 2000; Warren 2002). Similar to TiE, the school production can have adults performing and is usually shown to students and their communities. Applied Theatre is something of an enigma when comparing the traditional format of school production, i.e.: choose script, cast performers, rehearse and perform (Grote 1997). Applied Theatre does however give an understanding of the more inclusive (Prendergast and Saxton 2009) model of authentic learning used in the project involved in this study, where students write their own production based on their lived experiences. This example of educational theatre is very similar to the subject area of Drama, without the framework in place that guides the teacher and the learner. The subject, drama, is a place where 'the predictable occurs within a probable outcome' (Taylor 1996, 2).

## **Embodied Learning**

Wright believes that Drama is fundamental to our pedagogy primarily because it requires that the learner be encouraged to learn in an embodied state (Wright 2007). Furthermore, Hennessey states his concern for the inseparability of cognition and rationality from artistic feeling and creativity. He makes the point in the section 'Learning through Feeling', that 'the *most important* lessons we learn in life are such that their significance to us *cannot* be characterised in terms of having acquired new facts' (Hennessey 1998, 194). Everett further develops this thinking with reference to Lecoq's integrated approach:

The last hundred years have seen a shift away from the body/mind dichotomy towards a re-integration of the corporeal, manifesting in a new paradigm of 'embodiment' which positions body, mind, culture and environment as mutually determinant (Everett 2008, 73).

Drama theorists, including Bertholt Brecht's political didactic exploration of acting (Brecht 1986; Broadhurst 1999), Antonin Artaud's essentialism (Artaud 1958; Broadhurst 1999), Constantin Stanislavski's psychology of the actor (Stanislavski 2013; Stanislavski and Hapgood 1981; Whyman 2008), Jerzy Grotowski's concept of transmission (Grotowski 2002; SCHECHNER and Wylam 2013), Augustus Boal's sensory, memory, muscular, emotional and imagination (Boal, C. A, and McBride 1979) and Peter Brook (Brook 1989, 2008; Boal 2005) all allow us to observe the very notion of embodiment through performance. Their works explore the art form of acting and the reciprocal nature of the art form.

The adoption of these theories in Drama in Education has meant that a rich embodied history is available to all educators. However, within this embodied learning we continue to see theory fraught with language dichotomies. The spoken and written language offers a wealth of knowledge and understanding, although if it goes unembodied it can become yet another imposed binary (talking about drama, versus doing drama). Doing Drama is the embodied state of learning as opposed to theorising the processes. In line with this thinking, is the importance for students to experience their teacher as embodied in their learning.

In 'The Teacher's Body' (Grummet 2003), we learn how important the embodied teacher is for quality learning to occur. Franklin suggests, 'to be possessed of glory in the dynamics of teaching and learning is to be embodied and honour the embodiment of others' (Franklin in, Freedman et al. 2012, 20). When I speak of the embodied teacher I mean the embodied experience, embodied teaching, embodied sexuality, embodied lives and embodied histories of teachers and the teachers sharing this with their students. The embodied teacher is required in the authentic production. The production teacher shares their craft through embodied experiences and history. Similarly, Eisner explains, 'to experience, the qualitative relationships that emerge in his or her work' (Eisner 2004, 5), allows students to make judgements that they cannot experience when they are not engaged in an embodied state of learning. The production lends itself to this embodied form of teaching and learning, it allows the learner and teacher a relationship that transcends the classroom and the page. This transcendence, in effect, is important in engaging the student at a level that is both interesting and sustainable - this allows quality learning to take place (Wankel and Blessinger 2012; Baldwin 2009; Anderson 2011; Grainger, Goouch, and Lambirth 2005; Anderson and Dunn 2013; Aubusson, Ewing, and Hoban 2012).



Students working together make the process of mastering articulation accessible. Vygotsky's theory of education supports this idea that collaboration underpins the development of literacy skills (Kozulin 2003). Furthermore, the ability to embody the spoken word also has the benefit of making meaning, allowing the writer to 'feel more alert to the world' (Anderson 2002). The involvement of the whole body, and not just the organs of articulation, is important in the adoption of the rhythms and patterns of standardised English (Algeo and Butcher 2013; Ong 2002; McCallion 1999; Langman 2014). From this understanding of how language can be experienced and enriched, it is a small step to ask what else can be learnt from 'embodying' learning, from experiencing intellectual challenge in the whole body, not simply as a 'mind' process. The production as a form of performance offers an embodied learning. This is informed then by performance discourse that is concerned with embodiment.

Examples of performative embodiment can be found in the postmodern dance of the 1960's Judson Dance Theatre, distinguished by the 'willingness to freely incorporate elements of pedestrian movement –' (Copeland 2004, 231). Dempster (2008) suggests that the ordinary or pedestrian movement has since been used to dichotomise dance to fit into the modern understanding that you are either a trained dancer or non-dancer. This way of thinking that a person is either a dancer or non-dancer disregards the embodied state of dance and the possibility that all bodies dance.

Earlier examples of performative embodiment can be found in the fluidity of Isadora Duncan's movements which 'expand upward and outward from the chest to flow through the entire body' (IDDF 2005), which could be considered to be devoid of conscious mind control. This type of embodiment experienced through dance of the pedestrian or everyday person, and what they have to offer as performer, is of *real* interest to the concept of embracing a school production within the school day. The context of the production usually includes the process of interpreting text rather than text interpreting the embodied or the lived experience. I propose that an interpretation of lived experience needs to happen for our young people to truly create embodied works and thus learn creatively. The creative learning of the students who collaborate on construction of a collectively imagined production is both pedestrian and embodied.

While some students bring with them acting and dance training, predominantly the students involved in production are pedestrian. Students bring with them all types of experiences from their worlds, some are more pedestrian in their approach than others. When choreographing with students I observed those students who had no background in dance willingly taking direction from those who have had dance (Kaufmann 2006) lessons. These students, who bring experience, carry varied levels of understanding and often bring ideas and ideals that extend the pedestrian.

Where the lived experience of each child involved is accepted as important and valued (Cole 2008), the dance training that some students have requires some support in the notion of working equitably. The idea that some students are more physically able (Kaufmann 2006; McCutchen 2006), those who have dance training as opposed to those who do not, is remarkable and requires some breaking down of barriers to allow those who feel less physically able, to participate fully (Kochhar-Bryant and Heishman 2010). More specifically, in relation to the title of this thesis, *The School Production – To be or not to be?*

Mary-Rose McLaren identifies the learning as:

‘A way of learning in the whole body – learning that engages the emotions as well as the mind; that is expressed in the arms and the legs and the fingers and the toes as well as verbally or in writing. For some children the present is so overriding, so overwhelming, that we need to meet them right there in the present, and place the opportunities to learn right where they are at that moment.

From the above you can move into literacy activities if the children are ready, or into dramatic scenes, or music composition, or debate and discussion, or artistic representation, or data collection and graphs. But this movement comes from the child, involved in the learning, gently guided, and offered opportunities to be themselves as learners. It is about being and being learners’ (McLaren 2010).

Grosz asserts the need to de-privilege some forms of textualisation over others, ‘for example the verbal or linguistic over the visual or the performative’ (Grosz 1994, 11). Lovat eloquently places an argument for the latter in our schools: ‘If there are ways in which anxiety can be minimized and self-confidence grown through schooling, then we must be proficient in those ways’ (Lovat and Smith 1995, 51). Lovat describes what is needed to educate students who can reach their goals as per Maslow’s psychological theories based on the hierarchy of needs (*See Appendix 2 Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs*). He contrasts ‘Gagne, as being far more inclined to want to guide or structure any discovery processes’ (Lovat and Smith 1995, 51). Either way it is evident that the preferred outcome for a student is to reach their optimum potential in a self-growing fashion.

Being a member in community space can have an effect upon a person’s ability to be an embodied learner. The timetabled education model of learning is known for requiring an enclosed space (Deleuze 1992), where everything can be measured and controlled. The production space that resides outside of the controls and confines of the timetabled model of education, allows students the opportunity to experience this freedom of space and time. The possibilities presented when the structure of class expectations are lifted from students is an exciting and freeing experience to witness. We see this through self-directed learning where students have the freedom to explore content and discover meaning (De Boo 1999; Watt 1989).

When students' confines are lifted and replaced with a freedom to *be* in the space and actually make work where they are embodied, rather than only contemplating the text which traditionally is where performance comes from. The Authentic model requires students to workshop, re-write, re-invent and create. In engaging in the collaborative process, a connectedness with the space and the people with whom interaction takes place in the moment to make performance becomes evident. This collective imagination phase, (Cammarota and Fine 2010; Murphy 2012; Hayward 2012) where students understand each other's imaginings and finish phrases of imagination through movement and word requires students to be present in their learning in the 'potential space' (d'Entrèves 2002) of their collective project. It requires the space and time to be free from restrictions placed upon the usual classroom. It calls also for connection beyond the school community.

Equilibration is also an important concept in this context. Csikszentmihalyi (1993) explained the necessity for the adolescent student to be allowed to use their bodies in their education as a means of reducing the need for behavioural management, in his theory based upon 'flow state' (*See Appendix 3 Csikszentmihalyi's Flow State*). When we disallow the student to be embodied we set up a state of confusion and a meandering apathy among our learners (O'Loughlin 2006). While educators acknowledge that there are different ways of learning that appeal to us (Gardner 1983; Pritchard 2013; Baum, Viens, and Slatin 2005; Gould 2012), we struggle to include the embodiment of the students in the Broadway model of production practice where the hegemonic heterosexual scripts are preferred (Agnew and Duncan 2011, 486).

The embodied student in curriculum is one that is of great interest in the theory of teaching and learning. One example of a theory attempting to address this is that of, Marcia Tate's theory, that, 'Shouting Doesn't Grow Dendrites' (Tate 2007). Tate addresses behaviour management by offering students engagement activities rather than requiring them to simply sit and listen. She suggests varying lighting, smells and using mood music in order to improve the capacity of the student to learn. Tate's (Tate 2007) theory is limited, however, because the action happens alongside the passing on of knowledge, rather than the creation of knowledge being embedded in the action, or experienced in the action. In contrast, the very nature of a theatrical production is a rich experience of the senses, offering the student an experience of 'flow state' whether via performance on stage, creating or applying technical skills such as lighting and sound or via another facet of the theatre.

Sir Ken Robinson advocates for the education of the whole person and speaks in his TED talk of the human, 'being educated in one side of the brain and then slightly to one corner, where scholars look upon their bodies as a means to transport them to meetings' (Robinson 2009). The authentic school production requires the student to learn in an embodied fashion and requires them to create through collaboration with other students, teachers and community.

Over time and in the past, more often than not, teachers were conditioned to learn in the ‘*chalk and talk*’ approach and many have become accustomed to teaching in the same way. Deviating from this standard of teaching is often seen as ‘innovative’, rather than the ‘standard’ being seen as stagnant. The Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration to teach process focuses largely on two subject areas as a prerequisite (Victoria 2010) to registration. Similarly, in Tasmania, a teacher is required to have two subject areas to teach. Such requirements further embed the thinking that secondary teachers teach ‘subjects’ rather than students.

This notion of teaching subjects has been challenged in popular media for many years, with heroic images of teachers being constructed from those teachers who address the needs of individual students. *To Sir With Love* (Braithwaite 2005) and *Freedom Writers* (Gruwell 1999) are both examples of what can happen when the teacher teaches beyond the subject. In the book, *To Sir With Love*, first published in 1959, is an autobiography set in the 1950’s. We meet the teacher, Mr Thackeray who begins a job in teaching at an East End London school. He works with a group of students who have been rejected from education and shows them through life examples how to be successful learners. Likewise, teacher Erin Gruwell changes the worlds and lives of students through encouraging students to write about their lived experiences, focussing on their past, present and futures. Numerous other examples exist such as Dead Poet’s Society, Bridge to Terabithia, and more recently, some of the teachers in Summer Heights High.

In these popular images of education, at risk students are challenged to become engaged in learning and often, to graduate from high school. These are examples of exemplary teaching. This is what the authentic school production teacher does. Through writing and understanding children in their present moment the authentic production allows a sense of embodied learning that has meaning for the students involved. Reflecting upon The Principles of Learning and Teaching (PoLT) (Childhood 2013a) calls for teachers to be as engaging as these exemplary teachers, yet, as Lovat asserts that in the ‘real’ school, ‘not only do our teaching methods in general continue to reflect a two dimensional approach to learning, so do our class rooms and physical structures, or more simply put, our ‘curriculum’ (Lovat and Smith 1995, 51). Our curriculum calls for embodied teaching and learning, yet the stark reality is that teaching and learning is two dimensional and the examples of the exemplary teaching are examples because they do not fit into the norm for teaching and learning.

## **Drama for learning**

We know that Drama requires more than a two dimensional approach to teaching (Morgan and Council 1988) and that doing Drama has been called upon as an answer to aiding students’ development (Bowman 2010; Dowdy and Kaplan 2011; McDonald and Fisher 2013; Winston 2013). In particular where gaps in students’ learning have grown, they have been watered and fertilised by the disengaged, the learning difficulty, the socio-economic factors, the missing of information,

absence and illness and the constraints placed upon learners to reach their potential. These constraints which impact on the learner's ability to engage and interact in classroom activities which call for mathematical, verbal and linguistic abilities, are often met with programs such as Reading Recovery which helps children who have been left behind to recover their skills in reading (Childhood 2007) or EMU, a Mathematics recovery program (Gervasoni 2001).

While programs like these have outstanding results (Morrow and Woo 2001; Jacobson, Foxx, and Mulick 2005; Perry et al. 2012; Atweh et al. 2011), the Dramatic Arts have been shown to improve these skills just as effectively (Heathcote and Bolt 1996; Neelands 1992; Baldwin 2012; Anderson and Dunn 2013). Drama educators intrinsically know of their possibility for bettering these skills in students (Aubusson, Ewing, and Hoban 2012; McGuinn 2014), yet understand that they will be overlooked time and again. O'Mara has questioned, 'Have you ever thought about using drama?' (O'Mara, 2003, 18) Likewise, Dickinson and Neelands suggest that Drama will improve a school's overall ethos (Dickinson and Neelands 2012).

The English/Literacy agenda raises problems to which drama seems to be the obvious answer and yet, it is not always obvious to educators outside the field of Drama Education. In response to Freebody and Luke's 'repertoire of practices' (Freebody and Luke 1999), O'Mara suggests that 'learners in drama education draw upon and develop this same repertoire of practices as they work with dramatic texts, the ability to participate in making and viewing dramatic texts being important literacy skills' (O'Mara, 2003, 21).

Drama plays an important role in literacy education. Many people have written of the potential for the Arts to enhance student literacy (Ewing 2011; Jackson and Vine 2013a; McDonald and Fisher 2013; John, Loescher, and Bardzell 2003; Pappas and Zecker 2005; Cohan and Honigsfeld 2013; Barrs, Barton, and Booth 2012; Dulabaum 2003; Roe et al. 2013; Cohen and Cowen 2007). Students learn reading and writing through context, semiotics, encoding and decoding. Each of these can be developed through Drama. Drama requires the learner to engage with material in a manner that writing alone cannot. This engagement of the embodied learner and teacher allows an embodied way of knowing, internalising and memorising. The learner who engages in the authentic school production learns in this heightened manner too.

## **Making Drama fit Assessment**

Current Drama practitioners and teachers continue to rely on 'Living Drama' (Burton, B. 2012), to teach Drama to the Drama student. The Victoria Certificate of Education (VCE) Drama Unit 3 requires students to make an ensemble performance (Bird and Sallis 2014), which allows students to work together and to explore their voice as drama makers, yet it requires that students tick boxes

along the way. For example, transformation of object (Grotowski 2002), becomes a criteria for marking how 'good' an ensemble is – how many times the student performers can think of transforming their object, which is not at all reflective of what it means to be a performer and to make work that resounds with a unique understanding of their worlds.

When a teacher gives a framework within what to create they simultaneously constrain the students' outcome. In other words, this need for summative assessment limits what students might otherwise make. In part this research proposes that instead, Drama practitioners working with school students should begin with the "mess" (being that which is the real stuff; the friction, the smell, the awkwardness, the profoundly funny to the shyest of shy and everything that lies in an embodied state) and find something that reflects and resonates with the lives of young people.

When a teacher begins with the assessment as the Drama VCE requires us to do, creativity is stifled in the same way when a Broadway production relies on extrinsic motivation creativity is stifled. When we focus on intrinsic motivation creativity has the chance to develop and the work that resides in this zone will be remarkably diverse. Whether there has to be a binary opposition between assessment and creativity is not the purpose of the thesis, but when the creativity of learners is immediately shaped for assessment purposes and convenience, then the relevance of this becomes questionable.

## **Contemporary Performance Practice.**

VCE Drama students often have a desire to explore drama, acting and performing further in their futures and find themselves dislocated from what is required of them in a university or contemporary performance context. There is a notable disparity between Australian contemporary performance practitioners' works and the Broadway model school production. Our schools seems to be a microcosmic breeding ground for the adult consumer world of mainstream mass-produced theatre such as *Grease*, *Jersey Boys*, *Rocky Horror Show* and *Wicked* to name a few.

Contemporary animateurs map the cultural stories of our people; they share the discovery of lands and the heartbreak of war and struggle for survival. *The Breath of God* (Moussa 2013) by Wahibe Moussa shifts an audience understands a mother's inability to love in the way society intended. Bangarra's Dance performance of *Mathinna* (Page 2008) tells the story of an Australian Aboriginal girl and her fatal spiral out of control in the hands of the Balanda (European person). Audiences who understand these problems, who visit these performances, are all the more enriched and their social understanding of our Australian cultural landscape grows (Craik 2007; Hickman 2010)

Where 'one would expect that where culture has become a "commodity" the bourgeois taste would prevail' (Bell 2008, xxiii) the opposite can be seen, which means that we don't have to continually

reinforce the hegemony of the dominant Broadway culture to have audiences engage with, respond to and even learn from performance work presented. The following examples are of Australian works that do not represent the hegemonic view of dominant culture:

- *Boxman* (Keene 2012) by Daniel Keene tells the story of a dislocated man, a refugee. His history, his unbearable story is shared with an audience who will never be the same.
- Andreas Litras' *Odyssey* (Littras 2012) which draws on Greek mythology as he tells a familiar Australian story of fish and chips and immigrating to Australia. This is the stuff of cultural growth and richness.
- *Hip-Bone Sticking Out* (Rankin 2013) places Australian indigenous people and the Pilbara at the centre of world history.
- *Tehran* (Sheshgelani 2013) explores ancient Persia and the current political climate through a multicultural view of its Australian-based creators.
- *Deaths' Testimony* (Schroeter 1998) dealt with developing world's ignorance of genocides underway. Exploring and contextualising the stories of the people who seek refuge in Australia.

The following Victorian theatres are some who support these important works: La Mama, Chapel of Change, Theatre Works, Red-Stitch Theatre, and The Malthouse Theatre. Yet our children attend schools and time and again are expected to tell and perpetuate the story of a mainstream world that is not necessarily reflective of their worlds. This struggle for the Broadway model production is further explored in the Script, Perspectives and Journal chapters.

## **The Teacher and Creativity**

The school production as an authentic model of learning requires students to be actively involved in their education. When the school production is carried out as an authentic learning experience it involves 'a three-step process: identify assumptions that you make which prevent you from seeing all the alternatives; deny these constraining assumptions; explore the consequences of the denials' (Ackoff 2008). Having said this, it is important to understand the affect that the collective creative pursuit can achieve or, as Hennessey's referral of Maykut and Morehouse (1994) succinctly explains,

'To indwell means to exist as an interactive spirit, force or principle—to exist within an activating spirit, force or principle. It literally means to live within... being at one with the person's point of view from an empathic rather than a sympathetic position' (Hennessey 1998, 89).

This is conducive to student-centred learning which happens in the authentic school production, allowing students to explore creativity which is empathically understood and or experienced by researcher/teacher. This is a very remarkable position in so far as it allows the learner to navigate their course to a great degree. In turn, this wholeheartedly supports the learning of creativity through

creative learning approaches, such as action learning (Aubusson, Ewing, and Hoban 2012), along with many other skills pertaining to being involved in Process Drama and Theatre. This of course raises the question, can creativity be taught? Furthermore, is the school production a possible vehicle for teaching creativity?

The Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT) which measured fluency, originality, elaboration, abstractness, and resistance to premature closure, was the tool used to measure creative ability (Torrance 1972, Tan 2007). The idea that we teach the tangible such as creative writing or creative problem solving skills, is separate to the idea that creativity in itself can be taught (Best 1982). Lindstrom's study found that creativity is assessable and therefore teachable (Lindstrom 2006). It is broadly believed that creativity can be taught through process and lateral thinking (de Bono 2009), yet there is an amount of creativity that a person can have (due to their specific set of circumstances) (Cubukcu and Gokcen Dundar 2007; Hallman 2007; Mellou 1996). Others believe the creative process can be taught (Cowley 2005; Craft, Jeffrey, and Leibling 2001). Kelly's *Educating for Creative Learning*, requires real world tasks for students to engage in (Kelly 2012).

Rantala asserts,

*'The question of connecting 'the real world' to formal education and pedagogy is not a new one. John Dewey wrote about 'appreciating learners' experiences, communal actions and interests as starting points of learning' (Rantala 2001, 386).*

The authentic model of school production as opposed to the Broadway model gives learners access to this 'real world' scenario that Dewey and Rantala speak of. Subsequently the process, rather than the production, may be of use in giving learners access to a 'real world' (Saldanna 2011; Gergen and Gergen 2012; Taylor 2003; Booth 2005) experience. 'TIE's praxis has evolved through work in schools and colleges (Wooster 2007, 32), productions (usually) target age-specific, but mixed ability and gender, students' (Prendergast and Saxton 2009, 32).

The authentic school production model as used in this research, allows the students to make sense of their own worlds, albeit through a Shakespearean script. Young people's voices are often marginalised (Batsleer 2008; McLaren and Kincheloe 2007; Duncan-Andrade and Morrell 2008; Smyth 2008) The students involved in this production wanted to do several well-known Broadway musicals as opposed to writing their own, as they themselves did not believe that they could have a voice. Supporting students to share their worlds through the school production, gives us an insight into their real world experiences (Groves and Welsh 2010, 95; Lombardi 2007) as opposed to them learning the exact lines to a well-known show and presenting this work which is elaborated upon in the Student Perspectives chapter.



O'Toole states, 'Paying attention to 'a culture that's considered unique or exemplary' (Saldana 2011), as is the school production through ethnodrama, allows the researcher and participants to explore a 'real world' (O'Toole 2009a, 185) experience.

## **Real World Experience**

In Australia the school production offers students this real world educational experience that resides on the fringe of curriculum. In understanding the nature of the extra-curricular we can begin to understand the reasons why students engage in the school production. In the National Centre for education Statistics 1995 study of extra-curricular participation (Statistics 1995) and the effects of this participation on other areas of a student's education, it was found that students involved in extracurricular activities were less likely to skip classes (Statistics 1995, 1); their academic results were on average higher (Statistics 1995, Table 2); and this included being in the highest quartile of maths and reading achievements. Finally it was found that 68.2 percent of students involved in extra-curricular activities expected to earn a Bachelor's degree or higher (Statistics 1995, Table 3).

The connectedness that an extra-curricular activity offers students is a good place to begin to understand why students involve themselves in extra-curricular activities. While extra-curricular activities offer connectedness, there are negative implications that should be noted. The added pressure of extra-curricular activities can lead to stress and the varied appreciation for involvement can leave students feeling unvalued (Dennin 2014; Segall and Wilson 2004; Klesse 2004). The idea of co-curricular (Andrews 2013) rather than extra-curricular allows students to develop their real life skills, while also being recognised for their participation.

## **Connectedness through the Extracurricular**

The willingness of students to be involved in extra-curricular and co-curricular activities can be explained by Lombardi's idea that 'they are motivated by solving real-world problems. They often express a preference for *doing* rather than *listening*' (Lombardi 2007, 2) Of course the 'doing' requires listening and being attentive to self and others, but listening is not passive as it might be in the traditional notion of the classroom. If students engage in the authentic production for a sense of connectedness and belonging it can be surmised that students' behaviour, whilst involved in an extra-curricular production, would be better than that of general classroom behaviour.

Giroux notes that not all acts of student misbehaviour are acts of resistance (Giroux et al. 2003). By this we understand that there are other reasons behind the ways that students misbehave. Further, McLaren (McLaren 2003, 91) observes that, 'In fact, such "resistance" may simply be repressive moments (sexist, racist) inscribed by dominant culture.' If these 'repressive' moments are expressed

through creativity, then it is reasonable to suggest that the behavioural management issues in our classrooms should decrease. Powell and Speiser develop this thinking further, claiming that, in order to view the world with empathy students not only experience another person's state of being, but they 'see their own point of view, values, and belief systems more clearly.' They go on to express that this allows learners to 'develop tolerance and an understanding that difficult situations are rarely as simple as right or wrong' (Powell and Speiser 2005, 40).

The school production differs to that of the timetabled curriculum in so far as behaviour is concerned. In Victoria, the approximate classroom teacher to student ratio is 1:24 (Childhood 2013b), while a single production teacher at any one time can be responsible for up to 100 plus students, without need for behaviour intervention.

## **Learning through the School Production**

The authentic model of production is owned by the students. It is a place where students are encouraged to have an active voice. Students can have a say in artistic pursuits in a non-confronting manner. For example when writing a script as a collective, students do not have the spotlight upon their literary skills. This alleviates, in many, a sense of panic otherwise felt when confronted with their limited abilities in an English classroom (Baldwin, John, and Kempe 2012). The idea behind reading aloud is to allow students to hear text read well and to have a model to which to aspire (Schumm 2006). While every reader will not necessarily read aloud articulately, the idea is that some will. Furthermore Nero, calls on Drama as a form of alleviating the tense focus upon,

*'Getting it right when speaking English while living in another form of English on a day to day basis. For example, memorizing parts for drama productions allows students to practice and "get the feel" of speaking Standard English while not under the threat of correction' (Nero 2006, 96).*

This is of particular interest to the authentic school production as students use their everyday English in exploring the lines but then refine these when writing it down. It becomes an organic process of language development between peers rather than a test based on the individual student's ability.

Equally, other subject areas are approached in a manner of practicality, which removes the onus on performance and getting it right. As a production teacher with a practical model and problem to be solved in real life, I have had excellent success in teaching students these concepts to a level of proficiently lighting a stage. For example, when students learn to light a theatre show they use complex mathematical devices such as Pythagoras' Theorem, spatial awareness and are also required to understand the science behind the way light is reflected and refracted. The onus is instead upon 'the

six basic domains of learning experiences’ (Hansen, Larson, and Dworkin 2003, 27) rather than on the measurable abilities.

## **Principles of Learning and Teaching in Dominant Culture**

The Principles of Learning and Teaching (PoLT) calls for, ‘Students’ needs, backgrounds, perspectives and interests’ to be reflected in the learning program and requires strong connections be made beyond the classroom with community (Childhood 2013a). While the production is not considered a learning program that resides within the daily functions of the school, it ensures PoLT for students’ best interests. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, The Australian Curriculum calls for The Arts strands, to be integrated into curriculum – for the Arts to be ‘hybrids’ this is what the production offers. While the school production makes these important connections for students, it is not given the time or consideration for what it fosters in our learners.

## **Abate**

In Shakespearean times classical plays were played at the end of term (Duncan-Jones 2014). Perhaps this is where he (Shakespeare) fell in love with the theatre. It’s known that Shakespeare wrote new works to perform; his plays were initially usually only played once or twice. They were works that resounded with his audiences (Banham 1995; Crystal 2013; Hoenselaars 1994; Wells 2003).

Literature shows that plays, theatre and drama have a place in education. The stage is crammed with diverse genres claiming to serve education of our children through different lenses and applications. One play or form of theatre that does take place with our students at the centre, giving them an experience in the theatre is the annual school production and yet it has not claimed a prominent space on this theoretical theatrical stage. Understanding the school production and the process at the heart of an authentic school production allows us an insight and a way forward into positioning the school production within this body of literature.

## **Flags**

The flags are not included as numbered pages. Behind this page, page 39 and before page 40 you will find an envelope, within this envelope you will find the instructions for how to read these flags. In the digital copy of the thesis the flags and explanation are found after the appendices.

## CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY

*The skill I share rests upon the shoulders of young people, a future. A smile falls into place, the moment is broken by the rush of 50 dancing feet upon the floor in front of me and a thousand Misses to follow and I'm hooked for another year, still exhausted and exhilarated by the year before. This is my story, his story, their story, our story. I hope when I tell it I do it justice. I hope when I tell it, someone, somewhere will hear it for all of them, for they are worth it, they deserve to be heard.*

### Research Design

The research involved in the school production project is concerned with human behaviour that is 'culturally complex' (Donelan & O'Brien, 2010, p. 3), and thus called for rich, organic, qualitative research. As chaotic and multifaceted as the role of researcher/teacher and producer extraordinaire is, it is firmly to facilitate a positive, creative and authentic educational experience for the students involved. Investigating the experiences of these students as they embark upon writing an organic school production through authentic learning (Lombardi 2007; Mantei and Lisa 2009; Herrington, Reeves, and Oliver 2014) opportunities called for a hybrid of qualitative research methods.

In considering the 'communicative expression' (Gergen and Gergen 2003) that is involved within the school production it became evident why I would focus my methodologies around those which have examined artistic expression as modes of communication. Furthermore, the script development for the school production, rather than the actual performance involved in the study has been included as the 'text' which is a very significant element of my research. When a presentational form is used to report research it can be argued that it is in fact a 'text' (Haseman 2006b).

Within the thesis is the developed script annotated with my observations, including behind the scenes notes. The taped version of the live performance of the finished script is in the appendices and should be viewed to understand an integral element of methodological outcome of the school production project. This live performance of the script, writing, brainstorming sessions, behind the scenes and rehearsals must be viewed to appreciate the enormity of the collective student achievement. Which of the two is richer in content and meaning? This depends upon the reader/viewer, for me the performance colours between the lines and the words and gives meaning.

Within the body of this thesis annotation of the moments involved in developing the script - including rehearsals, aesthetic decision making and even shoe throwing – have uncovered a unique production process to comment upon the student/human experience. A looking glass is particularly held up to backstage, off-set, in between spaces and in places where the students and teacher worked towards the common goal. To explain these spaces is to give a full insight into how the process was drawn

together. Johnny Saldana asserts in relation to literature that has come from studying backstage and off-set behaviours, ‘Such accounts are rare in the literature’ (Saldanna 2010, 4). These spaces and moments in creative time hold some of the most important moments involved in school productions (Saldanna 2010), this is evidenced throughout the Student Perspectives chapter.

Backstage is where all the action takes place for what needs to happen onstage. This is where the actors and stagehands work together under pressure to achieve a common goal. This is a clear example of extrinsic motivation in education. It’s a place where the informal conversations and interactions occur and lasting bonds are made (Misztal 2002). Montemuro, as quoted in Baker states, “there is so much to see from the vantage point of backstage” (Baker 2013, xii). Friedman asserts that ‘stability of character, skill, credibility, and integrity – and the trust they make possible – are essential for backstage communications’ (Friedman 1994, 105). This unchartered space (backstage) and the moments it holds enhance the learners’ experience, the real world requirements – attributes that Friedman speaks of are developed backstage during production and rehearsal. Grappling with these attributes is seen in the Backstage Chapter.

An awareness of the backstage and the spaces that the creative collective imagination follows, which may be physically back stage or in other spaces where we take the collective imagination (the school bus, at home, in the corridors, while singing in the shower, at 3am when sleep eludes us) each minor moment is a moment in time that accumulates to make the whole. The reflection of these moments, shared and synthesised, allowing the students to embark on more than what might be the conceived product. The realisation that all students have something to offer to the overall project, however small or seemingly insignificant, has me acutely positioned as the auto ethnographer within the ethnodrama/theatre of the school production.

Although I did not use Action Research within my methodology it must be said that it ‘solves real problems’ (O’Toole 2006, 50). I wanted ‘to create spaces where those who have structurally been denied a voice’ (Langhout and Thomas 2010, 67) (when it comes to the content and aesthetic decision-making around the school production) could engage, express and experience ownership of their school production. For me, (the teacher) it was ‘about change and intervention’ (O’Toole 2006, 51) in an area that didn’t feel right for me. As the teacher/researcher I decided to use the model of ethnodrama to investigate the problems I saw within the running of the school production and the culture surrounding the school production in one Australian secondary school.

The task of collective script development, rewriting and research was considered as ethnodrama and commented upon within the context of creativity, connectedness and experience, by myself and participants (Knowles and Cole 2007). The strategies employed in this process was that of a social network study, which included a series of nodes and connections to help explain the steps which inform the way we see the intricacies of the creative exploration of students interlinked with teachers,

peers, audience members, parents, extended community and the self-view of the participants within the social network.

Ethnodrama offered a research method in which to observe the making and the voices of the participants and ethnotheatre in understanding the end product or the theatre show that comes from a school production. My background in the Performing Arts, writing, directing and performing has become second nature to me. I wanted to understand the school production, which in comparison to my experience with Performance Art was starkly extraneous. Constructing an ethnodrama script with the participants made good sense. The research focuses upon the performance or the sum of the school production being rich in aesthetic and entertainment value (Saldanna 2005, 14) more so than what we might ordinarily expect an ethnodrama to look like.

While ethnodramas are the performances that come from research, the school production project required some experimentation and development of the methodology. O'Neill asserts, 'the self-reflexivity inherent in the ethnographic process, along-side the crisis in ethnography and the 'linguistic' and 'cultural turn' in socio-cultural theory has led to demands for experimentation' (O'Neill et al. 2002, 3). The off-centred ethno-drama hybrid methodology used in this school production research project is precisely experimentation. The 'off-centred' can be explained by the participants making the performance script with me, while I am positioned as teacher, and auto-ethnographer. What is the overall mien of this project based on the off-centred ethno-drama? It is personified by student participants with a voice (Kazubowski-Houston 2010, Jackson and Mazzei 2008), collective writing with peers, opportunities for embodied practical experimentation and a researcher, who observes, documents, becomes involved and teaches.

The research deals with everything that the production demands of the teacher/administrator, teacher/director, teacher/producer, teacher/set designer, teacher/costume designer and teacher/tech designer as an embedded researcher (Gunter, Hall, and Mills 2014). The autoethnography explains how this teacher is positioned and is further explored within the Journal chapter where we see aspects of my world, where I need to challenge my assumptions and dislocate myself as the subject to understand the viewpoint of those surrounding me (Cole 2007). I wanted to be able to foster a sense of creativity through initiative, inspired by fertile imagination and navigated by emotional intelligence. I also wanted students to be able to critically reflect through a real sense of freedom of action and thought, which promotes autonomy (Greenwood 2012).

However, when it came to anthropology and the study of the human being in the process; and what it is that the participants' learn and develop from this particular model of school production, I realised that ethnodrama as I understood it would not be sufficient in understanding the students' experiences. Ethnodrama would allow me to make a performance that reflects upon the participants' understanding of the process and what they were learning. Ethnodrama became a model for me to develop

performance and to measure learning. Not only was, what the participants learnt, but how they learn of interest. It provided insight into how they think about their worlds. It allowed them to voice their understandings of their worlds through performance and performance texts and to make their own performance. This is not necessarily the sum of an ethnodrama but rather an imagined script imprinted with the participants' ideas, cultural understanding, age-based references, performance understanding and dreams (Gilbert 2000, Jackson and Mazzei 2008). It allowed for the here and now to be explored through the development of performative, aesthetic text that was then performed - not labelled as an ethnodrama, but as a school production.

The methodology of ethnodrama did not exactly offer the solution to understanding the participants. Instead, the writing workshop – where embodied participants (rather than passive readers of a prescribed script) developed their own script through workshops that built characters and scenarios for the stage – became the site for mimesis (Mienickowski 1995, 371). The ethnodrama was never about what it means to be in a school production – this required too much of my voice. In understanding what it meant to be in a school production and perform an original script rewritten by the participants, I was positioned to make observations both as the autoethnographer and teacher of these participants.

The ethnographic script produced was an authentic school production script which simultaneously held within it, the voice of each participant. By authentic I mean that the students made the script in an authentic manner. This script is the participants' voice about their worlds through the medium of performance. There was no effort in ensuring the performance would be entertaining, with students voicing their ideas and connections to their worlds through the performance making process. This was me 'thinking like an artist' (Saldana as cited in Ackroyd and O'Toole 2010, 59) I wanted students to fashion their own script rather than responding to research questions to make a performance.

Positioned as the researcher I was able to make very conscious decisions about how the students were stimulated to make the work that they did, what the processes involved were. I wanted them to focus their understandings of their worlds and to understand where their worlds intersected with the Shakespearean script. The completed script has been included within the body of the thesis as it serves as an artefact and example of the creative collaboration that was the ethnodrama. Unlike the conventional ethnodrama scripts, the participants wrote down their ideas and thoughts about their worlds, in a collectively imagined and conceived script.

Throughout the research project I questioned what an ethnodrama was and its relevance to this particular process of creating an authentic school production. The significance of using the 'research participants' actual words' (Sandoval and Carolyn 2014, 522) relates to a model of ethnodrama as it catches the students' ideas, imagination and understanding about the *mis-en-scene*. This process allows them to imagine and embody their ideas, rather than simply assuming a character through

limited information. The performance was not intended ‘for knowledge transfer’ (Rossiter and Godderis 2011, 676) alone, rather as an all-encompassing performance that pointed the profile at a 45 degree angle upon the stage and illuminated the intricacies of all the traffic and backstage complexities as well as the learning possibilities and the dynamics involved.

This script re-sounded the participants’ voices. My understanding of this is embedded in the feminist theories of Grosz (1994), that performance offers us a language beyond the two dimensional dichotomy of the written word. Ethnodrama as qualitative research ‘comes from the experiences and understandings of the population being researched’ (Haseman 2006a, 3). An ethnodrama script is the researcher’s version and selection of material. My research called for the participants’ voices to be directly engaged. Where the researcher’s script in an ethnodrama interprets what the participants’ experience is, this script is the culmination of the participants’ experiences.

The idea of making a performance about making a performance – seemed to be bordering on the absurd, and I had to question my practice at this stage to plan my action and consider the outcomes. Initially I questioned, will it still be an ethnodrama? I was sure I would still have a Drama. Ethno refers to the people studied in the Drama. I was sure this was still happening. I wasn’t dramatising data (Saldanna 2003). I was collecting data from the dramatisation and the process of getting to the theatre. So where did my methodology fit? Analysis of the participating students fell somewhere between Ethnodrama and Ethnotheatre, while analysis of myself as the teacher used Auto ethnography. The following hybrid was adopted:

**School  
production  
through  
teacher  
researcher  
lenses &  
student  
experience**

1. Ethnodrama in the workshoping and rehearsal process.
2. Autoethnography to comment upon the student researcher’s position within the research, which shall include the teachers’ task of ‘thick descriptions’ (Geertz 1973, cited in Jenkins 2003, p. 184), from production.

This combination delineates an otherwise organic project. The recent study entitled, ‘Risky Business: A cross-disciplinary investigation of creative arts as an intervention activity for young people at risk in urban and rural Victoria’ (Donelan & O’Brien, 2002-2005, p. 3), is a good example of a collaborative work that focussed on the benefits of creative arts on young people albeit ‘at risk’. The Risky Business (Denzin and Lincoln 2000; Janesick 2000) similarly used such a conceptual framework involving, ‘Field-based data collection, emergent analysis, grounded theory and stakeholder input’ (Denzin 1997, 3).



In this project, digital data, including video footage, photographs and emails were used to document the process (Atkinson et al. 2007). Data and anecdotal evidence was also recorded manually in journal format and using tools such as One Note, where my thoughts could be recorded visually and or audibly. This thorough documentation meant the process was incredibly arduous when transcribing. 'Ethical dilemmas about how much information to disclose' (Miller et al. 2012, 2) became a consideration with the vast volume of data at hand. To document all data would be to explain every stroke in an intricate painting. In following this analogy I have focussed upon the texture (individual experiences and the collective experience), colour (areas of production involvement), contrast (various participants) and brush stroke (collective imagination) to read the picture that was painted as artistically sound, just as Saldana is, 'adamant when he declares that ethnodrama should be aesthetically pleasing and sound' (Saldanna 2005, 14).

Saldana observes several Ethnodrama research projects in 'Performing research: Tensions, triumphs and trade-offs of Ethnodrama', which is a unique look at several projects that have successfully employed ethnography as a methodology for research in Drama and Performance (Ackroyd & O'Toole, 2010). It has informed my understanding of the possibilities in Ethnodrama. Saldana comments that this text, 'critically examines some of the rather grand claims made by theorists and scholars of ethnodrama, particularly when it comes to the questionable power of the art form to initiate social change' (Saldanna 2010, 3).

These projects, and particularly that of Sallis' work into Boys in Drama education, influenced my methodology. Even though his project differed to the school production it allowed me a model of data collection in so far that it was in a school and involved drama education. At one point Sallis states, 'the boys began to take me into their confidence' (Sallis 2008, 8). This privileged position that he explains became an accepted state for me as researcher and co-script writer and thus co-ethnographer. While the ethnographic script that came from the research paints one picture, the Autoethnography that supports this offers insights into what Sallis eludes.

The ethnography is supported by the self-reflexive method of Autoethnography. Autoethnographic performance involves, 'reflexivity, in which the researcher pauses for a moment to think about how his or her presence, standpoint, or characteristics might have influenced the outcome of the process' (Wall 2006, 184). It was clear that when I grappled with the students' rejection of working on an original script, I was in this moment of pausing and rethinking what it was I would do. Choosing a Shakespearean script was an outcome of this reflexivity. This can be seen in the Journal chapter. 'Critical ethnography becomes the "doing" or the "performance" of the critical theory (Madison 2005, 15), and the autoethnographic performance is exactly the outcome of the thoughts, ideas, images, nuances, and workshops of the subjects.

This self-reflective Autoethnography allowed me to understand what I contributed to the participant owned ethnodrama script. My journal, which openly offers my moments of insanity along with triumph, is presented as a documentation of my 'hot cognition', reflection and analysis. This was important for the methodology in so far as it gave me a voice, where, as altruistic researcher, I had given the voice to the participants. This further step in analysis is an effort to further 'interrogate' (Sallis 2008, 9) my application to the ethnodrama methodology. The processes and intricacies involved in hearing the moments of clarity, connection and imaginations of each participant, along with the processes and methods used to organise the project, ensuring a rich educational experience for participants (Potrac, Gilbert, and Denison 2012).

## **Process**

In practical terms participants discussed, workshopped and co-wrote a script with me. The script was collectively edited and fine-tuned and brought to life through rehearsals, this process of editing continued while the script was inhabited and played upon the stage during rehearsals and shows. Participants performed and ran technical aspects (including digital applications) of the production, depending on their areas of interest. Participants made aesthetic decisions regarding their work. For example, how it was staged, lit and enhanced by costume, mood, sound etc. The production was performed to the participants' school and wider community.

The audience became an important consideration in the ethnodrama. The expected audience was no different to that of any other Clarity College performance. It would be held in the school's theatre situated in a rural setting, a small city approximately 100 kilometres west of Melbourne. It was anticipated that the general public and extended community would be in attendance. The fact that the participants' peers made up part of the audience had an motivating effect on the participants' experience. Ellis asserts, 'an individual is best situated to describe his or her own experience more accurately than anyone else' (Ellis, cited in Wall 2006, 148).

In line with this thinking, participants' were encouraged to articulate their views of their performance and how they had perceived their peers' feedback. Carolyn Ellis writes, 'In autoethnographic work, I look at validity in terms of what happens to readers as well as to research participants and researchers [. . .] our work seeks verisimilitude' (Ellis 2004, 124). In the case of the production I certainly looked for verisimilitude in terms of what moves within the students/participants as actors in both the process and performance and myself as researcher, artist, director, teacher and person.

The use of video footage and photographic documentation allowed a view of the process, otherwise forgotten or left unnoticed and showed, 'life as a work of art, rather than as a chaotic response to external events...' (Csikszentmihalyi 2010, para.1), and also gave me another viewpoint, or perhaps best explained as a vastly conscious view which has been used as a point of reference and cross-

reference when examining the thought process and behaviour of participants. Video footage was collected for all readings, workshops and rehearsals. The video was set up as a third eye to capture the process only. It was not supposed to be used to modify behaviour. However, students being aware of the filming wanted to see their rehearsals back and this did inform their understanding of how they were developing their character, how their character was interacting with other characters, whether they had good projection or whether their expression was everything that it could be. It was supposed to be used only to inform my notes made after workshop rehearsals, purely as a tool to aid memory and moments missed.

Participant's parent/guardians were made aware of the filming process and permission was obtained for students/participants to be filmed for these purposes. Due to copyright laws, the final Broadway model productions had not previously been filmed at this school. Students had not been able to retain a documentation of their school production prior to their own production of *A Midsommer Nite's Dreame*. By using a Shakespearean script that has been adapted and rewritten, each student was presented with a copy of their school production.

### **Sample – Students involved in the production of *A Midsomer Nite's Dreame*.**

**There were 85 secondary school students from Year 7 – 12 attending a Victorian coeducational secondary college. This cohort included a total of 72 females and 13 males.** Each student volunteered to take part in their annual school production. The sample indicates that the production was more heavily chosen by females as an extracurricular activity. It also indicate that there are less students involved in their first and last year of secondary schooling, which could be related to the transitioning periods that these students are in. We see most students are predominantly interested in performing while only a few have considered the technical aspect of the production, this may be due to the perception of the qualities available to become involved in within a production from a student viewpoint.

**TABLE TWO: DETAILED STUDENTS INVOLVED IN AMSND 2012.**

Year level	Gender	Area(s) of interest	Previous experience	Completed the production
7	Male 3 Female 6	Acting 3 Band 0 Dance 2 Tech 0 Backstage 0	Yes: 1 No: 2	Yes: 9 No: 0
8	Male 1 Female 12	Acting 13 Band 0 Dance 13	Yes: 13 No: 0	Yes: 13 No:

		<b>Tech 0</b> <b>Backstage 0</b>		
9	<b>Male 1</b> <b>Female 18</b>	<b>Acting 17</b> <b>Band 1</b> <b>Dance 15</b> <b>Tech 2</b> <b>Backstage 0</b>	<b>Yes: 19</b> <b>No: 0</b>	<b>Yes: 19</b> <b>No:</b>
10	<b>Male 5</b> <b>Female 21</b>	<b>Acting 19</b> <b>Band 4</b> <b>Dance 12</b> <b>Tech 0</b> <b>Backstage 0</b>	<b>Yes: 25</b> <b>No: 1</b>	<b>Yes: 26</b> <b>No:</b>
11	<b>Male 1</b> <b>Female 11</b>	<b>Acting 9</b> <b>Band 1</b> <b>Dance 5</b> <b>Tech 1</b> <b>Backstage 1</b>	<b>Yes: 11</b> <b>No: 1</b>	<b>Yes: 11</b> <b>No: 1</b>
12	<b>Male 2</b> <b>Female 4</b>	<b>Acting 6</b> <b>Band 0</b> <b>Dance 0</b> <b>Tech 2</b> <b>Backstage 2</b>	<b>Yes: 6</b> <b>No: 0</b>	<b>Yes: 6</b> <b>No: 0</b>

## Data Collection

Footage was collected on more than one camera when we worked in focus groups. In this instance flip cameras which are easy to use, download and delete were very useful; however for the documentation of the production a professional camera was used to capture clarity of the overall show. The school only permitted documentation of the production (by a teacher on staff) to assist participant's memory, no private video footage was allowed. The camera was used to capture the whole scene and was not used to zoom in on a person. This provided an overview allowing for reflection on material that was missed or glossed over.

Footage was also used to inform and determine the subsequent meetings and rehearsals during the process of making the production. Footage used later for analysis purposes have been event and date stamped for easy retrieval. 'Selection determines which events are brought into focus for deeper analysis' (Derry 2007, 20). In Derry's (2007) paper, 'Guidelines for video research in education: Recommendations from an expert panel', we learn that it is not so much what is videoed but the intention and purpose informing it. Thought and planning took place prior to filming and analysis occurred directly after for note taking and cataloguing. This process meant the projection of the film enabled me to take comprehensive notes. Once the film was initially viewed it was then stored in a cataloguing system within the hard drive of my computer.

Not all significant material collected could be used (Lovett 2008). Some of the material is left out to highlight the moments that have been shown throughout the thesis, especially those moments in the Students' Perspective chapter and Journal chapter.

Furthermore, short surveys which gauged participants' experiences, took place during the process and after the finished performance. The nature of these surveys was to comment on experience and included brief open ended questions. Through the gathering of observational, video and short survey data careful consideration was given to the participants' experiences:

- Involvement in the production process
- Education
- Performance
- Understanding of the creative process
- Reflection of their development
- Interaction with those around them
- Understanding of the content of the production.
- Reflection of how they viewed themselves and others within the process and the performance.

This data was collected via my:

- Observations – notes taken during and after working with students in rehearsals and the writing circle.
- Conversations – documented directly after they happened.
- Taped scenarios – where a video camera was set up for rehearsals (which also acted as a means to remind me what had happened in the previous rehearsal).
- Journals – my personal reflections kept after each day that I worked with students or on the production.
- Brief surveys – very brief written surveys distributed at meetings. Participation was completely voluntary.

One focus group or a 'core group' was asked to contribute if they wished in writing and these pieces were collected to examine students' own written reflections in response to questions. This is similar to Sallis' research into boys in Drama (Sallis 2010).

These findings have been included in the data as a point of interest. More importantly, the research was interested in participants' engagement and ongoing attitude towards school during and after the

production. Students school attendance records prior to involvement in the production, during the production and after the production over a three year period were observed and included in the data.

This research included making a school production with the students, for an audience including their school, families and wider community. Students worked on the production this meant having students in every role of authentic learning (Snook, Nohria, and Khurana 2011); the cast and crew that became the school production for 2012; including: writers, directors and actors, lighting and sound designers, composers, musicians, choreographers and dancers were predominantly from the student body. Students would look at problems troubleshoot, collaborate and hypothesise ways forward. They would then trial and error their ideas and come up with solutions; this is seen in both the Student Perspectives chapter and the Backstage chapter. At times I would be required to support this process, for example a choreographer realised she couldn't teach some moves to the dancers as they didn't have the required skillset, so she decided that it would be better to only have experienced dancers in the piece, I gave her an alternative way of looking at this problem, this particular example is explored in the Student Perspectives chapter, in particular the choreographer section. It called for student mentors, administrators, public spokespersons, and stage designers. A range of student lead movements groups occurred. The main four involved the actors, dancers, musicians and the technical people. These four main student lead groups, used cross-collaboration to bring the 2012 school production to life. The framework of the research project included the following six stages these have been located as nodes and connections, these nodes and connections are intrinsic to ethnodrama as is the script (Saldanna 2011) and the autoethnographic comments placed upon the script:

## **Node 1 - Auditions**

- Connection 1 - Audition/Meetings

The auditions involved 78 students from Clarity College. Students were aged between 12 and 18 years across the school years of 7 – 12. With 36 per cent of those who auditioned, auditioning for their first time. The auditions were held in the school's theatre, the Gay Gough Theatre a purpose built indoor amphitheatre with the teacher sitting in the audience seating and the students auditioning upon the stage. The audition process was decided by me in consultation with the music, dance and another drama teacher. I was present at all auditions as were the respective teachers for dance and music. Auditions were advertised for 2 weeks prior to audition. The audition processes included:

- Connection 2 - Meeting

Initially a meeting was held where students could sign up in their interest areas, these areas included:

- Acting (51 students),
- Singing (26 students),
- Dance (39 students),
- Administration (2 students),
- Backstage (6 students),
- Costume (2 Students),
- Props (1 student),
- Make-up (2 students),
- Sound (1 student)
- Lighting (1 student)

The sign up required students to record their names under the headings of anything they would like to become involved in, meaning they could place their name under more than one heading. They also recorded their year level, phone number and email address. These details were collected at this point so that I had a record of those who would audition to mark off those who attended audition, add in any newcomers and follow up any students who were on the list but didn't show up for the audition. An email was sent to students reminding them when and where the auditions were to be held, some students communicated back through email arranging another time that didn't clash with other lunchtime plans. The phone numbers were recorded so I could easily contact a parent in case of emergency. These details were checked immediately prior to each student's audition. Auditions were held over a week of lunch times, which meant students who had their name down for 3 or 4 separate items, would have to attend several auditions, losing most of their lunch break for that week. It also meant that I worked straight through lunch and that three other teachers missed at least one break each.

- Connection 3 - Advertising for Auditions:

Auditions were advertised a week prior to the initial meeting, calling all students interested in becoming involved in the school production. The following advertising was used:

- Newsletter – sent home to every family
- Student Bulletin – read out each morning during the students Links' class
- Library Advertising – Window designated to the production in the library
- Posters – displayed around the school (made by Year 7 students in Art class)
- Word of mouth
- Follow up advertising in the form of emails

In the initial meeting students were made aware that the production would be an original script. Auditions took place as they have in previous years; students were made aware of the research project after the audition process. This meant students who wanted to be a part of the production could become involved as usual. Afterwards they were given the choice of whether or not to take part in the project, all students in the production decided to take part in the project too. Had any student opted not to take part in the project then their experiences would not have been included, as far as working on the production it would not have changed anything for a participant who had not opted to be involved. Students were informed of the study and given permission forms. (*See Appendix 5*) The audition was structured in a non-confronting manner where students auditioned in small groups. The audition styles were decided by me in consultation with other staff in relation to the students' expectations of how these auditions should be run.

The first of the auditions were the dance auditions and were held in larger and then smaller groups. The students referred to this audition as a 'cattle call' which is a legitimate theatre term that also goes with the term 'hooper' for chorus line dancers. This type of terminology can be used or questioned. While this was briefly discussed as a derogatory term by some students it is not dealt with in the thesis further. Students auditioning for dance arrived, were taught a dance phrase and then given a short time to practise this and present what they had learnt. This allowed me to see how quickly students could pick up dance steps which informed the style and complexity of choreography for the individuals involved. This allowed me to understand the needs of the students pertaining to learning movement phrases. Of course there is more to the speed in which a person learns a movement phrase, technique, articulation and confidence were also considered based on this very quick glimpse of what the students performed.

Dance auditions were carried out in small groups (groups chosen by the students for comfort and familiarity). A simple movement phrase I created, was first demonstrated by two senior dance students to the students auditioning. Students auditioning were required to dance it back as close to what they interpreted the phrase to be. Vocal auditions were held in pairs where students were asked to sing a few bars of a familiar song.

Auditions did not eliminate anyone from being involved. Instead they were used to help gauge the student's level of interest and ability, which was taken into consideration when script-writing. It was noted that students felt much happier and more confident when they realised that they would get a part no matter what; this encouraged some students to get involved who otherwise wouldn't have.

Acting auditions were held in pairs. The difficulty with auditioning students is in some ways no different to auditioning the adult amateur. The 'challenges in legitimately recognising and nurturing 'talent' (Seton 2007, 1) is dealt with through a homogenised task. In the case of the school production



auditions there was no elimination, rather mapping of students' possible abilities and interests. Students were all given the same section of script a week prior and performed this excerpt in front of me. This informed my understanding of how the students read aloud, interacted onstage and their ability to connect with the character they were reading for and with the character read by the partner. Some students had learnt their lines and included a great deal of action in their delivery while others had lost their script and needed help to sound out some of the words.

Vocal auditions were held by the music teacher. He requested students to prepare a song. I sat with him throughout the process. He recorded students range and gave them some brief feedback. This process allowed us to see who already had an established singing voice and the level of need for those who would require support.

Once a list of students and their interests was compiled we had a meeting for the whole ensemble prior to casting the show. At this meeting we discussed how we would rewrite the existing script and formed an interest group of students who were keen to be involved in the devising and writing process. We then proceeded to develop our version of the script.

## **Node 2 - Writing**

The 'writer's circle', (quite like that of literacy circles in the analysis of the play) as it came to be known, met mainly on weekends in the theatre. The name came from beginning our writing in a circle as one might begin a Drama class. As a group we rewrote Shakespeare's, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This group of (43 students, 28 female and 15 male and 8 Year 7's, 12 Year 8's, 10 Year 9's, 7 Year 10's and 6 VCE students - 3 of both Year 11 and Year 12) initially met after school to brainstorm "Shakespeare" and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Students knew very little about the playwright and the script and I immediately found the need to explain and explore William Shakespeare and the storylines of the faeries, the lovers, the Duke and Duchess and to place the script within the history of the Elizabethan period. Over time Shakespearean scripts have been unpacked (Publishing and Williams 2007; Shand 2009; Ridsen 2012; Bloom 2010; Hugo and Anderson 2001; Fandel and Imsand 2003). The initial response was, "Wow that has a lot happening," (Billy) and comments such as, "Hang on a minute. Who was Demetrius again?" (Emily). One student in particular wanted to further unpack his character, Demetrius (Dull and University 2008).

On a whole the students embraced the storyline and were immediately full of ideas and discussion about the meaning of the play as the process went on. One Year 10 girl drew a large family tree on

butcher's paper to remind everyone how the characters in the play related to one another. Students quickly adopted an attitude that while the Elizabethan language posed some degree of difficulty, they would problem-solve and overcome this. I was instantly relieved and proud of the student's initiative to propose a solution. This one act set a precedence of a 'can do' attitude.

The choice of how to make a script is fundamental to ethnodrama and I needed to consider how the students approached Shakespearean text and what surrounded this idea that Shakespeare might be too difficult. Ames was once told, 'that high-school theatre students should never perform Shakespeare' (Ames 2013, 40). In an English Key Learning Area meeting in which I attended, a teacher exclaimed, 'I don't think we need to do Shakespeare any more - the kids don't like it' (teacher 2013). While other teachers in the meeting defended teaching Shakespeare, so have many others (Omans and O'Sullivan 2003; Shand 2009; McIver, Stevenson, and Dept 1994; Flaherty, Gay, and Semler 2013). At the root of this comment was the fact that many English teachers, both those newer to the profession and teachers in the profession didn't feel confident teaching Shakespearean texts (Haddon 2009; Skrebels, van der Hoeven, and English 2004; Dean 2013; Miller 2013). It is hardly surprising when Shakespeare's plays were intended for the stage, not the classroom (Moncrief, McPherson, and Enloe 2013, 15). Not all teachers have the expertise to teach Shakespeare through Drama and therefore do struggle with the texts. The Broadway show on the other hand is familiar and may be more accessible to those teachers who do not have a performance background. The authentic model does not have to be rewriting a script, it could be writing an original. The Shakespeare rewrite was a compromise for the students to feel safe that their work would be known.

Initially the students' approach to learning a Shakespearean script was one of immense displeasure. Students learnt they would be working on a Shakespearean script when we began the writing process. When asked why students were so apprehensive about Shakespeare, I quickly learned that this displeasure came from the classroom tainted Shakespearean lessons. This prompted me to start at the beginning, placing William Shakespeare as a real person in history; I asked which students knew where Shakespeare was from, only one hand raised. What was it like in Shakespearean times? Again, one hand was raised. Why do we still study Shakespearean plays? A shrug and yawn fledted about the circle.

It was at this point that I needed to switch on the students' wonder and awe about Shakespeare, the plays and the era. What better way than to introduce a feminist conspiracy theory...rumour has it Shakespeare may have been the front man for a woman who actually wrote the plays (Hudson 2009). The Cooke-ham poem by Amelia Bassano Lanier is said to have specific terminology similarities to the speeches of Titania and Oberon that appeared in no other texts of the time (Hudson 2009). Among other evidence within the plays written by her hand, Amelia was there at the time and had the opportunity to be heavily involved in the theatre as she attended many rehearsals, she was also known

to be a highly capable writer (Hudson 2009, 67). This notion was introduced five minutes prior to the end of the initial meeting along with a suggestion to look into it. After our first meeting students were asked to find out a fascinating fact about Shakespeare, the following were collected:

1. Shakespeare named characters after people he knew (something we went on to do).
2. He wrote loads of poetry too.
3. He had eight children.
4. He knew the queen.
5. He references heaps of stuff in his plays.
6. He survived the Black Death.
7. They had a child out of wedlock.
8. The ideas underlying many of his plays are copied from other people.

As the interest and understanding grew, the idea that we would rewrite a Shakespearean play became more favourable to students, particularly when they realised they would make the final decisions as to what was cut, changed, enhanced or played with.

My prior knowledge informed me that the writers' circle adopted for writing the script collaboratively allows a sharing of the load and encourages all participants to have a voice. Collaborative work is looked upon as synonymous to action research (Malloch et al. 2010), which has been needed more in ethnodrama (Holstein and Gubrium 2008). Just as Action research has been said to bridge the gap between researcher and practitioner (Kidd and Czerniawski 2011) and practitioner and participant (Groundwater-Smith 2012) and collaborative writing helped these barriers to dissolve and the student voice to strengthen, so did this hybrid of Ethnodrama and Autoethnography. Noel and Robert explain that Ede and Lunsford included any activities that contributed to the final piece in their definition of collaborative writing (Noel and Robert 2004, 64). I wanted a definition of the collaborative writing that would allow all students involved a part in 'writing' the script as this would then enhance ownership. Hence, a very loose definition of script-writing that covered any correspondence around what we were writing, including: talking, brainstorming, dreams, photographs, ideas, workshopping, handwriting, filming, typing and social media notes was adopted as contribution to the script.

I would arrive early to unlock the school and theatre to meet students for previously scheduled meetings. After students arrived I would bring them together usually in a circle and recap where we had got to in the previous week and then set guidelines as to where we needed to get to in each session (although students started to do this themselves on the fourth week.) I also had a flip camera set up to film the proceedings of the rehearsals. As the students dissected each of Shakespeare's scenes, it was decided collectively what would remain and what would be replaced, based on what students' thoughts and positions were on themes and issues that arose.

Unlike Sallis' questioning of the boys around themes in his study (Sallis 2010), I questioned the students' choices as a way of developing their understanding and focusing them (Fisher and Frey 2007). I was careful with how I would do this, for example I'd say, "Do you mind if I say something here?" And then go on to ask, "Do you think you've probably explored this in enough depth? We still have a lot to write and the weeks are fast running out." The aim was to write a fresh version that reflected the students' worlds and a play that would satisfy aesthetically and theatrically (Ackroyd and O'Toole 2010, 59). For this student-owned version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to materialise, I understood my role as the teacher for when momentum slowed or halted and researcher to observe as students constructed their own script.

After each writer's circle I would view the recording and take notes. I reworked the script and edited (typos and obvious spelling errors) often writing scenes based on jotted down collective ideas afterwards due to time constraints which went with the territory of developing a script in this manner. Any scenes I wrote would then be visited in the next writers' circle which meant my writing was then edited to come into line with students' understanding of the script. Anything I wrote after hours, I did so in consultation with two very keen writers, Rose and Emily. Often emails between us would see a scene through to fruition. Students would claim parts of the script from time to time and I would have to remind them that this was a collective process and without the ideas of everyone in the workshop, the scenes would not have evolved in the same manner.

Collaborative writing for these students in the past had been to brainstorm and then go away and write their individual version. The idea that a significant piece of writing could be collectively written was quite novel for the students. The writing circle evolved seamlessly and workshops consisted of several students who were quite eloquent at sharing their ideas and a core group willing to act out scenes and try lines as the script took shape. I became increasingly interested in the 'social process' (Reither and Vipond 1989, 856) involved in writing the production. Each session was recorded and at times I jotted down notes but for the most part I relied on the recordings to inform my understanding. As teacher/artist I was unable to separate myself from the process to observe in the moment as researcher.

After learning a little about the script and playwright we met on Sunday mornings in the Gay Gough Theatre. Each morning would begin with a roll call, coffee, chatting about what had happened on the weekend, ideas for the script. On the first morning a female Year 12 student who I refer to as Rose set her coffee upon a table and dragged it across the stage where she proceeded to set up her laptop. We began from the start of the script and Rose typed, she also had a say in what might work, but she typed the words that were said between everyone present. We looked at the script line by line.

The process was fascinating to observe and participate in. Students began their understanding of the Shakespearean script as one might observe a Bower bird making their adorned nest. First we see the bird pecking away at something, loosening a piece of dried grass, just as I observed students dealing

with the language in a disjointed contemptuous manner. We then see the bird hopping forward with the dry grass and then flying off just as the student becomes a little more comfortable and familiar with the language and they begin to offer ideas and lines. It isn't until we see the bird with several items in their beak that we make the presumption that it must be building a nest and at this point we can trust that it is doing just this and we don't necessarily need to see the nest to understand the process.

The nest or the script that was built line by line collaboratively and socially emerged as a collective of understandings and ideas. When we do see the nest we are pleasantly surprised by its intricacies and design and the strength yet subtleness of the structure; just as with the process of the play taking shape we begin to see a plot develop like a thread of blue ribbon running through the Bower bird's nest, thicker in some parts and barely visible in others. It is then that we can imagine the action that is to take place and the finished script and nest are ready to be filled by life.

Another senior girl, Emily in Year 11 would read the line aloud and sometimes quite organically this would shift for a time to another reader and another, always started by Emily. This would then be discussed or someone might just say 'I love that'; if they didn't explain why I would ask. In this case the line would be kept intact. In other instances the lines didn't say what was wanted so they were changed, the process for the changing of lines or adding or taking away of lines followed no one rule – yet always became a collective decision, the engagement of reasoning and articulating ideas meant that 'critical thinking' (Gokhale 1995) became a part of the script writing process.

Scenes were being workshopped by a body of actors who would bring the lines and the comedy to life, which would in-turn lubricate further ideas. The creative melting pot was exciting and high energy. As ideas were thrown around with relaxed idea development phrases such as, "Imagine if..",

"What if that was performed up there?" and...

"OMG, I have it I know exactly what should happen next!"

"You are hilarious! I think you have to play Bottom."

"Wait for it..."

"Inspired"

and "Just sayin'"

The community grew in rich connections; one student began to bake cookies for the Sunday gatherings. I observed students become incredibly comfortable with one another, those who had initially been reserved started to get up and workshop or suggest ideas. Students would laugh at and

with other students' ideas, it was a case of 'anything goes'. A culture of acceptance grew, based on one of the improvisational 'golden rules' (Johnstone 2012, 69), accept and explore all offers. The collaboration and improvisation of the parts, piece by piece, word by word, ultimately developed the script.

Writing the script meant adding scenes and even including a new sub-storyline, partially to allow the collective ideas to develop and in part to accommodate all students who had auditioned. The sub-story line of Sissia and Dante, involved a young faery and human who fell in love and found their love was forbidden. This initial idea came from Rose and was further developed as a collective. This was included as an issue that the students were compelled to speak of and excited to bring to life. Just as students decided that the trees in the forest would act as flies on a wall and their witty comments would ensure the audiences' understanding of the play.

As the process went on, the writers' circle began to dwindle this was due to students' other weekend commitments. We ended with a core group of approximately twelve to fourteen students that fluctuated depending on student availability, one Female Year 12 student, three Year 11 students two of whom were male, five Year 10 students – four girls and one boy and one Year 7 student – a girl, which meant that not all of the students benefitted from dissecting the script and thus did not have the same level of understanding as those who committed to the writers' circle. This didn't mean that others weren't present but that they would come one week and not the other.

Towards the end of the script the work-shoppers tired of the finite writing requirements including proofreading and a small group of three finalised the script these were the two girls Rose Year 12 and Emily Year 11 along with a male Year 12 student, Flynn. Emails would pass back and forth as we laboured over lines. The visualisation continued and during conversations held in the hallways, my office, the theatre, in class rooms during lunch breaks and online we developed not only a script, but a show with a heart invested through students' visions. The creative process was organic and connected and exciting. If the script had been written by one person it would not have been as reflective of participants' beliefs and ideas. Instead it reflects, the collaborative opportunity for learning, understanding, listening and meaning making that occurred through the collaboratively imagined work.

### **Node 3 - The Rehearsal**

The rehearsal phase of the school production is an important part of the process. The rehearsal aspect has several phases that give us an insight into the school production methodology. This research project relies heavily upon the processes in developing a student made production which includes the

scriptwriting process, the rehearsal process and the performance process and all the nuances that come with these three defined spaces of process. The rehearsal process is important in understanding how students socialise through theatre, develop characters, movement and music for the school production and how they interact with each other throughout the rehearsals to see the script through to fruition. The rehearsal phase is multifaceted and covers scene development, character development, line learning, spatial awareness, mastering of songs on instruments and vocal training and the overall conceptualisation of the self as a part of a whole cast and crew that comes together to be the school production.

Once the script was finalised, the process changed effortlessly to rehearsals. We began with a dry read which occurred in a circle on the floor of the school's theatre and for the first time students who had written the script began to see other students bring their characters to life, which in itself was a learning curve as some stated they hadn't thought of the character being played like that. Older students buddied up with younger students, (which was planned to a degree but required the initiative of the older students to support the younger students) to ensure they could read their parts with ease which showed a very early forging of relationships across age barriers (DuBois and Karcher 2013; Miller 2004; Topping and Maloney 2004; Buckley and Zimmermann 2006).

Rehearsals started with a full script blocking. Students were all issued with their own personal blocking sheets, where they could take notes on their entrances, movements and exits. This meant I was in the auditorium as director while most students/actors were backstage. The blocking that occurred onstage was recorded by video which after the session I watched and took notes on. What occurred backstage was also recorded; I then viewed this for the first time and took notes. At all times my blocking was open for suggestion; it was made very clear that I encouraged students' input and would at times ask for input from actors. At times I would give a scene to a group of actors to develop.

I welcomed students' questions and gave reasons behind my decisions so that all student actors began to look at the script as directors as well as actors. The reasoning behind this was to ensure that students began to understand both practical and aesthetic stage directions. When asked, only two students realised the intricacies of the stage directions. Based on this I explained the stage and areas of the stage and how these areas of space endow actors with 'virtual qualities' (Parr 2005, 262) prior to the script doing anything. I explained the importance of entrances and exits being practical so that everything ran smoothly. I produced a hand out to explain the stage directions.

The backstage footage was very revealing, in that I was able to understand how the students were feeling about going on and off stage. It was particularly moving to see the level of focus and the camaraderie between these students who often didn't otherwise know each other. I saw older students taking on natural roles of responsibility.

Focus groups were then used to work on characters and skill development. The following focus groups were formed:

1. Dark Faeries – Faeries aligned with Oberon – mentor: the student playing Oberon.
2. Light Faeries – Faeries aligned with Titania – mentor: the student playing Titania.
3. Actors – The actors for the royal court – mentor: the student playing Bottom.
4. Lovers & Family – The young lovers and the royals – mentor: the student playing Theseus.
5. Dancers – Faeries and those with smaller parts – mentors: Two senior choreographers.
6. Backstage – Crew of 8 students – mentor: senior student stage manager.

Each group had a leader, an older student who, had shown in the backstage footage, a natural capacity for responsibility. This didn't mean that they were the only student in the group with leadership qualities but they had been asked if they were comfortable with the role of leader. Quite naturally students took on the role of "mentor" without being labelled the group leader and younger students readily referred to their mentor.

These groups worked on character development, understanding what lines meant, checking that everyone understood their schedules and ensuring everyone was feeling included and needed. The mentors assisted with rehearsals as many of their scenes had the group or parts of the group involved. This meant that when I was working with the "lovers" on stage, other focus groups were working on their scenes, lines, etc.

Having written the script meant that the functionality of the rehearsals ran more smoothly in the sense that all students could be engaged and productive most of the time. Those students who had spare time, without scenes to rehearse, sat in the auditorium and actively watched the action on the stage. After each scene, students were asked to offer constructive criticism and at times also interjected their ideas throughout the direction of scenes. This could at times slow the process, yet in the long-run building this understanding saved me having to do this in later rehearsals.

## **Connection 1 - Camp**

After having spent several weeks writing, blocking and rehearsing the production we embarked on a weekend production camp. The camp allowed for an accelerated and focused time spent on developing the production through focused rehearsals. While it had been established as an annual camp prior to me arriving in the school, I did have a choice in whether I ran the camp or not.

Camp Adekate production camp was held 20 minutes outside of Daylesford in Adekate. The camp is discussed further in the Journal chapter. The focus of this camp was to get as many rehearsals in as possible, costumes developed and further bonding of the cast and crew. The camp was held on a



weekend and began on Saturday morning and ended Sunday afternoon. Students were responsible for their travel to and from the camp. Only four students did not attend, due to other commitments. Students paid for the camp as the production did not have a budget. Teachers volunteered and were not given any time in lieu of their commitments.

The teachers who attended besides me were,

1. The dance teacher
2. An early career drama teacher
3. The PE teacher who was a friend of mine
4. A young teacher who I had been mentoring
5. A teacher who works with at risk students
6. Two adult helpers who had working with children checks

The school's principal visited on the last day in time to collect her daughter. The art teacher visited and helped with set design and another teacher from my staffroom popped out with coffees for the teachers on Sunday morning after our sleepless night. As previously stated, the camp was something that was in place prior to me taking up my position as the Drama teacher. I was pleasantly surprised that there was a production camp, yet a little saddened to learn that it was held over the weekend and was completely without funding. The responsibility for the camp landed entirely with me.

The organisation that goes into such a camp requires booking the location and all paper work associated with this. Writing and sending several notes home regarding dates, costs, location, needs and medical considerations (*See Appendix 4 Camp Note Sample*). It required me to:

1. Liaise with the office staff to ensure students have paid and turned in their notes.
2. Liaise with the social support for students who could not afford the camp.
3. Appoint a medical officer from the teachers who attended
4. Supply medical officer with a brief of all remarkable medical cases and medications for the weekend.
5. Scheduling for cabins.
6. Scheduling of chores.
7. The rehearsal schedule.
8. Activities.
9. Prizes.
10. Certificates.
11. Technology requirements.

The weekend began at 8am with cabin allocations explained by me. I had allocated cabins based on gender and age as per school requirements. One Year 12 student, Flynn exclaimed, “Oh, come on Gill! Why can’t I sleep in the girls’ cabin? I am gay! It’s more of a risk to put me in the boys’ cabin, although hang on a minute not even! School rules are so archaic – I swear!” The Camp rules were shared by the patrons (*See Appendix 4.1 Camp Rules*). The rehearsal schedule began at 9am where students according to the schedule would move around to various scenes, dance rehearsals, singing rehearsals, costume fittings and technology, set design workshops. Each of these workshops was either recorded or the person overseeing it reported back to me what had occurred so that I could develop an overall picture in terms of rehearsal, rather than for research purposes. It was on camp that I realised the teacher survivor had to make decisions for the researcher and at times the researcher’s ideas and questioning just didn’t have a place in the moment. While I scheduled (*See Appendix 4.2 Camp Schedule*) and coordinated this I also ran a rehearsal and oversaw all other activity. I left the dining room seating arrangements free and observed that students tended to sit more in their mentored groups rather than their cabin or friendship groups.

At the end of the day we had the annual hut building competition, where students in chosen teams, built ephemeral huts in the neighbouring forest.

**PHOTOGRAPH ONE: EPHEMERAL HUTS**



Improvisation of faeries occurred while in the forest on dusk, the quality of light was noticed by myself and Rose to be beautiful and allowed us to imagine this lighting state into our stage presentation. The best hut builders were awarded with a chocolate and the honour of winning the best hut builder's competition for 2012. Later that evening the entire cast sat around the camp fire in pyjamas and coats, toasting marshmallows and telling ghost stories.

At the end of the camp we had several developed and polished scenes and three polished dance pieces. When parents arrived to collect their children they were seated in an outdoor theatre in the round bush setting where students performed two scenes and a dance piece. This "sneak peak," allowed students to show their parents what they had been working on over the weekend and gave the students and teachers a real sense of achievement. At 4pm all students left with their families. At 5:30 pm I packed the final things into my car, thanked the camp's proprietors and headed home.

## **Node 4 - Behind the Scenes**

In the coming weeks, refinement continued through rehearsals, workshops and meetings. Everything behind the scenes started to come into focus. Costumes, set, sound, lighting, hair, make-up, administration, everything had to be organised, designed, created and put into action. For this production I had decided that students should be involved as much as possible, I also decided that we needed to achieve a low budget approach so that we could start to make improvements for the facilities and technology for future years. These decisions were made and based on my previous experiences with school productions. I wanted students to have ownership of the entire show.

Over the months I would write letters to have discount approved from stores like Bunning's or I would spend several hours sewing. Parents took home sewing with steps to complete. I sent out emails asking for support from staff, for anyone who may have a particular item. I scouted through thrift shops for items needed. Each weekend was consumed by a list of pieces of cloth for costume, makeup for faery character's faces and set and props and each week another list would grow as the performance evolved. Every piece of costume or prop or technology had been touched by my hand, and or the hands of a student or volunteer mum, dad or community member. The gravity of the workload expected from a 'production teacher' is discussed throughout the Journal chapter.

## **Connection 1 - Costumes**

For all costumes students would contribute their ideas for their character(s). We had a session where we talked about the feel of the characters and the colours, textures, feel and styles best suited to their character and their character's status as far as power and emotion came into play. For example,

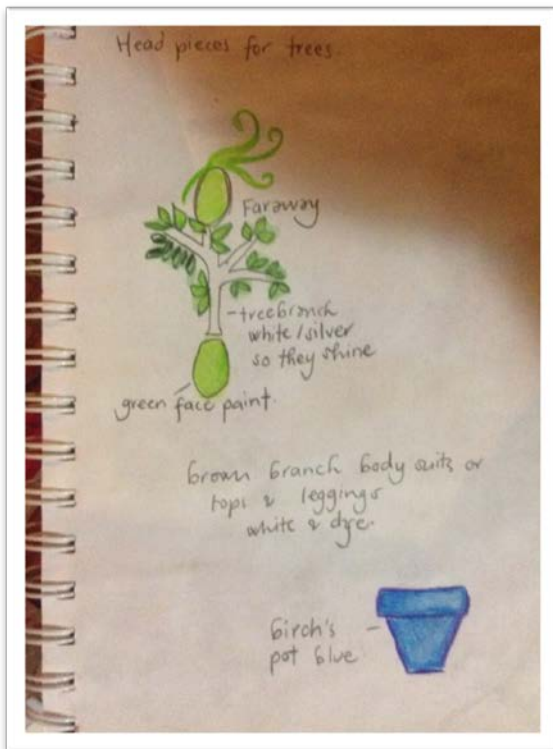
Hippolyta, who was very fiery in character, was dressed in red earth tones, the fabrics were shiny and extravagant, luxurious velour was used to show her wealth. Costumes were created by students, parents, another teacher and me. Costumes were largely revamped from the costume room, some hired, some found in part in thrift shops and some made from scratch. Those made from scratch required money, shopping, design and construction. It was decided to keep the costumes within the Elizabethan era of the script. This decision was laboured over amongst students. The faeries ended up having a much more modern feel to them but the other characters were dressed in ‘*Elizabethanish*’ costume. Practicalities were considered when it came to faery wings, also the size and the shape of the wing connected to the status of the faery, for example Oberon and Titania’s wings were made from magical looking material and were enormous in comparison to other little faeries. Oberon’s wings measured almost two meters.

## Connection 2 - Set

The set development again relied upon what we had available; it was simple and complimented by fairy lights. The writers developed ideas for the set as they wrote the script, a series of drawings were made by one student in a production set book:



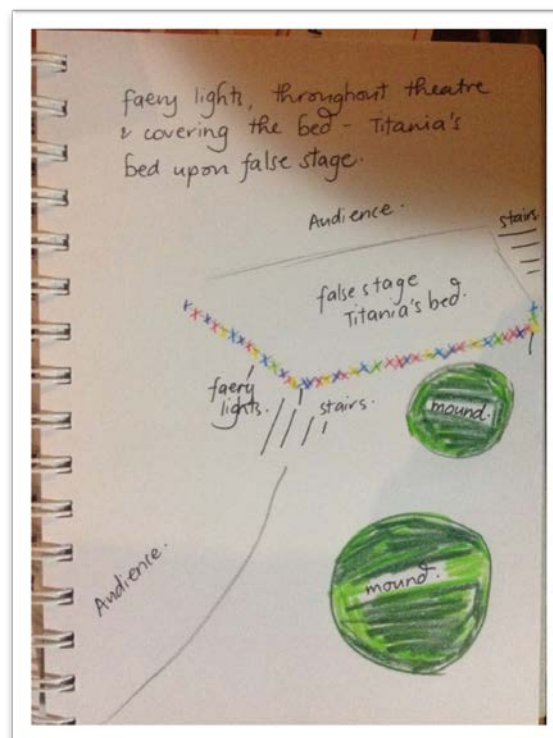
**IMAGE 1** - Set design including the talking forest characters.



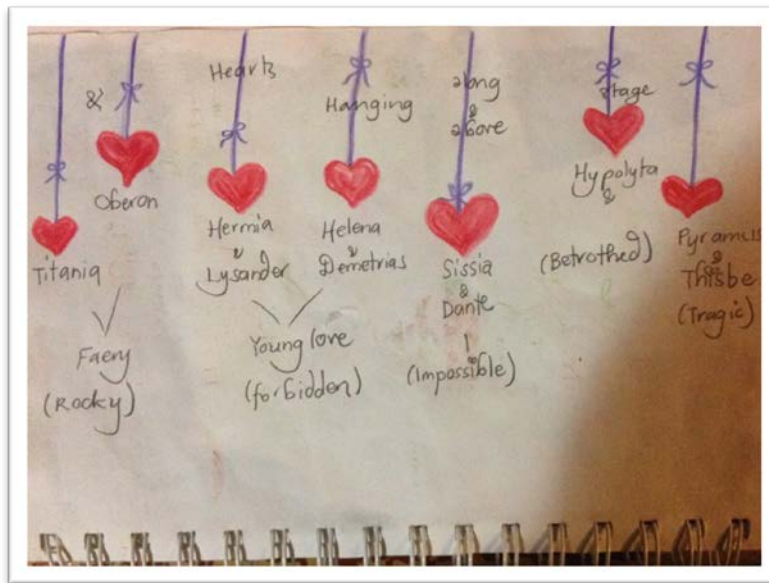
**IMAGE 2** - Faraway and Birch appearance.



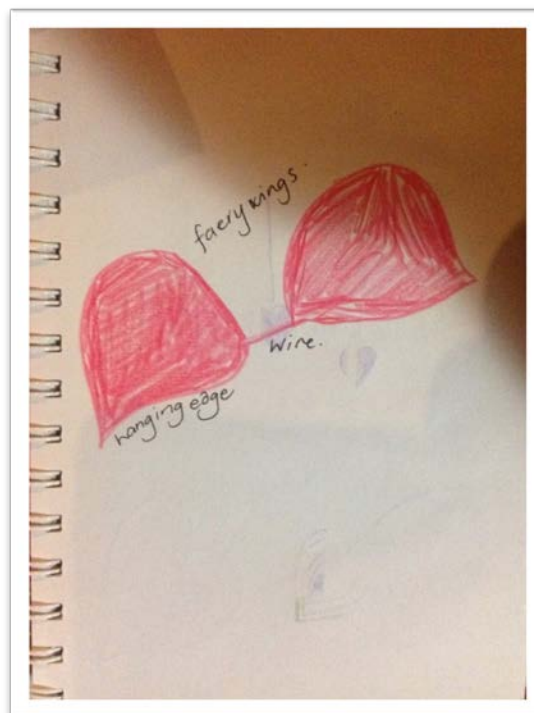
**IMAGE 3** - Hippolyta's and Theseus throne.



**IMAGE 4** - False stage ideas for Titania's bed.

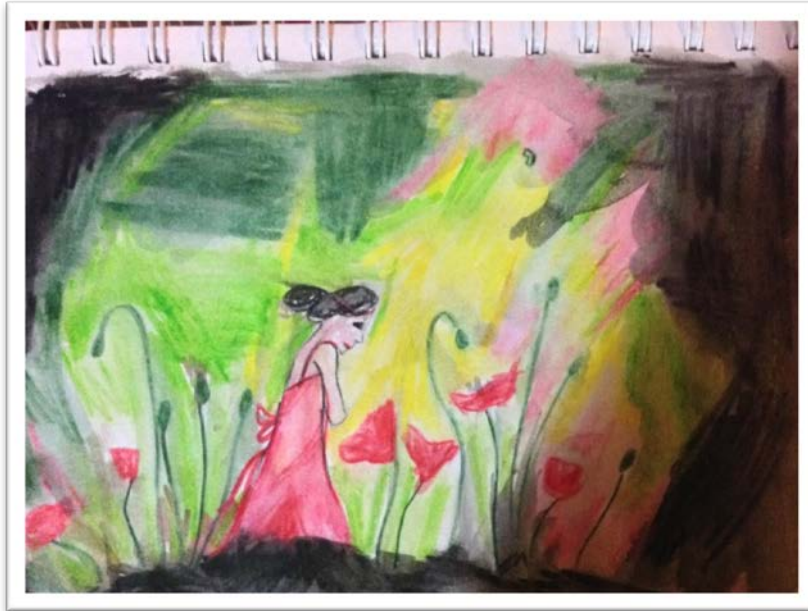


**IMAGE 5.** Family Tree – so the audience knows the love connections.



**IMAGE 6** - Developing fairy wings.





**IMAGE 7** - A lover in the forest with poppies.

The girls' technology design class designed the trees and constructed, painted and delivered them to set. These students had a meeting with the set designers, who were writers and actors and consisted of two males from Year 11 and 3 females, one from Year 12 and two from Year 11. I was present at the meeting and took down measurements and details. During the construction period students from the design team visited to see the various stages and gave the girls feedback. This feedback was used to develop the set in a way that would be practical and aesthetically enhancing. In the end, just weeks before the show opened, there was a core group, myself and three other students, who ensured the set and lighting came together. At various stages of construction the set design students would report back to the cast with developments and problems. At times the entire cast would problem solve issues with set design. This is explored in the Backstage chapter entitled, in a section entitled Shoe Throwing. The day before the show opened I was in the theatre until 2am constructing a swing set and wrapping it in fairy lights and vines. Each day the set would be cleared of any dead debris and fresh bits and pieces of trees and shrubs were brought in. Students volunteered, some bringing flowers and vines from home, others nipping out the back of the theatre to cart in chunks of bark and twigs.

### **Connection 3 - Lighting**

The lighting design required me to hire a desk from a local stage lighting company as our desk had an electrical fault. We had a cherry-picker and electricians in to clean all of the lights and replace several globes; unfortunately this took almost half of my budget. The realigning of these lights took place before the set and finalisation of scenes so it was very difficult to get a broad lighting plan that we hoped would work for the show that we envisaged developing. I was notified on the same morning that this work was to be done and used my spare periods and breaks to guide the electricians as to where the lights should be pointed and what gels should go where. One VCE Drama student who was also involved in the production came along to this as he had spare periods. Other students wanted to be involved, especially our lighting student, however she had classes that she couldn't afford to miss. An assistant production teacher and also Drama teacher swapped her class so she could be present at this realigning of the lights. By the end we had a lighting grid that covered the entire stage. I immediately began to make notes of which scenes would have to be moved to accommodate the lights. Lighting a show in this way is close to impossible, yet it was the only way we could achieve lights without spending thousands on professional lighting.

## **Connection 4 - Sound**

The sound was largely dealt with by the music teachers – a professional company supplied most of our needs and the money we had saved on lights, and the rights to a show was spent on a multi-cord for the school, which meant we were able to cut down our hiring costs by several hundred dollars each year. The sound took some time to perfect as this was the first time the school had used a full student band. The band is further discussed in the Student Perspectives and Journal chapters. Ensuring students could be heard when they sang and spoke was challenging with the few microphones we had hired and those we owned.

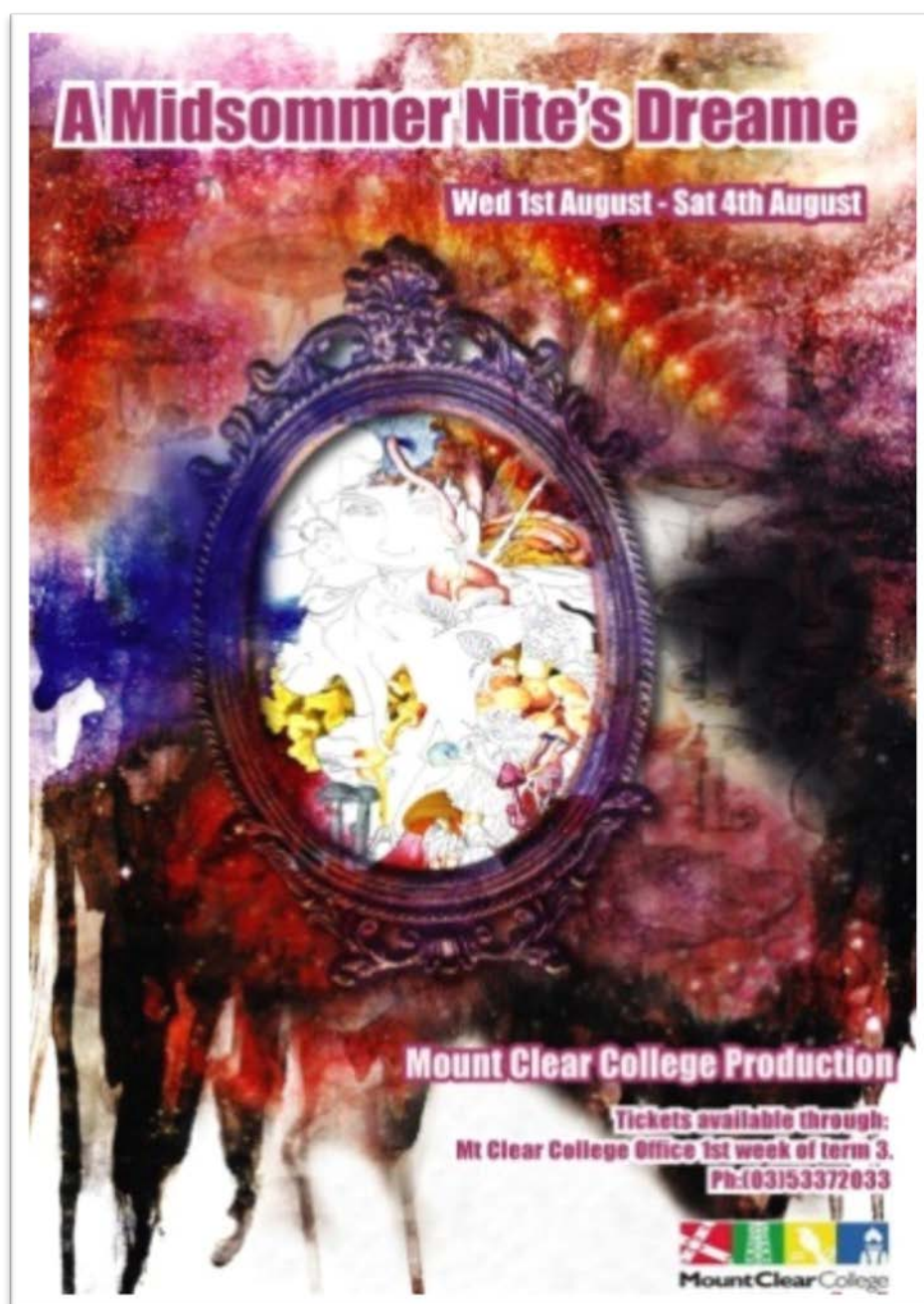
## **Connection 5 - Hair and Makeup**

Hair and make-up involved creating faery faces. Ideas for the faery faces were brainstormed by cast members. Individual designs became the domain of the teacher who oversaw hair and make-up. She took drawings and photographs from each faery and developed the designs with the students. In particular she worked on hair and makeup with three students to design the faery faces and the hair. Shopping, collecting the required make-up and craft stocks, and ensuring there were enough fake eye-lashes for the whole cast meant quite a lot of time for me and the volunteer teacher. We then ran several hair and makeup workshops so students could learn to do their basics and in some cases each other's more intricate designs. Due to time constraints involved in preparation before a student show, Oberon had a teacher getting him ready as his make-up and hair was quite elaborate. Others arrived with foundation and hair ready and entered into a production line of lipstick, mascara, blush, craft and glitter before they emerged as faeries.



## Connection 6 - Administration

The administration involved in the show was immense. Apart from letters to parents throughout the year, a long list of administrative tasks were undertaken: the scheduling, blocking, printing scripts, developing and printing programs and tickets, liaising with the media, meetings with staff around the productions vision and progress, organising set, costume and lighting design, liaising with appropriate industry professionals, purchasing and requisitions, publicity needs and administration for the actual shows, such as tea and coffee with snack sales and ushering. These administration requirements were largely overseen and to a varied extent carried out by me. Some roles were absorbed by volunteer teachers. The advertising image was created by a first year teacher who had previously worked in advertising. She took a photograph and description of students' visions of the show and some drawings and developed an amazing image that really reflected the whole aesthetic feel of the show. This was then used in email banners, posters, postcards, media advertising, tickets, t-shirts and programs.



### **IMAGE 8 - Poster Design.**

Interviews with the media involved me and some students speaking about their experiences. See Student Perspectives chapter in the section written by Rose. All publicity photography was carried out by a senior student who also ran the lighting for dress rehearsals and the shows. The filming of the show was carried out by a very experienced teacher who had their own professional equipment. This teacher also volunteered to edit the film.

## **Node 5 - Pre-production**

The pre-production rehearsals brought many nerves and as we ran the first full dress rehearsal it felt enormous, like a massive machine starting up for the first time. Having all of the cogs turning in time took some oiling and fine tuning. The show did not feel nearly ready to open the next night but experience with teenage performers told me everything would be fine. There were several negative comments stating that the show wasn't ready, as there seem to be every year. The tension was high and even the slightest thing like a stocking not being re-hung in the right manner had people on edge. At this point all I could do was encourage calm and put out spot fires. This idea that keeping a sense of calm and mutual respect is an important part of the methodology involved in the authentic school production. It's no secret that mutual respect is important for effective student teacher relationships (Teaching 2008, 2; Education 2005, 9, 18; Beutel 2009, 8; Nelsen, Lott, and Glenn 2013; Richardson and Gallagher 2011; Neelands 2009a, 2009b; Teaching 2008; *Recommendation 1720/2005. Education and religion* 2005). This is further examined through specific examples in the Journal chapter.

## **Connection 1 - Pastoral Care and Ethics**

The teacher in the position of production educator who oversees all facets of the school production is undoubtedly in a very powerful position with the students and other staff with whom they work. On the other hand within the school this is seen as a very powerless position, so there is almost an awkward balancing of the power at play. Students on the one hand look up to this teacher as an all-

knowing adult with answers and on the other hand feel they can rapidly question and disagree with due to the lack of respect for the qualifications this teacher holds. These can be explained by the lack of respect for the production within the school but furthermore by the idea that anyone can act and that knowledge in this area is not necessary as everyone has an affinity with the idea of performance, as we have all seen plays or television or even performed in something, a concert, a recital, a Christmas carol.

The power at play needed to be considered from an ethics view point. My interactions with students could have been affected by the power that I had over them. However I was determined to erode this power and instead infuse it with mutual trust, responsibility and empathy.

The ethical process in which I followed throughout the production was to treat each child with respect and to expect a mutual respect. This included respectful interactions during the making of the school production, inclusive of decision making, dealing with pastoral care and behavioural issues as they arose. Each child's right to contribute was respected throughout the process. When a teacher takes on a role of production coordinator or production teacher they take on the role of pastoral carer of each child involved. They also take on a leadership role in ensuring the child's rights are upheld by all other adults who may work on the production, these may include other staff members, community members and parents.

As stated, pastoral care is something that goes hand in hand with any production.

Throughout the process there are always issues that arise with the period just before opening night being one of the busiest times for upset and unease. Following are a few examples throughout the process and opening night: The first for this show was the reluctance to create an original show, everyone was quite invested in this discussion and some students took the idea of an original show as an insult. There were issues with music and students becoming upset with how their singing rehearsals had gone. Some students were not able to afford things like the camp. Little relationships would flourish and then breakup, which would create working difficulties. There were students who pulled out because the work load became overwhelming, students wanting to join half way through because they heard how much fun it was to be involved in. Injuries occur either outside the production or during dance rehearsals, effecting students' abilities to perform. Students have little quarrels about what had been said behind each other's backs. And the final pastoral care comes when the show is over and students feel lost without it.

The production teacher, in this case me, has a position of responsibility in dealing with each issue that might arise. While each issue deserves the time and attention to ensure each participant is happy in what they are doing, it is worth noting briefly that the participants learnt from these moments. For me the production teacher has a responsibility to keep a sense of calm, organisation within the chaos of

what a school production is and to model professional and caring behaviour. While this may not always be easy amongst the chaotic atmosphere it is paramount in allowing the students a safe and happy place to learn. This is the key here, students in a production are learning. They are not Broadway actors to be shouted at and criticised. An example of this is documented in the Journal chapter. I wanted to ensure students knew this would not happen while working on the authentic modelled school production. I made it very clear that everyone was here to learn and that everyone has varying degrees of ability and physicality that each person brings with them their own unique positive contributions and these contributions would be celebrated. This partially came from my past experience with teacher/directors treating students rather cruelly and my inability to see this as theatrical practice, and to also adhere to the university's ethics requirements.

An ethics application was approved on 08.05.2012 by Victoria University which enabled me to study the children involved in the school production. This study was supported by the school's principal and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Victoria including the use of the school's name in the thesis. Letters were sent home to parents outlining the study and the ethical requirements (*See Appendix 5 Permission Letters*). The pastoral care involved and the developments that grew out of the social interactions of students involved in the production are outlined in Chapter 7 Student's Experiences. These provide an insight into the backstage moments that became a part of the process of the school production and the product.

## **Node 6 Production**

The production phase required many hours of planning and preparation. These hours were inclusive of the script writing, rehearsing and preparation. It calls all areas of theatre production together and the coordination of all areas to work in a perfect balancing act of coordination. This node requires a great deal of skill and knowledge in the theatre and in education. The production phase calls for a director and teacher with all eyes, ears and ideas, ideas for troubleshooting and enhancing. The final full-dress rehearsal was the first time students worked with the microphones, the first time we worked with the hired lighting desk and the first time the whole set and props had been available. The production phase included: final dress rehearsal, opening night, subsequent shows and closing night. During this time everything that students and staff had worked towards was performed and continually refined. It is in this phase that the students perform their work to an outside audience on a continuum that allows their story to unfold. It is best understood by breaking down the connections.

### **Connection 1 - Dress Rehearsals**

The production phase included the bump in and final dress rehearsal that was performed to an audience of primary students. This had been a tradition at the school for students to 'try out' their

show on a child audience before showing it to a 'real' audience. The only difference was that the 'real' audience would be paying and has adults and peers and the primary school audience were made aware that they were viewing a final rehearsal. This also meant that the students had a fresh response to their work and allowed the primary students who came from feeder schools to see what a high school production was like. This was the first time that the whole show had come together in its entirety without pausing to refine things. Technical glitches were ironed out while the students performed. A great deal of pressure was placed upon the sound, lighting and backstage crew to get everything to run smoothly. I had bought some trusty walkie talkies for the behind the scenes crew to communicate about any issues. It was the first time that I had called the entire play from the bio-box, giving instructions and cues to the stage manager, stage hands, curtain pullers, lighting and sound technicians. This was a time of firsts and a place where the students learnt that many things had to come together to make the whole. The intensity of the responsibility of all involved was described by some students directly after the final dress rehearsal as awesome, unbelievable, frantic, chaotic, cool, wicked which are all words that describe how they felt about being under that amount of pressure and responsibility.

Directly after the full dress rehearsal a meeting was called where notes that I had taken along with the notes from teachers backstage, the stage manager, student directors, choreographers, vocal coach, sound technician, lighting technician, costume and make-up students were shared. This was a time for the entire cast to reflect upon their show. To consider how it had been received, where things required work, what could be done differently to ensure everything ran smoothly and to share the exhilaration of their experiences.

This was followed by the clean-up and organisation for opening night. This meant all students needed to store their costumes, makeup, and props in a way that they could easily find them for opening night. The stage had to be set back to act one, scene 1. All electrical equipment had to be switched off and set ready for the beginning of a new show. The stage was set ready, behind the scenes had running sheets and costumes in the wings. Props lined up and labelled. Every student had their own place backstage in a dressing room where they had stored their costume and kit. Everything was ready for opening night.

## **Connection 2 - Opening Night/subsequent nights**

Opening night had arrived. I stayed at school to supervise the students who couldn't go home in between. Students arrived early to get ready in their costumes and make-up. They shared dinners of chips and chocolate, bought from the local takeaway shop. Students rehearsed lines and movement phrases, tweaking their parts.

I ensured all technical requirements were checked and cued ready for use. Everyone focused their time backstage to help each student ready themselves for their performance. Make-up was applied, costumes donned, props organised. Half an hour prior to the beginning of the show I called all cast and crew to a large circle. Here we came together as a whole to focus. Last minute reminders about being quiet backstage and remembering to project voices onstage took place. A few little games were played to help calm nerves and focus students. Finally the whole cast and crew focus on an object in the centre of the circle and when the leader jumps, arms and legs splayed calling “UHH” everyone does this in sync, this was to allow everyone to feel that they were a part of a whole team working together. After this final focus moment everyone would clap and head off to their places ready for Sissia to start the show (*See DVD 1 00.02*).

### **Connection 3 - Closing Night**

On the final night, students started to worry about saying goodbye to their characters and the show. For some, it was a relief that the show was drawing to a close, but for others it meant tears as they realised this would be the last time they played their character. The Year 12 students became upset as they realised this would be their last school production in their lives. Younger students became upset that the Year 12 students would not be a part of the cast for next year. Students signed thank you cards backstage and wrote on the backs of each other's' programs. Everyone prepared to enjoy their final show.

### **Node 7 Post Production**

After any show there is still an incredible amount of work to be done. Firstly bump out must take place. This is where everything must physically be removed and cleaned that had been in the space. This was largely completed by me, another teacher, a friend and my family. While students are eager to turn up to have their costumes fitted, they are not so often around to launder them. Once this is done there are awards to organise and DVDs of the show to burn and distribute; again this was up to me. A brief after show party was held at the school for students and they brought cake and party food and danced and relaxed. The weeks after a show can be strange for students as they miss their characters and gathering with their friends. I would often pass a student in the hallways and have them state that they missed production. I too miss the production but am relieved to only have to work one fulltime job instead of three – exhale. Given that I also taught some of the participants in subjects within the curriculum meant a couple of things: I could build a stronger rapport with these students; and that I would need a teacher external to the production process to cross mark any summative work undertaken by the participants in other classes. Ethically this required me to take extra precautionary steps to ensure the possibility of the clouded role of researcher/teacher from being an issue when it comes to the blurring of participant/student line. This was required for ethical approval, however it is

worth noting in the usual running of a school production and other extra-curricular activities such as sport or tutoring this is not considered. As previously stated the students held an after show cast party. This was held on school grounds directly after the show. Students brought food to share and they wrote messages on each other's programs. The sentiments of these messages were to the effect that all students felt that they belonged and that they were sad the production was over. The students made me a card and signed it. I have included it below as it offers the gratitude the students showed me in this simple gesture.

At a whole school assembly later in the year I awarded each student with a certificate that outlined what their contribution was and gave them each a copy of their DVD. For some this was the first Production DVD that they could own as the productions previously had copyright issues which meant that the show could not be recorded. This DVD for the students acts as a memory of their experience onstage and a reminder of the relationships and learning offstage. For the school, the DVD is a record and for me, evidence of the amazing school production that I had a hand in and a very important record for this thesis. (*See Appendix 7 DVD*)

## **The Research**

In running the school production it is evident that I managed the care of the students involved, aesthetic decisions and the purpose of the school production. This purpose extended beyond the students' positive experiences through collaboration and collective imagination to encompass the research project. While I collected video footage, photographs and recorded student comments and thoughts, sections of my reflective journal form Chapter 4 which offers an insight into the teacher and researcher involved in the school production process. Autoethnography and ethnodrama allowed me to look at the research as a part of my usual teaching load (Noffke and Somekh 2009).

The methodology required an element of surviving the immense workload I undertook to run this school production, while teaching a fulltime load and simultaneously undertaking this hybrid of applied and practice-based research. The picture would be authentic, so the reader would understand what it can mean to be a Drama and Production teacher. The insights come from a teacher who is actually experiencing the day-to-day grind of the job, while running the school production. This insight comes from working inside the school rather than from a researcher only view. The research was my work and the work was my research. The teacher's journey, my journey is further explored throughout the thesis.

**(Chapter Four ‘The Journal’ is presented in Volume 2 for ease of reading).**



## CHAPTER FIVE STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

After the week long season of *A Midsomer Nite's Dreame*, I asked for student volunteers to express their feelings about writing the script for the school production. Some responses came to me via email; some were typed and placed on my desk, others written on scraps of paper and one written on the back of a brown paper bag. I copied or typed them in their entirety exactly as they had been composed. These statements represent students from Year 8 through to Year 12. When collectively viewed they not only express how students feel about themselves as writers, they also uncover a motivation to be heard by me. In some instances it was those students who were the least confident writers who volunteered their accounts of writing a script. It is worth noting that from approximately forty script writing participants; I received responses from a quarter (ten). The responses were written and delivered to me of the students' own accord. Those who chose to respond responded for a reason. Why did a quarter of the students volunteer their responses? When looking at the cross-section of responses, I noted that most of the responses came from children who had not thought of themselves as writers. All of the respondents had at some point indicated that they had something to say. In particular three of the respondents had started the writing process with apprehension and finished on what I can only refer to as a high. The sense of achievement experienced when the finished script was handed out was intense. The script was bound with a cover and handed to each student. A sea of comments followed.

"Wow!"

"OMG did we seriously write all of this?"

"This is the most writing I have done in my entire life."

"Smell it."

"I love the cover!"

"Far out! I just want to read every word!"

"Did you guys seriously write this?"

"This is freaking amazing."

### Writing Statements

In the case of the *A Midsomer Night's Dreame* project students engaged in a writing circle. These were similar to a literature circle which has been, 'adapted, modified, and personalized' (Daniels

2006, 11) to fit the writing structure. Students in positive peer groups were motivated collaboratively towards the common goal (O'Donnell and O'Kelly 1994, 328) of a writing a script for performance. Some became the characters being developed by their collaborating peer writers. The formulation of literary concepts was mixed in the theatre and the various levels of abilities allowed for significant learning and cross student mentoring. Not only were these writing circles, they were reading circles, literature circles and conceptualisation circles. The circle was named by the students as they would literally sit in a circle with the action at the centre. The following are a cross section of student responses to the question asked of students at the end of the process. They were asked as a whole group to contribute their answers if they wished. A sheet of paper with the following question was taken by students who wished to contribute. *Students wrote this year's production. If you were a part of writing the script what did you think about the process of writing your own production?*

I have used nom de plumes throughout the thesis; several students chose their own pseudonym as they had wanted their own names to appear in the thesis:

The following are the individual accounts of writing the script. I have provided all comments first followed by my response and analysis of the accounts. This allows the reader to gather the overall student voice and response to writing a script.

### **Writing Statement 1**

I just thought writing a script was for famous people, but Gill showed us how to do it and helped us to understand that the story needs climaxes and peaks and troffs and foreshadowing and rhythm, which I had thought was more about drums. It's actually pretty cool when you know how to write a story or a play. I am pretty sure I want to have a go at writing films now. (Andy)

### **Writing Statement 2**

I loved to learn about how the character was made and it was so much fun to make up a person. I haven't done it since I was really a kid. I like the idea that your character may have a vulnerable side and this can fit like a jigsaw to other characters. (Brielle)

### **Writing Statement 3**

When I thought, we are writing the play the first thing I thought was, "is she crazy?" No way did I think we could just write a play and that it would turn out ok, it actually turned out awesome. (Ethan)

### **Writing Statement 4**

I especially enjoyed learning to find what would make the audience love the character, not just what had to be said but little elements, tiny fine tunements that made the characters funny and ridiculous at the same time. (Rose)

### **Writing Statement 5**

Before doing the writing circle, I thought I couldn't even write. I didn't really feel comfortable the first time being there because, I am not a good speller or good at putting words together. I told Gill and she just made me get it. She said it isn't English in here you just need a great imagination. It turned out she was right, but I did learn commas and stuff when I was writing because otherwise the actor would say everything wrong. It was the first time I actually got all that, because if you didn't have a comma or a rest then the character would sound all wrong. And it wasn't like in other classes and stuff because, Gill would ask what sounds better? Putting a comma here – then she would read it – or here? And she said trust yourself when you read it and you will know and it makes it sound so easy but it is if you're acting it out. (Tahlia)

### **Writing Statement 6**

My first time to write a script. I thought I did pretty good. I enjoyed the process and like the meanings behind why characters said and some times did what they had to as well. The best bit was chosing if Dante and Sissia would end up together coz it was really like if there was a girl and a guy and they fell in love but they weren't aloud to go out with each other then how would they handle it. I loved all the hidden messages, lucky you had us Miss because you would have probably not known how young people feel about things like that. But you probably would though because you know about lots of stuff. (Blair)

### **Writing Statement 7**

I had always enjoyed writing immensely, but working with Gill made my words come to life and sometimes the life told me, "STOP!! Don't say that!" Prior to the experience I could basically write strong stories, I have the recipe. Now I am able to feel and envisage my characters and the sets and having to think symbolically for stage set gives the words even more meaning. It is exciting to write a story and imagine characters and everything but knowing that it won't just end up on your teacher's desk forgotten in a pile of marking, and actually seeing it being brought to life and seeing Gill just correct it there and then and asking your opinion on the changes that were necessary and accepting and trusting what you had to say was an amazing feeling. (Bronte)

### **Writing Statement 8**

OK Miss I am a shit writer and even tho you say I am grate we both no it! Ha ha. But itzthe first time that I liked it. It was cool to see it all just make a story that everone could understand. And I no you wanta go thru this with me and fix up my language don't forget u even said that langage is always evolving. So this is a bit of text message lingo for you miss. Don't tell any1 but it rocked and it felt good and I cant wait to do it next year and I think I will be better in my English class now too. Thanks to you miss. (Xavier)

### **Writing Statement 9**

Well first I am sad that it is all over. I didn't like the writing so much so it was good to still do it by being the actor. It was like the first time I have ever seen a play written, I thought it was so hard. But if you stick at it, it is so much fun and you get a good play at the end. Anyway I liked that I didn't get made feel stupid like you would in English when you have to read and you can always find the good about someone Miss that is what you do, you make people feel good and you get good ideas from people even when they can't read well or whatever. (Pete)

### **Writing Statement 10**

Amazing! I loved doing the production this way! Why didn't we think of it earlier? We could have been writing productions for years and imagine how good we would be at it by now. (Pete)

## **Response to Writing Statements**

In writing statements 1, 3, 5, 8 and 9 all students' comments relate to the confidence to write. In each of these statements we can see the student's gratitude for being given the opportunity to write in a manner that has not focused on their downfalls. A specific example worth further investigation is that of statement 9. Not only do I like this statement because it says something nice about me, it also comments on the effects that a teacher being kind to a student can have upon how they then feel about school. This particular student supposedly hated school, although he showed that he didn't want this educational experience to end. There has been research into extra-curricular activities supporting students to stay in school due to positive effects that allow students to feel connected and supported (Everson and Millsap 2005; Massoni 2011; Fredricks and Eccles 2005; Zaff et al. 2003; McNeal 1995). The school production has not specifically been considered in these studies; however the fine arts, including Drama, have. Pete joined the school production the following year and took on more of a leadership role. He is still at school, studying.

In statement 8, written by Xavier we see something different. He says it's the first time that he has enjoyed writing. I wondered what it was that he had enjoyed about the writing. I asked him when I ran into him in the corridor a few weeks after reading his note. His reply was:

Don't get so excited by it Miss. Just sayin' it was cool. Nah, I think it's because you got like the people up there and they are like the puppets or something and you're like the person what makes stuff happen to them. Kind of like God Miss, I liked feeling like a god. (Laughter) No seriously but – it didn't care if I couldn't write, I could feel it I was having good ideas because everyone was listening and saying, you know, like write that down, every time I said something. It was cool Miss. When are we doing another one Miss? (Xavier)

Apart from liking the God complex which is his way of saying he felt empowered through his ideas and being able to be actively engaged in making parts of the script happen. Xavier enjoyed that his peers valued his contribution to the writing. His initial statement showed that he had been made feel to 'dumb' previously. The atmosphere in which he engaged in literacy within the school production was possibly more welcoming than in the classroom. I offer the following reasoning for his positive experiences in production writing: he was surrounded by people, who were nice to him and liked him; he didn't actually have to read or write, instead he had verbal input; he could see his words coming to life through the actors which suggests he may be more of a visual and kinaesthetic learner; and I was supportive and encouraging, giving him genuine compliments with regards to his contributions and expecting his further input.

In contrast statement 7 offers a different perspective in that Bronte did feel that she could write well. She enjoyed that her writing became real that it wasn't just written and forgotten. She saw that I appreciated her writing because I didn't forget it in a pile of marking and this is significant for the way we view the position of writing from our students. Often texts written by senior students are too long to read aloud in class or at an assembly, quite often their work will never make it to the soundwaves. A play offers a chance for students to hear their work back and to be able to contemplate how other people perceived their work, both in the presentation and in the manner that the actor portrays the work. At times during the writing of the script students would comment upon how they had intended people to play the line and would enter into discussions about what worked best. Sometimes this would mean changing punctuation, rewording, or the way the actor played the line was altered. These negotiations of peer writing allowed students to understand that writing is never really finished. Right up until the end of the production the script was open for edits. In the shows students would edit on stage through improvisation due to a missed line or waiting upon an entrance. This organic relationship with the words on the page, being brought to life, offered students a new way of looking at the written word and, moreover, at their own written words. Largely students had

not experienced this in their school except for in the Drama class and then this was at times not required as plays were, “Made up on the spot and we never even wrote the play down. I didn’t even know about the two dotty thing, the um, colon until I learnt it here and I am in year 11.” (Gen) Gen made this comment in a rehearsal when students were talking about the layout of their text. The students entered into discussions about whether to use a colon after the name of a character to indicate that text would follow.

## **Analysis of Writing Statements**

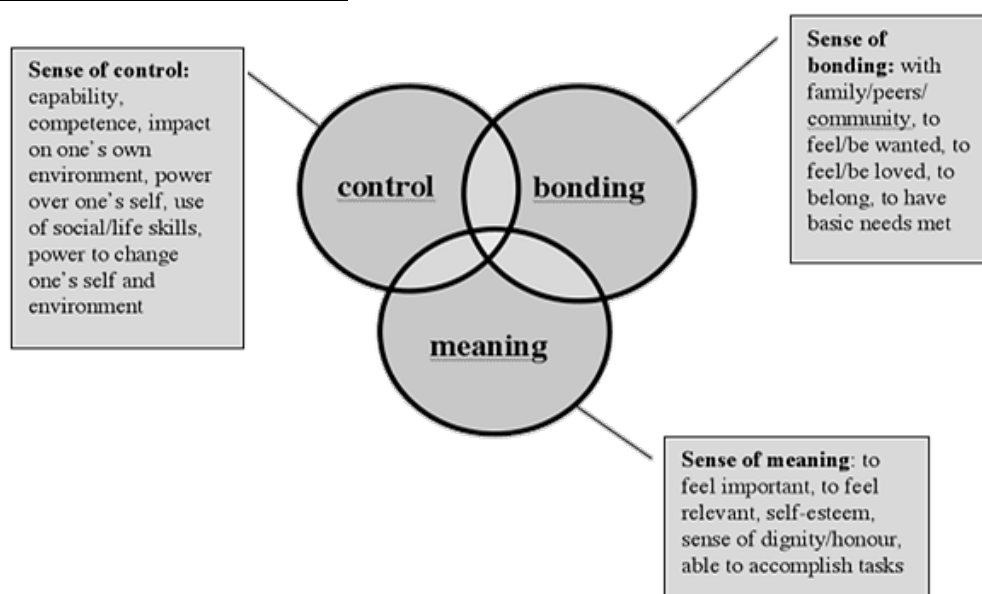
### **Being Heard**

The right to be heard applies to every aspect of a child’s life – at home, in school, in health care, in play and leisure, in the media, in the courts, in local communities and in local and national policy-making, as well as at the international level (Lansdown 2011, 7).

Being heard focuses our presence and perception. Suddenly, being in a group required students to be present and have input while being aware that this contribution was constantly open to others’ perceptions. To have their ideas heard and included in a collaborative script by me and their peers was for some an enduring experience. In particular Bronte asserts that she likes that her work will be used and heard. Bronte’s comment is explored further in 4.3.2. Brielle states that she hasn’t made up a play since she was a kid. The often ‘tacit’ learning environments in schools (DEECD, 2009, 3) do not allow the child to play and have their voice heard. Brielle refers to a time in her childhood prior to secondary education where there was scope for her to make up words that would be tangibly played out. It’s this idea of playing out an idea that allows students to be heard and to understand what their writing sounds like when it is heard.

Xavier too displays an affinity with being heard. He enjoyed that everyone could understand what he was saying. This implies that perhaps he usually doesn’t feel that people around him understand what it is he is saying. He points out that being valued for what he had to say by his peers and me felt ‘good’. He is describing a positive self-concept through being heard. The following diagram further explains Xavier’s motivation and experiences.

## DIAGRAM TWO: MOTIVATION



(Phillips 1990 in, Holdsworth and Blanchard 2005, 28)

The idea that collaboration in real world experiences allows a voice to be meaningfully heard transcends the notion of 'simply listening to 'voices', 'views' or 'perspectives' (Holdsworth and Blanchard 2005, para 11) as one might do in a classroom for an allotted period of time. Xavier experiences these three interrelated factors that attribute self-concept.

## Playwriting as Literacy

Bronte's comment calls into scrutiny assessment practices, whereby a teacher takes work that is completed and grades it. Whereas collaborative script-writing calls for ideas to emerge, be developed and heard. The questions asked through feedback were happening in the very instant so the questions: Where am I going? How am I going? Where am I going next? (Hattie and Timperley 2007) were answered as the student wrote, rather than after the work sat in a pile for assessment to be handed back with limited written feedback. The feedback too was multifaceted in that it didn't just come from me (the teacher) and it wasn't based solely on the written word. The feedback included the actor's animated example which allowed the students to see when they needed to employ punctuation and literary devices. This shared navigation around the writing components allowed students like Bronte to visualise her words.

Tahlia's comment further uncovers literacy through playwriting when she writes about learning specific language functions. She realises that what she writes and how she writes it will have impact on the language function of the character she is writing for. She specifically points out commas and how she had learnt their importance when writing a character's lines. She had seen that the character

sounded wrong or more to the point that the actor couldn't read what had been written fluently due to the lack of punctuation. This is not always evident when reading from a book; however it becomes imperative when actors read lines as lines are packed with meaning, rarely description or other utterances of writing. 'The competence to code and decode written texts comprises the technical abilities of writing and reading' (Verhoeven, Elbro, and Reitsma 2002, 4), these technical abilities are needed to be able to read the lines and act out the meaning. This basic functional literacy has been cause for concern amongst the Australian population, particularly in Tasmania where it is said that more than 50% of the population are 'functionally illiterate' (ABC 2013). This means that they struggle to read the basics, for example medication or a recipe.

## **Empowerment**

Each of the writing statements evidences empowerment. Each student points out that they liked writing the script, some that they didn't feel they could write prior to becoming involved in the writing circle, one even makes a claim that he will do better in his English class because of this experience. The motivational factors involved in the writing required a level of 'flow' state (Csikszentmihalyi 2010), the students as shown in the Journal Chapter could work contently for hours and expressed that they didn't notice the time passing, "I seriously cannot believe that we've been writing for three hours, it feels like we started five minutes ago!" (Flynn) Beyond this the collective imagination desired to write a great script. To achieve this aspiration, students needed to understand the original script. The strong sense of purpose students experienced while writing the script could be attributed to the common goal that they were working towards (Piaget 1999; Deci 1975; Langford 2004; Heckhausen, Schmalt, and Schneider 1985).

The intrinsic motivation explained above along with the extrinsic motivation (Staw 1976; Brown 2007) of performing the production which leads to praise and a level of fame allowed students to become incredibly focused. This empowered them to become good writers, good team players, good actors and good people. This created a positive experience which meant the students involved wanted to participate in this type of collaborative writing again. During the writing phase there was an ongoing self-regulation (Schunk and Zimmerman 1998; Purdie, Hattie, and Douglas 1996) and shared regulation of each child's learning. This was evident as the students discussed the use of grammar and punctuation and made decisions over which words they should use.

This self-regulation was ongoing throughout the entire process, where students would change lines because they didn't sound right. The idea that the students' writing remained unfixed meant that the entire process became quite organic. It didn't matter who owned the words, anyone could change them so long as they could give good reason. This level of collaborative-writing (Nunamaker, Romano, and Briggs 2013) promoted a sense of community and group achievement.



## **Collaboration**

The collaborative nature of writing the script equally motivated students to write a script that they could be proud of and finish writing. They encouraged each other to “stick at it” (Pete), this display of persistence along with their abilities to think interdependently all while ensuring accuracy in their writing along with weaving humour and empathy for the characters within the script are evidence that the students were using Costa’s Habits of Mind (Costa and Kallick 2008). As a working group the students took pride in supporting each other to get things done.

## **Student Reflections**

I asked students to write about their experiences as representatives of differing areas of the production. These areas included: music composition, choreography, acting, vocal, stage management and technology.

## **Student Statements – Production 2012**

### **1. Rose – Stage Manager**

*Rose’s statement was sent to me via email.*

Being a part of The Clarity College 2012 Production, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, was honestly one of the best experiences in my life. I have been involved backstage for the past four productions now, and this year was something completely different, in a good way. I have a passion for the workings of the theatre, rather than onstage work, and have always only worked on props and the going ons backstage, always with the same director. So when Gillian Schroeter started working at MCC and became the new teacher in charge of the school musical, I admit, I was apprehensive. I knew how our previous director worked, I worked well with her, and she had given us three of our most successful productions that have ever happened at Clarity. This apprehension grew when it was announced we were going Shakespeare, because we were known for our big musicals, not plays. I talked to many people who were veterans in the production, and we all agreed that Shakespeare was insulting (not because it was Shakespeare, which in fact, I love, but because it was not nearly as hard as we had to do in previous years, and there was no singing, which we are known for). But we heard her out anyway, and when Gillian explained that she wanted to rewrite the play and put her own spin on it, I was intrigued, to say the least. This could get interesting, I remember thinking. Because here was such

a well-known story, and we had a chance to adapt it and make it our own, even add music, if we so wished, and as an avid novelist, a script is something I have always wanted to work on, but I never knew where to start.

So at the notion of changing aspects of the play and making it our own, I was behind it, and I immediately expressed interest in being one of the writers. Workshops started, and about twenty or so of the cast and crew began throwing around ideas, finding ways to make as many roles as possible for the large cast we had, finding ways to make it an intriguing new story. After the ideas were discussed and the writing began, the workshops shrank down considerably, and the script was written with much input by these cast members, but written mainly by Gillian, myself and another student, and the three of us spent quite a lot of our time meeting up and going over what we'd written, as well as the constant emails going on daily. This process seemed to take a LONG time, with the constant changes and tweaks we made, and it perhaps shortened our rehearsing time considerably compared to previous years, but it was worth it because by the end of it, we had a script that we loved and made as much sense as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* can be, given how confusing some aspects of it can be. Songs were also selected to sing, based on the capabilities of the actors, and of course how well they fit with what was going on, and two instrumental songs were composed, and two songs were written to be sung, which I was a part of and I never thought I would be able to do in a high school production, because of how things had previously been done at Clarity College.

I remember that many people had been quite apprehensive about the script and the additional characters being written in, but that all changed when they got the script. There was generally a very positive reaction to the changes and everyone was excited to work on their scenes.

That's something that I remember being a big difference in this year's production compared to others. Generally, the further you go on rehearsing a production, the more tedious it becomes going over and over the same things, especially if you don't like a scene. But because of the fact that we wrote the script, we could change things people didn't like, we could make things easier to understand, and because it was such a fresh new thing, it seemed as if it took longer for people to tire of rehearsals – in fact, it's been over for a month and half and we are missing it, all of us are.

But it wasn't only the fact that we all got along so well, or that some characters were written with a specific actor in mind that makes it hard to let go of, at least for me.

For me, the reason the 2012 Clarity College Production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is hard to let go of is because I had a voice, and it was heard. I've found that the backstage crew is generally overlooked in what they do, and I have made peace with that, but my words were spoken, my words were sung, my words made people laugh, and my words made people sad. Scenes I directed were executed wonderfully and I've heard them be spoken about with praise, and I was heard.

And you can say it was the fact that I volunteered to help write it, that I wanted to direct some scenes I

wrote, that I collaborated with musicians to write some songs, but it's not that.

It's the fact that Gill believed in me enough to let me.

I would have been okay with just doing backstage stuff again, for my final year of school, but Gill made a point of getting people involved in the creation of this masterpiece, which I truly believe it was. Gill got people to WANT to contribute to bringing our production to life, and she is a wonderful director, who really knows how to work with high school students, from year seven to year twelve.

It's a quite commonly held fact in – at least our school – productions that you start in the ensemble, in year seven, eight and nine, with a few exceptions, and you work as a group, not really being known singularly outside of the ensemble, and not having many lines that are exclusively yours, and if so, they are just a walk-on role. This was a commonly held belief. And then you would work your way up into minor roles, secondary roles and then the leads as you got older and if you had enough talent for those kinds of roles. Gill kind of got rid of that idea, that if you were young you didn't get a lot of lines, you didn't get your own role. We created roles for every single one of the cast, and whether they were big roles or small roles, everyone got at least one line to themselves, regardless of their age, which helped each actor develop their character and have a real sense of who they were on stage, even when they weren't talking, just in their body language.

Age doesn't matter, whereas talent does. I know this. Gill knows this. And that was one of the most amazing things about Midsummer, that this was recognised. Gill recognised talent, whether it was acting, singing or dancing, and she let people showcase their talent. Some younger students choreographed dances because they had the talent, which is something that I haven't seen before in a production, usually teachers would choreograph dances. But talent was not wasted this year, and that made this production enchanting to watch.

Gill has helped me realise where I could go with writing and directing, and I hope to pursue it in the future thanks to her guidance. The production has helped me, I have made amazing friends thanks to it, people I wouldn't have really known because of the age differences, and I'm thankful.

I'm not used to people believing in me, in my writing, in my ability to lead others, and I have always been unsure of my talent, but not so much anymore, thanks to Gill and how much she believed in me, which is just an extension on how much she believes in the talent of teenagers and helps them.

I can honestly say it has been a pleasure spending so much of my year on a performance of this magnitude, and I honestly don't know what to do with my life now that it's over, because I'm not over this experience.

I don't think I'll ever be over this experience. (Rose)

## **Analysis – Stage manager**

Initially, I wasn't sure what to think of Rose's comment regarding Shakespeare being an insult and something that was not difficult enough for the students to work on. What she wasn't saying was that

the previous shows had been hard. She speaks of the school productions as being known for singing and big Broadway musicals which said they had not been about the students. Students had been measuring their shows based on how hard they were to accomplish. When Rose heard about the Shakespeare production she immediately thought there would be no singing or dancing. This uncovered my inability to communicate quickly enough that we would still have singing and acting and to be able to be heard for long enough to explain that it would not be the traditional *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

This was the first time I learnt that Rose considered herself to be an 'avid novelist'. The idea that she had not known where to begin with writing a script I learnt very quickly as the writing circle began. Questions, included how to master the physical structure of the script, through to how much information was given to set a scene and the directions of the playwright. Stage directions were often given verbally as ideas and not written down as they were actively workshopped. These became collectively remembered and accessed later in the rehearsal of scenes. The writing process included the evolution of the collaboration to achieve their shared script and process of collaborative writing and all that this brought with it.

Students would discuss the need for a comma or bracket in some depth, at one point they discussed whether or not they should use abbreviated text message language to quicken the process in areas. At one point she stated, "Some things take time, and it is the time spent that make them worth-while. Do we want a show that only we can understand? We have to think about who is going to receive this message from us." Other students responded with, the likes of "OMG, my parents wouldn't have a clue about text message lingo." (Mary) This group decision was a very early understanding from the student cohort that they would make a message for meaning for their projected audience. In writing the script the students began to think and project how their performance might be received by an audience and they made decisions with the audience in mind.

Rose noted that there was less time in rehearsal. In my experience there was approximately five to six weeks longer spent in rehearsal on this project. This was partially because students were used to a much longer rehearsal period and partially my realisation of this. Students were panicked when I initially said that we would have a period of seven to eight weeks in rehearsal. I decided to stretch this out a little so that the students could feel confident that they had enough time to complete a show, given that they didn't know the way I worked.

The writing process undertaken by students lessened the need for the 'tedious rehearsal' time as students identified with characters as they had written and made connections with other characters. Some students knew their lines and characters intimately, while most students knew the entire story

line and where their character fitted into this storyline. This is shown through Rose's comment that they ended up with a script they 'loved.' You cannot love something without investing something in it. They had invested their ideas, discussions and voices, these original aspects of the script hung within a deep-seated memory.

Rose speaks of the script taking 'so LONG' but also states it was worth it. This comment alluded to the idea that when you do invest a lot of time into something that is worthwhile, then it feels good afterwards, so much so that she referred to the script as a 'masterpiece'. The script is very good for a script mostly workshopped and written as a collective. In some ways I can understand that it did feel like a masterpiece for these students who, when they set out to write a script, didn't know where to begin. Not only had they achieved a script, they had achieved an amazing theatre production that they effectively owned and could claim as their own work. Every moment expressed upon stage had been considered by these students. Rose mentions the songs were selected for actors and meaning, she missed that they were also selected for musicians and in some cases where we could not find a song, one was composed and written. The students who wrote or partook in writing the script had to consider the whole picture to develop the stage show that they did.

Rose has understood her experience so deeply that she has drawn comparisons with her previous experiences. At one point she articulates very poignantly, 'But talent wasn't wasted this year.' I don't particularly see this as talent as much as I do drive and potential. Whether a child had talent or not had not registered for me. (By talent, I mean an ability to perform something either miraculously through their natural abilities or a lifetime of hard work learning particular performative skills.) If a child wanted to manage back stage or choreograph a dance then I wanted to ensure they had the opportunity to do so.

Rose uses the language, 'allowed,' as if I had allowed them and in a way it was partially this. However what is underlying this statement is that in previous years they were not allowed. This raised the issue for me that the production in the past for Rose and her peers had very much been structured around what teachers did, the teacher making aesthetic decisions and the students doing what was expected. This idea of the students being, to some degree mute in the making of their own production required questioning, it required further unravelling and I found myself wanting to understand more.

I asked Rose what she had meant by the statement, "Talent was not wasted this year." Which she responded with,

"Oh! Come on Gill, you know what I mean! You had Charli and Kathy choreographing, Kevin composing, us writing, people directing. I mean you even had people organising props lists and stuff. If that was another production it would be,

you need to be at Friday's rehearsal and know your lines! This year it was totally different. The process was a democratic one, where everyone made the choices and everyone could have an opinion (Pearl and Knight 1999). I thought sometimes, just tell them to shut up and listen to you, but you would hate that.' Rose expresses that she felt that the students had been empowered to have a voice in this production. She reiterates this several times with, "I'm not used to people believing in me," and "I had a voice and it was heard." She seemed to have had an overwhelming experience in her final year of secondary school of being listened to. She was listened to by me, her peers, her audience and community.

Rose spoke on behalf of the students to the newspaper and I was taken aback to see this now very confident girl begin to shake. After the phone conversation, with tears in her eyes she said, "Thank you! No-one has ever trusted me enough to do something so important. That was the best feeling ever." I have copied the newspaper review below.

## **PHOTOGRAPH TWO: NEWSPAPER ARTICLE**



For me, the reflection of Rose's experience is touching. She was a year 12 student at the time and took it upon herself to write a reflection of this length promptly sending it through to me via email. From the vague request that was afforded to her, the response was profound, and when I thanked her for the

time she had spent on her writing, she responded with, “No. Thank you! I don’t feel I have even barely written enough to express what this production was for me.” I realised that I had successfully ‘co-participated’ (Lave and Wenger 1991, 21) in Rose’s learning. I had not realised how profound this experience had been for Rose. Was it the ‘real world’ or non-linear ‘intuitive’ learning (Torff and Sternberg 2001, 96) that had taken place or a solid combination of both or perhaps the magic of the theatre? I was soon to understand that I had underestimated the magnitude of experiences represented by the students in their responses. Rose’s final comment in her response was, “I don’t think I’ll ever be over this experience.”

## **1. Emily – Writer/Actor (Transcribed from commentary on a video)**

### **STUDENT STATEMENT – PRODUCTION 2012**

Working with this production has been incredible; it’s been a really great experience. It’s my 3<sup>rd</sup> production, it’s my first time I’ve been involved any more than just in the ensemble. We wrote the production ourselves based off Shakespeare’s original work, which was a lot of fun and it was really good to be able to work through and put in what we wanted in there and to be able to say what we wanted to say with the story but still have a lot of that original vision that Shakespeare put in which really ties together still with our day.

It’s been a lot of fun, I’ve been able to meet people who I would never meet otherwise and have made otherwise and have made really close, good friendships which you don’t always get through school, like meeting people that it would just be impossible to meet and that’s been awesome. I have some, you know new best friends from doing that.

And just, it’s taken – it took a long time to do and you put so much work into it and to see it come out and just be amazing because I like just think that it was, I think that it was incredible. It just feels really good like, it feels like such an immense achievement to be involved with this amazing thing that starts in working stages, and it’s just, it’s just a seed it’s not even a plant yet, it’s just a seed and it grew and it got to be just beautiful – it was, it was incredible. It was such a good experience! I don’t think I have anything else to say.

### **Analysis – Writer.**

## STUDENT STATEMENT – PRODUCTION 2012

Emily speaks of the production as fun and a way of meeting people she otherwise wouldn't have. This affinity to a 'network density' (Maroulis and Louis 2008, 1907) or connectedness with peers explains Emily's positive feelings towards the production. Emily's experience holds much of the same sentiments as Rose's response. Emily, however as an actor states that she had never been considered as anything more than an extra. This relates to a statement made earlier around talent. In her role as Hippolyta she was able to develop this character and find a way to play this woman, this powerful and demanding woman. At times she would say, she is very unlike me and in other ways she is like me. Method acting (Stanislavsky 2008) had played a role in how Emily saw herself as the character, she had thought about the affinity she had with Hippolyta. Emily would try to play her character one way, perhaps loud and demanding and then try to play her as nasty. This experiential learning through performance is similar to Wiley's performative experiential education (Qualters and Wehlburg 2011). Finally she settled on a demurely sarcastic, controlling Hippolyta. Hippolyta was further brought to life after this with her costume, make-up and physicalisation.

Several actors and I decided to meet at a local costume hire venue so that they could all have a say in their costume. Emily, I remember as being particularly amazed at the costumes and the choice available. She started to select items, on her dressing room door there were yellow gowns and pale blue. She had one gown with fragile pink flowers upon the bodice set in a soft pink skirt. She tried these on and I observed as outfit after outfit she would find something wrong. She exited the change rooms feeling that she wouldn't find anything, seeming almost defeated. Then I handed her a dark maroon velvet cape and told her to pull her hair up and look at herself in the mirror as Hippolyta. This suggestion to imagine herself as the character through facial expression was in part, me grasping at straws to find her a costume and appealing to her learning preference of method acting. She announced, "This is it! It's the colour, this is an angry, seething colour. The texture is royal, I love it!" I had just experienced this participant discover for herself the idea that colour can translate mood (Jackson 2014).

Emily discovered too that she had a voice and that she could have a say and like Rose she states that while it took time it was worth it using the analogy, "It's just, it's just a seed it's not even a plant yet, it's just a seed and it grew and it got to be just beautiful – it was, it was incredible." The students began with the seed of Shakespeare and they did make a real and tangible performance from this seed. This beautifully articulate description offered by Emily points to 'story drama' (Schonmann 2011) in that it began with a stimulus and was built upon through work-shopping.

## **2. Kevin Musician/Composer (Transcribed from commentary on a video)**



## STUDENT STATEMENT – PRODUCTION 2012

Hi, I was involved in a production a school production this year, it was called A Midsummer Night's Dream and you know at the start I didn't really want to do it because there's some certain stigma attached to guys who go and do a Broadway production and that's why I've never done productions before, but I went along to a couple of the writing sessions, writing circles or something and you know I found out that we got to write our own, the play or not exactly our own but we wrote it on the basis of Shakespeare's play but we got to stuff around with it a bit and mix it up and change it to how we wanted to adapt it.

I've seen a lot of Broadway productions done by schools and it's not great! But this was really good coz it was all our own stuff and I really like music, I'm into music and so we had a school band to do all the music for it so I got to play all the music for that and I even got to compose a piece for a year 11 dancer to choreograph a dance to. It was just really enjoyable to sit in with the band and just watch the show every night and then to just see the audience enjoying my piece and well later on someone pulled out because they had to go away so I just decided to do the part of Egeus. And it was pretty funny, because I got to sit in the band, where the band sits and then jump on stage play my part, run back. You know no one really noticed, it was not a big deal. That's another advantage of a school production.

It was just a really, well enjoyable to work with the teachers and the students, we all got along really well. And that's about it!

### **Kevin – Analysis.**

Kevin brings the perspective of the musician/actor and makes some very important remarks about the difference between a Broadway production and the authentic style school production. As a male student he felt that he couldn't really be in a production, even though he wanted to – because he didn't want to be perceived as gay. He explained to me, "It's not that I don't like gay people, I do. I just hate being judged. I mean I'm not gay and I really couldn't care what people think but seriously school productions, guys get bagged out something bad. Not with this sort of thing though, this is like you sort of get a following. People came up to me and said, did you jump on stage and far out did you actually write that music?"

Kevin expresses here that he felt his artistic contribution was appreciated by his peers rather than viewed as something only girls or gay guys would engage in. Secondary students are not adults, this is not their chosen career and as teachers we should be aware that they are vulnerable to the types of peer-pressure referred here to by Kevin. Adolescents are developing their sense of identity which 'may be complicated by community beliefs and norms.' (Nash and Whitehead 2014, 99). The

authentic school production allows students as shown here by Kevin to explore their identity without the stereotype attached (Steele 2011).

The possibility that Kevin could be involved in this type of production meant that he could compose a piece of music and see it performed. The possibility of this authentic production had given Kevin a sense of ownership over his work. This was relevant to all of the statements shared. Each student invested in their ownership of the work and understood the work to belong to themselves and their friends (Coleman and Greenwood 2009). Coleman and Greenwood (2009) report that students feel a sense of enthusiasm towards their learning due to the relevance to their everyday lives thus experiencing intense meaning through knowing their learning is applicable.

### **3. Flynn Actor/Director (Taken from a Drama Victoria Conference Presentation)**

#### **STUDENT STATEMENT – PRODUCTION 2012**

Having had the opportunity to perform in our reinterpretation of A Midsommer Night's Dreame and the Broadway Musical Westside Story gave me a unique opportunity to compare the two.

Having been cast as Lieutenant Shcrank in Westside Story I felt that I was immediately limited by the lines prescribed for the character. I found the lines to be inappropriately racist, “#####”

While I have no problem with character acting, I thought for a student-based play that there might be some degree of censoring, if not to make the actors feel a little comfortable for the sake of the audience.

It was big blow to people's self-esteem due to the perfect dancer types getting all lead roles. And people with varied degrees of acting talent were cast in whatever was left. Not to mention that copious amounts of talent were shoved into the chorus, for example the person who played Hippolyta in A Midsommer Night's Dreame was not given any lines and told to stand in the background.

Whereas in a Midsommer Night's Dreame, it meant that everyone involved had their say and some sense of input. Now even though it is long finished I am still experiencing positives from things I have learnt from being in that production such as while at university while studying a creative writing course I was told that I was one of the only students in the course to have found their own creative voice in writing and I link this back to being able to co-write the script with a bunch of friends.

We all created characters that we were all so happy to play and there wasn't an ounce of self-doubt.

In comparison Lt Schrank I'd like to end with an excerpt from a *Midsommer Nichte's Dreame* where Bottom (the character I played) convinces Quince and the other actors why he would be better in every part. (Performs part)

### **Flynn Actor/Director – Analysis.**

Flynn compares his experience with the authentic model of school production to the Broadway model. This piece of reflection comes from a Drama conference presentation where Flynn presented a student's perspective on working on school theatre productions. He indicates that he had every confidence in the part he played in *A Midsommer Nite's Dreame*, when I questioned why he felt this way he commented, "I wasn't made to play something that was horrible, something that while I could access it – I didn't want to. And why do we want to say to audiences that these characters are ok for us to play. I mean Schrank was rank. I would come off stage feeling horrible. When you're an actor you can say no to working on something, why can't you do the same if you're a high school student?" My response, was to tell Flynn that he had raised a very good question. How could I tell him that it might have something to do with his education attempting to mould him to a dominant culture? He went on to state, "Do they really think that if they make us do hypocritical school productions that we will actually conform?" Flynn questioned the idea of conformity through vehicles such as the school productions. He went on to say, "Don't worry Gill you don't have to tell me. I know! I have gone through a freaking heterosexual only school system my entire gay life and I know they all think I am wrong! But guess what I know I am not wrong and even if it did take me until year 12 to come across a teacher who didn't see me as wrong or my beloved production as a way to brain wash me, I still knew deep down that once I got out of school I could be me. You know I see it like you choose to walk in the circles you walk in and I won't have anything to do with most of them after school. God knows how you ended up a teacher in a school." Flynn had just described his understanding of a need for critical pedagogy, he described himself as being marginalised by the very fabric (McLaren and Kincheloe 2007) of the toxic environment that he had been educated in. This insight into the experience of Flynn's dealings with dominant culture in his education and how suppressive it can be is something that not all teachers are privy to or going to have the opportunity to ever become aware of without seeking answers to something that feels wrong as I have done with the production. I question if the production would have felt wrong had I not had the background in my undergraduate Performance Studies course that I did. Would I have gone through a teaching career without questioning what it was this production meant? Would Flynn have found his 'own creative voice' as he refers to in his statement? Perhaps both of us would have perpetuated the dominant culture unquestioningly.

#### **4. Hannah Choreographer (Verbal feedback, transcribed from video).**

## STUDENT STATEMENT – PRODUCTION 2012

I've been dancing since I was tiny. No one has ever asked my opinion on dance. I have danced hundreds of dances, both solo and ensemble. I have been told what to do and I have done it. I guess all of these years and these hundreds of dances have let me to know how to teach others dance. I loved the freedom of dance making. I even enjoy thinking about that person who just can't get their footing right or will no way be able to do the leap or turn that I would like to have in one spot or another. I think about it and then I try to think about how they are thinking and what is stopping their body from doing it and then I try to tell them, explain to them or show it to them and sometimes it just doesn't get through and I have to remember that there was a time when I would not of been able to do it either.

It's my first time getting the chance to make the dances and my first time to meet a person who doesn't just say, well she can't dance make her do something in the background. I didn't know any such type of pedestrian dancing. I liked it though because it means my friends feel like they can dance and even though we still used lots of ballet and stuff we could still include everyone. Otherwise it would just be the ones who have had a lot of dancing backgrounds to get the dancing roles which isn't very fair and I agree with Gill that if you do want to dance then you should have every opportunity to.

I think it sort of also helped that the fairies were characters and so sometimes we could play with that and sometimes the fairy just didn't have to be an amazing ballerina or something. But then if there was something, like if we had a dancer who was able to dance really well then we would find ways for them to be able to dance at their level with everyone else, like they might do a little solo or bit.

I loved just choreographing a dance piece to a piece of music that was written by another person. We just made it up on the spot really. Like I rehearsed it but by the time I performed it we just sort of knew what was coming next and it all just worked. It was cool too, how the story-line was written around the dance and it meant the dance had a real reason to be there. I haven't really felt that as being a priority before. I think that it is because the teacher had made the dance before and that the script was one we just did, not wrote. Now if I was to be told to do the same type of dance with some people missing out because they didn't have dance training or whatever, I would have to say that it isn't really fair. Working on the production this year gave me the idea that dancers could just be mean because they had lots of classes or whatever which made them better somehow and that should not be how it is. I'm not saying that all dancers are like this, because that isn't it, it's more like that when we are doing a production it's like the only ones who can be dancers are the ones who have training. I think obviously that dance training is good, because you can do the moves and everything but it isn't everything too.

Like I remember when we started with the marionette dance and first up we thought that three of us would do it. Imagine if we just did this. If you look at how the dance worked out in the end it was so much better that everyone learnt how to do it. If I couldn't tell them how to do the move, I would show them and if I couldn't still get them to understand sometimes I would do it with them, like I would take their hand and actually move it. They all had different ways of learning the moves. That whole dance was awesome because Karlia and Dayne had written the lyrics and music so it was really cool that so many of us were performing in it. Even when the King was supposed to sing, it worked really well that he talked it in the end. That was one of the best experiences for me for sure, I had fun choreographing it and I even enjoyed teaching it to everyone else.

## **Choreographer-Analysis**

Like Flynn, Hannah expresses the need for a dominant approach to dance in the Broadway model of school production. While Hannah makes links to the authentic model affording opportunities to those students who would otherwise be marginalised due to their lack of dance training. I found the comment about the dancers being 'mean' to be very poignant and questioned what she meant. She explained that dancers would look down on people who didn't have training. Another student who didn't have a great deal of dance training corroborated her explanation, stating, "My town is really bad for it. If you go to one school of dance then you are supposed to be better than anyone else and like if you go to where I go to then you're not a real dancer, because you're not anorexic and stuck up." (Kaylee) This opened a Pandora's Box of dominant dance culture, body image and the fragile state an adolescent's self-image can be in as 'going through puberty can amplify body image concerns.' (Croll 2005, 155) General expectations to be thin with pressure from, 'mass media, family and peers' (Gustafsson 2010, 23) is often enough to cause an adolescent to develop negative self-image issues. The added dance pressure to be thin can further complicate this. While popular dance culture has conflicting views on whether dancers need to be thin, Kaylee understood that dancers who are not thin enough are not taken seriously. I asked Kaylee how she felt about being a dancer in the school production, her answer: "This year?"

"Yes."

"Great, I mean it's obvious I am not a size 10, there is no way I was going to dance last year. At least we had a say this year with our costumes. When Ms. S said about leotards though, I just about choked. I was so relieved when you said leotards weren't the only option. I thought, thank God!"

"So has it more to do with what you're expected to wear?"

“Not really, but far out leotards aren’t for everyone. So yeah, sometimes people don’t want to do dance in production when they know they will have to wear a leotard. Who wants a special costume sewn just for their size cos there aren’t any in existence?!”

I hadn’t considered the stigma attached to dance and costumes and how uncomfortable this could make a student feel, until this point was raised. I realised that we had a variety of bodies and wanted to cater to all students, however it wasn’t until I experienced the resistance to the leotards that Ms. S had promoted, that I realised there was an issue. As teachers we should be aware that our students could be silently suffering in regards to costume and body image. As it turned out for this particular dance, students wore black bike shorts, black singlets and skirts made from rags, made by students and the school’s principal. When I asked Kaylee if she felt comfortable with the costumes, she answered, “Yeah, I mean you have to move so that has to kind of be practical but then you don’t have to have everything show either.” This comment added to the body-image dilemma and the dancer. Kaylee is referring here to the female anatomy showing and again, raises a very good point that girls should not have to be objectified in school productions.

Children performing in school productions are often required to wear skimpy outfits that objectify them for their audience. If I look back to my own experience as a hot box girl in *Guys and Dolls* at the age of sixteen I danced in front of an audience in an underwear costume. Price and Pettijohn reported that Dance attire was found to have negative effects on the self-body image of young dancers (Price and Pettijohn 2006). I have attended school productions where I have felt uncomfortable watching children dressed in highly sexualised costumes performing sexually charged dance moves. There are examples of this that can be found in our media. A recent example was *Star Power Competition’s* televised performance of a group of eight year old girls dancing to Beyoncé’s ‘Run the World (Girls)’ (Levin 2013). If popular culture, including schools is happy to sexually objectify our children on stage for audiences to ogle, what hope do these children have in growing up to be well-balanced women with positive self-images?

I questioned student’s choreography where overly sexualised, to try to begin to understand why and where these ideas for movement came from. Karee commented, “I know it looks sexual but it’s just a really cool move Miss.” I asked what was cool about the move and she replied, “I don’t know, I guess it’s on music and stuff, plus it looks awesome.” I questioned why she thought it looked awesome. Karee replied, “Cos it just does.” The student director with me at the time said, “Well it looks like you’re a dog humping someone’s leg, no offense to you or anything, because I think you are a wicked dancer.” (Zach). I reprimanded Zach stating, we don’t need to place those visuals alongside the dance movement.

Then to my surprise Karee stated, “Yeah, you’re right. It does look pretty slutty.” At this point I questioned what the impact the peer discussion had upon the outcome of this particular move. It took

Zach to paint a vivid picture for Karee to understand how the move could be read for her to admit that the move was “slutty.” I was left wondering if she had actually viewed the movement in this way or had the more sexual audience response forced her to look at this movement from his perspective? I asked Karee if she had thought of the move in the way that Zach had explained it and she admitted she hadn’t but also stated, “I knew it was like sexual and stuff, but most dance is anyway, I don’t see what’s wrong with it.” The normalisation of the objectification of women means that children don’t know when they are being objectified. There’s also the idea that girls will be labelled as ‘slutty’ due to a dance move, whereas a boy might be referred to as a ‘stud’ (if this is the masculine equivalent)?

The idea of the objectification of women also arose when script writing, in particular this was evident in the song performed by the young female lovers, *I Wish This was All But a Dream*, written by student, Ruby. The lyrics state, “I don’t think you realise that I am not just a thing,” this can be viewed in the performance DVD Part 2 5:05. This song marked Helena and Hermia’s realisation that they didn’t need a man in their lives to be happy. At 27.12 we learn that Helena has decided to go back-packing around the world, rather than marry Demetrius or Lysander. The fact that the students addressed and questioned Helena and Hermia’s need for a man to define them in the script, shows that children are capable of seeing this objectification for what it is, just as Zach had questioned the dance move. The questioning of this objectification of women comes from being able to consider and question the script. In a Broadway model school production I am not sure this level of questioning would be commonplace as it is exactly what Broadway seeks to do. In a school context this is no different as schools performing Broadway shows are promoting the dominant culture.

I certainly know that when I was required to wear underwear in my part as a hot-box girl, I did not question it. My mother, who I regard as a feminist, did not question this and the audience did not question the scantily clad teenage girls dancing before them. The reason I did not question my underwear costume was partially due to my age, my need to fit in, to have the perfect body-type and to feel that I was attractive to my audience. I remember my friend, not wanting to try out for the hot-box girls because she was too fat, and when she did try out, she was cast in another part not requiring her to bare as much skin. In hindsight I was conforming to the Broadway model production. Did this affect my self-image? Yes, in hindsight it probably did. Along with many other parts of a girl’s world that require her to be objectified, the Broadway school production can contribute to this unhealthy objectification of young girls.

The reference made to the marionette dance gives an insight into how students had already been indoctrinated into believing that dancers should dance. The indictment that Hannah makes, that her opinion had never been sought when it came to the making of a dance astounded me. Not only had she spent her entire life dancing, she had never been asked what she thought of the movement that she participated in. This indoctrination of a powerless and voiceless dancer led her to the idea that just

three students would do the dance for the marionette song which was a shock to me. It was equally a shock to the students when I disagreed and said all the dancers would learn the choreography. Initially Hannah was concerned that ‘they’ wouldn’t be able to learn it properly or on time. Afterwards though she had learnt the importance of inclusion and saw the benefits. She also talks about how people learn and what she did to help her different learners. In this instance the tutor is the expert and the learners, novices (Wellington 2007, 135). Hannah learnt though to have empathy for her peers and grew as a person in sharing her skills. In the end she was rewarded with the ownership of the finished dance piece. This piece was something that touched me profoundly, the image and gesture of the movement learnt by these empowered dancers (Cruz and Berrol 2004) was an intrinsic example of authentic learning. (*See DVD 01:26:28*)

## **5. Lara Tech (Verbal feedback, transcribed from conversations)**

### **STUDENT STATEMENT – PRODUCTION 2012**

“Is he for real? We’re supposed to light this show with these lights pointing everywhere? Far-out.”

“Problem is, Mr A we don’t want to be electrocuted. I reckon it will be money well-spent.”

“Some good news cast! I have the whole lighting plan written down.”

“I can make it work but, I don’t know how safe it is going to be.”

“Hell, no! You cannot put a cord across the stage like that! If you want it done, get me to do it properly, run it by someone, Gill, me – but don’t just plonk it there for someone to break their neck on it.”

“Ok, I have all of the cues ready and am all over this new desk”

“Shit! Shit! Shit! I’ve lost the lights Gill, do you copy, I’ve lost the lights, let them know to hold that curtain. I’m working on it.” Three seconds later with the problem trouble-shot the lights came up.

“Hell no! He did not just push him on stage! What is going on?”

“Okay, could you get your lines right just once, I have a difficult lighting manoeuvre here, but don’t worry about me!”

“Holy shit! She is so freaking talented.”

“Man, I love sitting up here every night!”

“What’s she doing, where is she going? Hello! I’m on the hundred tonne freaking follow spot, where are you?”



“How do you expect me to light that? Where are you?”

“Don’t forget to turn on your head-set tonight.”

“Can we have a level on the lead here, man we can’t hear her.”

“The microphone is not working, someone back there needs to tell her project, we’re having issues. Did anyone replace the batteries? I’m going down now to trouble-shoot this, stay tuned....Might help if you switch it on! I am gaffer-taping these microphones on, so no other bright spark decides to turn it off. That was fun!”

“This band sound awesome tonight! They’re like pros.”

“You guys are freaking awesome tonight! You are going off! You should see it from up there!”

When presented with a gift for her contribution to the production, Lara exclaimed, “I didn’t do much, played with some switches and lights, it was awesome. Thanks.”

## **Tech-Analysis**

Lara had been a part of the crew since the beginning of the production, coming along to some rehearsals so she could think about how to light the show. She had never worked on lights or sound before. I showed her how to patch lights, rig lights, change a globe, terminology, what colour means and how to work with limited resources. Lara learnt everything very quickly, she understood the Maths behind lighting and while she required some help, she mostly understood what she was doing. She questioned how we made decisions on whose height to focus on in a scene and when she realised that she would have limited control over movement of lights was quite irate due to the work she had invested in a lighting design. We were limited to the movement of just six lights due to the physical impossibility of moving the other fourteen lights. She improvised with floor lights, lamps on set and the free manual use of a spot light. Leading up to the show she was very organised and driven to provide good lighting.

During the shows she operated as if entirely in flow for the duration of each show, any problem was faced head on and solutions were procured along the way. She showed immense responsibility and leadership skills and took her position very seriously. While I could have run the lighting and sound, relinquishing this control was freeing and fulfilling. To see a student execute each queue and troubleshoot and project solutions upon further mishaps was very significant. I learnt that students want this type of responsibility, that they enjoy the responsibility and grow through it. Lara said to me after the final show, “Seriously, thank you Gill, I know I can do anything I put my mind to now! This was freaking unreal.” (Lara)

## **Conclusion**

The student perspectives give us an insight into how the students felt about their work, their achievements and their learning. They indicate that the students learnt through self-directed learning supported by me. Their statements show that they are ‘self-actualised individuals’ (Gibbons 2003, 141) who feel valued and therefore positive about their achievements and abilities to carry out the work expected of them. This encourages self-regulated learning (Edwards 2014) which means students take on the responsibility to complete tasks they are required to carry out and means that they experience success, which empowers these learners to feel that they have control over how they learn. We know adolescents require a sense of autonomy and self determination to be engaged and achieve in a motivated state (McInerney 2013) and these student perspectives in response to the authentic school production show us that their self-esteem is not only intact but high and they do feel a real sense of achievement and empowerment. The Script chapter six that follows is testament to the students ability to produce high quality work when they feel heard and valued.

**(Chapter Six ‘The Script’ is presented in Volume 3 for ease of reading).**

## CHAPTER SEVEN BACKSTAGE

***We don't focus on backstage but it is back stage where we focus.***

*I want to share the smell from the rancid dressing room, the hate in the young girl's heart who wants everything her way or the highway. I want to place on the pedestal the autistic child who played a part so well that he made his audient teachers and family cry and the rest of the audience laugh aloud. I want to break the mould again and throw it away with the mould of the high school production.*

### **Backstage Comments**

Students were invited to write something about their backstage experiences. I provided paper and pencils. These responses were collected by me on the night of the last show. I have typed them as they were written. This gives a sense of the students' voices this is informal writing and I did not want to place emphasis on spelling and grammar.

#### **Backstage Comment One**

*It was probably the most awesome part(y) of the production really. It was like rock climing and just awesome.*

#### **Backstage Comment Two**

*Backstage was where I felt most exciting. It was like I can't wait to even get there and then like all hugs and stuff when your going because your going to miss everone and it made it real hard to sleep thinking about how really great it all was.*

#### **Backstage Comment Three**

*If you are asking about backstage the mess and the smell, well that's another story. But if you're asking about the backstage where people were genuinely having a wonderful time then that is the backstage I will remember, although some peoples farts take the cake.*

#### **Backstage Comment Four**

*Back stage to me was hectic, nervous, support, fun, tears, everything. Imagine if the audience got to see that. They would probably think these kids are totally sycho.*

### **Backstage Comment Five**

*Backstage meant allot of work for I was the props person. Everyone would see me coming and be like, ok I have it her and then I'd take their prop and put it back on the table. I had everything labelled for where it had to go on that table and if I couldn't find something then look out! Heads were going to roll. I didn't miss any cues with props which I can pretty sure say I am proud of it.*

### **Backstage Comment Six**

*One story from backstage started when I couldn't find my dress. We, that is me and some friends looked everywhere for it. I was so worried I was going to get yeeled for it so I kept on avoiding everyone. Then it was time to go on after the first act and my friend told the teacher. She was just like right quick let's make something else, we have about 2 minutes and that is what I wore for all of the rest of each show. It was pretty funny when I think about it.*

### **Backstage Comment Seven**

*Backstage rocks, we would get hot chips if we stayed straight after and just do flips and cartwheels and stuff and joke around. One night I drank 3 cokes and got pretty hyper. It was cool just hanging out.*

### **Backstage Comment Eight**

*Seriously it was freaking cold. On the second night everyone brought their blankets and stuff. After a while it was warm if you went in the junior girls dressing room if you could stand the smell of all of the deoderents and everything.*

### **Backstage Comment Nine**

*Backstage this year, was so much more relaxed than before. For one the stage manager was a student which helped because she wasn't freaking out. Plus we had a much cooler younger teacher out the back too which made things pretty awesome. This year we had a huge space to chill out in which was good. The shows all ran so smooth so the backstage must work when it is more calmer and relaxed.*

### **Backstage Comment 10**

*The makeup was so full on. And I had to change mine so it was pretty stressful. After the first show I was alright because I knew I could do it I was just really focused on what I was doing. The makeup*

*teacher was so nice and helpful to that made a big difference. Our makeup looked so cool, not just the lipstick and eyeshadow and stuff we had tattoos and all sorts on our faces. We designed it to, which made it easier out the back because we knew what we were doing.*

### **Backstage Comment Eleven**

*It was so cold, I nearly died from shaking, then you'd be on stage and hot. No wonder everyone was getting sick, plus we spread the germs between us as you do so it was like the communal cold.*

### **Backstage Comment Twelve**

*It was pretty freaky to start with being out there with practically grown ups and then us. But it was cool that we got the junior girl room, that made it feel comfy. The older girls was so nice though in the end, they gave me lollies and helped to do my hair. I came to be like a bit of the mascot because I was one of the smallest kids. It was pretty awesome.*

### **Backstage Comment Thirteen**

*I am writing this because I haven't got anything better to do, my friends are on stage so will write until they come back. Ok bye.*

### **Backstage Comment Fourteen**

*I hadn't thought about backstage to be totally honest with you. But now that you asked us to write down something if we wanted to I thought, what can I write down? Backstage is where we all come together in the circle and focus on something and show we are all a part of one group. It feels like a big family back here. It's sad it ends tonight. I have been holding back the tears because I know I am going to miss everything.*

### **Backstage Analysis**

The backstage comments compiled give us an insight into the feelings and thoughts that students have about the backstage aspects of the production. After reading these I initially felt very strongly to incorporate the voices from backstage. It seems that when it comes to research **we don't focus on backstage but it is back stage where we focus.** As a teacher most of my focus is upon backstage, while as a director my focus is on stage. My focus has been around the writing and rehearsal process. What happens physically and emotionally backstage though gives us an intimate perspective and understanding of what the students learn through their interactions backstage.

Comments 1 and 2 indicate how profound the backstage experience was for students. It is described as the most exciting place. This is perhaps because the students are working together as a real team who make something real on stage by doing what they do backstage. It's as if backstage is as exhilarating as standing on a cliffs edge, knowing that each step would be meaningful in the success of their school production. The experience of being supported and supporting each other backstage was meaningful and real.

Comment 14 indicates that backstage is indeed where we focus and it is the stuff that makes lasting connections for the students involved. Comment 5 shows the requirement of this student to be focused and for all other students to be focused on what she had to take responsibility for, props. It also shows that the cast backstage were taking students who had positions of responsibility seriously, and respected their fellow students for what they were managing.

Comment 13 is lovely, what it doesn't say draws my attention to what it does say. The student is back there waiting for friends to finish a scene so they can share the backstage moments together. Likewise Comment 7 gives us an insight into how much this student liked 'hanging out' with friends.

Comment 12 gives us an insight into the sense of connectedness regardless of age and also gives an insight into the sense of mentoring from older students and the effect this had on the younger students to see that older students were not scary, but that they actually cared.

Comment 11 and 8 raises the lack of heating issue I touched upon in the Introduction, Chapter One. These comments also raise the idea that the students were communal and that they all got sick and run-down together. These comments also offer a glimpse into how exhausted these students felt after putting in the hours of commitment to the production. Comment 3 demonstrates awareness of the physical smell and close proximity of sharing of these spaces, yet speaks highly of the sense of connectedness triumphing over the smell and conditions backstage.

Comment 10 indicates a positive relationship forged between the 'make-up teacher' and students. It also shows how important it is for the students to feel that they get a say in how their character is physically portrayed.

Comment 9 again reflects these positive relationships forged between teachers and students. It also shows that the student stage manager who had been guided by me had learnt that yelling at people as she had done in the past would only make matters worse. The students learnt that the production was much calmer and relaxed backstage when there was mutual respect and care for each other's feelings. Comment 6 is an excellent example of the resilience that students learnt backstage, it also reflects the positive attitude that had been expected.

Comment 4 is profound. The audience did get to see who the students were in some respects. The show was written by the students and performed by the students. What happened backstage each night was what made the show that was on stage. Although, when I read this I did think to myself what a brilliant idea for an original school production script.

## Shoe Throwing

The shoe throwing grew out of necessity for a swing on set. While writing the script, Flynn suggested a swing for the character of Puck. Stating, “The swing is playful, like Puck. It also signifies that Puck is androgynous and that he/she slips or swings between realms.” Instantly the cast loved the idea of the swing on set for Puck. Leah commented, “Imagine how cool that would be. We could have vines falling from it to make it a part of the forest.” The students went on to add that they would like the seat to be wooden and the rope a natural colour that would blend with the forest. I found myself becoming caught up in the swing idea. It was simple, yet effective. The next day in the staff room, I asked a young wood-work teacher if he could possibly make a swing seat for me. He did so and it was ready for our next rehearsal.

The students instantly flocked to the swing seat and marvelled over the design. I marvelled over their enthusiasm towards a piece of wood with four holes in it. It occurred to me that it wasn’t the wood that captured their imaginations; it was what the wood represented. The swing seat had brought their dream closer to reality. Joanne remarked, “That was fast.” This was followed by a very attention-grabbing comment from Alicia, “That’s what I love about production! You come up with an idea and you don’t just write it down and forget it, you actually make it happen.” I was impressed by this students’ articulation, she hadn’t up to this point had much to say. I asked, “Does that happen elsewhere?” To which she quickly interjected, “What?” I went on to further my question and was spoken over by student, “You know in general, in life, like at school, at home n’ stuff?” (Kaylah) Alicia went on to give the following explanation:

*Like everywhere. At school in class you know like if you are doing a book and the teacher says at the start of the year, for your orals you’ll do a small piece in duo. Then by the time it comes around, they’re too busy to really care and kids start saying I’m not doing that or that they don’t want to take it serious and dress up and everything and then when you do – everyone looks at you like you’re a freak. What really annoys me about it is they still pass. But at home it’s like, my mum will say, this weekend we should go to the movies and walk around the lake or whatever and then she ends up pretty much working all weekend anyway. Or like on Facebook when you’re saying with your friends like let’s do this or like you come up with really cool stuff but you never actually do it and you even kind of know you won’t really. It’s different in the theatre you say you’re going to do it and you do it.*

(Alicia)

### **IMAGE NINE: WORD COLLAGE – AUTHENTIC LEARNING**





## Connections to Authentic Learning.

The school production when delivered as an authentic learning model shares qualities of the Broadway model and yet, differs quite significantly:

**TABLE FOUR: PRODUCTION COMPARISON**

Broadway Model	Authentic Model
<b>Meaningful: If the script is in some way understood as a whole script and students can ask questions about why certain things happen as they do. Students are given the opportunity to explore and understand their character and how it fits with the rest of the script and action.</b>	Meaningful: The script is written by the students for the students. The lines have meaning. Students understand the script; they make decisions that cause the words, actions, set, characters to have meaning within the mis en scene.
<b>Engaging: Students engage with the script to play their part. They engage with each other to interact on stage and</b>	Engaging: Students engage in the script to make meaning and to play their parts. They engage with each other to

<b>backstage.</b>	understand the meaning and convey the meaning through the action.
<b>Real: Students have 'real' experiences of performing a script.</b>	Real: Students have 'real' experiences in writing, designing, performing and reflecting upon their script.
<b>Life: Real life role of actor, singer.</b>	Life: Real life roles taken on by students in all facets of the theatre. Lighting, stage management, choreographer, director, band director, sound technician, costume, prop, set design, administration.
<b>Reflective: Based on teacher feedback during rehearsals.</b>	Reflective: Based on collaborative workshopping and rehearsing.
<b>Ownership: Students are a part of their school show.</b>	Ownership: Students wrote, produced, directed and creatively designed their show.
<b>Creativity: Role playing, dancing, singing.</b>	Creativity: Writing script, lyrics, music, creating choreography and bringing these creative pursuits to life.
<b>Audience: The audience at the end and audience during rehearsals.</b>	Audience: Final audience and students peer audience as each stage is designed. For example showcasing a piece composed by a student musician.
<b>Community: Community involvement supporting the school production.</b>	Community: Community involvement supporting the school production.

The production supporting the community. Performing excerpts of the original script for people living with an intellectual disability and working with these students on their own performance.

**Roles: Taking on roles of creative leadership in the school.**

Roles: Taking on roles of creative leadership in the school. Mentoring younger students. Real life roles.

**Team work: Working as a part of a creative team to perform a theatre production.**

Team work: Understanding the importance of every person involved in the process of bring a theatre production to stage for performance to an audience. Giving the audience consideration within the making.

## The Flower

The production allows students to experience more than a single subject they explore themselves amongst others. Students have opportunities to negotiate and collaborate, they understand everyone's contribution as being unique and important which is a difficult life skill to learn. Students have to look at the bigger picture and to some extent embrace altruism in the process. In the sense that they perform onstage as a huge cohort and each and every member must be there and contribute for the whole massive machine to be manoeuvred. Or to further explain:

On the final evening one of our trees received a text message from a boy 'dropping her' –

Alanah: “Oh my God if Karee doesn't go back on what are we going to do? We can't perform.”

It is here that I must point out that Karee was a flower who would have to say one line. Initially I thought to myself – Oh no why hasn't Alanah learnt that we can improvise and absorb lines, we had done so enough during rehearsal. When I pointed to this as a solution it was only once I heard her response that I realised she had learnt these coping mechanisms on stage, she had learnt even more, she went on to say.

Alanah: “Yeah I know that but it's not the same. It's like she has worked for this and for some idiot (excuse my French) but for some guy to just do that to her and not even think – she's performing tonight, well if she throws it in now – she's not only losing the guy but she's like losing this too. And I reckon that girls shouldn't just let guys do what they want and then get hurt by it.”

Alanah went into the dressing rooms and spoke with her friend, this very upset flower emerged and when I said I was proud of her she smiled and the students began clapping. Karee, I realised had just had an amazing lesson in positive resilience she put other peoples' needs and feelings before her own and I can only derive that she felt empowered. While Alanah had done something else, she had supported her friend, cared that even her small part meant a lot to her and the rest of the show and in that one moment as the students clapped I saw that they had reached a level of camaraderie, the common goal if you like had allowed them to take this cast to a whole new level. The feeling of immense ease and comfort felt in the moments before the curtain opened on the next act was like the ease of a cool breeze at the end of a sweltering hot day. To me the rhythms resounded and the moments peaked a little more that night and I couldn't help but feel that I had witnessed something very profound. In the same breath I heard my voice tell me that I was too exhausted to analyse this. This was something, a beautiful moment that would be spoiled if I were to analyse it!

### **The Incident of the Missing Purple Glitter Pen in the Dressing Room.**

After the first show the make-up teacher asked me into the junior girls' dressing room.

Teacher D: “I'm really sorry to have to ask you, I know how busy you are – but I'm not sure what to do. One of the students' faery purple glitter pen has gone missing.”

At the time I didn't think anything of it. I wasn't too concerned and if you were standing in that dressing room resembling a bomb scene, you wouldn't either. Everything had gone to chaos and I was surprised the purple glitter pen was the only item we couldn't locate. I suggested having the students pick up all of their things and placing them into their bags. All the girls quickly collected items and placed them in their bags. No purple glitter pen was found in the process. The teacher then explained that she suspected that a student had purposely stolen the purple glitter pen and secreted it in her bag.

This was very different to the first statement that we couldn't find the purple glitter pen. I wanted the child to have the benefit of the doubt and be given a chance to set things straight. I spoke to the girl whose purple glitter pen had gone missing. Martha is an intelligent, mature year 7 student.

Martha: "Miss Schroeter I am sure that Kylie has stolen it."

To which I questioned, "How?"

Martha went on to explain that Kylie doesn't have much and she often takes things she wants. The teachers had found her with a student's phone and once she had taken a twenty dollar note. I asked Martha if she thought it was fair to suspect Kylie based on her past behaviours. Martha immediately agreed that this was unfair and stated

Martha: "I really hope she didn't take it. Kylie hasn't got many friends and we had started to like her, doing this production."

It was at this point, I realised much more than finding the purple glitter pen was riding on solving this issue.

Dealing with specific behavioural issues displayed by students while running a production can be both difficult and rewarding. Kylie had many issues within her classes and as expressed by Martha, Kylie was not highly regarded by her peers for these reasons. These are real life experiences that Martha and her friends were dealing with backstage. Kylie's behaviour was not new to them, yet they had seen past this while working on the production and accepted Kylie as their friend. When I questioned Kylie initially, she assured me she hadn't taken the purple glitter pen. However when she was asked to make sure it hadn't fallen into her bag, along with all the other girls in the dressing room, she excitedly exclaimed,

Kylie: "Oh my goodness! It has, I have it, don't worry."

Martha and the other girls grew angry at Kylie and when I asked why,

Martha: "I understand that she has some issues, but surely she can see how nice we've been to her. I mean I feel sorry for her and I get that she doesn't get much stuff, but stealing a purple glitter pen? All that did was stress us out."

I asked Martha why she felt stressed, and she outlined that she was concerned that the purple glitter pen wouldn't be there for the next show when she had to go on stage. I decided to buy another purple glitter pen as a backup for Martha. This purple glitter pen wasn't required however it allowed Martha to relax, knowing that she had a back-up. I also discussed other ways she could have gone about dealing with the issue. The ideas are listed below:

Martha: "I could have just searched her bag, I knew she had it."

When asked why she didn't do this,

Martha: "Well I wouldn't like it if someone did it to me."

Martha: "I could have been more careful with the purple glitter pen."

Here we see that she was taking responsibility for Kylie's actions to a degree.

Martha: "I suppose, what I did – telling a teacher which worked out pretty good."

Here we see her solution where she asked for help in a situation she wasn't sure she could handle.

Martha: "I could have gone off and told everyone!"

I asked her why she hadn't done this and she told me she wasn't that mean or stupid, she also stated,

Martha: "Kylie couldn't help it."

I asked her if she could have helped it, how she would have handled it differently, to which she replied.

Martha: "I still would have asked for help, because that would be pretty nasty if you had no other reason to do it. Knowing that Kylie took the purple glitter pen because she thought it was pretty was ok, like it didn't hurt me because I knew she can't help it. But if someone else did it, it would be to hurt me or to play a mean joke or something, it's just different! When I think about it was pretty lucky Kylie took mine because I know her, if it was one of the other girls then there could have been a problem."

## **The Kiss**

One night immediately before rehearsal as the actors gathered backstage with Rose and Teacher B, as prompt for the rehearsal, Sarah was reading over her script.

Sarah: "What? They have to kiss?"

Flynn: "Dah, we wrote it in!"

Sarah: "Oh, yeah but I forgot."

Cherry: "Well I don't mind. I mean Xavier's not here yet but we can ask him."

Rose: "They have to kiss!"

I firmly responded with, “No they do not have to kiss!” This was a misconception that Rose had picked up from her involvement in previous school productions.

Rose: “What’s the point of having a kiss in there if they don’t kiss?”

To which I responded that no one would be made to kiss another person in the play, if they decided to then that would be up to the two people involved.

Rose: “But we’ve had to kiss in past productions.”

To which I responded that just because it was done before it did not apply this year.

Rose: “Ok what’s your reason then?”

I explained to Rose aside that in the first place as a teacher I could not force two people to kiss. And secondly a kiss can be considered a very intimate action. I asked is it fair to impose that on two people?

Rose: “I don’t get it! It’s ok to impose fighting. Like in the movies, it’s ok for little kids to see fighting and stuff but nothing that leads to sex. That’s the same as this!”

I responded with, “I understand that, however this is not the same. The two Students we are talking about are not professional actors. They are school Students performing in a school production.”

Rose: “Yeah I get it, but it’s going to ruin the show if they don’t!”

I said that I didn’t believe that it would ruin the show and suggested that the kiss be implied.

Rose: “Yes! Brilliant! That’s it! Can I direct that scene?”

Sarah: “I don’t get it?”

Flynn: “You use theatrical conventions to imply that kiss is going to happen.”

Rose went on to direct the scene and the scene changed several times. At one point there was a blackout as they leant in, at another an embrace and each night. When performed it was performed differently. Here we see that students feel they have the right to question why? Rose makes connections to the mainstream movie industry and censorship, only satisfied when offered a solution. Students are explicitly required to think about how they can use the craft that the theatre offers them to problem solve. It was as if Rose had been given a clue to a game and she couldn’t wait to play it.

## The Guys

A conversation in the guy's dressing room.

- Matt: "I wouldn't come in here if I was you Miss. Someone just farted."
- Flynn: "Someone?" (Pointing his finger back at Matt.)
- Roland: "Don't worry Miss, we're all decent! Why do girls always take so long to get ready?"
- Flynn: "That's a bit sexist, don't you think?"
- Roland: "No. Not even you take as long as they do."
- Flynn: "What do you mean, they?"
- Roland: "Girls!"
- Flynn: "So our getting changed rates are based on our gender!?"
- Roland: "Well we're all ready!"
- Flynn: "Heaps of girls are too! Just because some have more stuff for their characters, doesn't mean all women are slower at getting ready."
- Roland: "Whatever - pass the chips!"
- Flynn: "Do you like salt and vinegar?"
- Roland: "I like chips."
- Flynn: "Take the whole bag, I can't stand them."
- Roland: "Thanks man!"

The simplicity of this conversation struck me. These two students had just discussed an equity matter and in the same breath taken to eating chips. There was no real disagreement. Flynn is older than Roland by four years, so age may have played a part – but the informal setting backstage added to the conversation. While Flynn was speaking he was diligently folding costume pieces and hanging them up. He picked up rubbish and placed it in the bin. All the while Roland sat upon the mezzanine level where the costumes are stored with his arms and legs hanging through the barrier.

## Finding Ferns



Bree: "Is this ok?"

Teagan: "What do you mean?"

Bree: "Is this ok for the stage?"

Teagan: "Why do you have to ask?"

Bree: "I'm not sure."

Teagan: "Pretty much any plant will be fine. Right? Miss Schroeter."

I answered yes that anything green would be good, or wood and added that they shouldn't kill any plants.

Teagan: "You greeny! It's for a good cause!"

Bree: "Look what I have!"

Teagan: "Did you just break that off that tree?"

Bree: "No. I didn't I swear, it must have been broken off today by those idiot year 9 boys who hang out here."

Teagan: "No need to swear."

They laughed, we finished gathering up bits of flora and scattered it about the edges of the stage. The response from other students when they saw the stage, proved to be a little overwhelming for Teagan.

Teagan: "Hey! Settle down guys, all we did was bring in dead bits of tree and flowers from the yard. Not a big deal."

Sarah: "But it's so effective!"

Rose: "Wow! This is amazing!"

Bree: "Teagan, Miss and me did it!"

Teagan: "We just picked up some stuff, carried it and threw it about the stage!"

Rose: "That might be what it is for you but for me it is a massive transformation!"

Teagan: "Oh stop! You're making me blush!"

Teagan was always ready to help, with anything and everything. She was supportive of the younger students and showed real leadership qualities. I noticed that she would only involve herself in

informal things where she wouldn't be publicly praised. On the final night when I thanked her for all of her help in front of the audience, she cried and hugged me and cried and thanked me.

She pointed in my direction and clapped. In her small speech she said,

Teagan:                    "I didn't do much. She just caught me doing some stuff. Thanks Schroetes,  
                                 It's been awesome. I never get awards; this box of chocolates is going  
                                 straight to the pool room!

Apart from being very comic, this comment summed Teagan's attitude up perfectly. She considered herself to be an ordinary person, just as the people in *The Castle* (an Australian film) are ordinary Australians. She didn't want to be made a big fuss of, but appreciated the gesture all the same.

## **Finale**

I have offered only snippets of what happened backstage. It is backstage that speaks volumes. Each person heard, was dealing with everyday issues and how best to cope with these. Every person has their own unique experience in which everyone else is invested in. Backstage proved to be an overwhelmingly positive experience for students and staff involved. It is the idea that we all walk the cliffs edge, when we walk it together with precision and calmness we make it together safely to the other side. Of course it takes team work and cooperation, and when someone slips we have to be careful not to let them fall. These are all important life lessons as well as important to being a valuable and valued member of a cast of students tiptoeing across the edge of a cliff that becomes a stage at the end of the night when they all hold hands again to take their final bow. As the show comes to an end, remarkably so does everything relating to the production. As teachers we tend to clean everything up and make it appear as if the show was all just a dream. Although the memories and relationships forged remain and become a part of the fabric of who we are as teachers and who our students are becoming as people.

## CHAPTER EIGHT CONCLUSION

*Slipping beneath the waves of the soft foaming ocean in the midnight sea spray that refreshes every possibility in me is not enough, it's not enough anymore to ride the tumultuous waves that will haunt me next year and the year after, I want the sun to shine and the wind to ease to a cool fresh southerly breeze on a hot afternoon in January so the artiste, the teacher, the colleague, the person I am can feel free to breathe, really breathe.* (Gillian Schroeter)

The final curtain call was applauded and the curtain closed in front of this group of young performers for another year. Already there was a buzz backstage about what they'd write next year. "Let's go solo!" (Erica) The question was posed at this Victorian secondary college:

### *The school production – to be or not to be?*

The students answered this question as the curtain closed and they screamed with exhilaration, they answered with their own voices and creative work. This question deals with the very nomenclature of the school production. Is it the product? Or the production? The authentic model is concerned with production; rather than the polished, measurable product. In considering the production as an opportunity for students to create their own artistic milieu, where their collective imagination is nurtured, allowing the students to make performative texts that resound with their worlds and make meaning for their communities, we consider the possibilities the authentic production offers.

This thesis supports the expedition navigated by these students. Their performance DVD is included in the appendices and referred to in the Script chapter. This thesis is meaningless without each and every student's story within it being heard and seen and felt. The process of developing the performative text that these young amateurs and performers made to resound with who they are, is a talisman for what might be.

### **Student Voice**

The authentic school production is an opportunity for student articulation of their worlds. It invites students to consider the big questions, to interact with their peers and teachers on a meaningful level that requires understanding and respect. It requires students to visualise their words and how they will be understood by their audience. It necessitates students' appropriate use of grammar and the careful choice of words they select. Students learn through listening to other students, they contemplate and experiment with words and actions to make meaning. The shared student voice reached through a performance of this magnitude shifts within the participants their belief in themselves; this is evidenced in the Student Perspectives chapters where we hear students speak of their experiences and

what their individual experience meant to them. In the Back Stage chapter we learn of the comradery of the students and development of individuals socially and the Script and DVD are testament to the worlds that the students explored and the story they tell carries their voices and ideas.

As I was positioned as a 'teacher-as-researcher' I brought with me my prior twelve year's knowledge and experience of working on authentic productions in both Victorian and Tasmanian schools. To bring about change in how students experience and respond with their school productions I needed to first understand the Broadway show and seek an alternative. My theory was that students can have a voice and this voice can be theirs and authentic (May 1993). Twelve years of working on the alternative authentic school productions showed me that students could learn differently through this experience and while the authentic and Broadway production both resulted in theatre shows the processes were different.

Clausen (2009) asserts the Western psyche has decided that the arts are for entertainment purposes and are not academically challenging. It is possible that this psyche is the reason that the school production has not been considered for anything more than a form of entertainment. Yet if mainstream society requires students to develop skills for the work place then the authentic school production process is valuable in offering students autonomy, creativity, collegiality, initiative, problem solving, team work and strong work ethic.

## **Teacher and Student Experiences**

The profundity of student experience surpassed my initial anticipations. Students feel marginalised and carry heavy burdens of self-doubt and anxiety around their ability to have a voice. The thesis uncovers a sense of uncertainty surrounding students when it comes to the responsibility of developing their own performance material. The safety net of the mainstream dominant culture allures them and reassures them, but when taken away amazing momentous triumphs occur. This lack of confidence caused me to question the impact good-willing, yet inexperienced teachers are having upon students when managing school productions. The production educator's experiences documented in the Journal chapter are significant in understanding the day-to-day demands and the expectations and limitations that teachers are faced with. My experience has also been documented throughout the Journal chapter. Perhaps one of the most memorable moments for me was when Teacher A congratulated me, "I didn't see how any of this was going to work. I hadn't trusted students for years. I can see your dream now! You visualised it, when we couldn't and made it happen. Congratulations!" (Teacher A)

Students learn many skills through their experience within the school production and a sense of confidence develops with these skills. These skills include:

## SKILLS

Traditional learning: Writing, reading, listening, contributing, literature, editing, maths, history, the arts, SOSE, technology, information technology.

Relationships: leadership, mentoring, problem solving, social skills, self-reflective skills, empathy, encouragement

Conceptual aspects: imagining a goal and seeing it through to fruition, believing in each other's ideas to find a common goal.

Performance aspects, including: improvisation, performance, dance, choreography, musical practice, musical composition, script writing, publishing, sequencing, rehearsal, comedic timing, character development, role, time and place, space, performative relationships.

Technical aspects of the theatre, including: lighting, sound, arts administration, designing, constructing, sewing, organisation, dramaturgy

And what do we learn from the students? The students teach us that they have a voice and that it should be counted. They teach us about our interactions with them. Meeting them as the facilitator has allowed me to grow from their experiences through autonomy. We see in the Student Perspectives chapter that students have developed self-actualised learning through a sense of autonomy and each student's story tells that they are valued. The students have been supported by good teaching practice that promotes a sense of autonomy and supports students to take on responsibilities so that they can experience success. Their images of self-confidence grew throughout the process; some from an eroded state. Rose states in her written statement that her experience will stay with her forever and it will act as a reminder to her that she is valued.

## **The Benefits**

The edifice of the Australian school theatre production has been called into question with the exploration of an authentic school production in this thesis. In this model of production the students are clearly at the centre, engaged in authentic learning through creative purpose. The authentic school production allows students to feel the freedom to explore their ideas and empowers them to consolidate their thinking through performance making of their creative expression.

Within the process of the authentic school production many positive learning experiences are uncovered.

Connectedness with peers and teachers meaning students feel they belong and from this sense of belonging positive relationships develop and are consolidated. Students experience a sense of connectedness within the school and broader community; school camps, assemblies, community newspapers and radio interviews as well as sharing their performance with their community allow the students to make real and tangible connections.

Thinking skills are called into action as students problem solve and critically assess their world in relation to the script and make meaning for the communication of this script on the stage. Students take on the responsibility of real world tasks such as: writing, directing, choreographing, composing and the technical and backstage aspects, along with performing in a quest to consolidate what they have learnt.

The affective learning that they experience has shown itself to be effective. It is effective in the sense of achievement the students feel when they design a costume or write a line in the script. Learning is effective when a student gains confidence to engage in his English classroom. It is effective when children learn positive modelled behaviours that are fair, calm and thoughtful and that carry empathy along with a sense of belonging. On an individual level it is effective when a student who is otherwise so disengaged by their education that they are at risk in life, shows up to every script writing session and never once misses a rehearsal. The authentic school production is effective in teaching and consolidating real team work that is required of good and compassionate citizens. It reminds teachers that the children they work with are amazing individuals with so much to offer who can be engaged, curious and committed. It does not show prejudice in that all learners and teachers work together regardless of ability and age.

Autonomy in learning became second nature. Students take on the responsibility of their own learning and show enthusiasm in doing so. This is seen throughout the thesis; it is not one specific example.

We see this when the students decide to become involved, their contribution to writing, directing, acting, choreography, technical conception and execution, composing and learning of music and self-reflection and critical reflection of their process.

Freedom to imagine ideas and concepts and see these ideas and concepts through to fruition was well documented throughout the process. This is especially evident when the entire process is looked upon as an entire performance cycle. We see the students begin the script reluctantly, and then embracing this, writing the script, bringing their words to life and performing their work.

The students have a voice and their voice is heard and counted and it means something.

More specifically we see children learn in ways that enable them to make important connections; some poignant examples from the thesis are:

- When Year 12 student, Rose, states that she has never had someone believe in her at school.
- When Flynn realises that his character represents something bigger than just a character and makes profound connections.
- When Emily teaches the other children the importance of looking at the bigger picture when writing a story.
- When Kevin sees his composition transformed through dance.
- When dance students understand that everyone can dance.
- When the angles of lighting make a mathematical concept come into focus.
- When Terry learns fair and reasonable ways to deal with individuals she finds frustrating.
- When a whole group of students can come together and believe in the impossible shoe throwing and support each other to collectively believe and then troubleshoot.
- When the empathy of the whole group manages to encourage the student actor to perform even though she felt terrible because her boyfriend had just broken up with her over the phone.
- When a child living with autism can feel he belongs and expresses himself on stage.
- And when at the end of it all each and every participant, say they will never forget these moments in time, the lessons in life and the connections made.

The authentic school production can be looked upon as a series of nodes and connections. One node alone does not make the connections needed for the authentic school production to work. It is an organic automaton which requires each cog to connect, it is interchangeable and no two productions will ever be the same. The model over the page depicts the nodes and connections for AMSND. It is mindful that the student, teacher and researcher, all are interrelated.

The purple nodes are connected by the school, the teal nodes by the human condition of learning and the blue nodes through research. Together they bring the intricate connections into a movement that requires each node to work and reciprocate. The authentic school production requires each node to work. The ethnodrama or research node can also be considered as reflective practice. In understanding that the organic automaton that is the authentic school production as not only rhizomatic in nature but moveable and malleable we can begin to conceptualise the connections and their importance in enhancing creative reciprocal learning. This intricate human automation that we see in the authentic school production, where human and automation work together to communicate is no different to a culture connected by lessons and movements, reciprocated in time.

These lessons and movements can resemble any element of life, take for example a school. The development of the *mis-en-scene* is a microcosm of life, a looking glass held up to the projected performance of the human interactions that came together to make meaning to result in the performance shared. Left behind is the artefact of the script, an anthropological view of the students' worlds in response to AMSND and their recorded performance. The futures of the students and what they take with them from their experience and how they share their knowledge in their futures continues to reflect upon this process and exploration of the interconnected creative outputs. The teachers take with them the fleeting moments and are reminded of the potential and the reward in their altruistic state. One student is studying writing at university, one paramedicine, another teaches dance, one travels the world, one stays at school another year, one I saw just yesterday as they called my name loud in the street shouting, "Wazup Miss?" regardless of what they are destined for they take with them these lessons and know their voices counted.

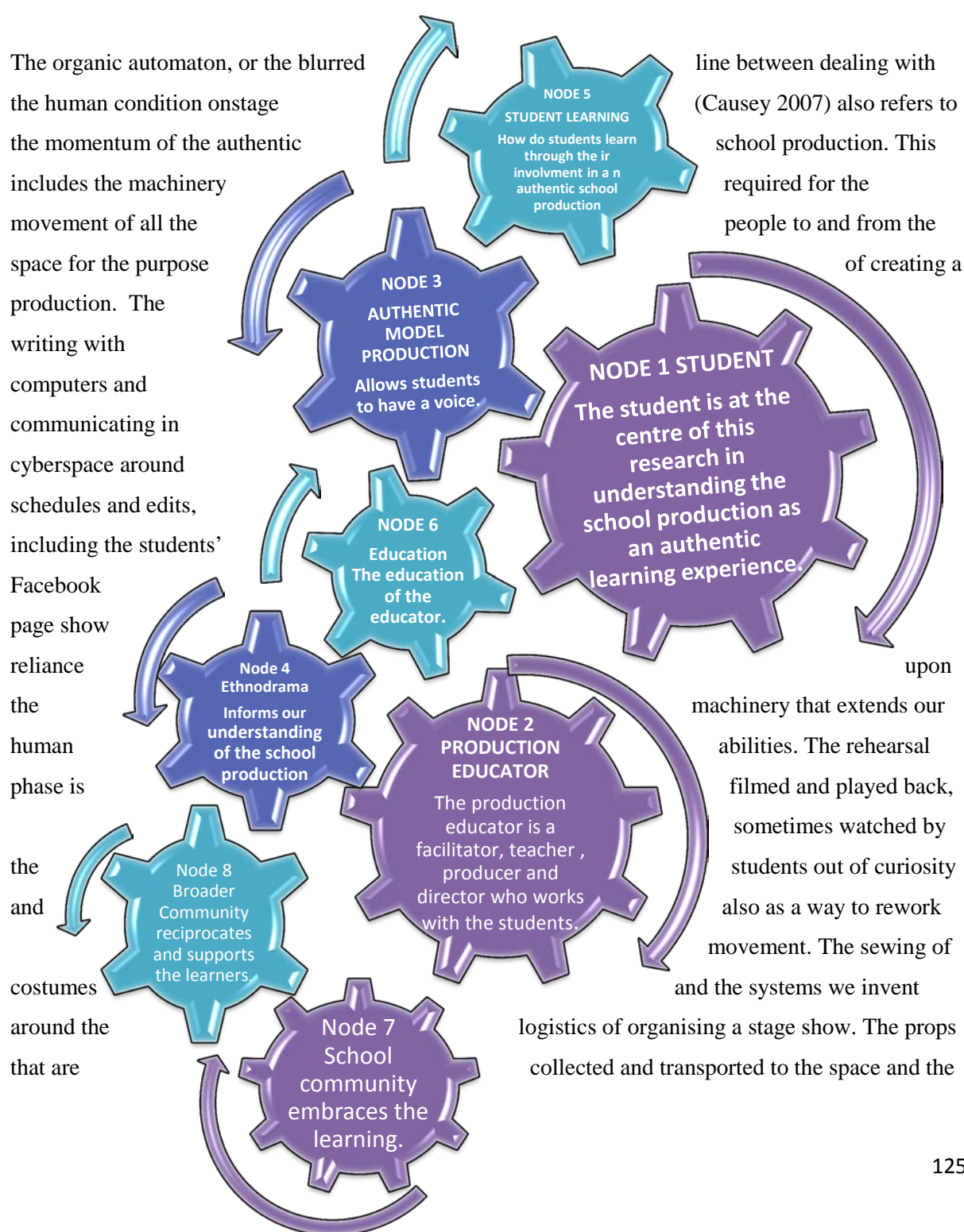
This series of nodes and connections shows that the connections are ever evolving, interchangeable, organic and dynamic. The relationships and sense of connectedness allows students to feel a sense of belonging; a freedom to explore their ideas and to make their ideas tangible. This model of authentic production encourages students to think for themselves. It requires students to collaborate and allows students to experience responsibility. It promotes good relationships and requires the students to behave with empathy. This model requires the educator to relinquish control in favour of collaboration through teaching and modelling.

Trust, the teacher and the students learn to trust, really trust and make meaningful connections. The benefits for the teacher come from a place of altruism, regardless of payment—there is a level of care, understanding and imparting of knowledge that occurs, which goes beyond classroom teaching. The entire time the authentic production requires the teacher to demonstrate behaviours, practice, skill, understanding and it requires the teacher to yield and trust that the students can be trusted and carry real responsibility to create and learn. The benefits for the student are similar to



any authentic learning model, yet there's something more that is almost intangible – it's the creative imagination and seeing what they create brought to life, made real and to have this whole experience to share is profound and rewarding.

**DIAGRAM THREE: NODES AND CONNECTIONS of an authentic school production.**



set that was built using drills and hammers, coming together to work with the words that were written and the actions that are executed. As the whole production is brought together, the momentum of the nodes and connections grows. The work is enhanced by lights and sound. The musicians bring in their instruments and plug them in to amps, the fold back is adjusted and the fine tuning of all the technicalities is brought into organic-automaton synchronization. This culminates in the nodes and connections finely tuning their rehearsed intersections in meaning making that is viewed by an audience and filmed by a camera to produce the automated memory of these moments in time and space.

On another level within the production we see the human become automaton as they perform the marionette dance. This is a glimpse into the students' vision of a blurred line between humanity and automaton and a comment upon the male dehumanisation of the female. When the marionettes were dreamed into reality the conversations supporting this were that Oberon treated women as his toys, he had the strings and pulled them to make them do as he pleased. The play things in this dance piece are human-automaton and the lyrics written by the student express this message.

## **Nomenclature**

The authentic school production offers so much to both student and teacher. It adds to the school's culture. The school becomes a place for students to practise theatre arts. It is a place of apprenticeship and reciprocal artistry development. The school holds the space that in turn holds the students' dreams and ideas. It is within this space that students' interactions with other human beings allows their ideas and dreams come to life. The authentic school production is more than a play or a production it is the energy and willingness of each students' input to create a performance that holds the collectives' voice and ideas.

The nomenclature around this educational performance engine must be examined in understanding the current state of the school production and the possibilities for the future. The school production instantly conjures ideas and familiar ideals – this is seen through the circle and the dot data. It is this familiarity and over exposure with the mainstream that we must question in understanding the nomenclature surrounding the term, school production. The meaning of production is dealing with the processes and methods that we engage with when transforming tangible inputs or ideas to create a product that is sharable. Of course it also has a meaning in business and manufacturing where the product is not just for sharing it is for profit. A Broadway show on Broadway is undeniably about profit. A Broadway school production that uses our children as commodities to produce dominant messages that indoctrinate and disregard what is outdated and flawed seems to be a practice that requires reconsidering. Schools are places of education, where teaching and learning occur.

## **Theoretical Implications**

The theory surrounding the school production is less specific than required to completely formulate an understanding of the school production itself. It requires further understanding of the teacher and student experiences within the authentic model of school production and further positioning within performative educational discourse.

The theoretical framework used in this thesis draws upon educational performative content, curriculum and pedagogy as we see in the Performative Education chapter. The performative content does not offer specific answers for the production in schools. The school production differs to that of Applied Theatre and TiE, as it requires students to be at the centre of the performative work. Yet these two bodies of literature do not specifically deal with the student performer as does the authentic school production. Whereas Drama as a subject in curriculum does deal with the student and their learning of the art form through theatre practitioners such as Boal, Brecht, Artaud, Grotowski, Stanislavski and the teaching of Drama that we've learned from Heathcote, O'Toole, Neelands, O'Connor, Ewing and countless other Drama educators – yet it doesn't necessarily deal with the theatre aspect of the production.

The pedagogy of Drama and theory steeped in curriculum inform our understanding of how the school production can be explored as a discourse. The pedagogy of Drama in education is understood in terms of outcomes as a subject as much as an art form. It is within the rich landscape of drama in education that a transformed school production finds scope to grow. Performative experiences can be 'powerful integrative forces' (Neelands 2009, 175) that allow students to make authentic connections and to learn in meaningful and enriched environments. Whether the outcome of the performative process and product is assessable the real meaning comes from the experience. The knowledge-making involved in an authentic production is less prescribed than that of Drama yet shares the qualities of the art form. The possibilities to draw on students' development in Drama, Dance, English and other easily integrated areas are significant and correlate with the Principles of Learning and Teaching (ACARA 2013).

The prescribed curriculum documents separate the art forms out and place them under the one umbrella, The Arts. The documents stipulate a scope for teaching and understanding the arts. They call for students in the Arts to combine art forms, processes and to involve other learning areas (AACARA 2013) yet the school production which does this on a mass scale has no mention within our curriculum.

## Policy Implications

Currently there is no place for production in the curriculum in most schools. There are several reasons why this might be the case:

- The production is not understood as a culmination of five art forms – The school production is culmination of all 5 art strands, it also integrates literacy and numeracy among other subject areas. It is important for educators to understand the possibilities the authentic production presents to educators and learners.
- Age based learning – is a logistical reason for why the production doesn't fit into the timetabled day of a school. When asking a colleague who is responsible for the timetable, why can't production be offered as a subject within school hours, the answer was, "The fragility of the timetable simply can't cope with varying age levels and sheer numbers of the students who want to be involved." (Mia 2012)
- Subject based learning – Subject-based learning closes down opportunities for integrated learning possibilities such as the school production. While teachers in every classroom try to integrate literacy and numeracy into their daily lessons, models for integration such as the school production could be an excellent working example for teachers to learn from.
- No position for the teacher – currently there is no position for the production educator. Often teachers engage in school productions while teaching fulltime loads, the school production is a powerful learning vehicle that requires consideration of the production educator's skills and experience and the time spent.

This thesis shows that the school production offers an exciting forum for the integration of subjects to culminate in meaningful educational experiences that enhance students' learning. It deserves a place in curriculum, whether this be in the daily running or as an extracurricular learning experience; it requires the attention of education policy makers.

The Journal chapter outlines several very important implications that concern educational policy. At the forefront is the teacher's experience. The teacher experiences shown throughout the Journal chapter offer an insight into their own self-doubt and the underlying inability to trust their students. The notion that some work is too hard for an entire population of students is raised when the idea of engaging a Shakespearean script was raised. A lack of teacher exposure to these texts and a lack of belief in our students creates this idea that whole populations cannot access areas of knowledge. A *Midsommer Nite's Dreame* restored this belief for one teacher. My practices were otherwise considered crazy by many of my colleagues; evidence of this is seen in the Introduction. This teacher experience may have something to do with the position of the production and how it is regarded or disregarded in the educational setting of a school. While school productions are advertised to the community and revered as wonderful experiences, the Performative Education chapter exposes this propaganda tarnished advertising of school productions to their communities. Behind the scenes there is no worth placed upon the process of the school production and the rich experiences of the students and staff members involved. It is important that policy be written to alleviate this discrepancy between the outcome of the school production and the treatment of the staff members who earn these accolades for the school. The possibilities that this could have for the future of learning through participation in a school production are tremendous, and the further implication that good policy could have upon Australian Theatre is only imaginable.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

The problem in the beginning of this project was the resistance to working on an original production. By the end of the project the teachers and students could see the value in this authentic model of production. Overall as an ethnodrama project we see stages of resistance marked by familiarity and group momentum. These stages are followed by navigation, encouragement and support to give the confidence it takes to work on original material. Small successes and setbacks happen along the way as in any school production. The final showing of the students work has a profound effect upon the individual as a part of something bigger and an example of success where they managed to take on responsibility to collaboratively create and present a production of this magnitude. In showing children that they can have a voice in the theatre this will have an effect on the future of Australian theatre.

The authentic production offers possibilities and developments, not only for learning but for the face of Australian theatre content. If we encourage our children to interpret their stories our theatre landscape will evolve.

As cited in the Introduction chapter, Cousin warns,

If we keep students within the confines of the mainstream and the traditional school play, we can only hope that they encounter other theatres forms later on in their lives. If not mainstream theatre will certainly continue to be upheld (Cousins 2010).

The school production as an authentic learning model requires our teachers to be qualified and knowledgeable in the theatre. For this to happen we need to look at not only the time allocation for a production teacher but also how we train a teacher in good theatre practice. How can we train the highly skilled teaching professionals to manage a school production of this scope for the benefits for the students' learning?

In considering a discourse around the school production that compares the divergent models of productions in practice, effective models mindful of potential learning can be achieved. In developing an understanding of the origins and history of the Australian school production we can inform the current school productions and their growth within our schools. This calls for a consistency surrounding the nomenclature of the school production. By consciously examining this immense educational vehicle for the potential it offers we can only then begin to understand it fully, in terms of pedagogy, curriculum and theatre in education discourse.

Rather than disregarding the school production as a bit of fun that is irrelevant and or disconnected to curriculum and student learning and development, we instead must grasp what the school production offers students, teachers and the community. In understanding the connectedness the production offers students and how the interrelationships involved in the nodes and connections required of an authentic production we can begin to make inferences as to why it draws students to school and holds their attention to learn.

Throughout the years while working on this thesis I have distributed circles that required the public to draw a dot – seemingly insignificant dots for an insignificant school production. I collected a significant number of dots, the dots represented those people who I spoke to that felt they understood what a production was. The positioning of the dot represented how much they knew about the school production, the centre being everything. Most of the dots I collected were in the very centre of the circles. One day I hope the dots will migrate to the outer edges of the circle for those who have no education in the performing arts and teaching of it. The time has come for the altruistic production educator to reclaim their knowledge, their skills and stand together in reclaiming the school production as the rich educational experience that it is. I investigated production educator's experiences with a small study of thirty production educators working in Victorian secondary schools; the findings suggested that each educator was required to engage in the production out of an altruistic position. Further investigations are required to fully understand the production educator's experiences.

## **Implications for Future Research into the School Production.**

The off-centred ethnography – This research has strayed from the usual understanding of ethnography. It has considered the experiences, words and ideas of the participants to be the actual ethnodrama. This removes the researcher as observer and places them within the research.

My experience as the production teacher – I have a background in Performance studies, this insight is revealed in the Journal chapter. Therefore the experience I document as a teacher and researcher of the production may be vastly different to those teachers/researchers who have a background in teaching or other areas in education.

Student participants – The students who participated in this project are from a lower socio economic rural setting. This has an effect upon their experience and understanding of the theatre and the way it works. The project was shaped by the ability of the participants' families to support their involvement and the time and dedication students could afford was also a consideration when they had studies and jobs to also contend with.

Teacher participants – The various backgrounds of the teachers involved in this project will vary to other schools. Some of these teachers had only ever taught at this one school. None of the teachers held a degree in any area of performance. The only teacher who had a degree prior to teaching was the make-up teacher. They were all teachers with an interest in the theatre. It should also be noted that all teachers who worked on this project donated their time. This has an effect on how much time a teacher can dedicate to the production.

School based restrictions – The school's support for the production on a monetary and in-kind support has a direct effect upon the process and the product. The limitations experienced were a lack of funding for the students involved. The production, even though it attracted a large number of students, was not equally provided for in the scheme of the whole school. For the sheer hours spent on the school production I was not given adequate time to work on both the production and my other classes. The theatre was in a state of disrepair. Expectations were solidified in what had happened in the past.

Workload – My huge workload meant that I was at times under duress in my dealings with the students and staff. It meant that I could not provide the level of educational opportunities to these students that I might have been able to afford if I had the time to do so.

All of these implications have a silver lining:

- Brad Haseman stated in relation to performative research, 'It is not qualitative research: it is itself' (Haseman 2006, 6). This is performative research within education.

- Without my knowledge and experience in performance I would not have questioned the practice of school productions in the school system.
- By focusing upon one school production it gives us a clear idea of the nuances involved in this production and offers ideas for future research in observing the students and teachers involved. These might include private sector schools, alternative schools and interstate and international experiences.
- The student cross-section involved in data collection deals with students who have little to no understanding of the theatre. The cohort is also considered to struggle. The upside of this was that the students were able to show that they could engage with a Shakespearean script which in the context of the school raised the bar a little.
- The school-based restrictions required me to be resourceful. There was no question for me that we would have a student band and make our own costume and manage all of our own technical aspects. These have all presented opportunities for me to teach students in these specific theatre roles.
- My workload is indicative of the reality of school production teachers whether we work on authentic, Broadway models or alternative models. In understanding what it is that the school production educator does we can begin to understand the learning that occurs.

## Exeunt

Living in the moment whilst engaged in the making of a school production offers an enriched state of engagement and learning. The ephemeral performance of the school production when performed is held in momentous memories of those involved. Like an ephemeral sculpture, the production is created, shown, viewed and falls away. The pieces that remain are those held by each person, these pieces are what they take away from the production - bits of experience and memory.

These bits are entwined in student's lives as creative education, belonging and connection - connection with their world, which allows understanding and conceptualisation; a belonging in their communities and connections with their peers and teachers. As educators we have a responsibility to these learners, we have responsibility for what they take away with them and what they learn along the way. This thesis urges the school production to be: to be more, to mean more, to offer more; more than a product, more than a reproduction of a product. *The School Production – To be or not to be?* is a question worth exploring and the answer is uncovered in these pages, these moments of every student who poured their creative imagination into a unique collaboration that resulted in *A Midsummer Nite's Dreame*. Just as O'Connor used Applied Theatre to mend the torn cloth of dreams for children who survived the New Zealand Earth Quakes (O'Connor 2012) and Robinson cited W.B Yeats when he asked teachers to tread softly on their students' cloth of dreams laid beneath their feet



(Robinson 2009) and Year 12 student Flynn's realisation that Bottom was a weaver of dreams I hope the fabric of this thesis demonstrates the dreams of the children I have worked with,

Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths,  
Enwrought with golden and silver light,  
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths  
Of night and light and the half-light,  
I would spread the cloths under your feet:  
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;  
I have spread my dreams under your feet;  
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

(W.B. Yeats 1899)

We should dare to dream.

**PHOTOGRAPH THREE: CURTAIN CALL**



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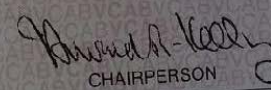


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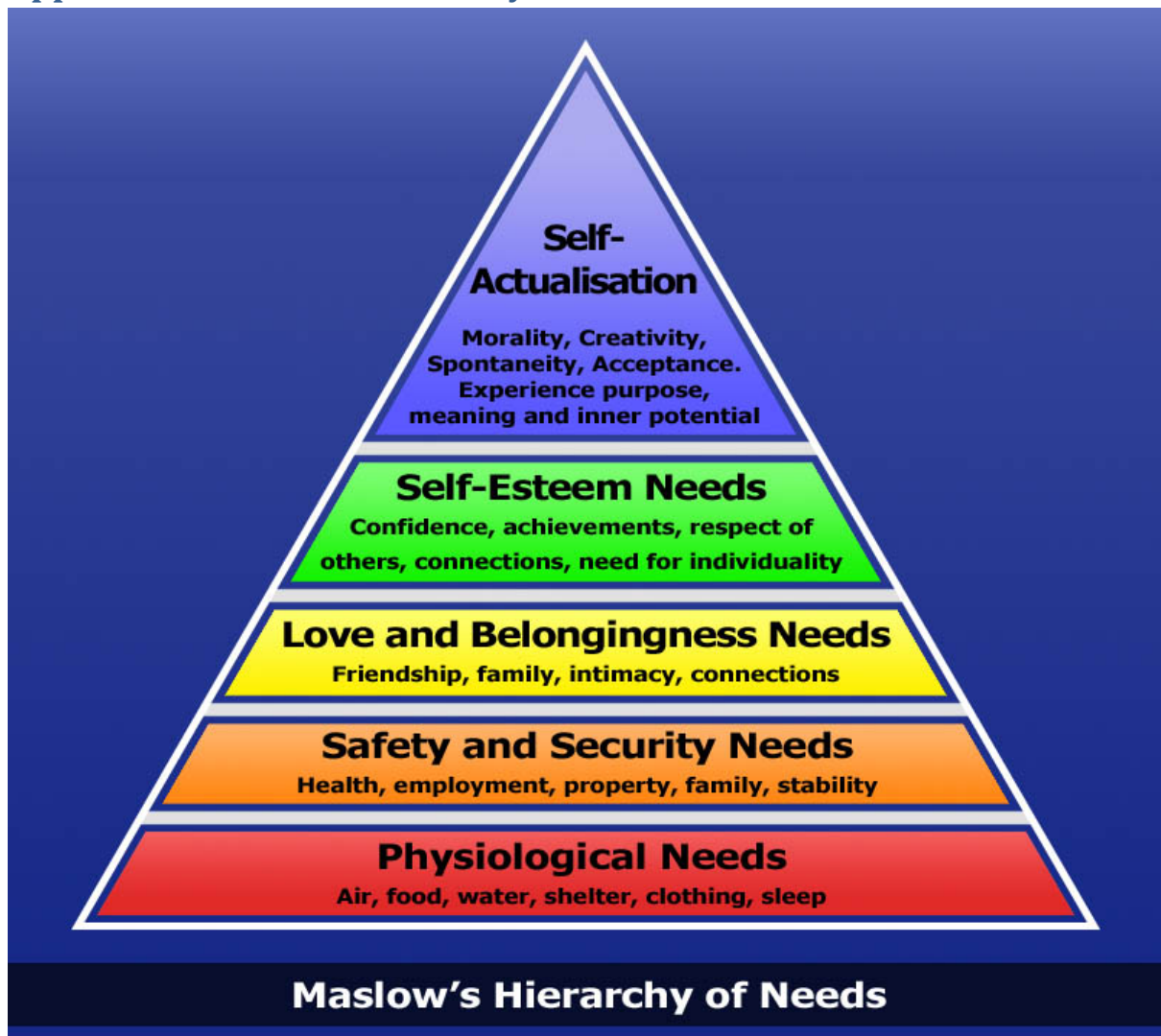
# APPENDIX

## APPENDIX ONE: MY DRAMA REPORT

### Appendix 1 Drama Report:

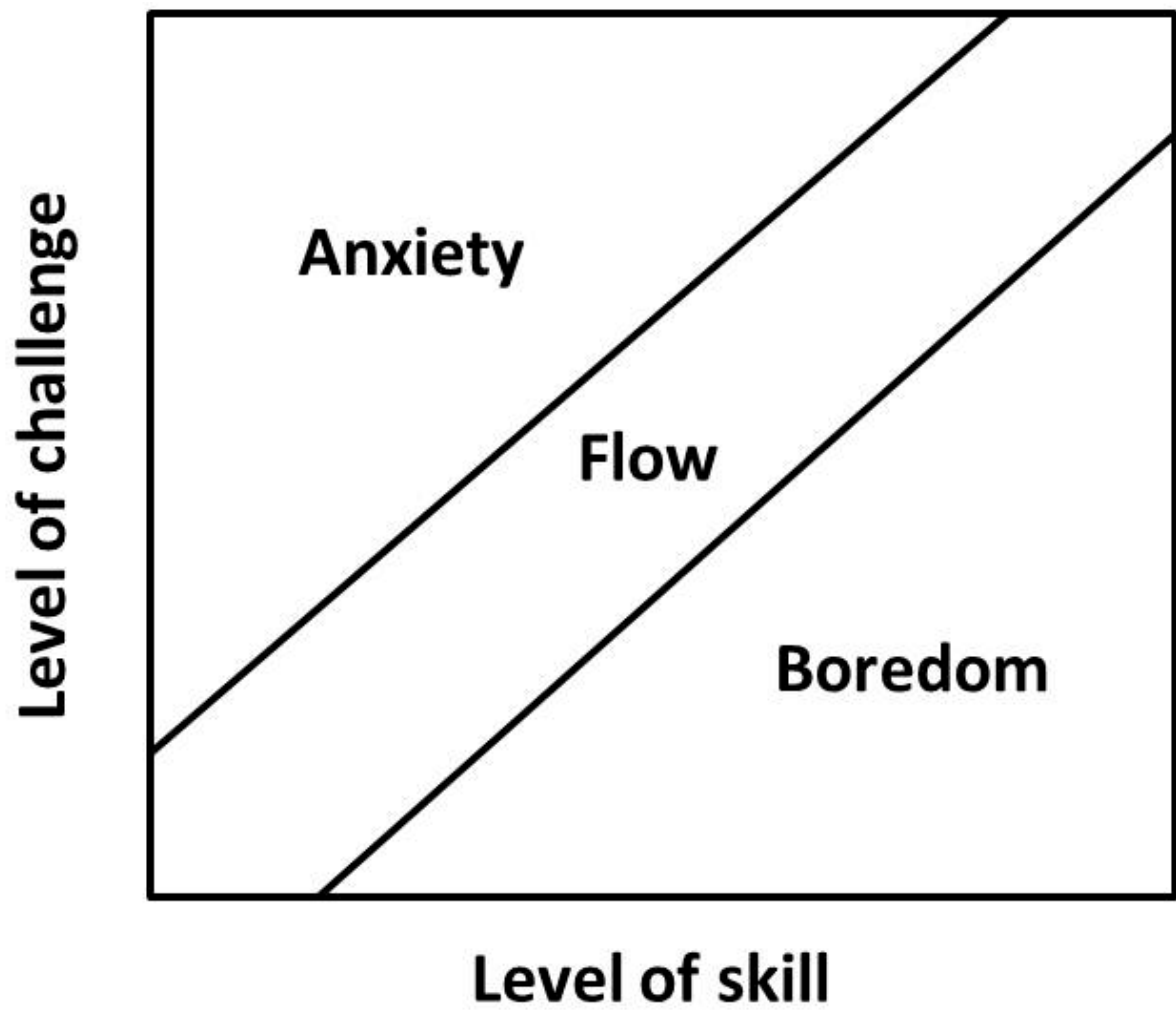
<b>VCAB</b> 	<b>Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board</b>
<b>VCE(HSC) 1991</b>	
DESCRIPTIVE ASSESSMENT TO ACCOMPANY STATEMENT OF RESULTS	
STUDENT NAME MISS GILLIAN LEE SCHROETER DRAMA	STUDENT NUMBER 901507562
<p>Gillian's achievement in Drama this year has been outstanding, demonstrating an ability to work constructively and creatively on all aspects of the course.***</p> <p>Her work in the improvisation unit demonstrated her ability to offer and receive logical character actions and to use role to explore a wide range of themes and situations.***</p> <p>Gillian demonstrated an excellent understanding of the art form in a series of written reviews of live theatre productions. This understanding was further demonstrated in her written evaluations of the working processes.***</p> <p>In her role of "Peter" in "The Golden Age", she showed an ability to achieve a sustained commitment to role. Her performance work was, at all times, well defined and conveyed a series of clear, dramatic images to the audience. Gillian developed her expressive skills to a very high standard and was able to present challenging material with absolute conviction.***</p> <p>Gillian's contributions to the technical area of publicity were excellent. She produced the poster, tickets and programme and all publicity material, completing all tasks without any prompting.***</p> <p>Gillian's monologue was very well written and was performed with a depth of emotion that was very convincing.***</p> <p>Overall, Gillian's positive attitude and her determination to do her very best have enabled her to develop outstanding skills in all areas of the course.***End of Statement.</p>	
<b>D 120034</b>	 CHAIRPERSON
NO ERASURES OR ALTERATIONS	

## Appendix 2 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs:



Taken from: <https://www.google.com.au/search?q=maslow%27s+ierarchy+of+needs&client>

### Appendix 3 Flow State:



Taken from: <https://www.google.com.au/search?q=maslow%27s+ierarchy+of+needs&client>

## Appendix 4 Camp Note – Sample

SHAKESPEARE'S  
*A MIDSUMMA NITE'S DREAM...*



Dear Parent/Guardian,

Your child has expressed their interest in becoming involved in this year's school theatrical production of **A Midsumma Nite's Dream**.

What this means for you?

Your child will be expected to attend after school rehearsals on a **Wednesday** initially from **3:30pm – 5:00pm**.

Your child will be expected to attend some **weekend rehearsals** to be held on a **Sunday**.

Your child will need to attend the **Adekate Production Camp in Creswick** which will be held on **5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> May**. Parents/Guardians will be responsible for transportation of their child to and from the camp. A short showing of the student's work will be presented on the Sunday for parents/guardians.

Costs involved: Camp \$70 Production costs \$30 **TOTAL COST \$100**

It is very important that children are able to attend all rehearsals they are required to attend as the entire cast relies upon a team effort. Students must provide a note explaining in advance if they are to miss a rehearsal.

Schedules will be distributed in the next two weeks and a date set for the production within this. You will be issued with an official note stating costs in the next two weeks. **Please do not pay money to the office prior to this.**

I give permission for my child \_\_\_\_\_, Year \_\_\_\_\_,

To be involved in this year's school production.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (Printed)

Emergency Contact Ph: \_\_\_\_\_

Yours sincerely,

Gillian Schroeter.

(Production Coordinator)

## **Appendix 4.1 Camp Rules:**

### **UC CAMPING PROGRAM STAFF SHALL:**

Be responsible for:

- Ensuring the safe conduct of the activity
- Discipline participants as required to ensure safe conduct of the activity
- Provide the necessary instruction to participants
- Carry out the equipment safety inspection prior to the activity
- Monitor any hazards which may arise during the activity and take appropriate action

### **USER GROUP STAFF SHALL:**

- Support the UC Camping programmer in any disciplinary action
- Assist as required by the specific activity guidelines
- Assist with instruction where possible
- Liaise with the UC Camping programmer throughout the activity
- Remain at the activity until the completion
- Where possible join in the activity

### **STUDENT RULES:**

Respect the camp supervisors and teachers.

Behave safely at all times.

Respect each other.

Complete all camp duties.

Participate in all assigned camp activities.

Keep cabins clean.

Remain in campsite.

Let a teacher know if you will not be where you are scheduled to be.

## Appendix 4.2 Camp Schedule:

### CAMP ADEKATE SCHEDULE

#### Saturday

TIME	ACTIVITY	SPACE	Break down – see key on reverse
9:30 – 10:30	Arrival – room assignment	Administration/Cabins	
10:30 - 12:15	Session One	Rehearsal Space	Gr 1 Hall, Gr2Carpeted Room, Gr3 /Gr4 Dining Room and Lounge Room or outdoors, Gr 5 Chapel, Gr 6?
12:15 – 1:00	Lunch	Dining Room or outdoors	ALL
12:45 – 1:00	Clean up your own lunch free time.	Outdoors	ALL
1:00 – 3:00	Session Two	Rehearsal Space	Gr 1 Hall, Gr2Carpeted Room, Gr3 /Gr4 Dining Room and Lounge Room or outdoors, Gr 5 Chapel, Gr 6?
3:00 – 3:30	Afternoon Tea	Dining Room or outdoors	
3:20 – 3:30	Clean up your own lunch free time.	Kitchen	
3:30 – 5:00	Session Three	Rehearsal Space	Gr 1 Hall, Gr2Carpeted Room, Gr3 /Gr4 Dining Room and Lounge Room or outdoors, Gr 5 Chapel, Gr 6?
5:00 – 6:00	Theatre Sports <b>or</b> Games (You choose) Games people will be the audience later on! Theatre Sports GSC&LFR Games CBA, SBR&CBR	Meet at the Camp fire to break into groups with leaders.	ALL Theatre sports – Hall Games – Oval or in the lounge room.
6:00 – 6:40	Dinner	Dining Room	ALL
6:40 – 7:30	<b>Duty Group A SBR&amp;CBR</b> and shower etc free time. <b>Supervision CBA, GSC&amp;LFR</b>	Showers/Kitchen	ALL
7:30 – 9:00	Theatre Sports Comp / Camp Fire / Singing etc	Hall	ALL PRIZES
9:00 – 10:00	Cabins zzzzzzzzzzzzz	Cabins	ALL
10:00	Lights out at 10 pm	Cabins	ALL



## CAMP ADEKATE SCHEDULE

### Sunday

TIME	ACTIVITY	SPACE	Breakdown – See key on reverse.
8:00 – 9:00	Breakfast <b>Duty Group B GSC&amp;LFR</b>	Administration/Cabins	ALL
9:00 – 10:30	<b>Supervision CBR &amp; CBA</b>	Showers/Kitchen	ALL
9:00 – 10:30	<b>Costumes GSC, LFR &amp; SBR</b>	Hall	Staggered
10:30 - 12:15	Session One	Rehearsal Space	Gr 1 Hall, Gr2Carpeted Room, Gr3 /Gr4 Dining Room and Lounge Room or outdoors, Gr 5 Chapel, Gr 6?
12:15 – 1:00	Lunch	Dining Room or outdoors	ALL
12:45 – 1:00	<b>DUTY GROUP C CBA &amp; GSC</b>	Kitchen	
1:00 – 3:00	Rehearsals prep for performance	Rehearsal Space	Gr 1 Hall, Gr2Carpeted Room, Gr3 /Gr4 Dining Room and Lounge Room or outdoors, Gr 5 Chapel, Gr 6?
3:00 – 3:30	Performance for parents	Hall or outdoors	ALL
3:30	<b>EXIT</b>		ALL

## GROUPS:

### Saturday:

Group 1 – Fire Flies SBR  
Session 1 & 2 (Session 2 Dancers only)  
Wild Faeries Session 3

Group 2 – Singers CBR  
Session 1 Titania and Oberon  
Session 2 Sissia and Dante  
Session 3 Lovers

Group 3 – Scenes GSC  
Session 1 – Actors (Parents)  
planners

### Sunday:

Group 1 – Wild Faeries - All faeries.  
All faeries minus wedding planners.

Group 2 – Singers CBR

Group 3 – Scenes GSC  
Lovers, Titani, Oberon, Sissia and Dante, Actors, wedding

Session 2 – Faery Council  
Session 3 – Wedding Planners

**And forest unless requested by Letecia.**

Group 4 – Scenes LFR  
Session 1 – Lovers  
Session 2 – Titania & Oberon  
Session 3 - Sissia & Dante

Group 4 – Scenes LFR  
Faery Council.

Group 5 – Dance CBA  
Trees.  
Far Away & Inka Sess 1&2  
Session 3 Join Group 3

Group 5 – Costumes CBA / Rehearsal of worked scenes/

**DUTY GROUPS – Clean the kitchen and dining room. Wash, dry and put dishes away, wipe down tables and clean floors.**



# CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

## INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS:

We would like to invite you to be a part of a study into the school production and the benefits of being involved in original school productions and the possible benefits that this involvement may have on a student's creativity development and overall experience of school.

## CERTIFICATION BY SUBJECT

I, "[Click here & type participant's name]"

of "[Click here & type participant's suburb]"

certify that I am the parent/legal guardian of {"participant's name"} and that I give permission for my child to voluntarily participate in the study:

'The School Production - To be or not to be?' being conducted at Victoria University by: Dr. Mary-Rose McLaren, Dr. Anne Harris and Ms. Gillian Schroeter.

I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by:

Gillian Schroeter

and that I freely consent to participation involving the below mentioned procedures:

- Being a part of collaborative creative work including:
- Audition process
- Casting
- Work shopping
- Writing
- Rehearsing
- Performing
- Technical applications involved in theatre
- Being video-taped and photographed
- Reflection in the form of conversations

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way.

I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

Signed:

Date:

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher

Gillian Schroeter

0400135932. If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics & Biosafety Coordinator, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001 phone (03) 9919 4148.

[\*please note: Where the participant/s are aged under 18, separate parental consent is required; where the participant/s are unable to answer for themselves due to mental illness or disability, parental or guardian consent may be required.]



**VICTORIA  
UNIVERSITY**

**A NEW  
SCHOOL OF  
THOUGHT**

17<sup>th</sup> May 2012

Dear Parent/Guardian,

You will notice that your child has brought home notes in regard to research being undertaken on the school production. The research is being completed by me out of my interest in the Performing Arts in schools, in particular the school's annual theatrical production. As it stands the school production is managed in many diverse ways throughout the Australian Curriculum. This study will look at this practice and hopes to inform how better to conduct school productions and their place in the Australian Curriculum.

Your child is invited to take part in the study and the notes handed out explain what this means. I would like to offer two information sessions. The first of which will be held after this Sunday's rehearsal (20<sup>th</sup> May) and the second is to be held after the following Sunday's rehearsal (27<sup>th</sup> May). These information sessions are to inform parents and their children about the research and to answer any questions. I ask that all parents could please attend one of these sessions, prior to signing permission for your child to be involved in this study.

I look forward to meeting with you. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your support with the production thus far. The camp was amazing; it allowed us to get so much work done. It was wonderful to see such a talented group of students forging new friendships and working so positively together.

Kind Regards,

Gillian Schroeter.

## Appendix 6 DVD

## The Flags

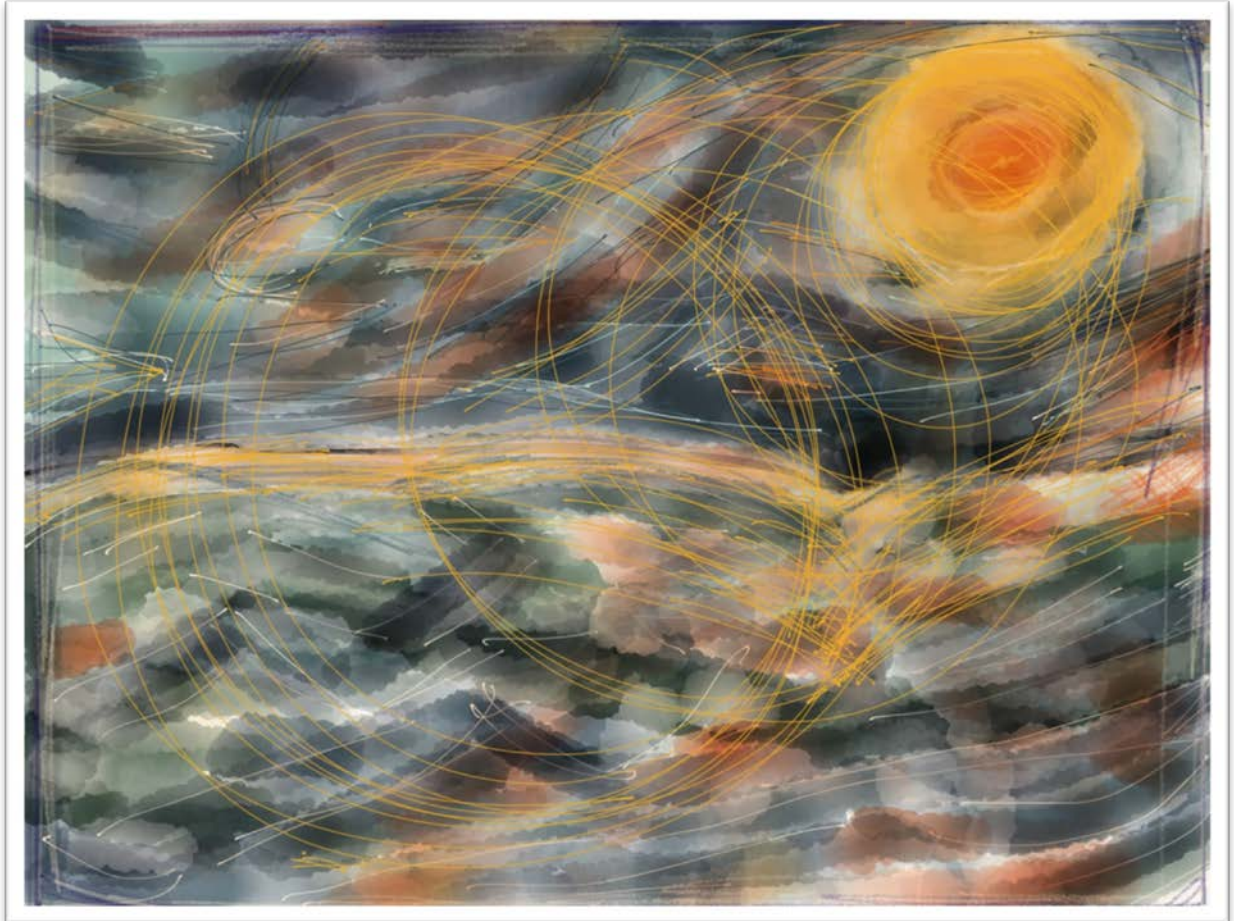
The articles within the envelope (for the hard copy) are considered to be flags that require consideration. The idea of the flags came from Elizabethan theatre where Shakespeare would advertise his plays with a flag upon the Globe Theatre. The flags were colour coded to communicate the type of play that would be showing. These flags too are colour coded based on my aesthetic judgement. My own art work has been chosen by me to advertise each flag. Sometimes information is as we see it or as we find points of articulation with it. Laying out these articles within a dichotomised language order system does not have the required desire that creativity calls for. I want you, the reader to play with the idea of reading these in your order of aesthetic judgement as you engage with the artwork and colours and make your own links to the creative qualities that the authentic school production offers education. The page numbers shown on the digital copy are not relevant for the flags, hence why the flags have been placed after the appendices in the digital copy. Each flag was placed randomly in the order that you find it here in the digital copy or in the envelope that you have.





In a school setting freedom is compromised. Students assign constraints to teachers, who assign these onto Key Learning Area Heads, who assign these onto Leading Teachers who assign these to Assistant Principals, who assign these to the Principal, who assign these to the department and so on and so forth. In the school production, while acting on stage there is no-one to whom an actor can assign constraint. It is not enough to know that our creativity is bound by constraints that are self-imposed to allow us to be freely creative. The obstructions that are in place that hinder our creativity need to be removed (Ackoff 2008).

The tension between constraints and freedom, and the development of personal and social responsibility that emerges from self-imposed constraint is evident in our life in general; students are not immune to this introspection. When we are faced with something we knowingly can't control we establish a set of limitations to outwardly control ourselves, including our responses, reactions and actions. Adolescents need to experience situations where this exercise of constraint can be modelled and practised. In a stage production, unlike a maths task or spelling exercise, the need for self-constraint amongst freedom is endless. In a real life situation, we happily assign our constraints to another, often someone or an organisation that has more responsibility however this does not mean that we have removed the constraints (Ackoff 2008). The authentic school production removes some of the constraints associated with learning.



The extra-curricular authentic school production, along with creative and critical subjects, offers students an experience that deviates from the school subject where, 'the point is to drill students in specific behaviours rather than to engage them in deep, critical reflection about certain ways of being' (Kohn 1997). The authentic production, as opposed to the Broadway model, allows an escape from this idea of drilling students and instead, offers an active space where students can reflect and understand the ways in which they interact with their worlds. In contrast to the school focussing 'on learning as an endeavour in itself, rather than as a means to building social relations and engaging in meaningful activity' (Eckert, Glodman, and Wenger 1997, 2), the authentic school production focuses on the meaningful activity and the connections and learning that come from the supportive and connected atmosphere and the more complex tasks that are required of students to achieve.

A study entitled 'Rich Tasks', which focuses on the relationship between the teacher and learner, encouraged students to solve real world problems through authentic engagement (Sivakumar 2005) just as the authentic production does in this project. If, as Taylor and Parsons suggest, 'student engagement has primarily and historically focused upon increasing achievement, positive behaviours, and a sense of belonging in students so they might remain in school' (Taylor and Parsons 2011, 4), then it makes sense that we examine what the school production has to offer in all of these areas which are inclusive of a well-rounded formative education. The OECD report calls for us to 'capture student performance on more complex tasks, such as problem solving, reasoning, or collaborative work' (Looney 2011, 16). Just as Drama in Education lends itself to formative education, so does the school production when explored as an authentic learning experience. In comparison, the reproduction of a Broadway show is far more summative in nature. It has a defined and reachable result or product. It is measurable. Students' work can be compared to the original show or other reproductions of the show. The representation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* could also be compared to another presentation. However, by removing the onus on the production to be the same or as good as, or even comparable, to another presentation of the script, it allowed for authentic creation and interpretation, unlike a Broadway script where there is no permissible deviation. In a Broadway model production, everything from the students' accents, to their performance, to the way they look can be scrutinised against the original. The Broadway model school production does not consider the marginalised. The best parts are given to the best looking, best singing and best dancing students. The scope for students to explore their pedestrian and embodied possibilities that are inclusive of how the student may look or perceive themselves are lost in the Broadway model show. While there are benefits in the Broadway model show, such as a sense of connectedness and the opportunity for those talented students to excel and exhibit their talents, it has to be said that this style of show not only overlooks the possibility of new stories being told, it overlooks the potential of many students. The following descriptions of school productions were published in the Ballarat media: 'The story of love, revenge and pies, will be told at Her Majesty's Theatre of Ballarat' (News 2013). 'Lucky Stiff was filled with

comedy, singing, dancing and lots of fun. This Production showcased the talents of many of our students from Year 7 to 12' (School 2013, 2). 'The first item on the bill for Term 2 was the production of Little Shop of Horrors, and what a spectacle that was' (Barlow 2013, 17). In contrast, 'this year's college production, A Midsommer Nite's Dreame was a, "Magically, beautiful show," (Audience member). The original Shakespearean script was taken and rewritten by a group of Mount Clear College students from Years 7-12.' (Rose 2012).

See article below:

From these descriptions published on the television news, newsletters and newspapers we can observe two things:

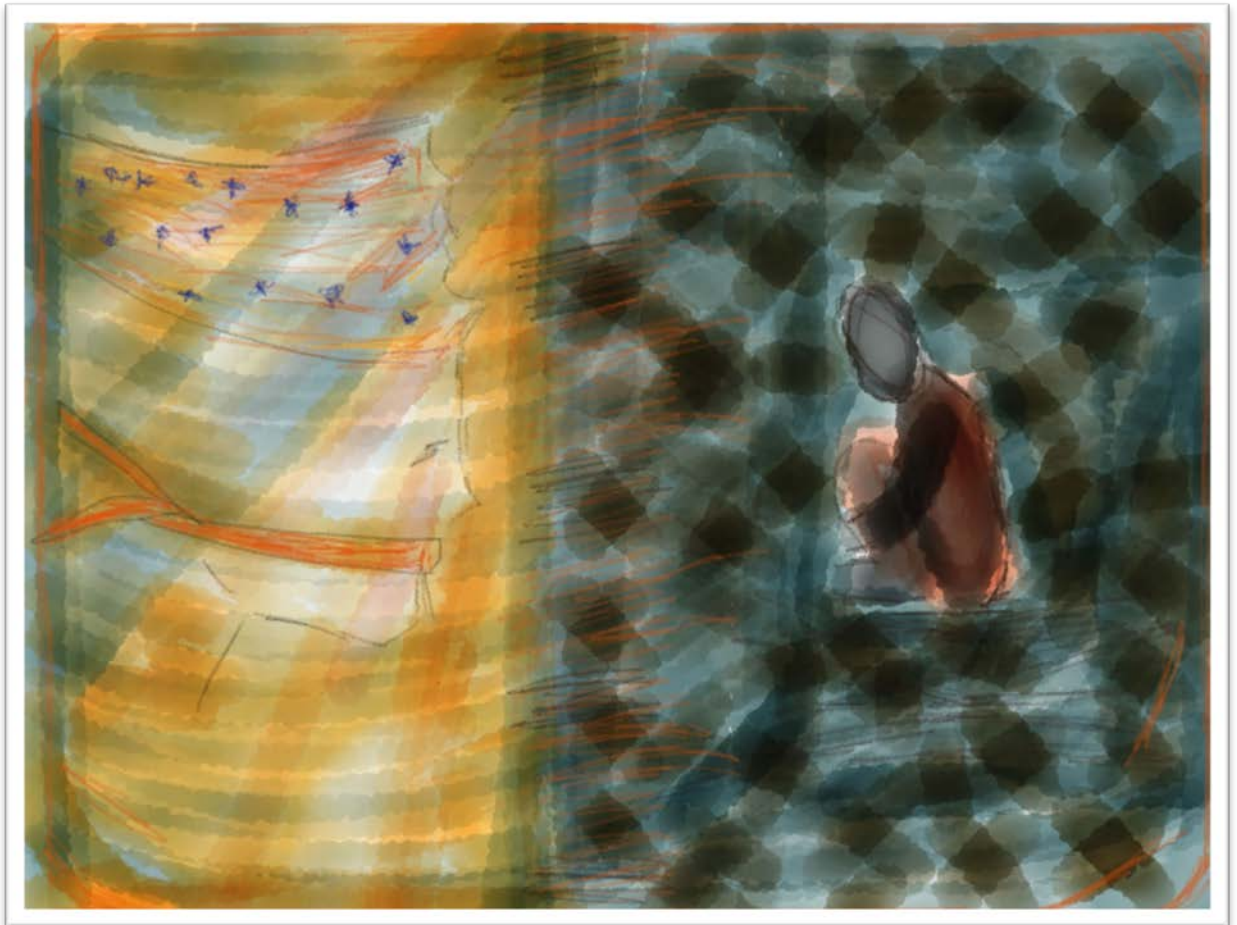
1. Locally, where this project was undertaken, students are engaging in productions with the community's eye watching.
2. Most production snippets advertise in terms of the product. The authentic school production advertisement comments upon the process.

Ewing (Ewing 2011, para.7), 'calls upon Australian governments to invest in high-quality arts education initiatives as well as high-quality research and evaluation of these initiatives.' Just as (McGarry 2011, para.1) recommends,

*Encouraging and helping educators to use playwriting in the classroom is [...] empowering teachers to unleash the artistic voices of America's youth? It takes a dedicated teacher to introduce playwriting into the curriculum, but the rewards are found in every student who finds her/his voice through this unique medium.*

This encouragement of playwriting and offering a forum for young people to articulate their worlds is akin to the Australian authentic school production.





Keeping in mind that, ‘problem solving does not usually begin with a clear statement of the problem,’ (Davidson and Sternberg 2013, 3) we need to work on the process of discovering the problems to be able to work towards solutions.

In order for a reassessment of the school production as a creative endeavour shared by the participants, and emerging from them, our educational constructs in general need to be reconsidered. The polarisation of the school curriculum, that asserts the value of literacy and numeracy, in their most restrictive forms, over all other forms of learning, needs to be readdressed, and the underlying assumptions need to be reviewed in the light of statements about desired outcomes for students in schools. “It would be an irony, and a pity, if creativity turned out to be a casualty of the national curriculum and assessment,” Dr Croke said. “Australia needs to ensure that its teachers, especially its newest ones, are equipped for the challenge of teaching creativity” (Patty 2010). Similarly, the Australia 2020 summit expressed an explicit need for the Arts in our curriculum,

Creativity is central to sustaining and defining the nation, fuelling the imaginations of citizens, nurturing our children and nourishing healthy communities. Creativity is broader than the arts, but the arts are central to creativity (Government 2008, 29).

One of the key ideas from the summit was to overtly link the arts and education:

Mandate creative, visual and performing arts subjects in national curricula with appropriate reporting requirements for schools. Explore new opportunities for extension and development such as Creativity Summer Schools, pre-service and in-service training for teachers ...

There must be a focus on the main art forms – music, dance, drama and the visual arts – as well as general encouragement of creative thinking as a core capacity for all students.’ (Government 2008, 30, 258)

While educators want students to be impassioned by and fulfilled in their education through the Arts, there is still the assumption out there that The Arts, while being positive, are not entirely rational.

Charles Fowler asserts: ‘the arts humanize the curriculum,’ and ‘the arts provide a more comprehensive and insightful education because they invite students to explore the emotional, intuitive, and irrational aspects of life’ (Fowler 1994). Under that description of the ‘irrational aspects of life,’ lurks a misogynistic voice, almost as an undetected undertone. Irigaray (Irigaray and Editor 1991) and Grosz (Grosz 1994) have argued that to be feminine is not to be ‘irrational’. Nonetheless, this perception of the Arts as feminine and ‘irrational’ remains fundamentally within education, and presents the Arts as ‘illogical’. This outdated notion has negative implications upon teachers and students who teach and learn in the Arts. The Arts are marginalised in schools often getting less time and provisions than other more ‘important’ areas.

‘I am happy to announce that the decision was unanimous that we adopt the six periods of English and Mathematics. While this will have an effect on the Arts and Technology subjects it is something that has to be done if we are to achieve the state standards in these two very important areas’ (Parker 2014).

This type of decision is made by schools who struggle to meet goals in numeracy and literacy the casualties of such decisions are the creative or irrational subjects. The problem with this is that when the Arts are taken away it further marginalises students and teachers who have interest invested in the Arts. Students who learn in the Arts are often considered less academic and therefore less important. I have however observed that at three secondary schools where I have worked that the student leaders and high achievers in these schools have all been heavily involved in the Arts and especially in the school production. An extra-curricular activity such as the school production, allows students to be connected, however marginalised they may be due to their interest in the Arts. In my experience the school production is a haven for students who are marginalised in the general school population. “I am sure I would not have survived secondary school had it not been for the school production” (McKenna 2012). I have taught several students who have said similar things with regards to the production, two of whom were in the projects, “It is my escape from how ugly the world is and it’s a place where I can just breathe and be me!” (Flynn 2012) Flynn was marginalised due to his sexuality, as was Scott, “They’re all a pack of homophobic pigs, I can’t wait to get out of this place. This is what I live for, without this I would go insane” (Scott 2010).

‘Classrooms and schools represent a “culture of power” to the extent that they mirror unjust social relations existing in the larger society’ (Applebaum 2003, 151). Robinson explains that those students who ‘excel at marginalised subjects never really feel anything other than marginalised’ (Robinson 2009). Our education system is failing these students at a rapid rate (Teese 2010).





The sharing of a language as central helps students turn implicit meaning-making into explicit knowledge (Marsick 2009), through collaborative creative making that is tacit. Writing authentic scripts that have articulations with students' worlds rather than performing outdated notions of American culture, encourages students to engage with the text that is made and express themselves through writing and performance. The idea that school productions are often Broadway musicals is indicative of mainstream Australian culture where we see dominant American culture portrayed in mainstream theatres around Australia such as *Wicked* (Platt, Platt, and Stone 2014), *The Lion King* (Disney 2014) and *The King and I* (Morgan 2014) all showing in Melbourne in 2014 at the Regent Theatre. Some alternatives to this type of theatre that give a dominant American view of the world are: Theatre of Identity, Theatre of Protest and Cross-cultural Theatre (Downs and Ramsey 2012).

It is not how contemporary a play is, but the content of that play and the ways in which it is accessible to young people, the universality of AMSND allowed students to engage in making their own version. Shakespearean scripts are accessible to students because he was himself innovative as a writer through his consideration for the use of space, his unique character developments and the voice he developed through the creation of scripts for the theatre (Ireson 1920), which is what the authentic school production requires of students. In contrast, schools all over Australia design their school production based on unquestioning repetition of tried and true texts, for whatever reason (be it time constraints, following what is usually considered the norm, easier to work to a mould that people know so as not to be questioned by parents, perpetuating mainstream dominant culture, a fear of the marginalised voice) which allow little space for the student's voice to be heard. Why is it that this is accepted practice for Productions in our schools? Earlier in this chapter I touch on this very issue, complexities of this are later explored in the Journal chapter. Perhaps it has to do with content and the safety of what is to be performed or as explained by Cousins,

‘Unfortunately, even the drama teachers who wish to transcend mainstream, commercial theatre are often restricted by principals, parents and/or the community at large. ... No one could possibly object to the standard musical. It validates the way we live as opposed to challenging it. It is a safe choice’ (Cousins 2010, 91).

In contrast with the safe reproduced mainstream theatre, when students collaborate to create a production it, ‘gives voice to the voiceless’ (Stephens, J. 2012, 73). Authentic learning gives a benchmark, a recipe for success in something that can be a mandala of impermanence and authentic learning.

Where traditionally the school production can be seen to uphold dominant culture the authentic school production allows for more, it allows for the voice, the perspective of the student to be heard and for connection in the making.



Unfortunately the reality is that students do not have the opportunity to find their voice in the school theatre because productions are often reconstituted Broadway musicals. Originally such shows would have been performed by incredibly skilled actors, dancers and singers who have spent years of rigorous training, learning their skills. They require performers who are confident as actors, dancers and singers, and often include four and five part harmonies, and stage directions such as 'magically disappears'. These shows are simply unattainable (due to the comparison to professional shows and the fact the parts were written for highly skilled and trained actors, singers, dancers and musicians) for many of our students; rather than support learning in creativity and performance, they highlight students' as yet undeveloped skills, and impose a derivative process, rather than a creative process. Too often they prove meaningless and thus interfere with the positive processes that can come from a more organic approach to the production. Yet the high school theatre production (and in particular the Australian production) continues to stagnate, using scripts, texts and performative materials that are heavily based in American culture that are considered a 'safe' option for teenagers. This reiterates the point that these school productions are safe because they are well known, often loved, and audiences like to sing along to the tunes and watch something that is familiar.





Often, the traditional school production emulates popular Broadway culture. However, the content of the Broadway model of school production does not necessarily uphold the expectations and values of the Australian curriculum documents Cousin asserts, ‘the traditional school play not only upholds mainstream culture through patriotism and exclusion of minority groups, but also upholds mainstream theatre’ (Cousins 2010, 89). The idea that a school production’s content depends on the audience’s recognition of that show as something familiar is problematic and it should be noted, that this also occurs in the general mainstream population. Reducing students’ educational experience to popular and well-known production texts has two very dire repercussions for students. The first is that they don’t fully get to engage with the material, and the second being that foreign and outdated concepts are being emulated. For example the production of *Guys and Dolls* (which has been shown in mainstream society this year in Brisbane and advertised as, ‘one of the most popular Broadway musicals of all time’ (Liveguide 2014)) that I performed in as a high school student, is, as a text, racist, sexist and promotes gambling. As a student I did not pick up on this. At no point was I required to understand what I was saying or performing. I shudder with dread now at the thought of being a “HOT BOX GIRL”.

While I enjoyed the disjointed sense of connectedness, which is the only way I can explain my experience where, I enjoyed the connection with my peers, but never really understood the whole story of *Guys and Dolls* nor my character’s inherent sexual innuendo. I did not at any point engage in any depth with the material that I was performing. This is a well-known play and parents enjoyed the show. I suppose I want the school production to be more. I am questioning why shouldn’t it be more? If students are going to spend half of their year working on a show then shouldn’t they at least engage with the material, or have a say where the content is concerned? I wonder if the Broadway model of school production may be stealing opportunities from learners to experience authentic learning. The authentic model of school production offers not only connectedness but a way to engage in creative learning that showcases otherwise marginalised voices.





Just as Denton was seen as a ‘red flag’ within an academic institution I am thus within a secondary school institution. Denton is an academic, a poet and woman who has heart and gravity. My concern for my students, like hers is, ‘Are they soon to be at risk—stifled, grounded at the beginning of flight?’ (Denton 2011, 86). If our students and teachers engage in the production as a reproduction rather than an organic learning and making process then students’ creative growth is at definite risk of being stifled.

This limited view of what the school production can be is further explained by Lovat’s image of the limited classroom and is reinforced in chapter one of David Grote’s, ‘A drama director’s guide’ which is concerned with how teachers should run school productions (Grote 1997). Grote fails to mention the possibility of writing original material and happily encourages educators to try to ‘get away’ with what they can as far as content and casting, noting that ‘students [are not] right for most parts anyway, due to their age’ (Grote, 1997, 117). Similarly, ‘Dramactive’, a well-respected and widely used text for secondary Drama teachers, offers a chapter on Theatre which works on assumptions that have not been critically reviewed. The authors explain, ‘We are fortunate in Australia to have many artists and companies specifically creating work for young people’ (Stinton and Wall 2005, 131). While this is no doubt true, as secondary educators we need to recognise students as being equipped to make their own work, for and by young people. It is evident that we need to listen to the voices of our youth instead of telling them what we think they need to hear:

‘Modern instructional advice encourages us to not just tell our students what we want them to know, but to listen to them carefully. This helps us to find out “where they are” in order to better understand what tasks to offer them that might help them learn’ (Scherr and Redish 2005, 41).

**VOLUME 2**

**JOURNAL**

## CHAPTER FOUR JOURNAL

*If you cannot increase reflective power in people, you might as well NOT teach, because reflection is the only thing in the long run that teaches anybody. Reflection is what makes the knowing something that can be touched on and assimilated for further use.*

~Dorothy Heathcote~

*My heart has held its breath and skipped a beat and fought with the red tape of the school's broken system of institutionalisation. I have longed to turn my back on all of that, but something draws me back like a moth to a flame. I find myself on the fringe of teaching, the production marginalised, teetering between extracurricular and obsolescence and the real casualty of this debacle is the student, the young writer, composer, director, costume designer, choreographer, sound and light extraordinaire, the actor, the dancer, the vocalist, the backstage help and the best friend who was too scared to join us this year but next year, "I will," the curtain opener and the curtain closer. I would like to play the music of a 13 year old boy for all to hear, so that you could understand why I do what I do, why I feel with every cell of my being that this moment will become a memory of forever in the lives of those children. I want this memory to find its place in curriculum. And the only way this will happen is if all the memories of those who have experienced a school production, and those who sat in the audience and those who spent countless hours of their time pulling it all together with a thin thread, tying it with the frayed edges, to make it happen in a school hall, a demountable, a town stage, the local theatre year after year, after year, after year, knowing in their heart that this would make the difference, this would bridge the ever growing gap.*

### Fore note

When embarking upon this research, I immediately decided to keep a journal. This was not necessarily a conscious decision as much as it was an informed decision. It marked behaviour I have grown accustomed to. I have kept journals of my work since being in an undergraduate degree in Performance Studies. For each piece of creative work I have engaged in since, I have kept a journal. Journals have allowed me to be in the moment, creating at one with the content. When the journal is left in time, something happens to the journal creator within – a sense of deep reflection. The creator keeps moving and shifting, their work continues to be considered, and the manifestation of what has been recorded, and what is later considered, collude to make meaning within the creator. My journal is both an initial extension of my experience and a reflection; furthermore it is an analysis of my work and my understanding of the world in which I find myself.

My reflective journal is Autoethnographic in nature. It is informed by Saldana's 'Analytic Memo Writing' (Saldana 2013, 43). The initial journal entries were set out with the respective dates allowing for reflections at a later date and later still an analysis of the whole process.

You could say my journal became an Analytic Memo when I analysed what it was I reflected upon. The initial journal positioned me as the vulnerable human that required explanation within the research. For me this was akin to hot cognition: I was at times emotionally involved or felt I was under attack. At these times what I expressed was the colour of emotion in what I was experiencing. The reflection upon this colour was a cooling down, and the analysis, cold cognition. Mark Minchinton's journal in *Delirious* (Minchinton 1994) influenced my final journal layout. The three columns I have used represent time and signify stages of cognition. I have included all three stages as 'neuro-science evidence suggests that sound and rational decision making, in fact, depends on prior accurate emotional processing' (Bechara and Damsio 2004, 336). Through processing my experiences, including my initial reaction/responses an authentic (real lived experience) insight is provided into the position of the teacher within the management of a school production.

I chose specific examples from chronologically ordered entries in my journal that would reflect the over-all process of running an authentic-modelled school production. The journal is placed within the thesis quite early on, as it offers an insight into what I mean by the authentic model of production based on the discussion around the Broadway model production and my response to this model. The authentic model of production requires students to be engaged, independent and committed learners. It requires students to take responsibility and to work collaboratively and respectfully. The Broadway model on the other hand requires that students learn and perform a script under the tutelage of their teacher(s). My journal discusses the Broadway model, and my decisions around an authentic model.

The coding used in this journal, as mentioned in my Methodology, is:

Teachers have been labelled with a letter – for example, Teacher A. This allows anonymity and removes gender. I will not be discussing any relationships in regards to gender and all teachers were assured that any reference to them would be anonymous. Students on the other hand have been given pseudonyms to allow for a more narrative feel to the discussion. Gender is not hidden. Students asked me if their real names could be used and when told that this was not possible, requested that they choose their own names.

## Journal - Systematised Introduction

### Personal reflective journal – Hot Cognition

*Why the Broadway musical? This will kill me! This desperation for a Broadway show. I have had students ask me for Grease, Mama Mia, Oklahoma, one girl wanted to do Guys and Dolls because her mum was in it. I was in the same production of Guys and Dolls with her mum. That production is a moment in time that leads me to question the Broadway model. I feel sad, empty and tired. I don't know if I have it in me to fight the way I run a school production at yet another school. Why can't my experience be enough? Why, does it seem that I am the only teacher whose every decision and students' work must come under scrutiny? I mean even when the students sit an English or Maths test with publicly released results such as the*

**Journal Notes based on Hot Cognition usually one week after journal entry was written. This can also be looked upon as Autoethnography.**

**When the school and broader community expected homogenisation of the school production, another reproduction of an acceptably familiar musical script with the participants and the audiences wanting to be lulled into the accustomed sense of security, I realised I would have a struggle on my hands before I even began.**

**Replication seemed a definite measure of success, I need to understand where this need to measure success comes from, is it a fear of failure. Given that this is a public display there is a heightened concern about**

**Analysis – When writing the thesis.**

*Australian ICAS tests teachers get to select only the best students. Not me. I get any student who wants to be an actor, singer or dancer no matter how tone deaf or uncoordinated and I love this, I love these kids who still feel that they can dream. I just hate that everyone from students, to teachers, principals and parents all seem to have an opinion.*

*The lady at the grocery shop said, "Are you the production teacher? We always come to the shows, what are you doing this year? I hope it's Annie I love Annie and you have a student who I think would play the part really well, she has bright red curly hair, last year she sang in Chicago, what was her name? You know the one..." (Shelley 2012).*

*In fact I do not know her name or her character's name and I don't want*

**succeeding in the production that is undertaken. A measured success with a recipe must be seen as a safer option. My suggestion of an authentic school production is scary; it's asking students to put themselves out there in a way that they are not accustomed to.**

**When I suggested an original show, it seemed unthinkable.**

**"We have to do a Broadway show, we rock at them. We should do Mama Mia and we could get the video and watch and then we would know what to do." (Kerry)**

**The students reflect that they have had success 'doing' Broadway shows; therefore they are sure they can do well if they follow this pattern.**

*you to tell me what show you think I  
should do! Just because a child looks  
like a character is not a good reason  
to do a show! It's like community  
members fancy themselves as casting  
directors based on students' looks  
and a performance; surely there is  
more to theatre than what is skin  
deep.*

I caught up with the grocery shop owner after the school production, she said, "I was amazed at this year's show. It was definitely the best one they've ever done. I was shocked that the kids wrote it. I wasn't thinking I'd really understand the Shakespeare but you know I really did and it was great. I tell you I laughed and cried. It was like going to a real professional show" (Shelley 2012).

In hindsight the grocery shop owner was not yearning for a Broadway show, she was engaging in familiar banter about something she loved. This opened my eyes to an assumption I had made. In

**I have to find something that**

**will allow students to feel safe yet experience an authentic model of school production, where they can collaboratively write the script and make decisions.**

**In some ways when I think about it, the community ownership of the production is great and it gives my research all the more reason for being. I wonder what it is about the production that has the grocery shop owner interested in the students' work.**

**What does it mean to the learner if adults in their community have a vested interest in their performance?**

Autoethnography at times we may have epiphanies (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2011, para 6) and this was definitely one – just because people are asking for a Broadway style show, does not necessarily equate to what they want, rather it is what they have become accustomed to, what they know and what they feel comfortable and familiar with. This realisation trickled down over the school, the students and the community and family audience. People had enjoyed this authentic style school production, the audience numbers had been stronger than in previous years based on the office staff's feedback, "We have never sold this many tickets before!" (Faye 2012)

This community member along with the students and teachers had based their understanding of the school production on a pattern 'of cultural experience.' When this



experience changes a little there is concern due to the initial fear of change, yet in this instance the outcome has meant that the change has been tested and the pattern has been shifted to allow change and it was embraced.

## Journal

### *Journal entries*

*(hot cognition)*

### Journal Entry One

*The pressure is on to do a Broadway musical. The students are adamant they will have their Broadway show. I am feeling reluctant and defeated here before I have even begun.*

### Reflective Journal Notes

#### Autoethnography

**The entanglement of what is the perceived school production with what could be the school production at this point in time was incredibly poignant and what enabled me to find a solution without buckling under pressure. Initially my response was that the aesthetic**

### Analysis

Students like the community member believe they want a school production that is based on a Broadway model because it is what they know. What they feel safe with. The school and the students in the school were afraid of failure. An authentic-modelled production seemed scary. It asked students to

**conventions would be violated if I couldn't rescue some autonomous theatricality. This brought into focus my role as an artist in production, forcing me to question what my position was and called for a redefinition of what I needed to achieve as teacher/artist. Journeying through the work as a work in progress is where the crux of the moment and the inter-action calls for thought, ideas, creativity and momentum, if this journey is stunted by the replication of a work does it mean it in turn stunts the opportunity to behave creatively and to make aesthetically minded work?**

dream and to have aspirations. If students have aspirations to be fulfilled then they are investing in their education. The marginalised and disengaged are suddenly expected to engage. Quaglia asserts that students, 'aspirations must be considered an essential component of the motivation to achieve, operating somewhat like a self-fulfilling prophecy.' (Quaglia 1989, 8)

The students already had aspirations to be in a theatre production, giving them further opportunity to see these aspirations through to fruition in an authentic model of production took away the safety and the homogenisation of the experience they may have had engaging in a Broadway model show. Instead by giving students the opportunity to own the script and make aesthetic decisions in taking on real world roles, students were able to develop some real and tangible aspirations that demanded them to take risks and achieve their aspirations on their own merit

through an authentic experience.

Just as the students and the community member wanted the safe and tried model so did the assisting teachers. It was what Teacher A was used to. Teacher A's own version of a script that they wanted to perform was too loaded with sexual innuendo and the Acts followed the Broadway model of promoting popular American culture.

The school production is perceived by the community and educators as really nothing more than the school production. An opportunity for students to play characters and roles that are measured and considered safe. The school

*Teacher A wants to do a musical that*

*he has written. I don't want to pass judgement on a colleague's work; however I am as unable to bring myself to work on this show as I am on a Broadway show.*

*I have to remind myself why I am doing this and I have to dig very deep to remain amicable in the face of adversity.*

production has a role in a school and that seems to be to bring in audience members and to make sure that everyone in the audience feels safe based on knowing the material they will be viewing. It is product driven with little attention or concern given to the process.

The Principal thought it played a role in teaching students about the history of theatre. So there was an element of educational value recognised through the Broadway model and the school production. The Broadway model school production, certainly allows students to be involved in a school production, it allows students to learn songs, lines and dances. It allows students to feel a part of something big.

The difference and what I am calling

for is something more. The school production can be a place for the marginalised student to find a place and for young people to have a voice; this is seen in the Student Perspectives chapter. It also offers real life experiences when the process is considered.

**“There is a point to doing a Broadway Musical, as the students gain from that experience in so far that they know what has gone before them, these experiences are very important and it is what the school community has come to expect.” (Principal)**

Students want to be sure of what they are doing and wanted it to be previously measured as they are products of the education system that values experience and shuns away from innovation.

The place of the known and measurable in curriculum is making a strong come back with NAPLAN and On Demand testing in Victorian schools.

Here we see an educator's rationalisation for what is safe and measurable. It is presumed that by engaging in a Broadway model school production that the students will learn about the history of theatre.

*The pressure to produce a mainstream musical was overwhelming.*

It became very apparent that the principal too had little understanding of what went on in the process of the production. It was as if the choice of a well-known script would equal a well-known show being performed and this would equal knowledge. This polarised view informed my understanding of how the production was perceived by some educators. It also reminded me that my

research was important in informing educators that the school production offers so much more than the polarised view of students learning to replicate a script and perform it and that equals success. It urged me to uncover what a production does do or can do so that educators might begin to see it for its many valuable learning attributes. I questioned what do I need to make clear to inform this school principal about what it is that I do when working on a school production?

The positive shown in Rose's comment to explore the authentic option was enough of a glimmer for me to press forward with this model that students perhaps were not used to. It was this sentiment shown

by Rose that urged me to unpack this majority. What did the majority really want?

*I find it alarming when a young person begins a sentence with a negative to warn me that something bad is about to follow – what has this child learnt in their young life?*

The majority didn't want to take unnecessary risks and the majority wanted to be sure based on experience that their show would be a success.

Who could blame them?

*We do not want to write our own! That would be so bad, last year we did Chicago ....and this year we think we should do Oklahoma. I don't want to like upset you or anything, because I like, get that an original production could be interesting but I'm like the spokesperson or something and no one wants to do it. (Rose)*

I thought to myself, '*Oh throw caution to the winds and let the struggle begin,*' wondering if *success* is rote learning mimicry, then what is its place in curriculum?

*You've got to understand that the teacher who was here before you actually had a degree in Theatre – she wasn't just a*

This person had not considered my background. It raises the issue that some further degree of qualification, beyond a teaching



***teacher, so the kids have gotten used to working with a professional. (Teacher A)***

**I realised with this teacher's statement that I was also an unknown factor in this school production. I could show photographs and videos of prior school productions that I had managed in this way – but the truth remained these students didn't know me nor did this teacher. I could understand that what I was asking the students and the teachers to do was to trust a complete stranger with a completely unknown method of running a school production.**

**I had to be considerate of these fears and come up with a solution.**

*Why does everything have to be so hard? I am the one who is running*

degree is preferred or even required to run a school production, which is curious considering that the teacher running the school production is expected to do so on top of a fulltime load with little consideration. Why would a production teacher need a degree in theatre or performance if they were expected to volunteer their time working two fulltime jobs while being paid for one? (A position description written by me appears below). Surely if you have expertise in a field you are duly compensated. This raised the issue of altruism once again for me. Why is the production teacher expected to be altruistic? I might love working in the theatre, but equally so the Maths teacher might love to teach Math.

Time allowances befitting of the time, effort and expertise are given to other teachers who engage in

*the school production, I am the one with the experience, and I am the one who is at all rehearsals, who send all notes home. Why must everyone else feel the need to make sure that they let me know what they think I should be doing?*

extra-curricular activities. At the school I was working at, another teacher had applied for the position I applied for, yet I was the successful candidate based on my further expertise in the theatre. Decisions of this calibre are being made, yet the person being hired is not treated as if their contribution is more than an altruistic expression in the arts. Another member of staff who organised the students' sports games had three full days to focus on this work. This is discussed in the introduction. It is wonderful that the sports teacher is recognised for their contribution but I do question the equity. Particularly so as we know that, 'participation in extracurricular activities may contribute to both social and academic engagement.' (Bush 2003, 10)

The following is position description that wrote in response to a meeting that was called with regard to my one period time allowance and block release being excessive.

**TABLE THREE: COLLEGE PRODUCTION COORDINATOR**

**College Production Coordinator – Responsibilities**

1 Period time allowance and special payment (removed this year).

*An outline of the responsibilities involved in the position – College Production Coordinator has been outlined below. NB: Approx. 5-6 hours per week of extra face to face teaching with approx. 70:1 student: teacher ratio. This varies depending on the stage of the show. Small groups face to face on top of this.*

- Compile lists of children wishing to be involved in production.
- Keep a comprehensive role and contacts parents whenever there is an unexplained absence.
- Source/Write script (If script is purchased cost of \$3000 - \$5000 if written the script suits the children involved and saves the school money however the hours involved are massive.)
- Run auditions and then cast varied skill levelled children within a common cast.
- Develop and manage all communication with parents, ensuring they are well informed and happy.

- Book the annual camp.
- Draw up all camp related activities coordinated with children moving around a circuit.
- Draw up cleaning and cabin schedules.
- Ensure medical information, safety and well-being of these students while on camp.
- Ensure medical forms and special needs are met for all students involved.
- Work with the music teacher to develop music.
- Work with students to develop original music.
- Work with volunteer staff, community members, former students and students to train them in areas of the theatre. Including the following:
  - Manage and train in set design and construction.
  - Manage and train in lighting design and operation.
  - Manage and train stage management.
  - Manage and train dramaturgy.
  - Ensure all costumes are designed and made, sourcing all materials, sizing charts for each of the 70 plus cast members.
  - Sewing costumes and or training and overseeing parts of costumes made by volunteer staff, students and community.
- Hiring technical equipment for lighting and sound/working with the music teachers on this.
- Blocking a full length musical/stage play. And providing comprehensive blocking for all students at their level of understanding.
- Casting students in roles so they feel their contribution is both meaningful and worthwhile.
- Looking after the wellbeing of 70 plus students involved in all facets of the school production.
- Liaising with teachers who teach production students.
- Ensuring students' behaviour and study are upheld while they are involved in production and supporting any issues that may arise.
- Mentoring students to take on 'real-life' roles and supporting each and every one of them to ensure they are successful in their pursuit.
- Scheduling and consistent rescheduling of rehearsals.
- Running two – three rehearsals per week (approx. 5 extra contact hours per week in face to face teaching) in the development of the production and being responsible for the well-being of all students involved in these rehearsals.

- Running several one on one sessions with students during lunch and recess breaks.
- Overseeing the artistic vision and ensuring its success including, acting choreography, singing and dance to tie it all together in a comprehensive show.
- At least an extra 15-20 hours per week after hours in gathering resources, making costumes, resolving issues etc.
- Maintenance of the working spaces – theatre, backstage, auditorium, bio-box etc.
- Compilation of all props, costumes and set, including effective storage and keeping of these items in the limited and shared space provided.
- Managing a very limited budget mainly self-funded and ensuring to bring funds back into the college. (EG: Purchase of multi-cord in 2012, headset communication devices 2012)
- Community connections with volunteers and audience – connecting with over 1000 community members and thus representing the school in a positive manner.
- Designing all Arts Administration and all responsibility in overseeing a successful campaign including press releases, including developing tickets, posters, programs etc.
- Making the tickets, cutting and placing in the office for sale.
- Making the programs, copying and folding approx. 500 -600 of these for students and the public.
- Over-seeing all photography while managing related lists of students in accordance to permission and naming.
- Education of students involved in stage directions, courtesies in the theatre, backstage and front of house etiquette and best up-to-date theatre practice.
- Running workshops to skill students in the theatre.
- Drawing up personal plans for each student's development and ensuring they reach their best ability and are able to deliver their best selves for the show.
- Bumping in, working with all technicians etc.(Includes set into a space one week prior, most professionals have at least a month)
- Coordinating full dress rehearsals, calling the show and overseeing stage management.
- Running 5 showings outside of school hours.
- Bump out within 48 hours, usually done within 2 weeks for a pro show. This includes hiring trailers, transporting set, deconstruction of set, disposal of set.
- Laundering of all costumes and future storage of these.
- Over seeing, filming and editing if DVD and its distribution.
- Producing certificates for all students involved.
- Pastoral care of students may include, low socio-economic support, dealing with disputes, parental

questions/complaints, supporting students to be able to participate, including integration students.

The Production Co-ordinator would not be my chosen job title. Production educator would be more befitting. Writing the position description was prompted by the minutes sent to the whole school staff in regards to my position of responsibility, which I was given very little time for and no payment.

**Minutes from curriculum meeting dated 6<sup>th</sup> August 2012.**

A note has been raised with regards to the school production teacher. Why is she getting a block release when she already receives a one period time allowance per-week?

In response to this curriculum meeting note that was brought to my attention by another colleague I decided to send the above mentioned job description of the College Production Coordinator's position to the next meeting. I outlined

the duties involved in the position. I have included this tabulated position description below as it prompted me to explore production teachers' circumstances. I also carried out a state-wide survey around this time to determine what the experiences of other production teachers were and found overwhelmingly the conditions for the school production teacher are remarkably similar between the 30 schools surveyed.

These actions proved to create certain unrest around me as a teacher on staff at Clarity College. This led me to begin to question what it must feel like for a teacher in their first year who hadn't the luxury of my undergraduate degree in Performance Studies and 12 years of teaching experience. This also contributed to my questioning the pedagogy involved in the teacher of a production; if a critical pedagogy was expected, then how could a teacher who had no formal knowledge or expertise in the theatre be expected to manage a production, moreover an authentic production?

The Clarity College title of the position description for the teacher running the annual school production was problematic. It reduces the teacher's position of responsibility to a teacher who "coordinates" the school production as one who is expected to teach the performing arts in their spare time, direct, produce and run all technical aspects as well as physical needs, along with the administration and pastoral care involved. I typed up my own job description while I was on my lunch break. I wanted it to show the things I do, as well as to appeal to the school's development of extra responsibility roles. Other extra responsibility roles at the school were supported by tangible lists of expectations for the role. For example: The Report's Assistant position which attracted 2 periods time-allowance required the staff member to:

- Ensure timely purchase of stationery required.
- Assist in maintenance of stationery.
- Ensure paper and ink needs are replenished for printing.
- Order and sustain staples.

- Segregate printers during report printing.
- Check printing is consistent.
- Order and deliver plastic sleeves to staffrooms.
- Deliver reports to staffrooms for collating.
- Order and deliver envelopes to staffrooms.

In contrast The School Production coordinator simply stated: College Productions Coordinator. In hindsight I might have had a far more comprehensive list.

To further understand the resistance we must first understand the general population's views of the school production. The following comments from my 'colleagues' at Clarity College were collected during the 2012 production period. While I have never gained mass undying support from a staff of teachers for a production, I had never had teachers complaining about the seemingly great circumstances surrounding my position as the College Productions Coordinator. A great level of discontent grew about the production amongst some staff. The following correspondence that outlines this discontent occurred around the time of the staging of the production:

**Selected colleague - teacher comments from 2012 school production season:**

1. "What bit of frippery are you putting on this year?" This comment likens the school production to trivia. This undermines the students' work and undermines me as a teacher in the school.
2. "Good way to get out of a meeting, I could do a bit of slap and tickle. Do you want some help?" 'Slap and tickle'? An abhorrent comment that derives its meaning from a sexual premise. Again, undermining the school production's worth.
3. "Are you serious, Shakespeare? With these kids, are you mad?"  
The idea that Shakespearean scripts are somehow above this student cohort was widely accepted. I was



constantly reminded that the students would not be able to work with the Elizabethan English and that I perhaps was trying to turn them into something they're not. This idea that a group of people are unable breeds discontent.

4. "Been hard at it have you, in La La Land?"  
A professional put down. The belief that the Maths teacher who said this is more highly regarded because the work they do is real.
5. "I am disappointed in you Gill; I didn't think you'd be stupid enough to think that production is more important than the assemblies!"  
This one speaks for itself. The reaction I had of bursting into laughter is worth noting. I found this comment bordering on, if not, ludicrous. Yet my colleagues did not and some even showed concern that I would get into further trouble for getting in the way of assemblies.
6. "We'll just let the students in the theatre for the meeting and tell them not to touch the props."  
The idea that the set is merely a practical physical thing disregards the importance of the performance space and thus disregards the performers.
7. "I don't get why you need to know when the light people are coming."  
Here we see a complete lack of understanding of what it means to light a stage show. This highlights a lack of understanding of the technical and mathematical considerations required when lighting a stage show. It informs the production teacher that people in the school making decisions for the production are not necessarily equipped to do so.
8. "Did you write the script with the kids? You're a glutton for punishment!"  
This highlights the assumption that as teachers we don't actually want to work with students and suggests students are hard work. It also points to the enormity of the task.
9. "How much money do you get to spend on that?"  
This question was delivered in a very non-approving tone. It highlights the assumption that I was given a budget and raises the issue of the lack of transparency and equality of school budgets.

10. “Can’t you just hire it?”

The idea of hiring equipment each year so as not to spend the production’s profits carries with it an undertone of a futureless venture. While hiring may seem like a good idea there are so many reasons why we need to purchase equipment.

1. Students having to re-learn new equipment every year (time constraints).
2. Not being able to use the working theatre throughout the year for drama, dance, music and other performance events.
3. Huge amounts of money out-laid each year for hiring means that there is never a chance to develop further in technical areas.
4. Difficulties with rehearsals.
5. Huge demands on bump in and out.
6. Added pressure on teachers to learn new equipment very quickly, never using the equipment to the best capacity.

11. “How much money would you need to buy a new controller?”

This comment highlights a lack of understanding of the equipment necessary to run a school production. If a new piece of equipment was required in the Science lab or an IT room, assistant principals would at least make an effort to know the name of the equipment, especially when you have just used it three times in the sentence prior to the question.

12. “You’ve got to understand that these things don’t just happen.”

This was in regards to moving lights. I was a little shocked at this comment as usually I am the person who does everything and I found it difficult to be reminded that things don’t just happen.

13. “You don’t actually need it, you want it – but you don’t need it!”

When it comes to the school production everything is considered a luxury. This comment was in regards to a heater backstage. Students were freezing and many had shocking colds. Yet other areas of school had excellent heating. Beyond this it is an OH&S issue. Students had rugs about their shoulders if they were outside the dressing rooms to keep warm.

14. “Is the show going to be ready in time?”

This is a question that seems to be the norm, whether you’re well known at a school or not. In this case, this was not a clumsy way of striking up conversation. This was a direct question asked of me after another

member of the teaching staff had seen a part of a rehearsal and had reported that it didn't look like the show would be ready in time for the opening night.

The idea that the production teacher's work can be questioned because it will be on display promotes a subservient role for the teacher. My response was to assert that I don't ask this person if they're doing their job properly, why they feel the need to check on me. I also gave them an alternative for the future: How is the showing going? "How many people have you organised to help out?"

This highlights that organising help is also my responsibility. This gives a tone that I have to ask for people's help. That people don't necessarily want to get involved and work with these students. I had sent out emails inviting staff to contribute, with this was a list of exciting roles teachers could take on. I also approached staff rooms to request help and was greeted by laughter and a general apathy towards getting involved in the extra-curricular. It is understandable as teachers do give so much time that it becomes a case of self-preservation.

15. "Are you getting out of supervision at the sports day?"

The idea that the production gets me out of other responsibilities uncovers the misconception that I do nothing.

16. "How did you swindle that?"

I'm a wheeler and dealer!

These comments devalued both my position and the production, but more importantly they stood as beacons of fear. These comments demonstrate how a society of educators forcefully upholds the homogenous dominant culture in their invested curriculum and schools. This fear has a direct impact on the students. The fear of the abject view having a medium to be heard makes dominant culture nervous and a need to suppress the voice of the abject arises. Marginalised students become further marginalised and dominant culture drowns out the possibility of a multi-faceted and all-encompassing culture (Fielding 2010).

*So the whole staff is against me. No wonder the students hate the idea of anything other than the 'norm'!*

**I have to compromise. Shakespeare – the solution was in the title of my thesis! While a script had not been stipulated in my candidature, I intended to write an original school production which could include rewriting a script. Shakespeare is well known, yet his scripts are changeable. Initially I had planned to write a script from scratch as I had done at previous schools. Here we would perform *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and rewrite it ourselves, thus allowing for creativity, engagement, ownership, understanding and a depth of experience described as authentic learning.**

I had originally planned to work on an entirely original script. However I had to compromise allowing students and the teachers involved to feel safe with a known script. Shakespeare's plays do not require rights to perform or re-write. His scripts deal with universal themes that the children could articulate in their own words, from their own view points. Using a Shakespearean script that would allow students to experience writing a script with a safety net meant as a researcher I was listening to the needs of my participants and more specifically as researcher I was finding solutions to the issues raised by the students and teachers. This was all covered in my ethics application as working with vulnerable underage participants.

## Journal Entry Two

*I will be altruistic, Teacher A's perception is not my reality. The reduction of two performance teachers shall be met with silence. The validity of our work shall not be reduced by inflammatory comments! Repeat this in your head the next time he sings this acrid song!*

**Again this need to put the self-last and to be altruistic was required of me in response to one of the teachers working with me on the production. The inflammatory comments stated that I was delusional to think that these students could do anything meaningful. I couldn't let the personal attack alter my work with the students. This teacher has worked on several school productions; however my expectations were in hindsight, unfair. Teacher A's background was as a teacher with amateur and school experience of performance.**

I have high expectations of my students and those I work with. The issues I had with my colleague brought into focus the diversity of teachers' backgrounds and the realisation that I was not working with someone who had training or a background in the theatre. Instead Teacher A's experiences were very much seated in amateur theatre experiences. And here I am not referring to all performance that is not professional, rather the performance that is indeed amateurish in nature.

**The unseen work involved when a teacher becomes the school production teacher. I have students greeting me with questions as they walk in the door.**

An American education website cautioned that ‘teachers are workers who have lives of their own. Electing to undertake voluntary activities can result in less focus on a teacher’s core classroom responsibilities, or on their personal lives. This can be the source of considerable stress.’ (Ontario 2014, para 4)

**I was dealing with students’ disappointment while teaching classes in Drama, English and Performing Arts. I didn’t have a break and was feeling exhausted. In hindsight I should have made this announcement on a day where I had more time,**

‘The new ban on working outside the 38-hour week will mean no camps, school fetes, productions or excursions outside of school hours.’ (Hadfield 2013, para 3)

This workload issue continues to be shown throughout the journal.

more headspace.

### Journal Entry Three

*First thing this morning I was greeted by a group of excited students, "What show are we doing? We think we should do Grease!" (students) The constant momentum building for me to conform to a standard well known musical is becoming overwhelming. After firmly stating I will not be involved in the production of such a musical and announcing we will be*

*doing our version of a Midsummer Night's Dream, I observed while waves of shock seemed to ricochet throughout the day as I taught 7 periods straight.*

*I approached the invested teachers at the end of the day and announced we would be doing A Midsummer Night's Dream. Some of their responses were:*

*"Gillian, these are Clarity kids, they just aren't that sophisticated."  
(Teacher A)*

**The idea that an entire school of students are not sophisticated – mentality that we should 'know our lot' was of a huge concern to me both as a teacher and researcher.**

Where does the idea that an entire population is without sophistication come from? Perhaps the Gonski review could be held accountable. Australian school children are underperforming internationally therefore we can't really help it if our children simply aren't sophisticated enough. Or perhaps it comes from a belief 'that the children of the rich perform better in school, on average, than children from middle-class or poor families.' (Reardon 2013, para 1) this idea that Shakespeare is too hard for our students has been contested and the denial of cultural access to Shakespeare questioned in terms of socio-economic status (Flaherty, Gay, and Semler 2013).

Or perhaps it comes from the teacher's



own self-doubt regarding their own levels of sophistication and whether they can offer this level of sophistication to their students. Or perhaps teachers don't feel Shakespearean scripts are relevant enough and therefore too difficult to teach this very notion is evidenced in McDougall's report 'A GROUNDBREAKING HSC English course has dumped Shakespeare and Wordsworth in a bid to make it more relevant for students' (2010, para. 1).

**Again the comparison to another school to be sure that this production would work.**

I had a conversation with a colleague about Romeo and Juliet which she indicated she understood to be a film by Baz Luhrmann and had never heard of Shakespeare. In relation to this comment on sophistication perhaps there are a lot of very popular beliefs and ideas surrounding this notion that Shakespeare is too hard and that students are not smart enough or that the Shakespearean scripts that might be considered accessible rely heavily upon the 'excellent film versions'

available (Houlahan 2002, 10).

*“Well that could work, I saw another school do that but there wasn’t any music!” (Teacher C)*

**This felt as though the teacher was questioning my thinking, it felt personal and it made me realise that I had to do something about how my colleagues were speaking to me.**

**This comment raises concerns about whether we could do it.**

*“I’m not sure what you’re thinking but I don’t see how it will work, how will we know what we need to do?” (Teacher A)*

**I reassured the teacher that I felt competent in working with a Shakespearean script. I even shared an experience example of working with a group of at risk predominantly Lebanese students (boys only) and rewriting with these students,**

*“You better be good at Shakespeare.*

*No I mean GOOD... because no one here is and least of all the kids. You want to see inside of an English class doing Shakespeare. Not saying that you can't, but it will be a battle."*(Teacher B)

**Romeo and Juliet into Year Ten language**

**"Juliet: Yo Bros What's up?" (Schroeter 2001, 3) That allowed for their broken English and understanding of the script. I iterated I had managed this as a first year out teacher while also running a school production and working a fulltime load.**

**All of these comments are pointing to the teachers' own lack of experience in the theatre. I was uncovering their fears of not knowing how to achieve this performance of AMSND. It seems that this is an unattainable aspiration of mine and that the other teachers are somehow wiser, I had wondered if this was an age thing. Two of the three teachers were 20 years my senior and at least one of these teachers was unhappy with me before I started the position as they had wanted to**

run the production. This was of course completely out of my control.

I am new to the position, not a new teacher and while I could offer examples and even videos of productions that I had successfully worked on, these examples were not enough. I had to ask myself, why wasn't this enough? Why was I still finding my decisions were in question? Had this been an issue for the production teacher before me? The answer to this was, yes. The teacher who had taken leave without pay was "burnt out" and needed out and time to "consider whether teaching is really for me?"(Teacher 2011) I had been questioned every year with regards to the production. On the one hand it feels undermining yet on the other it

*Why is everyone so concerned with what I can do? This presumption that the production teacher (that I) don't know what I'm doing.*

is thought-provoking because so many people, teachers and students have a vested interest, their aspirations to work in the theatre are possibly wrapped up in this. I know this is anecdotal evidence of a number of students who do an education course focusing in dance and drama because they can't get into a performance course or they took the safer option with a pathway into teaching as this would secure them an income.

I called a qualified friend as a sounding board.

I realised that, even though this friend was interstate working at another school she was my colleague. She shared a similar background, she too had similar experiences and this conversation was enough to give me the strength in myself that I

I wanted to leave this entry out but decided I need to show the human side of the production teacher, of myself and while it is repetitive, it is a repeated feeling of hopelessness and exhaustion that comes in waves throughout the production process. The effect this had on me personally and my children is worth noting as a researcher. I had to develop ways to remain focused and to keep a clear separation of self and the position.

*I arrived home, initially cried, vented and then spoke to a fellow thespian. It is important to get a more understanding perspective.*

*My friend stated, "Gillian, Drama teaching is a lonely job. A production teacher even lonelier and thankless. Did one of those people stop to consider your feelings? No! Why? Because they don't have to, they are teachers, they are righteous and you my friend are at the bottom of the pile. Everyone in that school, parents and students too, feel that they can tell you what to do. Everyone has an opinion on the theatre because they have seen a show. Well teachers like you and I who have a deep understanding for the art-form have to listen to this every day."*

"Teacher A doesn't think it is a good idea and thinks the whole idea stinks

**was making good decisions and that I could do this and that these students could do this.**

**Speaking to my friend allowed me to gather the strength and clarity to overcome the opinions of onlookers.**

and you don't know what you're doing." (Flynn 2012)

*My momentum will showcase how sophisticated these students can be! How dare Teacher A involve a student in this! Why do I have to prove myself as a teacher of an extra-curricular activity? Why do so many other people who will have very little to do with the show feel that they can have an opinion?*

*"I can't believe you Miss, you never say a bad word about anyone! Don't you want to like tell him off or anything?" (Flynn)*

**This unprofessional input where another staff member questions my abilities, undermining me in front of a student alerted me to Teacher A's insecurities. It concerned me though that students would need to listen and deal with this type of banter.**

**I spoke with teacher A about this incident and made it very clear that I would prefer that any concerns in the future should be brought directly to me and that as responsible adults we are not to behave in an unprofessional manner with students.**

**Flynn showed his disbelief at my reluctance to show any unprofessional retaliation. Instead I said in response: "For whatever reason Teacher A feels this way and it is my job to reassure Teacher A that I do**

The production teacher may be brought under scrutiny because of the nature of the educational activity being open for all to see. This idea urged me to start to question people wherever I went about their knowledge of the school production, I asked in meetings, conferences, symposiums and even at a world congress held in Paris. This has been called The Dot. The dot is shown below at 4.4.5 Dot Data.

know what I am doing and that  
it smells sweet.”

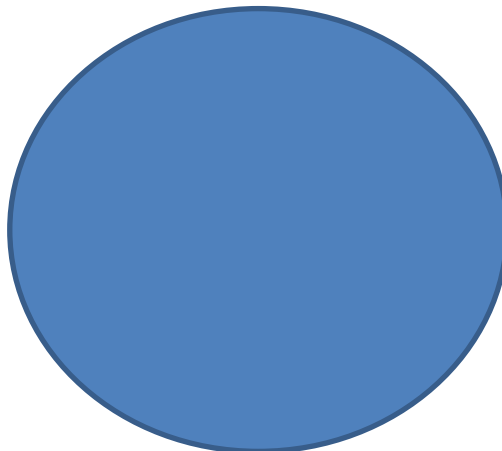
## DOT DATA

### DIAGRAM ONE: THE DOT

Please place a dot in the circle below in relation to school productions in schools:

1. A dot nearer the centre should represent a clear understanding of how and why school productions occur in schools and also correspond with your experience in a production.
2. A dot closer to the outside of the circle represents very limited understanding of how and why a production occurs in a school and perhaps having viewed a production.

A dot outside the circle represents you haven't any idea about the school production pedagogy and you have never been involved in any school production

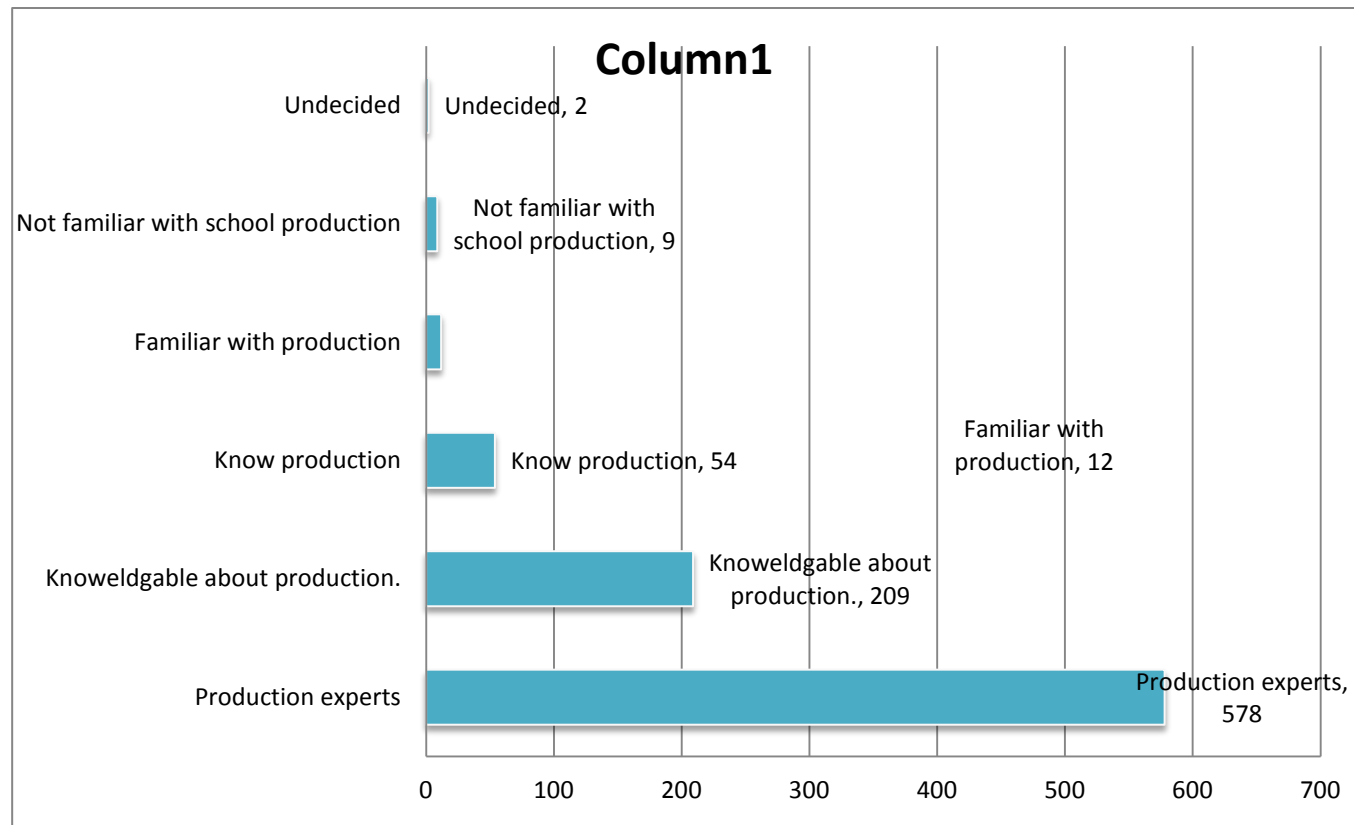




As stated above whenever I presented at a conference or found myself in front of an audience (research symposium, committee meetings, world congress, drama conference) I asked that audience to rate their knowledge of the school production by placing a dot in a circle. This was an ongoing survey that I ran while researching the school production. It was not covered by ethics, however, participants only gave me their dot if they wanted it included in the thesis and all dots are anonymous. The closer to the centre of the circle meant that the participant knew exactly what a school production was. The closer to the outside of the circle that a dot was placed marked that the individual was not sure what a school production was. What I found was very noteworthy. Most people considered themselves experts in the field of school productions.

Of the 864 people from around the world who were given the circle and the dot to locate their understanding of the school production, 578 people's dots were at the very centre of the circle. Of the people surveyed 209 placed dots close to the centre of the circle, 54 people's dots were half way between the centre and outer rim of the circle. 12 people placed their dots quite close to the outer rim of the circle and 9 people placed their dot outside the circle. The 2 that remained placed their dots inside the circle and also traced a line that exited and entered the circle with dots. The chart on the next page shows us that the majority of people who were asked to perform this simple task believed themselves to be experts in the production. The X axis denotes the number of people surveyed and the Y axis their responses:

**CHART THREE: DOT DATA**



## Journal Entry Four

*Today we began our writing circle.  
Starting with warm up  
games/breaking the ice thirty two  
students showed up to the circle and  
almost all were excited and positive.  
Others asked many questions, such  
as:*

*"So can you tell us why we are not  
doing a Broadway Show?"*

*"Teacher A says it will fail and we are  
the ones who will have egg on our  
faces."*

**The beginning of the learning  
process seems to be emerging.**

**Students feel validated in  
questioning their production  
teacher. Which has a couple of  
notable factors to it: In  
comparison with a subject,  
students might not question  
why of a Maths teacher. It is not  
necessarily a bad thing. Why do  
students feel that they can  
question this?**

**Partially because other teachers  
had been giving their negative  
ideas to the students and  
partially because the students  
don't feel safe or don't believe  
that they can achieve something  
a little different. They can't  
foresee how positive this can be  
which was partially because of  
the extra-curricular nature of  
the production. Students feel  
that they can take ownership of  
their creative work.**

This highlighted the grey area that the school production operates in. Teacher A had developed a rapport with the production extracurricular cohort, just as I had. Students were taking me into their confidence by telling me what Teacher A had said.

**I considered why the teacher had invested time to comment upon my ideas for the production. Did Teacher A do this because they felt unsafe, or did it have to do with having the students on side? If this was the case when did sides develop? What I did and how I acted upon this information would be a reflection of me as a researcher and teacher.**

While I knew this was unprofessional behaviour, Teacher A either wasn't aware or thought it alright due to the extracurricular nature of the school production. Once again the handling of this situation required careful consideration given my position as researcher and teacher. This continued to be an area that I had to deal with throughout the process and was certainly something that I had not been trained in to deal with apart from my undergraduate course which allowed me to think for myself and to thus be assertive of my beliefs.

*To which I answered, "This isn't Broadway and our budget is very small. I would like to be able to show what you guys can come up with. And I hope we can put some money back into the theatre too."*

**The monetary concern – shared with students at all times, the need for this? I have referred to this in my introduction.**

I told the students that Teacher A most probably didn't think you would tell me this information, so it is probably fairer if we forget this. I then spoke again with Teacher A. I asked what they thought of the idea to work on AMSND. Teacher A said they thought it was a good idea, but also thought it to be too ambitious given the students I had to work with. I left it at this and kept in

*“Why are we doing Shakespeare and how are we gonna do it?”*

*My reply, “We’re not doing Shakespeare, we’re going to use one of his many amazing plays and put our own fresh spin on it. We can do this because we don’t have to pay royalties to Shakespeare because he’s been dead since about 1616.”*

**This reiterates the fear of working with a Shakespearean text.**

**Explained through monetary terms again, and this partially the reason – yet the real reason I was unable to share. How could I say because everyone here seems too afraid to write their own original script?**

mind how Teacher A had operated.

The monetary constraints are real for students in public schools and unfortunately they need to understand this and be a part of innovative ways to overcome financial constraints on props, sets and costume.

*“Oh my God how do you know that?”*

*My reply, “I am interested in this so I know things about it. If you’re going to produce a play it’s good to know as much as you can about the play you’re doing. Do you know who wrote the show you did last year?”*

**Why do students feel surprised that a school teacher knows these details?**

*I was surprised to learn that only one person could tell me who wrote their previous show.*

**This showed that the writer of the script had not been important in the students’**

I suppose that is not necessarily so terrible, we often don’t know who wrote song lyrics or TV shows we see but this reminded me of what the principal had said that she believed children learnt about theatre through Broadway style productions. It occurs

**previous experiences with school productions.**

to me that children learn about theatre from their teacher.

**It is great to know that at least one child sees this as an opportunity.**

Why couldn't I have quoted,

"Living creatively is really important to maintain throughout your life. And living creatively doesn't mean only artistic creativity, although that's part of it. It means being yourself, not just complying with the wishes of other people" (Groening 1993)

The school's Principal, I suspected was another person who would place their dot at the centre of the circle without giving it much thought.

*I was very happy when a quietly spoken girl approached me and*

*thanked me for the chance to work on an original show. This reminded me why I do productions.*

### **Journal Entry Five**

*Auditions today, wow amazing passion and energy, I am excited beyond words. I have seen fifty students and have another thirty-seven to see tomorrow. Of course they'll all be included. We'll end up with a cast of approximately 100.  
March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2012*

*I am feeling very excited and extremely energised by the students' energy! Worried about such a BIG cast and learning all of their names!*

**This raises the issue of where the production fits amongst an already packed curriculum for education and how this affects students and teachers. On top of a full working load the teacher running a show, or creating the performance must give up many hours of their own time to oversee all aspects of producing a stage show.**

**The feeling towards the work has changed at this point for me – I am immersed in the act of doing rather than the politics imposed upon the institution. The difference of putting on a youth play in a school to that in the amateur theatre – the added stress.**

**I was energised by the students. I was overwhelmed by the enormity of everything I would have to do in the coming**

### **Journal Entry Six**

*We spent 6 weekend hours writing today. I decided we couldn't read the script through first as the time wouldn't allow, rather this would be our first read and we would both deconstruct and rewrite. It seems to be working well.*

*"I like how it sounds, I like the rhythms, we should try to retain this about our script" (student)  
Unanimously agreed upon.*

months. Little things like how was I going to learn all of the students' names? As a Drama teacher I already had a bank of at least one hundred and twenty names I needed to remember, how could I learn another hundred plus names on top of the students I was also required to teach in my fulltime teaching load?

This is a lot of time spent writing in one focused session, in comparison to what students would usually spend on writing in an English class. It is far more time than what we might expect students to be able to focus on the same task for. These students were engaged and writing the whole time apart from a 20 minute lunch break where they continued to discuss ideas.



**This student is discussing literature, he expresses that he likes the rhythm and urges his peers to keep the rhythms. This student ended up writing using rhythm. He would articulate a line or reword another student's line slightly to have it fit with the rhythm of the character's speech.**

*"You know what I am going to do? I'm going to write down the family tree so we can remember who's who." (See Chapter 3.p85 image 5)*

'Instead of expecting a student to write, edit and publish (whether teacher or student is satisfied or not) a text every week so we have "enough" evidence to justify the grade,' (McLeod 2012, para 4) why don't we engage in longer texts with our students that allow meaning and time to develop their creative ideas?

*"Imagine if you had all the actors and they could like write their own bit!"*

**The idea emerged that the actors could shape their roles,**

In an Action Research report investigating writing in English primary schools, it was found that, 'a third of the children perceived that their teachers disliked writing and were anxious about writing in front of them.'

*"The style would surely suffer if you had everyone writing their own parts!" (Emily) To which I replied, "What about collaboration?" Can't we collectively support a style while everyone contributes?"(Me)*

### **Journal Entry Seven**

*Today the writing circle began to naturally cast roles. I stressed nothing would be set in stone; even the words we were writing would remain changeable. It was agreed what happens in the writing circle stays in the writing circle.*

*We now have a circle of 8 – 13 writers. A group of 5-11 who workshop lines to see how they physicalise on stage. One student is*

**this happened quite organically. Students naturally took ownership of parts and the casting for the production began to occur in line with this.**

**The idea that style has to suffer when a script is collectively written is curious. Why hadn't this student thought that the style would be enhanced by having so many voices included?**

(Ings 2009, 18). This model of collaborative writing through the school production shows the teacher engaged and loving writing. It showed me as someone prepared to write in front of students and it showed that a story can be constructed as a joint venture.

*typing; one invested in staying true to style and another, a young man who seems to be a very poetic, a languid embodied writer - he moves between the two realms of performers and writers and is also concerned with style.*

*"The only reason I am staying at school this year is because of this Shakespeare show. I have never done a school production before and probably never really will again. This is just me. It's pretty amazing that it came along – I think sometimes there is a reason and then sometimes*

**This reality that students who were not there and could not develop their role required students present to be altruistic in developing other students' roles emerged. One student said, "If you are wording lines for a person's part try to imagine how they would be that character. Don't think of you playing that character. How would you feel if you read your lines and thought, I so wouldn't say that?" (Emily) This student was asking her peers to consider other people's perspectives - she was in effect calling for empathy.**

Students feel confident to make decisions around casting and character development. Being able to imagine myself playing a part first requires an ideokinetic connection. I have to ask myself prior to employing acting techniques, *can I imagine myself as this character?* By allowing students the space to find characters that they can imagine themselves embodying, we are also offering a channel through which their voice can be heard. The opposite of this is discussed in the chapter, Students' Perspectives, where a student reflects on playing a part in a Broadway model production that he felt he could never fully imagine himself in.

*things are just random.”*

**The Poet is otherwise disengaged from school has told me that he would have dropped out, although he heard we were writing a play and he wanted to ‘give it a go.’ The usual stereotype for a school dropout might not be the boy who wants to write poetically. Yet this student could not get this experience elsewhere. I questioned what I could do to ensure he stayed in school.**

*After 6 hours of writing with students and several scenes completed and many conversations about meaning and making it beautiful and staying true to the, “Magic,” we reluctantly stopped and went home. Exiting the theatre into the sun, I was shocked into the loss of my weekend, but felt strangely happy with what the students and I had achieved.*

**Was this random or was there a higher reason, some quite deep philosophical thought? Redirected into the writing of the script we see this student make some philosophical comments as he writes parts in the script. This is seen**

The student asks her peers to use cognitive and emotional empathy. In doing this she suggests the production, ‘group share a common humanity and a common destiny’ (Walter and Finlay 1999, 735).

I had a knock on my door in the hot summer of 2013. The poetic writer was selling solar panels. I asked him why he didn’t stay in school. He replied, “There’s just nothing there for me. I enjoy this, I’m doing something for the environment and I get to walk and have conversations with people like you about doing something real for our planet.”

The importance of a life/work balance for teachers can impact on their families, their other teaching requirements and their ability to remain calm under stressful circumstances.

throughout the script chapter.

The production being an extracurricular activity has its impacts on staff involved and the students. These can be both positive and negative.

## Journal Entry Eight

*We extend the writing circle by 2 hours due to excitement and mobile telephones and obliging parents. The circle dwindled to just 4 students and me; the dynamics of the script writing changed here. Suddenly we started to write more intensely, imagining the character that had previously been played by students in the workshopping. One student took on the role as scribe, the other three*

**During the writing comments flowed such as:**  
**“Imagine if he wears a flowing white frilled shirt!”**  
**“Oh my God I can totally see it now the forest would be dark and he’ll like emerge in a puff of smoke, oh my God I love this, this is going to be pure awesomeness!”**

What happens between the lines and is shared between the dreamers is a collective vision, a vision of theatre that expresses their thoughts and ideas. The writers learn so much more than how to rewrite a script, they learn to negotiate, collaborate, make compromise, listen, visualise, how to create a character and a role through collective dreaming, so much more went into writing the lines,

*students systematically approached each line of the script deciding quickly how to rewrite or reword. I looked on in amazement as these students effectively became playwrights. My concern for those students who were not rewriting was calmed by the following comment. "Gill, you are offering it, if they don't want to or can't do it then that's ok. When we do the first read through we'll explain everything to them, I have this awesome family tree, you care too much!" (Rose)*

**I wonder what they meant by, caring too much? The idea that a teacher can care too much, is a little foreign to me. However, a student stated this. Does this mean then that they think teachers don't really care? Perhaps it is the time I spent with the students working on production.**

**As a script emerged and roles were assigned and accepted the rehearsal phase began. A school**

Dealing with levels of teacher caring is synonymous with Teacher Student Relationships (TSR) and in this case engagement and a feeling of connectedness in school. The TSR I had developed with students was obviously perceived as more caring than that of other teachers for this particular student. TSR requirements are discussed in the chapter on Student Experience.

As a director of students in a school production there is a need to teach and not to expect that students can be actors.

production rehearsal phase is longer and far more arduous, (perhaps) than working on a professional show. The directors' role becomes ever blurred by the teacher's role, or at least it should.

### Journal Entry Nine

*Today I was humbled to see the excitement and mentoring of older*

**I organised groups so they would have some more experienced student performers/readers with students who were less experienced. Students understood this as a 'good' idea and rose to the occasion. I was not expecting however to witness the degree to which this**

Peer interaction can be meaningful in student engagement and learning. Mahony suggests in Eccles *et. al* that 'membership in prosocial peer groups' (Eccles et al. 2003, 868), among other attributes found in extra-curricular activities, promotes better educational outcomes and positive behavioural development.

*students with younger students as our script was brought to life by the probable characters. We laughed, explained, showed the family tree and referred to it several times.*

**mentoring would occur.**

**Future rehearsals will continue to allow students opportunities to mentor and learn from each other.**

Docendo discimus is the Latin for we learn by teaching.

## **Journal Entry Ten**

*8 groups were formed to help with the understanding of the script, key writers were the leaders and older students supported younger ones to understand their roles and the importance that each character played in making a whole picture. One student explained, "Without you, there is no one to scratch Bottoms*



*ear and for him to show the audience what a pig he is, so even though it seems small it is really huge because of what it does for the rest of the play. And it's like it for all of you because even though there are lots of faeries, there are lots of nuances you know like little touches sort of like when you do a painting and you just highlight a bit, without the highlight no one would notice the main bits."*

*In another group I listened as a Year 12 Drama student mentor explained the difference between role and character and the younger students wrote down what was unique to their character.*

## **Journal Entry Eleven**

*The music carefully selected by students is proving problematic.  
Teacher A is resistant to the music*

*the students have chosen and I am finding this challenging, having previously worked in mutually creative work relationships.*

*Teacher A had not worked with student musicians on this level previously. One day as I was leaving my classroom Teacher A entered the classroom stating, "I need to talk to you! About music. I know you want the kids to choose the music. You've got to understand though that this is impossible! I have got to chart this music and I am moving house. It's totally unrealistic"*

*The manner that this was delivered was in an angered state and I felt quite shaken by this confrontation.*

**Teacher A has their own agenda in coping with the extra stress of the extracurricular load. For Teacher A, in previous years the music was played by professional musicians or recordings played.**

**Teacher A's concerns for a life/work balance are all valid, but the way the concerns were delivered were quite unprofessional and bordering on threatening. I felt that I had been told that this could not and would not happen. It is also possible that the teacher was feeling out of their comfort zone and felt that I was pushing them**

Students were capable of writing, charting and performing the music. How many cohorts had been denied this opportunity in the past? Teachers are in a position of 'creating possibilities' (Kostogriz 2012, 410) that affect our students potential on a social and cooperative level that enhance the students' experiences.

In a democratic classroom the teacher should not be the gate keepers of knowledge, deciding which tasks

into an area that they did not feel comfortable with.

*I decided to speak to students about the practical concerns of charting and arranging these songs. Several music students said they could do the work and would be happy to do this.*

*Today we had a meeting with the students and Teacher A present.*

**Even with this information, alleviation of the teacher's concerns was proving extremely difficult. A meeting with students explaining the choice of music began to show the teacher firstly, the thought processes behind the choices and made apparent how much these students had invested in**

should be given to students. Instead the idea that knowledge should be shared and developed (Brookfield and Preskill 2012) was at the heart of the authentic production. This idea that we could co-create (Mills 2002) made sense.

Teacher A had difficulty in relinquishing control, this could be due to a number of factors:

- The fear of the unknown.
- Fear of failure in the public domain
- A fear that the children might surpass the musical abilities of the teacher.
- Apprehension of working on new music.
- Having usual practice challenged.
- Creating work for the teacher.

All of these are realistic fears or worries that the teacher had to deal with and face. While they are expected to take responsibility for the music

**the writing of the show.**

**Students obliged, cutting the songs back to bare essentials. Ultimately the most effective solution would have been prevention, having the teacher present during collaboration with the students.**

they have the reins taken from their hands which left the outcome to some respects to an unknown entity, in this case, the students.

*Teacher A requested that the songs be cut back quite a bit to make learning and charting possible.*

**The students and I were left feeling a little disillusioned. The songs were a collection of previously recorded titles and some that students had composed and written. While the outcome seemed amicable and positive, cutting the songs right back meant losing the quality of the meaning in these songs.**

As Teacher A and students worked on each piece it became clear that Teacher A enjoyed working on the music. The student band were dedicated and enjoyed what they were playing. In the end each song was completed in its entirety.

*The teacher's response after the meeting, "Well Gillian, it's on the one*

Teacher A stated after the show, "I didn't see how any of this was going to

*hand going to be a lot of work and we're going to have to cut the songs right back.....on the other hand I had no idea how invested these kids are and find it refreshing that they are so passionate about the music."*

*(Teacher A)*

**As the process developed Teacher A began to enjoy working with a student band. Teacher A started to give responsibilities to the musicians.**

work. I hadn't trusted students for years. I can see your dream now! You visualised it, when we couldn't and made it happen. Congratulations!"

The teacher had given over the need to control the situation which is all caught up in producing the perfect product. This music teacher did what I couldn't. Teacher A worked with an all student band and cast of singers and dancers to bring the music and meaning from the student musicians to blend with the other action to make meaning. As time went on Teacher A became interested in seeing how the dance and song were interacting with the music and showed interest in the storyline and the meaning brought to the production. It occurred to me that previously this had not been important. Qualified musicians had been called in for two rehearsals prior to the show.

## Journal Entry Twelve

*Blocking the show. Not a single person could tell me what I meant by 'blocking', not even the teachers.*

*The blocking of the entire show took two 2.5 hour rehearsals to complete. Students thought it a very good idea! I found myself teaching stage directions and a whole variety of terminology to the students.*

***Students who had been in amateur theatre and previous productions had not come across blocking. Teachers, two of whom had worked in the theatre and all of whom had been involved in the running of school productions previously had not heard the term blocking either.***

Stage blocking deals with the action on stage logistically, taking into account all factors.

While it isn't necessary to understand blocking to direct a production it is very useful in organising the action especially with large casts. This realisation that teacher and students who considered themselves to be experts, dots at the centre were exposed as having very little idea when it came to how to actually direct a

*It quickly became apparent that blocking would be fun. I photocopied off blocking sheets for each student to take notes. The research videos would double for blocking purposes.*

stage show of this enormity.

### Journal Entry Thirteen

*Tomorrow is the camp.*

*I have spent the afternoon and evening making sure I have enough treats for all students coming, photocopied spare scripts, all schedules and maps ready for distribution before checking I have all notes in place, earmarking those who haven't completely filled out the forms, for completion upon arrival. I have read all medical notes and studied the photos of the few students who have potentially life threatening conditions. Here the role*

**The annual production camp is somewhat of a luxury (and by this I do not mean the accommodation). It gives focused time working on the production. This was the first school I had worked at that supported a production camp even though it was held on the weekend.**

This idea is covered earlier with teacher's working loads. If a teacher is going to work on a production they are giving up the equivalent of another fulltime work load. There is a need for the work to be recognised, as this is not sustainable.

On the other hand the camp too is another extracurricular activity that allows for strengthening of relationships and intensive focus upon development of elements of the

*of teacher, director, researcher and carer are blurred out of control. For the weekend I would be responsible for the entire cast besides three students who would not be coming due to conflicting personal commitments. I was supported by three other members of staff. A PE teacher, a new career teacher and Teacher C.*

*After working a full week, camp begins tomorrow morning at 8am and finishes Sunday afternoon at 5pm.*

*I observed students again naturally mentoring each other. One older*

**Spending an entire weekend, or 35 hours, working on production is almost a weeks' worth of normal working hours. The entire production occurs outside of allocated time.**

**I decided while driving home from camp that we would have a rehearsal free week. This would be self-preservation and allow the students time to catch up.**

**Groups of students worked together and mastered whole dance pieces and scenes. Students helped each other with lines. Costumes were designed, fitted and sewn. Some of the set was painted.**



*student helped a younger student with making their bed on the top bunk. The younger student thanked the older student and they hugged. "This is going to be so awesome!" (Nemu).*

*I managed one rehearsal session, while several others took place with older students overseeing the progress.*

*After the first session we met in the dining room and students suggested showing what they had already developed. A young group showed a comedic piece they had polished with me, the rest of the cast roared with laughter.*

*Another group showed a love scene and everyone clapped and cooed*

**I have noticed, when students are left with a problem they quite naturally care for those around them in the process, if the solution and structure is entirely left up to them. The students were projecting that this would be a positive experience.**

**The destructuralisation of the new camp setting allowed students to take the lead.**

**Students wanted to show their work as they might have done when they were younger. Their peers approved, they owned the scenes and this allowed the students the confidence that what they had made, even**

*ooooh!*

**though original, was good. The response showed the students that the risk they had taken was worth it.**

This is an example of the students owning their learning and feeling engaged and empowered by this (Berger et al. 2013).

**The importance of the love scene and how it was received by the students reminded me that the adolescent heightened sense of experience as they discover who they are is wrapped up in how they perceive and make these scenes.**

*Afterwards without asking, students cleaned their morning tea dishes and went back to rehearsal ten minutes early.*

**This sense of responsibility was spilling into the everyday.**

*After the day's rehearsal students built ephemeral huts in groups in the forest. It was so lovely to see the older students again had teamed up with younger students. I sat above on the hill watching these students build*

**Again, mentoring naturally occurred, these older students had the opportunity to take some responsibility and to learn through teaching and the younger students eagerly wanted to learn from their elder**

When we trust students to own their

*huts as the sun set on our day of work.*

**peers.**

work they develop a sense of responsibility (Gootman 2008).

*Flynn exclaimed, "I haven't even looked at my phone all day!" (Flynn)*

*By the camp fire tonight we told ghost stories. We roasted marshmallows. One student exclaimed, "This is what school should be like. This is like the school for creative people!" (Erin)*

**In the relaxed setting with the task of rehearsing taken away, students shared stories and laughed and joked. They made concoctions of chocolate, banana and marshmallow and tasted these and shared their inventions. The idea that there might be a school for creative people was very exciting.**

Here was the idea that you need to create to be without addictions required in the capitalist world in which we live. Fox states, 'Creativity may be the authentic experience of the infinite.' (Fox 2004, 18) The authentic requires students to collaborate and create for a large period of their year. Here we see the students around the camp fire. The whole evening I did not see a mobile phone.

*I arrived home to a weekend's worth of washing and cleaning. I had enjoyed the camp but couldn't help think...yet another weekend swallowed up by production.*

### **Journal Entry Fourteen**

*Productive weekend. Most scenes rehearsed. Several dances choreographed and learnt. Many costumes beginning to take form and set construction started. Students happy, they have achieved so much and the bonding, priceless. Besides having a student with special needs disappearing every 5 minutes, the weekend was thoroughly enjoyable and exhausting.*

### **Journal Entry Fifteen**

*Snail's pace, students forgetting*

*what they had developed at camp.  
The lack of continuity always seems  
to be challenging.*

*I had to attend a meeting so I had  
another teacher also involved in the  
production start the rehearsal. When  
I walked in fifteen minutes late I  
heard screaming, "There is no way  
this show is going to be ready, you  
need to focus, you need to listen, you  
need to stop talking!" (Teacher B)*

*The initial shock at what I was  
hearing in an aggressive tone  
halted me, I then stepped in and  
reassured the students that they  
were doing an amazing job, not only  
had they started to learn their lines –  
at this point I was cut off.*

*"Look I'm not wasting my time, have  
we been looking at the same thing?  
Half of them haven't learnt their  
lines! We have people up the back  
here talking while you're trying to*

**The need to be referee and keep  
things calmly ticking along often  
arose. The damage caused by  
negative outbursts pushed the  
process back a little every time  
and would raise doubt and  
anxiety for some students.**

There needs to be a realisation that the  
teachers are not alone in all of the  
extra work added to their daily lives.  
Students have their full study load,  
sporting commitments, artistic  
commitments, families and part time  
jobs. This is the downside of the  
extracurricular; again and again this  
side shows through as the underlying  
negative. Balancing this is a problem  
for student and teacher alike.

'This is such a toxic practise' (Jean

*direct a scene. I'm going." (Teacher)*

*After the teacher left I reassured the students again and managed to calm their initial opposition towards the teacher. The role I played here could have been played by any teacher observing mutual respect in their practice.*

**The difficulties of working with other teachers who are under a great deal of stress and how to shield students from this and why we should shield students from this all became relevant for me.**

**I wanted students to develop mutual respect. I wanted them to understand that this was a calm environment. I had experienced a lot of yelling in the theatre in amateur and school productions. I did not experience this as a Performance student or later in my work in the theatre, in fact I have experienced quite the opposite.**

**A school production requires a teacher to work with the students to have mutual respect and this all seemed to be flying**

2014, 9) this level of anger and shame used in education to deal with young people is simply not appropriate. This can be attributed to the sense that teachers do not always have the skills they need in the theatre to know and trust that the students will work through these types of rehearsals. These are rehearsals that even highly skilled actors have. Knowing that this is a part of the process and trusting in the process can only come from relevant experience or education in the theatre. Provided we learn from bad rehearsals, there can't really be a bad rehearsal (Gillett 2014).

If we want respect we must first show respect (McCue 2009; Paterson 2005;

**out the window on both sides.**

Meeker 2008; Carroll and Tober 2009;  
Johnston-Parsons and Johnston 2000).

**The teacher's frustration and student reaction came from my interrupting and calling for calm as well as feeling out of her comfort zone. I was asking her to trust that the students would learn their lines, where she wanted cold hard evidence of this as insurance that everything would work out in the end.**

## Journal Entry Sixteen

*Today we lost Titania! Overwhelmed by juggling study commitments, work and production, she made the difficult decision to drop the part. She was relieved. I was happy for her as she seemed almost immediately calmer.*

*Weeks earlier I had seen an inkling that this student was struggling to juggle work commitments, the production and VCE - I had asked another student to understudy the part and she happily accepted the challenge. It was, however sad to see her leave.*

**The student response to Titania leaving the cast was anger, which I had not anticipated. The anger grew from their fear that perhaps their show would not succeed.**

**Shortly after this Teacher B, assisting with costumes, gave**

We perceive events like this differently. I could see that the student had many commitments and was struggling to juggle all of her responsibilities. In her mind she had given the cast enough time to find another Titania. The students might have felt that they had been let down; that she didn't have her priorities straight and that she lacked commitment to the production and them as a cast. All of these feelings are relevant; they are all concerned with the greater good. The idea that sometimes we make sacrifices even though it isn't easy, because it is the right thing to do. However, why should this student have to make a sacrifice? She was studying Year 12 Drama, why couldn't this count towards her study load?

This highlights that characters played by different actors are not the same. Even if the size had been amenable the



**the understudy the same costume. It was at least 4 times too large for her so teacher B told her to get her mother to adjust it. While this might be seen as pragmatic. I was shocked! I felt we had already given her a hand-me-down role, we couldn't give her a costume too! So I set to work creating a completely different costume that would highlight the new actor and enhance how she would play the character. I was overloaded and it would have been easier to hand the costume to her mum, although the student had indicated that her mum couldn't sew and wouldn't be happy with the idea. I wanted to keep the peace in some respect because I was exhausted. I looked at the task as an opportunity to help this student connect with her character in the limited time she had. I asked her for her ideas and we developed a sketch together. Another mother**

costume has more to do than to be the character. The previous student was playing the character as a dreamy and sometimes bitter and twisted faery, while the new student actor was playing her as a brooding angry faery.

Extracurricular activities, while very positive, can take their toll on the learner and the teacher. The teacher who decided to reuse the initial costume was trying to preserve her energy and there is absolutely nothing

**designed and made the wings as she had seen the oversized costume given to the girl and offered to make a new one after I had started on a fresh version.**

wrong with that. We need to understand that there is so little time and so very much to be done that a teacher working on a production has to be SUPERHUMAN.

**The idea that Oberon would now be playing his part with a new Titania took a little time for the actor to come to terms with. While I viewed other students become angered at his reaction and others become angry at me and the former Titania, I realised that they were dealing with some real life relationship issues and that I needed to be able to mentor the way this was dealt with. Another teacher threw in the comment,**

**“Oh get over it, you’re all Drama Queens - that’s showbiz!”**

This is about imagining one scenario for such a long time and to then change this scenario and to reimage the character in the new version. It is about understanding that it is the character who relates to the other character onstage, not the person playing the character (Vilga 1997).

In actual fact that’s not showbiz! It’s an opportunity for the teacher to model understanding and sound and equitable tools to deal with feelings and very valid concerns. This alerted

me to the need for the production to be taken out of merely the “Showbiz,” realm and be placed also into an educational setting with pedagogy and good practice focused on to develop it into an area where students can flourish socially. While this could also be taken as a positive comment that showbiz is a sense of community – this was not the tone in which this was delivered. The teacher belittled the students issues that they needed to deal with. And the comment was loaded with sexism.

**This also raised the issue of a Facebook site for students in the production and how this was a grey area beyond the physical**

The school’s policy did not allow me to be a member. The idea behind this is that no teacher should have contact with a student on social media as this protects the teacher from responsibility of anything they might see and feel compelled to report. Social media used in extracurricular activities needs consideration. This would have been a great way for me to contact students for rehearsal arrangements

## Journal Entry Seventeen

*Facebook is creating issues between students around Titania leaving. I feel I have no way of dealing with this due to the school's policy to turn a blind eye.*

**school setting. The social networking site was used only by students and was relevant to the student's worlds. It became an area of concern for me in so far as I couldn't see the information circulating. This raised a very real issue not only for production but an issue for the whole school body.**

and to monitor and guide conversations. These types of policies that shy away from grey areas of communication with students on social networking sites are an added difficulty to managing the extra-curricular production. On the one hand I operate in a grey zone, outside of school hours, but on the other hand I must remain a teacher that doesn't have these connections with students. This seems contradictory and can be confusing for students.

**The scale of this production was the equivalent to a Broadway show. Where I had spent time**

*I must make sure I document how many hours I have spent on this show! I want to show the scale of this production along with the time taken to produce such a quality show. At the same time it is important to understand the hours that the teacher puts in on top of working fulltime.*

*It's 3am, I am heading to bed and will have to rise at 6 to go to work. Not only am I director, producer, teacher, researcher, care giver, costume and set designer and maker, I am also the administrator which means lots of communication all the time! SLEEEEEP!!!*

**writing, I saved time when directing as students were familiar with the content and the level to which each individual had to perform was tailored to their needs and abilities.**

**The delegation of responsibilities was difficult in that I didn't have a great deal of teacher support. Having said this there was no less support than I had previously experienced. An example is a teacher taking on the task of the program. Then a week before the show letting me know she hadn't found the time.**

When delegating responsibilities I understood that this could mean that the quality would not be at the level I might be able to achieve, it also presumed that the task would be carried out. Often this is not the case.

## Journal Entry Eighteen

*Bump in happening, set starting to look good. A teacher asked me today if they could still have their assembly in the theatre on Monday morning, however they were not prepared for the answer to be, no. I said I would have to get back to them, that this would be a huge ask. When I checked with sound equipment etc. going in I decided this would be a very bad idea so let her know. I was shocked and saddened by the lack of support and respect I was shown in her response. The problem is the majority of teachers and students have little understanding of the work that goes into a production and they rarely value the work.*

## Journal Entry Nineteen

*Had full run in front of an audience today! A little worrying, I am relying on my experience to know that the next show will be magic.*

**This complaint came even though emails and notes in the staff and student e-calendar and newsletters had been circulated months, weeks and days prior. A production newsletter had been published weekly with updates so that the staff realised the work's progression. (See Appendix 7 Sample Newsletter). Announcements and presentations at whole school assemblies informed of the works' content and development.**

**After years of productions with young people I have learnt that adolescents will come through**

A community of teachers and learners should be aware of and value everyone's contribution to the learning environment. As a fundamental need, this should be addressed.

Trusting that the students want to achieve.

with the goods so to speak.

## **Journal Entry Twenty**

*Amazing! The first show was astounding, magical. The audience was excited and responsive and the students were absolutely beaming with pride. Exhaustion and adrenaline.*

**While, for the teacher this is a time to enjoy their students' success and feelings of elation, it also a time to prepare students to say goodbye to their characters and dealing with letting go of the production.**

**Re-emergence of my personal life.**

## Journal Resonance

My journal reflects a world of performance in education called the school production. It notes me as the production educator, working with students to make an authentic production. The process encouraged the students to experience a sense of responsibility through trust. The students made decisions and owned the work. My place was as an artistic facilitator and mentor of positive and constructive working relationships. It required me to be altruistic and to affectively work with the students. This work begets happy, engaged, capable and resilient students working together towards a common goal. It raises the following questions with regard to current practice and future possibilities:

- How can we ensure the extracurricular authentic learning experiences and opportunities are managed equitably amongst other extra-curricular activities within the school? The journal shows the overwhelming work load and the requirement for the production teacher to be altruistic; it also touches on the required expertise, which is considered in the conclusion as a possible projection for teacher education.
- How can we use the school production to further enhance our students' sense of well-being?
- What does the production offer students in life skills?
- What is the teacher's experience? The realisation that Teacher A had not trusted students for years and could now see the value in the method that I had used to approach the school production.
- How do the students grow as learners? The independent learning observed while on camp and the engagement of the students demonstrated, indicates a level of commitment from the students that I do not experience in the classroom. The extracurricular nature of the camp allowed students to work with people across the year levels which required a level of student to student learning and general mentorship.

A brief silence within me fell with a darkness and coldness about this thesis at the end of the presentation of my journal. I wondered if my short comings had marred the possibilities. These reflections caused me to second guess and question my thinking. Why had I reacted the way I had? Why didn't I have the strength to stand up and claim what I know - a knowing that is deeply embodied and entangled with rich performative experience? I wasn't prepared to defend my worth, I hadn't the strength. The light came from the students who changed their thinking and believed and trusted in me to trust them. From them I gained strength. The following chapter gives further insight to their experiences.



# **VOLUME 3**

## **SCRIPT & OVERLAYS**

# CHAPTER SIX SCRIPT A MIDSOMMER NITE'S DREAM

## 6.1 The Script Inclusion.

The authentic school production script, *A Midsummer Nite's Dreame*, is a story that belongs to each student involved. This is an ethnodrama script written by the participants, not the researcher. The decision as to how many characters would play parts in the ethnodrama was not determined by the minimum 'number of participants necessary to serve the story line's progression' (Saldanna 2003). Instead the number of characters was determined by the number of participants and in some cases more than one character was developed for a participant to allow the person to gain the experience in the theatre that they desired. We see this in Brielle's two characters of Faraway tree and the Duke's servant, Philostrate. It is important for this study that the script be understood as a body of collaboratively written theatrical work, that came from the research and this is the reason that the story of every participant is on display for all to see. The transparency through continuity of showing a whole, rather than selected parts allows the reader to understand where my analysis has come from.

The idea that the data should not speak for itself was a very important consideration when deciding the fate of the words produced by the participants. The reason for me telling the participants' stories through my story of research into the school production is to give the participants a voice. I wanted to be able to give these students the opportunity to explore their ideas beliefs, dreams, abilities and responsibilities through making this school production. I hoped it would be a profound, exciting and fulfilling experience. Along the way I learnt how different students learnt and how different students managed themselves in group situations. The script encapsulates so much more than the words on the page. The words written were arrived at after much deliberation. The playscript holds each and every student's voice, their ideas and beliefs. I am not going to take the liberty of extracting parts of their voices when it comes to the collaborative performance script. Saldanna makes a very interesting point,

Most researchers have been taught to never let the data speak for itself, but I question that directive's applicability to ethnodrama. Many participants can speak on their own behalf without interpretive intervention from a fieldworker. Just as an ethnographer asks, "What is this research about?" ethnodramatists must ask, "Whose story is it?"  
(Saldanna 2003, 223)

The performance of this script - a story that belongs to the students involved in this study - was performed as an ethnodrama, albeit an off-centred ethnodrama (as explained in the methodology). In showing the

script derived from the collaboration of student work as the ethnodrama I effectively take out the middle person, me. In offering this script as the ethnodrama I take two calculated risks. The risk is that I could be viewed as solely relying on the collaboratively creative work and that this may not be considered an ethnodrama. These risks are very important, they are important for me as a researcher, teacher and performance artist. I intentionally risk the validity of the research in upholding the richness displayed by the students' voice and richness of the performance of the participants' work, which complimented my interpretation of it. This does not mean that I have not analysed the process, script and performance. It simply means, as outlined in the methodology that this ethnodrama places the researcher within the performance art work and then requires the researcher to stage this script as the ethnodrama and further requires the researcher to adopt a hybrid of methodologies in their reflection and presentation of data.

If I could paint the picture of the actual performance on the page for all to see I would do this too, however all I can do is urge the reader to watch and experience the DVD of this performance (*See Appendix6*).

## **CHAPTER SIX THE SCRIPT WITH NOTES**

The following script was written and performed by the student-participants. It appears exactly as edited by the students. The page numbers that position the script within the thesis and the comments have been added by me. In the printed version of the thesis the preceding comments that correlate with the comments are overlayed to allow the three parts of the script to be easily understood. The three parts are the script, my comments and then the exploration of the comments in relation to the lines being written.

## ACT ONE, SCENE ONE

**Comment 1** Sissia is Titania's little sister, to show the family member who doesn't conform to the family's expectations.

Sissia is in the audience. Centre stage, there's a bag of faeries, trying to break free. Sissia makes her way through the audience.

SISSIA: **She bumps into a woman in Elizabethan dress.** Who are you and what are you and why are you and how do you – see me?

AVON WOLF: Ssh you mustn't mention me, I am Avon, Avon Wolf! No-one but no-one must know I was here.

**Comment 2** Avon Wolf - the woman who may actually have written A Midsummer Night's Dream.

SISSIA: But how do you see me.

AVON WOLF: Dear Sissia, it was I who dreamed your dreams and an wished your wishes long before you were even a spec of dust. BUT I am not here. I am a secret swan - I was never, never, near! **She places her hands over Sissia's eyes and moves behind her – she spins her around in circles – then lets her go and runs behind the curtain.**

**Comment 3** The idea that some characters can see mortals and ghosts is introduced.

SISSIA: **Stumbles a little as if too dizzy then shrugs off the thought of Avon.** Excuse me, pardon me, whoops, I'm sorry, ouch! **\*she continues like this until she reaches the stage. Sissia sets the faeries free\***

**Comment 4** This foreshadows what happens later in the script where Sissia is set free from her immortality.

MUSIC: FIREFLIES BY OWL CITY.

Faeries dance.

FEATURED SINGER: You would not believe your eyes  
If ten million fireflies  
Lit up the world as I fell asleep  
'Cause they'd fill the open air  
And leave teardrops everywhere  
You'd think me rude  
But I would just stand and stare  
I'd like to make myself believe  
That planet Earth turns slowly  
It's hard to say that I'd rather stay  
Awake when I'm asleep  
'Cause everything is never as it seems  
'Cause I'd get a thousand hugs  
From ten thousand lightning bugs

**Comment 5** A dance piece to open the show, students chose this as they thought it was like a Midsummer's Dream.

**Comment 6** Awake when I'm asleep – dream reference

**Comment 7** Here the cast of faeries, join as one in the dance to turn....a student said "It's like the planet turns and there are things we don't notice, you know it could be like faeries or it could be like you know people who are there every day and they are on this planet but we don't notice them. It's like the faeries notice everything that is going on in their worlds and others, I reckon it's pretty cool!"

As they tried to teach me how to dance  
 A foxtrot above my head  
 A sock hop beneath my bed  
 A disco ball is just hanging by a thread  
 I'd like to make myself believe  
 That planet Earth turns slowly  
 It's hard to say that I'd rather stay  
 Awake when I'm asleep  
 'Cause everything is never as it seems  
 When I fall asleep  
 Leave my door open just a crack  
 (Please take me away from here)  
 'Cause I feel like such an insomniac  
 (Please take me away from here)  
 Why do I tire of counting sheep  
 (Please take me away from here)  
 When I'm far too tired to fall asleep  
 To ten million fireflies  
 I'm weird 'cause I hate goodbyes  
 I got misty eyes as they said farewell  
 But I'll know where several are  
 If my dreams get real bizarre  
 'Cause I saved a few and I keep them in a jar  
 I'd like to make myself believe  
 That planet Earth turns slowly  
 It's hard to say that I'd rather stay  
 Awake when I'm asleep  
 'Cause everything is never as it seems  
 When I fall asleep  
 I'd like to make myself believe  
 That planet Earth turns slowly  
 It's hard to say that I'd rather stay  
 Awake when I'm asleep  
 'Cause everything is never as it seems  
 When I fall asleep  
 I'd like to make myself believe  
 That planet earth turns slowly  
 It's hard to say that I'd rather stay  
 Awake when I'm asleep  
 Because my dreams are bursting at the seams

**Comment 8** "Hey Ms Schroeter, that bit's like when Sissia says goodbye."

**Comment 9** Signifies when Puck interferes with everything in the forest.

As the music fades, faeries go behind curtains. Torches shone upon the audience. Faeries exit.

## ACT ONE SCENE TWO

Red carpet rolls out from behind the curtain, there's music (trumpets), and enter Theseus, Philostrate and Hippolyta.

THESEUS: Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour draws on apace. Four happy days bring in another moon. But oh, methinks how slow this old moon wanes!

HIPPOLYTA: Four days will quickly steep themselves in night.

THESEUS: **Comment 10** It was decided that the audience will need help to understand what was going on here. The students begin to develop their own hybrid Shakespearean language to make it more understandable for the audience and for themselves.

Exit Philostrate. Hippolyta elbows Theseus.

HIPPOLYTA: —What did you have to go and do that for? Now everybody is going to know that we're getting married and I haven't even spoken to the wedding planner yet! I don't know, I don't know, the pressure you put me under, AHH! \*screams and goes into hysterics\*

Enter Egeus and his daughter Hermia, with Lysander and Demetrius.

EGEUS: Full of vexation come I with complaint against my child, my daughter Hermia. Stand forth, Demetrius, my noble Lord. I said yes, he can marry her, right? Stand forth, Lysander – and this one's playing her. You know what girls are like, she's fallen in love with "the bad boy". And he's given her heaps of stuff too, she thinks he's so dreamy, and NOW she won't marry Demetrius. As a father, in this kingdom, I want the right to make her marry who I want her to marry, is that too much to ask? After all, she's mine, what I say goes! Which shall be either, to THIS gentleman \*points to Demetrius\* or to death.

**Comment 11** The student playing this role changed these lines completely saying: "Look at what she's wearing I wouldn't be seen dead with her, he buys her stuff too. Look at this dress. He is all wrong for you I say, wrong"

AVON **Appears on side stage aside to the audience** Only I would not send her to her death, but to make it be authentic here she seems doomed!

THESEUS: What say you Hermia? Be advised, fair maid – you need to listen to your father, he's the boss, deal with it. And... Demetrius, look at him. He's hot!

**Theseus looks embarrassed to have said this.**

HERMIA: So is Lysander!

**Comment 12** Like a ghost of the theatre, who has come to see her play played by a cast who believed it had been written by someone else. The name came from Shakespeare's birth place, Stratford Upon Avon and Virginia Wolf's surname. He is all wrong for you I say, wrong"

THESEUS: In himself, he is. But take this one, your father will be happy with it.

HERMIA: I would, my father look with my eyes.

**Comment 13** Here the students felt Theseus needed to be brought up to date which is also how they felt about their own fathers.

THESEUS: Rather your eyes must with his judgment look.

HERMIA: Look, I don't mean to be rude to you, but just let me know, what's the worst thing that can happen to me if I don't marry Demetrius.

THESEUS: Either to die by death, or it's the convent for you. Think about it, you're young, and then you can endure the livery of a nun to live a barren sister all of your life. Or do what your father wants, you don't want to be a withered old shrew, singing hymns in a convent. Do you want that? Do you really?

**Hermia stamps her foot and lets out a shriek in annoyance/anger and storms off, up onto the small stage, sitting down.**

**Comment 14** This unspoken action allows the audience to learn that Hippolyta rules the roost.

THESEUS: Just take some time and think about it! Get back to us on it! We could have a double wedding!

**Comment 15** This is a text message aside which students have used in their script in places.

**Hippolyta elbows him. Demetrius goes to Hermia, down onto one knee.**

DEMETRIUS: Relent, sweet Hermia! **\*looks at Lysander\*** And Lysander... stop acting like she's yours! It's my right!

**Comment 16** This was very funny, many students in the writer's circle went on to discuss this.

LYSANDER: I'm just as good as he is. Why don't you like me? What's wrong with me? Why are fathers always against who their daughters love?

THESEUS: Right! What we'll do is, all the men come with me, I'd you women, you stay here and you can convince Hermia of her rightful place, and and and

**Comment 17** The sexism here was discussed, as to whether they wanted to get rid of this?

HIPPOLYTA: Ahem. **\*snaps book shut, and everyone begins backing off, exiting\*** I've got a wedding to plan, we've wasted far too much time on this! **\*grabs his tie\*** you're coming with me! **\*screams\*** OPHELIA!!!!

**Ophelia, the wedding planner, enters, carrying heaps of wedding stuff, dropping stuff.**

OPHELIA: ASSISTANTS!!!

**Comment 18** Is a wedding planner, a modern spin and poke at the state of capitalistic weddings and the stress of them. This character as special powers just as a wedding planner does.

**Six assistants enter, carrying heaps of stuff with them, picking up what she dropped.**

OPHELIA: We need actors! Find Philostrate!

**The assistant next to her, Latifa, turns to Maria and speaks.**

LATIFA: We need Philostrate!

**Comment 19** An idea where all very young students get a line but only one person has to remember the line.

MARIA: **\*turns to Portia\*** We need Philostrate!



PORTIA:                   **\*turns to Saxon\*** We need Philostrate!

SAXON:                   **\*turns to Andrea\*** We need Philostrate!

ANDREA:               **\*turns to Bridie\*** We need Philostrate!

BRIDIE:               **\*Turns to look offstage\*** PHILOSTRATE!!!!

**Philostrate enters; walking over to the line they're in and speaking to Bridie.**

PHILOSTRATE:       Yes?

BRIDIE:               Oh... what does she want him for

ANDREA:              What does she want him for?

SAXON:               what does she want him for?

PORTIA:              what does she want him for?

MARIA:               what does she want him for?

LATIFA:              what does she want him for?

**Ophelia passes the first assistant posters.**

OPHELIA:             Give him this.

**They pass it down the line to Philostrate.**

LATIFA:              Give him this.

MARIA:               Give him this.

PORTIA:              Give him this.

SAXON:               Give him this.

ANDREA:              Give him this.

BRIDIE:               Give him this.

PHILOSTRATE:       **\*takes it from him\*** Where should I put it?

BRIDIE:               Where should he put it?

ANDREA:              Where should he put it?

SAXON: Where should he put it?

PORTIA: Where should he put it?

MARIA: Where should he put it?

LATIFA: Where should he put it?

**Comment 20** This scene shows the pressure the wedding planner is under to deliver a good wedding.

**Ophelia gets annoyed, walks over to Philostrate and stands right in front of him.**

OPHELIA: Where should you NOT put it?

PHILOSTRATE: Ahhh... so I can like, put one out the front, in the café, and-

OPHELIA: You need to put it... **\*shrieks\*** EVERYWHERE!!!

**Everyone exits. Hermia and Lysander enter. Dante is watching the entire scene.**

HERMIA: What am I going to do?

LYSANDER: How now, my love, why is your cheek so pale? Come, it will work out! The course of true love never run so smooth. If lovers are a good match, their love might be ruined by war, death, or sickness, so that the affair only lasts an instant. Their time might be as fleeting as a shadow or a short dream.

HERMIA: If then true lovers have been ever crossed, it stands as edict in destiny, then let us treat our trials as patient. I suppose, it's a normal part of love. As dreams, sighs, wishes and tears will stop.

LYSANDER: That's better, it will get better. I have a plan... Meet me at the edge of the woods, we'll cross through, and we'll get married in the next town over.

HERMIA: My good Lysander, I swear to thee, my cupids strongest bow, by the best arrow with a golden head, by the simplicity of Venus doves, by everything that ties lovers together, I'll be there. Tomorrow night.

LYSANDER: Keep promise, my love. Look, here comes Helena!

**Helena enters.**

HERMIA: Fair Helena!

HELENA: Call you me fair? Take it back, as far as Demetrius is concerned, YOU'RE the beautiful one.

HERMIA: I don't even like him. I can't help that he loves me.

HELENA: Well, you must have done something to lead him on.

HERMIA: How is it my fault, again?

HELENA: You don't have to be that beautiful. Look at you!

HERMIA: Well, you don't have to worry about it, because after tomorrow night, he'll never have to see me again.

LYSANDER: Helena, to you, our minds we will unfold. Tomorrow night... under the moonlight... we plan... to run away.

HERMIA: We're going to meet, where you and I used to tell each other secrets when we were only young. We shall not return. Goodbye, old friend. Pray thou for us. And good luck, grant thee, thy Demetrius.

**Exit Hermia and Lysander. Helena starts singing.**

**MUSIC: Not Pretty Enough by Kasey Chambers**

**Comment 21** Chosen to reflect Helena's low self-esteem in regards to not being as pretty as Hermia. This brought in-depth discussion about today's pressures to be pretty. Students were amazed that even back then before advertising that girls felt inadequate.

HELENA: Am I not pretty enough  
Is my heart too broken  
Do I cry too much  
Am I too outspoken

Don't I make you laugh  
Should I try it harder  
Why do you see right through me

I live, I breathe, I let it rain on me  
I sleep, I wake, I try hard not to break  
I crave, I love, I've waited long enough  
I try as hard as I can

Am I not pretty enough  
Is my heart too broken  
Do I cry too much  
Am I too outspoken

Don't I make you laugh  
Should I try it harder  
Why do you see right through me

I laugh, I feel, I make believe it's real  
I fall, I freeze, I pray down on my knees

I hope, I stand, I take it like a man  
I try as hard as I can

Am I not pretty enough  
Is my heart too broken  
Do I cry too much  
Am I too outspoken

Don't I make you laugh  
Should I try it harder  
Why do you see right through me

HELENA: I know that Demetrius will run after Hermia...

**Helena exits. Demetrius enters. Dante runs up to him.**

**Comment 22** This character is introduced as a human who thinks he is immune to love. Students thought he was a great example of what some younger guys can be like.

DANTE: Demetrius, wait! I'm so glad I've found you! You will never believe what I've just heard!

DEMETRIUS: What, Dante, tell me?

DANTE: Hermia and Lysander are going to elope. And, not even that, Helena is so in love with you-

DEMETRIUS: ELOPING! What?! She's going to elope! Where? When?

DANTE: They're meeting at the edge of the forest at sundown. But didn't you hear me? Helena really loves you! And she's hot!

DEMETRIUS: You don't get it. I'm not interested in her. I love Hermia. Why don't you go after Helena?

DANTE: Nah, she's not my type.

DEMETRIUS: Ah, Dante, you don't understand love.

DANTE: It can't be THAT complicated.

**Comment 23** Famous last words!

**Demetrius and Dante exit. Black out.**

### **ACT ONE, SCENE THREE**

**The actors are on stage.**

**Comment 24** This makes reference to Bottom being played by Shakespeare.

AVON: Upon this stage actors pace the board, but show you how the actor really be - while he cloaked mysterious as me his talent was the actor that before you see.

QUINCE: Is all our company here?

BOTTOM: You were best to call them generally, man by man, according to the scrip.

QUINCE: Okay, we're going to need, um, we're going to need, um... a character, um, what if you play-

BOTTOM: First! Good, Peter Quince, tell us what the play is, then read the names of the actors, and then just... shut up.

QUINCE: Alright. It's a very tragic comedy, about the horrible deaths of Pyramus and Thisbe.

BOTTOM: That's an excellent play! I love it!

QUINCE: Answer as I call you: Nick Bottom, the fashion designer!

BOTTOM: Yes, I'm here, just tell me which part I'm playing.

QUINCE: Pyramus.

BOTTOM: Uh... what is Pyramus? A lover or a tyrant?

QUINCE: A lover who kills himself, most gallant for love.

BOTTOM: I'll have to cry, to make my performance believable! There will not be a dry eye in the theatre! Alright, alright, name the other actors. Oh, god, don't, stop! I think I'm in the mood to play a tyrant! I'd be good as a tyrant! I could play Hercules! I could do an amazing rant!

**Comment 25** The catch word that Bottom repeats as his comic tag.

**He gives himself stage directions, what he could do, how he could be, goes on and on about himself.**

BOTTOM: It would be so truly inspired! Now, now, go on, tell me, who are the other actors? Ah, by the way, my performance right now, that was in the style of Hercules, the tyrant style. I understand that the lover would have to be weepier, of course. I could do that. I'm versatile like that. I could play both parts. I could play both parts! Oh my God, I could play both parts! Inspired!

QUINCE: Francis Flute, you'll be playing the part of Thisbe.

FLUTE: What is Thisbe? A wandering knight?

QUINCE: No, no, no. Thisbe's a lady! The one Pyramus must love.

FLUTE: Aww, no! I'm not playing a woman! I'm growing a beard.

**Comment 26** Students developed their own English accents. It was decided that Thisbe sounded like a very slow version of Alice from the 'Vicar of Dibley.'

QUINCE: That's okay, I'll get a mask.

BOTTOM: **\*Gasp\*** Inspired! A mask! I could play Thisbe as well! I'd just put the mask on! Right? I'd be Pyramus and I've be like **\*high voice\*** Thisbe, Thisbe! No. **\*low voice\*** Thisbe, Thisbe! And then in falsetto, ah, Pyramus! My dear lover!

QUINCE: No, no. You must play Pyramus, and Flute, you Thisbe.

BOTTOM: Alright, alright, go on.

QUINCE: Robin Starveling, the teacher.

**Comment 27** Played with a very slow English accent, accentuated by slow precise movements.

BOTTOM: What? A teacher? Teachers cannot act! I could do this part!

STARVELING: Here.

QUINCE: Robin Starveling, you'll be Thisbe's mother.

STARVELING: Oh, I'll be good at that! I'll follow me mother around, and watch exactly everything that she does.

QUINCE: Snout!

SNOUT: Here. Who will I be playing?

QUINCE: You'll be the father, Pyramus' father.

SNOUT: I think he'd make a better father (points at Starveling)

STARVELING: Nah, I'm studying me mother!

QUINCE: Snug, the plumber. You'll be playing the part of the lion. And I hope here is a play fitted.

SNUG: Have you the lions part written? If you do, give it to me, it takes me a long time learn stuff.

QUINCE: Don't worry you'll improvise.

BOTTOM: INSPIRED! Let me play the lion too! I'll ROAR so loud, so clear, that I will make the Duke say, "Let him roar again. Let him roar again."

QUINCE: You'd be terrible at that.

**All the actors back him up. (yeah, you'd suck, you'd be bad, etc)**

BOTTOM: Well, I think I'd be a great lion. And Snug, I'm laughing now because you'll be coming to me for help.

QUINCE: You can play no part but Pyramus.

BOTTOM: Okay, I'll do it. What should I do? I know, I'll grow a beard! Should I grow a beard? I'll grow a beard! **INSPIRED!**

QUINCE: Wear whatever you like.

BOTTOM: **INSPIRED!** A red beard! That's what I'll do! A red beard! Can you see it, red beard! It's inspirational! Red. Beard. Inspired, so inspired!

QUINCE: Here are your scripts, I'll get working on the props, I pray you'll fail me not.

BOTTOM: We'll meet in the woods! In the natural amphitheatre! Everyone work hard, make sure you know your lines, and if you need help, call me!

QUINCE: I'll meet you at the oak tree.

BOTTOM: Make sure you're there. You know what; this is going to be... **INSPIRED!**

AVON: Inspired indeed, allow me not to impede. **She laughs....**he does but make me laugh! I am fond of him so!

**Actors exit.**

#### **ACT ONE, SCENE FOUR**

**Lights up on the forest.**

**Comment 29** The forest was developed to bring the forest to life. The trees comment upon the action.

**Comment 28** Avon comments upon Bottom aside to the audience, the more senior students decided to break down the fourth wall, it was at this point that we decided to do some Brecht workshops as the younger students didn't have any knowledge of the "fourth wall." This also raised a staffing issue – if Drama teacher was teaching the school's Drama students tis wouldn't be a problem. Rather the Drama teacher is in the English class due to timetable constraints.

FAR AWAY: Is it day light's saving?

**Comment 30** The forest was developed to bring the forest to life. The trees comment upon the action.

STUMP: Who knows these days?!

**Comment 31** Started out as Stump and was renamed Woody, like Woody Allen. The Yr. 7 actor playing this role developed a comic commentary of the action on stage. This character is a stump.

WILLOW: I don't know but it's bbbbbright.

CHLORA: Why are you complaining? All your petals didn't get knocked off like mine the last time Oberon had a fit?

FAR AWAY: Would you be quiet! Don't say his name or he's likely to show up!

CHLORA: Who?

**Comment 32** Puck maintains many of the Elizabethan lines. Played by a Yr. 12 female Drama student, she enjoyed the challenge and developed her understanding of the character.

STUMP: You are so dim Chlora – Oberon!

FAR AWAY: Ssssh! Would you - **\*GASP\*** shhh! Someone's coming!

**Enter three faeries, Cobweb, Nissa and Lorella, at one side, and Robin Goodfellow, also known as Puck, at one side.**

PUCK: Hello, Spirit, wither wander, you.

COBWEB: Over hill, over dale, through bush and thorns, over parks, through the water, and fire, I wander everywhere. Swifter than the moons sphere. And I serve the Faerie Queen. I organize all the faerie dances, I make sure there's no spots on the petals, I make sure we're surrounded by sweet smells. I'm trying to find dew drops at the moment, actually, so you know, I'm in a hurry, like, I'll see you later. Farewell, thou lob of spirits. Our queen and elves.

PUCK: The kings having a party here tonight? And just make sure, the queen doesn't come anywhere near him. Because King Oberon really angry. Did you know, she stole that little boy from the Indian king? It's the first time she's kidnapped such a darling human child before. Oberon's so jealous! He wants him so badly! But she withholds the beloved boy. She puts flowers in his hair, and makes him all her joy. So now, Oberon and Titania are, like, enemies, they are always arguing and all the little faeries get so frightened that they hide in acorn cups.

LORELLA: Cobweb, unless I'm mistaken, he is Robin Goodfellow. \*to him\* aren't you he that frightens the maidens of the villager? He goes around stealing milk. He stops farm wives from turning their milk into butter. And he makes all the beer flat.

NISSA: Aren't you the one that makes people get lost in the dark? Some people call you hobgoblin, and sweet Puck, and you're nice to them, and do their work for them, and give them luck. Are not you, he?

PUCK: Thou speak'st aright. I am that merry wanderer of the night. I jest to Oberon and make him smile. I do heaps of stuff. I've tried my hand at making people fall in love. I lurk in gossips bowl. Sometimes, fat old women try to sit on me! But I slip out from underneath them, and they fall down. And they scream OUCH! But step aside, faerie, here comes Oberon.

COBWEB: And here my mistress, I wish he'd go away.

**Enter Oberon on one side, followed by "dark" faeries and Titania on the other side, followed by "light" faeries, including Sissia.**

**Comment 33** King of the Faeries, most of his lines were rewritten.

OBERON: What a displeasure to see you, Titania.

TITANIA: What, jealous, Oberon? Faeries, skip hence. I've sworn I'll never speak to him again.



OBERON: Am I not thy lord, you're supposed to obey me, I'm your husband!

TITANIA: Ah, so NOW you want to be my husband! When it suits you! Why'd you return from India? Come back to see Hippolyta, did we? Why, worried, because she's marrying Theseus? What, did you come to celebrate their marriage did you?

OBERON: How can thou stand there shamelessly, carrying on about Hippolyta and me, when everyone knows you're in love with Theseus?

**Sissia steps in, hands on hips, enraged.**

**Comment 34** Here we see the development of the King and Queen as a fairly modern soap opera. Students likened their relationship to that of one you might see on Home and Away.

SISSIA: How DARE you talk about my sister like that?

TITANIA: Oh, don't worry, Sissia, these are nothing but jealous lies. \*to Oberon\* Ever since the beginning of midsummer, no matter where my faeries and I meet, YOU show up! What's your problem?

**Titania begins to sing, some faeries dance.**

**MUSIC: Four Seasons in One Day by Crowded House**

**Comment 35** Chosen for its comment upon the seasons changing. The forest and faeries have to contend with the seasons changing in response to Oberon and Titania's moods. This was further developed by a Yr. 8 musician who played sound effects on a key board and emphasised by the lighting student creating the illusion of lighting etc.

TITANIA: Four seasons in one day  
Lying in the depths of your imagination  
Worlds above and worlds below  
The sun shines on the black clouds hanging over the domain  
Even when you're feeling warm  
The temperature could drop away  
Like four seasons in one day

TITANIA: It's our fault, everything's going haywire. You need to get over it! Forget about the child! I won't part with him. You've got to understand, his mother was one of my worshipers, we were practically best friends. Do you not understand? She was mortal, she died giving birth to him. And for her sake, I will protect him with my life.

**Comment 36** This is related to the Hollywood stars adopting and having children as their fashion accessories.

OBERON: I would you give him to me! You can adopt another! We could adopt 4 or 5. This one suits me – look at him! A boy like this needs a father! Think how good we'd look in the magazines the boy and me! You could get another one! You know I have no patience for processes like this. Give him to me and you go and get a girl from a mortal somewhere. We have gold lots of it! Don't be petty!

TITANIA: Petty, this one is not a fashion accessory! I told you he's the son of a friend! A friend who died. I know you of all people don't understand this concept! BUT I tell you NO! **\*The light go on and off there is thunder etc\***

OBERON: How long within in this wood do you intend to stay?

TITANIA: Perchance till after Theseus' wedding day. And if you can behave yourself, you can come with us. If not, leave me alone, and I'll stay away from you.

OBERON: Give me the boy, and I'll go with you.

TITANIA: Not for thy faerie kingdom. Faeries, away!

**Titania and her "light" faeries exit.**

**Comment 37** This comment from Avon, mocks Oberon and his reliance upon the feminine Mother Nature. This came from a fairly vocal feminist student.

OBERON: My gentle Puck, come hither. That very time I saw, but thou couldst not. Flying between the cold moon and the Earth, Cupid all armed. And yeah, to cut a long story short, he pierced a thousand hearts.

**Faeries start to come onto stage and listen in, and the trees start to open their eyes and listen in.**

AVON: Here he who is in control, relies still upon Mother Nature for his power.

OBERON: But the most important bit is I paid attention to where Cupid's arrow fell. It fell upon a little Western flower, which used to be as white as milk, but now it's purple. Bring me the flower.

FAERIES/FLORA: Bring me the flower; bring me the flower (louder and echoed)

PUCK: What, me, now?

**Puck walks and picks up a random flower, off a tree and all the trees start going on about it.**

TREES: No, not that flower, no! She took a week to grow that! (etc.)

FLY: \*in pain\* AHHHH!

**Comment 38** This character is a Venus fly trap.

**Puck gives the flower to Oberon, a yellow flower. Oberon yells at him, getting angrier.**

OBERON: What is this? This isn't purple, can't you see that this is yellow and not purple?! **(Knocks flower out of his hand.)** NOW GO GET ME A YELLOW--- PURPLE FLOWER! Now see what you've done! Get me a purple flower! And get it to me before the clock strikes twelve!

PUCK: The mouse ran up the clock! Hickory dickory dock!

FAERIES/PUCK: The clock struck one!

**Comment 39** Reference to a nursery rhyme here. This was included as the discussion held by students was that time is man-made.

OBERON: I didn't say one! I said twelve! Having once this juice, I'll watch Titania when she is asleep and drop the liquor of it in her eyes. Then when she wakes up, no matter who she sees, she'll fall in love with them!

OLLIO: Head over heels in love with them?

OBERON: In love with them.

ORDELLA: Could be a bull.

FAYE: Or a wolf!

DIZZY: Or a monkey!

DEZRA: An ape!

BREENA: Or a lion!

LILLIE: A tiger!

ERLINE: A bear!

NYX: Oh my! Or a human!

**Comment 40** Some of the many faeries who comment upon the momentum of the script. And form a faery council to discuss their King and Queen's terrible moods and the effect they're having upon the faery folk.

**Comment 41** This also allows each student to have at least a line to say, rather than being lost in the background.

**Silence for a beat and then all the faeries laugh cruelly, on the floor, slowly dies down into silence.**

OBERON: And then to add insult to injury, I shall make the child sound to be a burden to her, and take him then, off her hands. **\*evil laugh\*** I will disappear hence with into these trees! I can see us now that boy and me in the magazines!

WARREN: A fly on the wall?

ORIEL: Like a fly on the tree!

WARREN: No, a fly on the wall!

FAERIES: Fly on the wall! (repeated by each)

OBERON: SHHHH!!! Hide!

**Demetrius enters, with Helena following him.**

DEMETRIUS: I love thee not, so leave me alone! Where is Lysander and fair Hermia? I feel my heart falling apart, as the one I live and breathe for is off with Lysander – the one I hate!

HELENA: I don't know why I love you, yet I'm drawn to you.

DEMETRIUS: Do I entice you? Do I speak you fair? Or rather, do I not in plainest truth. Tell you I do not, nor I cannot, love you?

HELENA: And yet no matter how much you hurt me, no matter how much you lie, no matter how much you push me away, I'll always look for that one reason to fight for you, to hold onto you, to stay.

DEMETRIUS: Don't tempt yourself with me, for looking at you makes me sick. Who goes there? (looks around)

**Faeries all step out from where they have been hiding before hiding again. Dante steps out.**

DANTE: That's a bit low.

HELENA: And I am sick when I look not on you!

**Comment 42** Dante comments on how pathetic the love sick Helena is.

DANTE: You got some problems, girl.

DEMETRIUS: Look, you don't want to risk your self-worth on the likes of me.

HELENA: But I... really rely on you. This forest doesn't seem deserted with you here.

**Faeries all laugh as all faeries except Oberon and Puck leave.**

DEMETRIUS: Head back now while you can find your way, for I am leaving now and you'll get lost if you stay. You know... wolves and things. There'll be beasties in them there hills.

DANTE: Dude, you okay?

HELENA: The wildest animals have not such a black heart as you.

DANTE: Seriously, glad you've caught up with this.

DEMETRIUS: I'm not listening to your whining no more! I will not be held accountable for what happens when you sleep!

DANTE: Dude. What is WRONG with you?!

HELENA: You've hurt me so many times thus far, what's one more going to do to my shattered heart? The way you treat the one that follows you blindly. We cannot fight for love as men might do, we should be wooed, and we were not made to woo.

**Demetrius exits.**

DANTE: So...what do you want to do?

HELENA: I'll follow thee, and make heaven out of hell, to die upon the hand I love so well.

**Helena exits.**

DANTE: All this love stuff! Why if we know something that hurts us so much, why then do we follow?

SISSIA: How would you know?

**Comment 43** This is the first time, Sissia a faery sees and hears Dante a mortal.

DANTE: Who said that?

**Dante turns to his right, doesn't see anything. Turns to left, she runs around him, and he sees Sissia.**

DANTE: STOP! (holds hand out to stop her, she falls back on the ground, he helps her up.)

SISSIA: You can see me. You can see me! Oh my! You can see me! I don't know what to do! A MORTAL CAN SEE ME. Oh... Help! I'll run! (starts running, stops) I'll hide! Titania is going to kill me!

**Sissia runs off stage.**

**Comment 44** Here Sissia realises that Dante can see her. And we learn that Titania won't be happy that she has allowed herself to be seen by a mortal.

DANTE: Wait!

**Dante follows.**

**Oberon steps out of the Faraway tree, and brushes himself off.**

OBERON: Before those two pawns, those mere mortals, leave this forest, Helena shall feel what it is like to be chased by Demetrius. And as for that flitty, fluttering little faerie... good luck! **\*evil laugh\*** He exits.

AVON: Oh Oberon, oh almighty powerful one, how you make me chuckle – even the trees in your forest mock you, your powers derived from the woman who doth giveth thou life, sweet little flower is he! **She exits behind him.**

## **ACT ONE, SCENE FIVE**

FARAWAY: Oh, thank goodness he's gone! I can feel my bark curling! Why always me?

HOLLOW: Well at least he didn't sit inside you! Last time he sat right here!

WOODY: They SAT on my HEAD.

**Comment 45** Here is foreshadowing of Far Away's wishes to be free.

FAR AWAY: You know what I hate about this, I hate that we can't get away from here! That we can't move!

BIRCHA: Well, I move! I move quite a bit.

FAR AWAY: Did we ASK you? We're talking about REAL trees!

FLORA: Yeah, shut up, no one likes you!

FLORA: Yeah, no one likes you (repeated by others, and the like)

**Bircha slumps down and sighs, sad.**

### **ACT ONE, SCENE SIX**

**Titania and faeries enter.**

TITANIA: Come now, faeries! We've got a lot of work to do today! (claps hands happily)

AVON: **Alongside Titania, no-one on stage can see her** – I could not have dreamed you more perfectly, your strength enveloped in feminine beauty, oh Titania.

RHOSLYN: What are we doing today, Titania?

AVON: **To Titania** Speak my queen I bid thee speak!

TITANIA: **As she speaks AVON touches her face and then vanishes behind the curtain.** Wait to be spoken to! **(stomp of foot)** We'll be gathering petals, you can gather petals!

BESS: Pink or red?

TITANIA: Purple! I need you gather some autumn leaves.

BESS: Um, I don't know if you've noticed, but there aren't really any autumn leaves out. There's something strange going on with the seasons, I went to frolic in them the other day, and there weren't any. I like to play in autumn leaves, and there weren't any, and there should be at the moment, and-

TITANIA: Would you please be QUIET?! Leaves, just leaves, green, brown, it doesn't matter, just get leaves!

**Enter Sissia, looking guilty.**

TITANIA: Right, some of you will kill worms infesting the rosebuds.

SINDRI: **\*gulp\*** poor worms...

TITANIA: What was that?!

SINDRI: Nothing, Titania...

TITANIA: Queen Titania to you! Now, some of you will also fight the bats and get their leathery wings for coats for my little elves!

**Comment 46** Sissia stands up to her elder sister Titania. This raised discussion between students about sibling s who are older thinking they have more rights than the younger siblings.

SISSIA: Umm, Titania... I actually have a problem with that.

TITANIA: **\*glares\***

SISSIA: Well, how would you like it if I ripped YOUR wings off and made coats out of them?

**Comment 47** Animal rights, raised quickly here.

TITANIA: I'm NOT a bat.

SISSIA: Come on, what do you all think? **(Looks at other faeries)**

**Faeries look scared/wary, take few steps back behind the trees, that protect them.**

TITANIA: How DARE you undermine my authority?! Just because you get everything your way, it's always been like this, Sissia this, Sissia that, SISSIA SISSIA SISSIA!!!!\*screeches\* I RULE!! ...I actually do rule. I'm Queen! You're just going to have to accept that not everything is about you. And why I pray thee do you look so on edge?

**Comment 48** We learn that Sissia is definitely able to see mortals and is willing to stand up to her sister, the queen.

SISSIA: Oh I had a dream methinks about AVON a mortal methinks. Anyway don't change the subject - I'm NOT deaf. And I'm NOT going to kill innocent little bats.

**Sissia leaves. Titania rests. Faeries start singing her lullaby.**

**Black Star – Avril Lavigne**

**Comment 49** This song chosen as the lullaby sang to Titania. A student came up with this because she thought the character Titania was like a star but she had a dark side.

FAERIES: Black star, black star  
Forever you will be  
A shining star, shining star  
Be whatever you can be  
A rock star, rock star  
You will always be  
A black star, black star, black star  
Black Star, black star, black star

MARIGOLD: Hence, away! Now all is well. One aloof stand sentinel.

**Black out.**

**Comment 50** Students felt this plotting needed to made clearer for the audience to understand Oberon's plan and the relationship he has with Puck.

## **ACT ONE, SCENE SEVEN**

**Oberon sneaks behind Far Away who sighs loudly, and he watches Titania, being guarded by Bess, who is pacing. Sissia enters.**

SISSIA: Is she still sleeping? And you've been here all night? Go, rest. I'll watch over her.

Bess leaves, trees are swaying in the breeze. Oberon freezes the scene with magic. He approaches Sissia, who is also frozen. He then approaches Titania.

OBERON:                    **\*in her face\*** Boo! Look at you, my Queen! **\*caresses her face\*** you think you're the ruler of the forest, but you sleep, and you sleep, and you sleep! And my plan... Where...is...Puck?

**Audience can hear a song "Don't worry be happy", and Puck enters, mid-song.**

PUCK:                    DOOO-DOOOT! **\*continues to sing and dance and then stops, seeing the room frozen\***

OBERON:                Oh, don't worry, you WILL be happy. Where is the flower?

PUCK:                    Ummm...

**Comment 51** Comedy used to show their scam as flawed – this foreshadows the mess that is about to unfold. One of the writers felt this would help the audience realise the chaos that was about to unfold.

OBERON:                Puck! First it was yellow, and then purple and now-

PUCK:                    Wait... just hold this **\*starts to pull out random stuff – yo-yos, a Rubik's cube, etc - and passes it all to Oberon\***

OBERON:                You have all of this, but not a blasted flower?!

PUCK:                    Hmmm... If I were a flower, where'd I be? **\*scratches head, finds it behind his ear\*** hey... here it is!

**Puck sits it on top of the pile of stuff, and Oberon drops it all, catching the flower.**

OBERON:                Wait. Stand by the edge of the forest. Step back a bit. Now Sissia, **\*he picks her up and turns her to Puck\*** when you unfreeze you shall see everything that you please.

**Scene unfreezes. Sissia sees Dante in Puck's place and follows him offstage. Oberon approaches Titania with the flower.**

**Comment 52** Mainstream TV comedy. Which got quite a laugh!

OBERON:                What thou seest when thou dost wake, could be a bull, or a wolf, or a monkey, an ape, or a lion, or a tiger, a bear. Oh Heaven forbid, it's a Kardashian!

**Oberon puts the drops from the flower on her eyes, and kisses her forehead.**

OBERON:                Punishment can be just as deserving as privilege!

**Oberon skips off the stage, happily, bumping into Faraway, who groans.**

## ACT ONE, SCENE EIGHT

**Comment 53** Sissia questions her love for someone who is forbidden. Students discussed this in some depth. The 'bad boy' fascination in teenage relationships came up and the relationship of Sissia and Dante was loosely based on this. Students were excited to be able to decide how Dante and Sissia's relationship would develop.



**Sissia enters.**

SISSIA: (to herself) I just don't understand... how can he see me? He's human, a mortal...So why am I so drawn to him? Why do I feel this way about him? I just can't get him out of my mind; I just keep losing my train of thought and UGH! It's like an illness!

**Dante enters halfway through her rant.**

DANTE: Does something bother you, faerie?

**Sissia turns to him angrily.**

SISSIA: Yes! You! You are what bothers me! You and your stupid human...ness! You're making me feel... all warm and fuzzy! I don't DO warm and fuzziness! I do fiery-ness and all that.

DANTE: But of course! Of course you do fire and "all that". Of course. You're doing this, aren't you? It's part of your magic, isn't it, faerie-

SISSIA: I have a name. It's Sissia.

DANTE: I'm Dante. **\*beat as they stare at each other, and then he speaks quietly\*** this is your work though, is it not? You are making me feel this fire?

SISSIA: Fire?

**Comment 54** Here they play with the idea of who says the word love first.

DANTE: Yes. This feeling is like fire. It burns when you're gone, and it burns when you're here. I don't know what it is, but there is something that's making me feel like this! It must be your magic.

SISSIA: The magic within me is not strong enough to make someone fall in love.

DANTE: So you can't make people fall in- Love? I never said anything about love, who said love?

SISSIA: Not me! I never said love, did you say love? I didn't say love. Did you?

DANTE: No. **\*beat\*** this isn't your magic? **\*Sissia shakes her head\*** then who is doing this? Who is making me feel this fire and brimstone?

SISSIA: Is it really so horrid? Am **\*I\*** really that horrid?

DANTE: You're a faerie.

SISSIA: And you're a human. I can't feel this sweet agony for a HUMAN. What would Titania say?

**Comment 55** The idea that their feelings could be wrong based on their family's expectations. The idea of being gay and not letting family know came up and part of the relationship was based on this. Later in the script where she loses her wings...

DANTE: Titania? Who is Titania?

SISSIA: My sister, the Queen! Oh, help! **\*Sissia starts pacing, away from him\*** She's going to kill me for this! How can you see me? You're HUMAN. Unless... **\*rushes across the stage so she's right in front of him\*** Do you have any faerie blood within you? That must be it! You have faerie blood within you and that is why you can see me and why I feel like this and- **\*looks at Dante, who's shaking his head\*** and I'm just so wrong, am I not? There's something wrong with me if I can feel this...

**Comment 55 continued..** it shows how she will have to choose love over family, which one student felt she would have to do.

DANTE: Feel like what? What do you feel, fair Sissia?

SISSIA: Like... I don't know how to explain it. There's this feeling you get... Well, I suppose you wouldn't, but there's this feeling I get, all faeries get it. When you fly so high that you've just forgotten about everything, you can't hear anything, it's just you and the wind, and your stomach lifts to this perfect moment. Your adrenaline kicks in and you just feel amazingly high at being one with the sky. That... that's how I feel every single time I see you..... stupid human.

DANTE: **\*smiling slightly\*** Stupid faerie.

**Comment 56** Students discussed the once bitten twice shy in relation to Shakespeare's Romeo in Romeo and Juliet.

SISSIA: You don't like feeling this, do you?

DANTE: Never said I felt like anything, now did I?

SISSIA: Fire and brimstone, it burns when I'm gone and also when I'm here. **\*very drily/sarcastically\*** That was quite poetic.

**Comment 57** Another reference to Shakespeare as Bottom. Also enhancing the idea that Bottom is the weaver of dreams.

DANTE: Don't pretend to know me, Sissia.

SISSIA: **\*starts pacing in front of him\*** You've loved before. You loved so deeply and unconditionally that it felt as if it truly did rip you apart when she left. So you built up walls, refused to let anyone in, you became logical, acted like nothing could penetrate the shield you had built. Then you saw a bloody faerie. How close am I?

DANTE: **\*sighing\*** Her name was Juliet. She was a great friend of mine for years; she was like a sister to me. She died years ago, chose death over marrying the man she did not love. Her lover died with her. There was not a story of more woe than that of Juliet and her Romeo.

AVON: **She questions the audience.** Think you Bottom dreamt of this?

SISSIA: I'm sorry.

DANTE: As am I. And so I swore never to let another affect me so, I would not love another like I did my friend, not give my love to someone who did not care.

SISSIA: Take mine. Take my feelings... I don't want them just to myself.

Sissia sings.

**Comment 58** This song was carefully chosen to show the possibility of a person being responsible for another's happiness.

Take My Heart – Soko

SISSIA: You can take my heart for a walk on the beach  
You can take my heart for a little trip  
You can take my heart very close to your heart  
You can take my heart forever if you like

But not every heart belongs to any other  
You and I  
You and I are meant to be  
I'm the one for you, You're the one for me  
You love me as much as I do  
When you look at me and we're skin to skin  
I want you so  
Please come in  
And you love me more and more  
And my love grows up with you  
And you kiss me more and more  
And I kiss you, too  
And I kiss you, too

If I take your heart, I will cherish it every day  
If I take your heart, I will heal these old wounds  
If I take your heart, it's to make it happy  
If I take your heart, it's forever close to mine

But not every heart belongs to any other  
You and I  
You and I are meant to be  
I'm the one for you, You're the one for me  
You love me as much as I do  
When you look at me and we're skin to skin  
I want you so  
Please come in  
And you love me more and more  
And my love grows up with you

And you kiss me more and more  
And I kiss you, too  
And I kiss you, too

(Violin solo! )

I don't care, I don't care  
If I'm again carried away  
If you swear, if you swear  
To give me your heart in return

I don't care, I don't care  
If I'm again carried away  
If you swear, if you swear  
To give me your heart in return  
To give me your heart in return

**They go to hug and Sissia's wings get in the way, she giggles.**

**Blackout.**

### **ACT ONE, SCENE NINE**

**Enter Lysander and Hermia.**

LYSANDER: Fair love, you faint with wandering in the wood. And to speak troth, I have forgot our way. \*clicks\* Damn! We'll rest here, Hermia, if you think it good. And tarry for the comfort of the day.

HERMIA: Be it so, Lysander. Find you out of a bed, for I upon this bank will rest my head.

LYSANDER: One turf shall serve as pillow for us both. One heart, one bed, two bosoms and one troth.

HERMIA: Nay, good Lysander. For my sake, my dear, lie further off yet. Do not lie so near.

LYSANDER: Oh sweetheart, my dear Hermia, I didn't mean THAT!

HERMIA: Oh, we will, I want to be in your arms, but not until we are wed.

LYSANDER: Amen to that. Amen, amen. I hope my life ends before my loyalty to you does. You sleep over here, I will over there. Sleep well.

HERMIA: Sleep well.

**Puck enters, dancing, holding the flower.**

**Comment 59** This was simplified to make what was happening clear for the audience.

PUCK: I've got the power, I've got the flower, but who will I use it on? There's no one around to use it on – wait a second! Ah! This must be the mortal that Oberon told me about! The one who made the girl cry! Pig! I throw the power of this magic charm on your eyes! When you awake, you will love none other than fair Helena.

**Puck exits.**

HIPPOLYTA: Ophelia, Ophelia, Ophelia-a-a-a-a-a **(This rings out through the forest)**

AVON: **From within the trees.** Though art not crazed but driven Ophelia, oh how I long to see thee play!

**(Ophelia appears from behind a tree.)**

OPHELIA: Yes Hippolyta?

HIPPOLYTA: That's Duchess to you!

**Comment 60** Here we see a power play between Ophelia and Hippolyta. This was based loosely on a teacher student relationship, where the teacher always has the power in the end. The process of being given a detention was discussed and how a student decides very quickly not to continue to push a matter if they know it will adversely affect them.

OPHELIA: Oh, okay – I didn't realize because technically you're not really yet because you're not married to the Duke.

HIPPOLYTA: Shall I remind you who exactly pays your meagre wage?!

OPHELIA: That would be the Duke too.

HIPPOLYTA: And he would not employ a wedding planner if it were not for me!

OPHELIA: Point taken.

HIPPOLYTA: Do you have the flowers ready?

OPHELIA: Absolutely! I assure you I have the most beautiful flowers sorted!

HIPPOLYTA: Wonderful may I see a sample?

OPHELIA: **(Clicks her fingers.)**

**Wedding assistants enter.**

OPHELIA: Who has the flowers?

**Each of them points to the next one.**

OPHELIA: Must I repeat myself? I asked whom has the flowers.

LATIFA: I-I-I...

MARIA: Um well!

ANDREA: We don't have them!

OPHELIA: What do you mean?

PORTIA: Well, we want them to be fresh!

HIPPOLYTA: Well, that makes sense. And the entertainment?

OPHELIA: We'll be holding auditions for acts, singing and the like!

HIPPOLYTA: I think something theatrical! Oh no is that the time? I have to ready myself for tea.

**(Hippolyta exits.)**

OPHELIA: Well don't all just stand there – pick all of this up! I'll meet you at the edge of the forest we need to get flowers.

**(She hands items to the assistants and they exit)**

OPHELIA: **\*to audience\*** How on earth did I forget flowers?

**Titania enters from one side and watches Ophelia leave from the other.**

TITANIA: I hath a very friendly feeling toward this mortal Ophelia, I think she hath faerie blood and I giveth her a power to ensure her mission done. For I hath dreamt of concoctions that look a little like her! And have hence fashioned her to be a wedding planner see.

**To the audience...**

Like you her? I giveth to the mortals as they all hath trouble to love, and design their ceremonies. I giveth her to make you sure and take your gold and hire the marquis. You hire her to choose the glasses, the place cards, the flowers and their vases. She'll taste your food and sip the wine, to make sure the guests fine dine. If you look closely she is the epitome of you and he and she and me. She believes in true love like no other – and places with all dexterity the miniature bride and groom upon the cake and sources coordinated knicks and knacks and never wearies of the task at hand. She leads with a light in her eyes, her servants afeard her and the bride's worship she earns. It is man I am yet to lose the cynicism of this dutiful role from. Perhaps it is his lazy streak that I must abide and focus his sights on the time spent watching games while his bride to be and the mad, sweet, Ophelia plan his nuptial day.

**Blackout.**

**ACT ONE, SCENE TEN**

**Comment 61** Titania's character is given the power to invent the modern day wedding planner as students thought she thought very carefully about the organisation and proper place of love – i.e. weddings.

**Empty stage apart from the flora.**

CHLORA: Oh me, oh my, it is something he did try!

WOODY: What are you saying Chlora?

TWIGGY: Well in my opinion, you Woody need to be patient and listen, Chlora's trying to explain!

CHLORA: Put he something in her eye! The one before the wedding planners – the faerie his name rhymes methinks wif MUCK – that's it PUCK!

BIRCHA: What would you know Twiggy?! Look at you you're so so prickly!

TWIGGY: I saw him too putting love juices in eyes. Playing the puppeteer.

DANDY: Well if you ask me I think you should all be quiet! There are mortals over there watching you.

FARAWAY: I have absolutely no time for mortals what so ever!

WILLOW: Why what have they ever done to you?

FARAWAY: I suppose it's like this – I am a tree!

**Comment 62** Faraway dreams of being free. This was initially seen as something funny and was later developed as a meaningful part that shows humanity's desire for what they don't have.

HOLLOW: Tell us something we don't know!

FARAWAY: Mortals can at least move right! I'd rather be a mortal and move than be a tree!

TWIGGY: Tell me if I am wrong but don't all trees die?

FARAWAY: If mortals kill them they do! Otherwise they live like,... well forever! Anyway...

HOLLOW: So you're telling me you want to be a mortal!? Why? Why on earth would you want to be mortal? You just said you have no time for them!

FARAWAY: So I can move, dance, be free! And I wouldn't waste my time on this love obsession that all mortals seem to have! I would feel the air beneath my roots and leap and bound and enjoy the freedom to move!

WOODY: BUT you can move – look at me! I got nothing here! Mortals cut all my branches off. Free pff – how free do you think they are!

OAK: Oh they're free alright, free to pee on the likes of me! Why you want to be like one of them Faraway?

FLY: I can see the upside to being mortal, I could get and eat as many flies as I liked if I could only move!

**Comment 63** Woody was a comment on logging but used as a contrast to Faraway and used to show that everything is relative. This showed some complex thinking and different examples were discussed in relation to this.

WOODY: BUT you can move!

FARAWAY: But we can't move from whence we are! My roots are deep! I would to fall over!

WOODY: Be careful what you wish for Faraway!

TREES ECHOE: Be careful what you wish for x 6

**Comment 64** This song was removed and replaced with chanting!

**FOREST SINGS CHORUS: Be careful what you wish for Jonatha Brook**

TREES: Careful what you wish for, careful what you do  
Even when you whisper, someone's listening to you  
Careful what you wish for, careful what you say  
Careful what you wish for, 'cuz it just might come true someday

**Enter wedding planner with entourage.**

OPHELIA: Okay, here we are!

ANDREA: But excuse me Ophelia, I don't think the Duke and his Duchess would want to be married in here, it's kind of dark and spooky!

BRIDIE: Are you crazy Andrea, don't speak to her like that?

SAXON: Do either of you have a clue? Honestly!

OPHELIA: Exactly! We're here sourcing flowers!

ANDREA: Bridie! What about that one over there!

BRIDIE: Ophelia, what about this one! **(She points to Fly)**

FLY: **GULPS**

PORTIA: Be careful Bridie and Andrea, that one eats humans.

MARIA: We should get Ophelia to look more closely!

LATIFA: Yo Ophy, get over here look at this one would ya!?

**Ophelia moves over to Fly.**

Ophelia: No! Wrong colour – that's a horrible colour!

**Fly gets angry and spits lots of flies and bugs and gloop all over Ophelia!**



**The wedding planner assistants laugh!**

OPHELIA: Well don't just stand there, help me! Let's get out of here! She kicks Woody on her way out! **(And he screams ouch)**

**They exit!**

### **ACT ONE, SCENE ELEVEN**

**A whole bunch of faeries are on stage, but not Titania, Oberon and Puck. All faeries seem to be playing and talking. Sissia is off to the side, daydreaming.**

ALALIA: Okay! Okay, let's-

**Comment 65** The faery council allowed for many students to have speaking parts.

**She is cut off by all the faeries still talking over her.**

NERETTA: Oh, shut it! Listen to Alalia, this is important!

NYX: EVERYTHING is always important to you council folk!

ORDELLA: **\*snidely\*** And shouldn't you be waiting for The King and Queen, anyway?

ALALIA: NO. Oberon and Titania can't be here for this.

NERETTA: And neither can Puck.

OLLIO: Definitely not. If Puck was here, then the King would know almost instantly, and that's not a good thing.

ORIEL: They can't know.

NYX: Ooh, this is interesting!

ERLINE: Are we committing treason?

LORELLA: We can't commit treason! I can't go to jail!

NERETTA: All of you, sit down and shut up! We're not committing treason, and Alalia has something to say.

**The faeries all take places around the stage, in almost a circle, with Alalia up the back, addressing them all, Neretta next to her.**

ALALIA: Titania and Oberon are out of control. Controlling the weather with their emotions, making thunder appear in the middle of a cloudless day! They just can't keep this up! The humans are bound to notice!

**At the mention of humans, Sissia turns and actually begins to pay attention.**

COBWEB: Well, what can we do? The King and Queen won't listen to us.

MORTICIA: It's that Changeling child! That's where the problem is.

ORIEL: This is why it should be forbidden for humans and faeries to be together.

BESS: For once, I agree with you. Faeries and humans don't mix.

MAURELLE: They shouldn't even be able to see each other, it's wrong if they do.

NISSA: Extremely wrong.

DEZRA: Glad we all agree. Fraternizing with humans is-

ALL BUT SISSIA: Wrong!

SISSIA: **\*tentatively\*** As a matter of interest... why can some humans see us?

ALALIA, SINDRI,  
NERETTA, NYX: **\*sharply\*** What?

NERETTA: Has a human seen you, Sissia?

ALALIA: This is very serious if they have.

SINDRI: How is that possible?

NYX: **\*laughs cruelly\*** It's possible because it's Sissia! I always said she had some kind of screw loose, and now humans can see her!

**Most faeries give her a dirty look.**

**Avon looks on in this scene – she seems pleased, until Sissia sees her.**

NYX: What? I'm just saying.

RHOSLYN: Don't be cruel, Nyx!

SINDRI: Yeah, leave her alone.

NYX: I'm just saying she's always been different! Now those humans can see her, she'll be gone soon. Either she'll stupidly fall for one of THEM, or they'll see her, get interested-

LILLIE: Hunt her down!

DIZZY: Make her be a firefly!

FAERYDAE: Rip her wings off!

NYX: And poor little Sissia will have more than simply a screw loose. She'll be insane!

ALALIA: Nyx and the rest of you, ENOUGH. Sissia, if you're not being seen by humans and if it's mere curiosity, we need to move on. We need to find a way for the changeling to no longer be a factor in this war between Titania and Oberon.

FAYE: We could hide him?

MARIGOLD: Is that the fancy way Oberon's taught you to say "kill"?

**Faye looks offended and Breena jumps in.**

BREENA: No! Just because we're DARK faeries, it doesn't mean we're EVIL. Learn the difference, pixie!

COBWEB: Do NOT call her that! We're not pixies!

BESS: We're nothing like them, and you should know it!

ALALIA: ENOUGH. If no one has any suggestions at the moment or anything further to discuss, then we must disperse. If Titania or Oberon-

NISSA: Or even Puck!

ALALIA: Yes, or even Puck – if any of them find out what we're talking about, the storm shall never end. All of you, think on solutions and-

SISSIA: **She sees Avon...**You again what are you doing here?

ORIEL: Whom might I suppose you art referring to?

SISSIA: oh never-mind!! I've got something I need to discuss!

ORIEL: **\*deadpan\*** Of course you do.

SISSIA: And if you tell Titania, I'll be turned to dust!

FAERYDAE: Interesting!

SISSIA: I know a faerie who has fallen in love with a human, a human who's fallen in love with a faerie, and they don't know what to do!

BESS: So THAT'S why you were asking!

WARREN: They should just forget-

RHOSLYN: No, they should go for it!

ARETHUSA: What? No! It's twisted to fall for a human!

DEZRA: Yeah, they're mere mortals.

MARIGOLD: I don't know... **\*everyone turns to her\*** I mean... would it really be so bad, to fall for a mortal?

ARETHUSA: Ah let me think about it? Ah you have a good point! NOT!!!

ORDELLA: Uh, try YES!

NYX: I know you're light faeries and all, but you're all REALLY dumb sometimes.

ARETHUSA: Don't like stereotype faeries and stuff right!

MORTICIA: The most important rule of being a faerie?

WARREN, LILLIE,  
DEZRA: NEVER be seen by mortals!

ORDELLA: The second most important rule?

DIZZY, FAYE,  
FAERYDAE: NEVER EVER be seen by mortals!

ERLINE: The third most important rule?

ARETHUSA: Um get some taste!

DIZZY, DEZRA,  
LILLIE, FAYE: DON'T fall for a mortal!

MARIGOLD: I don't think it'd be that bad...

ARETHUSA: You are one deranged faerie!

PEASEBLOSSOM: Yes, I think it'd be nice.

NERETTA: It's not our ways.

ARETHUSA: Um hello and they're ugly!

ALALIA: She's right. It's not in our blood. And unless you became mortal, you'll outlive them.

ARETHUSA: Um hello, they can't even fly!

**Comment 66** Once one faery decides to state that it wouldn't be too bad to fall in love with a human

BESS: But what about our souls? Sometimes people are just born to be with a mortal, sometimes people just have to become mortal.

ARETHUSA: Um hello! Souls – are you serious?

LORELLA: I think I'd like to be human.

OLLIO: Me too. After a while you just kind of get bored of being alive forever while everything around you changes. I'd like to be human.

ARETHUSA: Oh right so you like want to be a dead mortal like that makes sense!

MUSTARDSEED: And me.

MARIGOLD: I'd give anything.

SISSIA: **\*quietly\*** I would do anything to be human. I really would.

**Sissia sings, all faeries dance.**

**Human – Ellie Goulding**

**Comment 67** It was as if Ellie Goulding had written this song for our production of a Midsommer

SISSIA: Human behave yourself,  
you have burst at the seams  
let it all fall out open your mouth  
often I lie wide awake,  
think of things I can make  
but I don't seem to have the parts to build them  
Human I wonder why you're a better make than I could ever build or create,  
you know not love or hate  
I am so scared of what will kill me in the end for I am not prepared,  
I hope I will get the chance to be someone,  
to be human,  
look what we've done,  
look what we've done

ALL FAERIES I would give my life, to be human  
I would give my life, to be human  
I would give my life, to be human

SISSIA: I would give my life, to be.

MUSTARDSEED: Human I'm trying to come clean,  
I will be a better me,  
I will not drink until I'm dead  
I'll make the most of it.

LORELLA: I don't know what it's like to be alive,  
to say goodbye,  
to cry a thousand tears because my ears won't listen

PEASEBLOSSOM: Human I'm trying not to lose my faith in you,  
I've sussed out all that I've seen through,  
I've sailed an ocean

OLLIO: I am so scared of what I'll look like in the end for I am not prepared,  
I hope I will get the chance to be someone  
to be human,  
look what we've done,  
look what we've done

ALL FAERIES: I would give my life, to be human  
I would give my life, to be human  
I would give my life, to be human  
I would give my life, to be.

SISSIA: I used to hear it all so loud,  
the sound of my heart breaking.  
The truth is waiting to be found,  
I trust that I will take it

PEASEBLOSSOM,  
MARIGOLD : I would give my life

LORELLA  
MUSTARDSEED I would give my life

BESS & OLLIO: I would give my life

SISSIA: I would give my life

ALL FAERIES: I would give my life, to be  
I would give my life, to be  
I would give my life, to be  
I would give my life, to be (human)

NYX: I'd love to see the Queen's reaction to this, Sissia. It's wrong.

DARK FAERIES: It really is... (etc.)

**Comment 68** Students discussed the need to see someone get into trouble when they challenge authority. And the question arose. why do people like to see

**Nyx exits with the rest of the "dark" faeries, Ollio rather reluctantly.**

**Blackout.**

**ACT ONE, SCENE TWELVE**

**Demetrius and Helena enter.**

HELENA: Stop, stay! Though thou kill me, sweet Demetrius!

DEMETRIUS: Helena, I charge thee hence! LEAVE ME ALONE!

HELENA: Oh, but Demetrius, and rather be alone then, with anyone but you.

DEMETRIUS: (claps) Great! Hold that thought, I'm going, see you later!

HELENA: No! Please don't leave, for the dark shall swallow me!

**Demetrius runs off. Helena pants, out of breath.**

HELENA: I'm out of breath! Hermia is so lucky. She's so beautiful. And where did she get her beautiful eyes? Not from crying! For tears wash my eyes more than hers! I am as ugly as a donkey! It's no wonder Demetrius just runs! What wicked and dissembling mirror of mine made me compare myself with Hermia's beautiful eye?

**Helena stumbles upon Lysander.**

HELENA: But who is here? Lysander on the ground? Dead or asleep? I see no blood, no wound. Lysander, if you live, please awake!

**Lysander wakes up, entranced by Helena.**

**Comment 69** Arethusa, a faery was developed to show how people can change their minds, when they know something is fundamentally right.

LYSANDER: What angel I see before me? I would run through fire if you told me to, radiant, beautiful Helena! Where is Demetrius? Oh, how fit a word is that vile name to perish on my sword!

ARETHUSA: Hey mortals, can you see me! **(She waves in their faces)**

HELENA: Don't say that, Lysander! Do not speak words so harsh! Why do you care if he loves your Hermia? What does it matter? Hermia stills love you. Then be content.

LYSANDER: Content with Hermia. No. I do repent. The tedious minutes I with her have spent.

ARETHUSA: **(To audience)** See what I mean – ugly!!

HELENA: Why is everyone always mocking me? When at your hands did I deserve this scorn? Why are you being so cruel? I have to say, I thought you were a much better person than this! It's bad enough that I've already been rejected by Demetrius, and now you're making a mockery of me! Let me be!

**Helena exits.**

LYSANDER: She didn't see Hermia... Oh, Hermia, keep sleeping. Don't come near me again. You know what it's like, it's like if you eat too many sweets, they make people sick to their stomach. And Hermia's like a sweet, that I've had too much of. But fair Helena! That's another story!

**Lysander exits. Hermia wakes up.**

ARETHUSA: **(Tickles Hermia with a branch which wakes her up)**

HERMIA: Help me, Lysander, help me! Do thy best to pluck this crawling serpent from my chest. I had a terrible dream! There was a snake on my chest, it was trying to eat my heart. Oh, Lysander, it was terrible! Lysander! Lysander, where are you? Awww... I'm all alone. Where is he? Gone, disappeared, hurt? Oh, help! Where are you? Say something if you can hear me, say something please! Nothing? Then I guess you're nowhere near! I'll find you!

**Hermia sings.**

Here With Me – Dido

**Comment 70** Chosen as it comments on how dedicated Hermia is to her love.

HERMIA: I didn't hear you leave  
I wonder, how am I still here?  
And I don't wanna move a thing  
It might change my memory

Oh, I am what I am  
I'll do what I want, but I can't hide  
And I won't go, I won't sleep, I can't breathe  
Until you're resting here with me

And I won't leave and I can't hide, I cannot be  
Until you're resting here with me

I don't wanna call my friends  
For they might wake me from this dream  
And I can't leave this bed  
Risk forgetting all that's been

Oh, I am what I am  
I'll do what I want, but I can't hide  
And I won't go, I won't sleep, and I can't breathe  
Until you're resting here with me  
[ From: <http://www.elyrics.net> ]



And I won't leave and I can't hide, I cannot be  
Until you're resting here  
And I won't go and I won't sleep, and I can't breathe  
Until you're resting here with me

And I won't leave and I can't hide, I cannot be  
Until you're resting here with me

Oh, I am what I am  
I'll do what I want, but I can't hide  
And I won't go, I won't sleep and I can't breathe  
Until you're resting here with me

And I won't leave and I can't hide, I cannot be  
Until you're resting here  
And I won't go and I won't sleep, and I can't breathe  
Until you're resting here with me

And I won't leave and I can't hide, I cannot be  
Until you're resting here with me

Hermia exits.

### ACT ONE, SCENE THIRTEEN

Sissia enters to find Dante on stage already. Arethusa is watching from behind Faraway.

DANTE: I thought you weren't coming.

SISSIA: I was at a council meeting about one thing, and it quickly turned into another thing and then everyone was just having a go at each other, calling each other pixies and you know how THAT can end up, it can get violent when we mention pixies, I'm glad-

DANTE: Um... I don't actually know... Why is it bad that you called each other pixies?

SISSIA: Well, because we're not pixies. **\*she gives him a look like this should be obvious\*** Pixies are tiny little mischievous creatures with pointed ears that are just vile and just – don't call us pixies!

DANTE: I'm not, I'm not!

SISSIA: Good... They say we're wrong. That it's wrong for me to be seen by a human, that it makes me wrong, not quite a faerie.

DANTE: **\*nods\*** I don't think my people would believe me if I told them about you. No one really believes in faeries anymore!

**Random faerie falls down dead.**

SISSIA: I take offence to that! We're as real as trolls and goblins and magic and all that!

DANTE: ...Trolls and goblins are real?

**Comment 71** Light relief.

SISSIA: Why wouldn't they be?

DANTE: No reason... So trolls and goblins and mermaids and leprechauns and Dwa-

SISSIA: Oh, mermaids and leprechauns aren't real, now you're just being silly. Gremlins though, they're sneaky little things.

DANTE: Oh... so... your people, they...?

SISSIA: Think the two of us are an abomination. We don't work; will never work according to them.

DANTE: And what do you think?

SISSIA: I think... I think that if it wasn't for this place, for the people judging us... we could make it. I believe we could.

**Sissia and Dante dance together, as a featured singer sings the song.**

**First verse and chorus of Gorgeous by Idina Menzel**

FEATURED SINGER: In a perfect world, in another time  
In a far off place we wouldn't need to justify  
Everything we are  
And all that we believe  
We could finally be  
Whoever we both want to be  
And when we can't be heard,  
And when we can't be seen  
I will call you close and  
You will reach for me.

When all of the beauty turns to pain

**Comment 72** This was a student's favourite song and it also happened to fit. It was sung by a student who had the perfect voice for it. Not how I usually like to work, but the students were able to give very convincing and articulate reasoning for this to happen. I don't like to work like this because I don't consider it important to have the best singer or dancer for any song, movement or acting. This just seemed to work this way.

When all of the madness falls like rain  
As long as we crash and we collide  
We will be gorgeous, you and I.

Through the window pane,  
Through the bedroom door  
This city wants to fight  
But it can't touch us anymore  
We have come so far,  
We have shed our skin  
The more that's taken from us now,  
The more we have to give  
And when we can't be heard,  
And when we can't be seen  
I will call you close and  
You will reach for me.

When all of the beauty turns to pain  
When all of the madness falls like rain  
As long as we crash and we collide  
We will be gorgeous, you and I.

And when we are drowning in the noise  
I'm gonna stop to hear your voice  
As long as we crash and we collide  
We will be gorgeous, you and I.

(We'll be gorgeous)  
(We'll be gorgeous)  
In the perfect time  
(We'll be gorgeous)

And when we lose our faith  
In all that's beautiful  
You lift me to this place

When all of the beauty turns to pain  
When all of the madness falls like rain  
As long as we crash and we collide  
We will be gorgeous, gorgeous, yeah

And when we are drowning in the noise

I'm gonna stop to find your voice  
As long as we crash and we collide  
We will be gorgeous, we will be gorgeous  
(you and I)

And when I lose my faith  
I don't know what to do  
You lift me to this place  
And make me feel so beautiful  
As long as you're right here by my side  
We will be gorgeous, you and I.

DANTE:                   **\*holds her\*** It's okay... There's a place for us. I believe there has to be.

SISSIA:                   What do we do?

**Blackout.**

ARETHUSA:    **(Feint spot on Arethusa - To audience)** Actually he's quite cute.

**ACT ONE, SCENE FOURTEEN**

**While Titania is asleep on the stage, the actors enter.**

**Comment 73** The moment where  
Arethusa changes her mind.

BOTTOM:               Are we all here?

QUINCE:               Right on time, and here's a marvellous, convenient place for our rehearsal! This green plotch shall be our stage, ah, behind this hollow tree will be our dressing room, let's do it exactly as we'll do it in front of the Duke!

BOTTOM:               Peter Quince!

QUINCE:               What sayest thou jolly Bottom!

BOTTOM:               There are things in this comedy of Pyramus and Thisbe that will never please. First, Pyramus must draw a sword to kill himself, which the ladies in the audience won't like. What do you think we should do about that?

SNOUT:                Oh... that is a problem... We can't have that.

STARVELING:           I think we'll have to leave out all the killing.

BOTTOM:               Not at all! I've got a plan that will fix everything! Write me a prologue that I can recite to the audience before we start! Oh, I'll sing a song! Ooh, I'll recite a prologue of an audience, and I'll sing them a song as well! I'll tell that no actors were harmed in the making of this scene, and that Pyramus is not really dead. That **\*I'm\*** really not dead! And we'll tell them that I'm not really Pyramus, I'm Bottom. The designer. And that will make it all better, they won't get too sad.

QUINCE: Okay then, we'll have a prologue, but not a song.

BOTTOM: WHAAAA? Not a song?

SNOUT: **\*GASP\*** What about the lion? The ladies will be afeared of lions! I'm really worried about that.

BOTTOM: Exactly. A lion is really going to scare the women. There's nothing scarier than a lion!

SNOUT: We'll need another prologue, to tell everyone that Snug's not a real lion. I could do that!

BOTTOM: Oh... No. That won't work. I think if there's two prologues, they should be spoken by the same person. It'll be too confusing otherwise. I could do that. I could recite the prologue!

QUINCE: Alright, that's what we'll do then. But there's two more things that we need to sort out. How are we going to bring moonlight into the room? because Pyramus and Thisbe have to meet by moonlight.

SNOUT: Will the moon be shining on the night that we're performing our play?

BOTTOM: We need a calendar!

QUINCE: **\*takes out book\*** yes the moon will shine that night.

BOTTOM: You can leave one of the windows open in the hall, and the moonlight will shine through.

**Avon appears**

AVON: And what if it be cloudy? Oh how they make me laugh!

QUINCE: Ah, yep. That's that one sorted. But we still need to get a wall. Because at one point, Pyramus and Thisbe need to talk through a hole in the wall.

SNOUT: You'd never be able to bring in a wall!

BOTTOM: Someone should play the part of the wall. Like me, I could play the part of the wall. I could be very still, like a wall. See, watch! **\*does so\*** see, like this!

SNUG: But...you're Pyramus.

BOTTOM: I could do both! Like this! (brings the circle of his fingers to his lips) THISBE! INSPIRED.

QUINCE: We'll bring another actor to be the wall. Okay, if we can do all that, it should be alright. Come, sit down, and rehearse your parts. Pyramus, you begin. When you have said your speech, go hide behind that bush. Everyone else, go there too, when you're not on stage.

**Enter Puck.**

PUCK: **(to audience)** What? Who are these Thespians? And why are they so close to the sleeping Faerie Queen? I'll watch their play, move over (sits in between two audience members then jumps up) and I might even act in it too, if I feel like it!

QUINCE: Speak Pyramus. Thisbe, stand forth.

BOTTOM: Thisbe, you smell like a flower, sweet. Odours and smells are like your breath, Thisbe. But what's that, a voice! Wait here. I'll be back.

**Bottom exits.**

PUCK: **(Stands on chair in audience)** that's the strangest Pyramus I've ever seen.

**Puck exits.**

FLUTE: Am I supposed to talk now?

QUINCE: Yes, you're supposed to show that you understand that Pyramus just went to check on a noise and will be right back.

FLUTE: As Thisbe. I love you Pyramus! Runs after him. I will meet you there, at the next town... over.

QUINCE: That's "the next town over". And you're not even supposed to say that yet, and you missed your cue, and don't read the stage directions.

FLUTE: Ohhh! As Thisbe-

**Comment 74** These characters were developed to be incredibly funny.

QUINCE: Don't say the "as Thisbe" bit! Oh I don't know how we're ever going to get this gig! The Duke Theseus and his Duchess are not going to want this group of Thespians performing at their wedding! The job of a director has never been so hard!!

**Bottom enters, he has a donkey head.**

BOTTOM: If I were handsome, my lovely Thisbe, I would still want only you.

QUINCE: Help! Monster! Run! Run Everyone!

**Quince, Snout, Snug, Starveling exit. Puck enters.**

PUCK: I'll follow you! And I'll catch you!

**Puck exits.**

BOTTOM: **(To audience)** Why are they running away? Is this a joke? They're trying to scare me, aren't they?

**Snout enters.**

SNOUT: oOOhhH Bottom I am afeard something hath grown in place of your head and now I am sure that neither the lion nor the death scenes will make the fair ladies scream but it will be you!

BOTTOM: **(In a neighing donkey voice)** What do you think I've got on my head? You're acting like an ass!

**Snout exits. Quince pops his head into the curtain.**

QUINCE: Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee. Thou art transformed to something horrible!

BOTTOM: **(To audience)** I see what they're up to. They want to make an ass out of me. But I won't leave this spot. They get jealous of my RAW talent – I'll stand right here and I'll sing for them – no matter where they are in the forest they will hear me!

**INSERT SONG FOR BOTTOM TO SING.**

**Titania wakes up.**

**Comment 75** Students' understanding of love and the sometimes inexplicability of the condition was discussed in some depth.

TITANIA: Please sing again, sweet human! I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again! My ear is much enamoured of thy note. So is my eye is thrall'd to thy shape. I swear I do love thee.

BOTTOM: **(To audience)** See what I mean I've got it all going on! I... don't think you've got much of a reason to love me. But when I think about it, truth, reason and love have very little to do with each other these days.

TITANIA: Thou art as wise as thou is beautiful.

BOTTOM: That may be the case! But if I were smart enough to get out of this forest, that would make me happy right now.

TITANIA: Out of this wood, do not desire to go. Thou shalt remain here with me. I'm no ordinary faerie, let me tell him. I rule over this summer (points finger), and I love you, so come with me! And I'll give you faeries to serve you, and they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep. And sing, while thou sleep, and I will purge thy

mortal grossness so that thou shalt like an airy spirit go.— Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed!

**Faeries enter.**

FAERIES: We're here. (etc.)

TITANIA: Be kind and courteous to this gentleman.

FAERIES: Hail sir, mortal! (etc.)

TITANIA: Do as he pleases, keep him quiet and bring him to me, I'll be over behind the Far Away tree.

**Blackout. When the lights come back on, Ollio is on stage by herself, just dancing around. Sissia enters.**

**ACT ONE SCENE FIFTEEN**

SISSIA: Oh, sorry... I thought I'd be alone out here. **\*goes to leave\***

OLLIO: No, wait, stay! **\*Sissia does so\*** Who's the human, Sissia?

SISSIA: I don't really think that's any of your business!

OLLIO: Please relax. I shall not tell Oberon or Puck or anyone else. I'm merely curious as to why you can see him, and why he can see you. I mean, you're not exactly the nicest faerie out.

SISSIA: Says the dark faerie.

**Comment 76** A comment made by one girl who had to explain her thoughts behind this to a few of the students.

OLLIO: Dark doesn't equate to mean, just like it doesn't equate to evil. What I'm saying is that I can see it being possible that one of those ditzy faeries like Marigold or Bess, or even Mustardseed! But not Sissia, the sister of the Queen.

SISSIA: What's your point?

**Comment 77** This whole area took almost 2 hours in discussion.

OLLIO: My point is, I think that the whole thing must be on some spiritual level. Maybe it's your souls.

SISSIA: **\*scoffs\*** You believe in soul mates?

OLLIO: You don't? **\*beat\*** I don't believe in them in the traditional sense. But I do believe that sometimes souls are in sync with each other. Maybe you and... what's his name?

SISSIA: Dante.



OLLIO: Dante. Maybe you and Dante are just meant to be, and no laws, human or faerie can stop that from happening. You need to do something about this.

SISSIA: Like what? What is your oh-so-brilliant plan?

OLLIO: You've heard about the lovers in the forest? The man, Demetrius, who wants the girl, Hermia, who is marrying the man, Lysander, in secret?

SISSIA: Now is not the time for gossip!

OLLIO: Not what I'm saying, pay attention! I'm just saying that maybe if you took a leaf out of their book, you could be with him.

SISSIA: I'm NOT following him around like a lovesick puppy-

OLLIO: NOT what I meant! Not talking about Demetrius, talking about Hermia and Lysander!

SISSIA: What do you mean?

OLLIO: You really can be dumb, you light faeries. I'm talking about marrying him in secret. Eloping. Ciao now!

**Ollio exits. Sissia looks thoughtfully.**

**Blackout.**

## **ACT ONE, SCENE SIXTEEN**

**Oberon enters and watches Titania.**

OBERON: I wonder if Titania be awaked. And what she saw first when she did awake.

**Puck enters.**

OBERON: Ah, here comes my messenger. How now, mad spirit? What have you wreaked in this part of the forest?

PUCK: Well. The Faerie Queen, Titania, has fallen in love with a monster. He was a wannabe actor, so I turned him into an ass.

OBERON: This falls out better than I could devise. And what about the mortals eyes? With the love juice as I did bid thee do?

PUCK: I found the mortal when he was asleep, and took care of that too. The mortal woman was sleeping near him, so when he woke up, he must have seen her.

**Enter Demetrius and Hermia.**

OBERON: Step aside, here's the mortals coming now.

PUCK: That's definitely the woman I saw, but that's not the man...

DEMETRIUS: Why are you so rude to someone who loves you so much?

HERMIA: If you killed Lysander while he was sleeping-

DEMETRIUS: Why would you think that? I'm the one who's being murdered as you pierce my heart with cruelty?

HERMIA: What does that have to do with my Lysander? Where is Lysander then? Can you find him for me?

DEMETRIUS: Why would I want to find him? You're getting all worked up over nothing.

HERMIA: Then can't you tell me he's alright?

DEMETRIUS: And if I could, what should I get there for?

HERMIA: The privilege never to see me more.

**Hermia exits.**

DEMETRIUS: I can't go after her when she's angry like this, I think I'm just going to sit here, I think I'll sleep...

**Demetrius sleeps.**

OBERON: What hath thou done? Thou has mistaken quite. And laid the love juice on some true loves sight! Because of your mistake, someone's true love must have turned bad.

PUCK: In that case, it must be fate! That's the way of the world! Oh, well.

**Ophelia enters:**

OPHELIA: **(She claps her hands and her assistants enter-her clap seems to have frozen the action)**

LATIFA: What you gone and done girl? Ophelia you gone and froze everything again!

MARIA: You gotto stopa doin' thisa Ophelia – itsa not a righta

BRIDIE: What's going on?

PORTIA: I'll tell you what's going on! Paparazzi that's what!

SAXON: Where? Where? Does my hair look alright?

OPHELIA: Would you all just....STOP! I don't know how or why but when it comes to wedding planning I have powers and I can see that this imbecile PUCK hath played with this magic flower and made a mess. If we don't put things right we'll have no business! And you know what happens if we have no business! No work for you or you or you or you or you!

ANDREA: I have an idea Ophelia! **(Awkward pause)**

OPHELIA: Well then, speak!

**Comment 79** The idea of the *underdog* having an idea and having the courage to communicate this to their superior.

ANDREA: We can hide behind the trees and watch and when we need to we can pause them and manipulate them so that we get the most weddings possible.

OPHELIA: Okay as she says. **(She stops Latifa and Maria)** Not so fast you two – you need to earn your keep! You are to check on our actors promptly and report back to me their progress!

LATIFA: Yes Ophelia!

**Maria and Latifa go to exit.**

MARIA: **(Mockingly)** Yesa Ophelie!!

LATIFA: I'll get you!

**They run off!**

**As soon as they exit, Oberon and Puck unfreeze.**

OBERON: What was that?

PUCK: What? What was what?

OBERON: Nothing! Okay what you need now do is fly through forest up stream and down until you find the love sick mortal Helena and I'll drop some potion in his eyes whence you return with her!

PUCK: Faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a Titania, able to leap tall Faraway trees in a single bound. Yep that's me! PUCK.

**Puck exits.**

OBERON: Right purple flower thus! You must make your magic in the eye of the fair love sick mortal...

**He is cut off by PUCK, who has just run back on.**

PUCK: She'll be upon here shortly boss! **(Very out of breath)**She's on her way in hot pursuit of her is the other mortal man, Lysander, his heart follows hers like a magnet to metal.

OBERON: Move away and shh you'll wake Demetrius! What noise these mortals make!

PUCK: Ha and then the two of them shall be pursuing one girl. We'll sit upon the branch up there and watch, they'll be our entertainment then.

**Lysander and Helena enter.**

LYSANDER: Why do you think I'm making fun of you? I do love you, I'm very sincere!

HELENA: But you've made these promises to me, and to Hermia. What's going on with you? Will you abandon her? Or is it all lies?

LYSANDER: I had no judgement when to her I swore.

HELENA: And I don't believe you're thinking clearly now as you broke those promises.

LYSANDER: Demetrius loves her, and he loves not you.

**Demetrius wakes up.**

DEMETRIUS: Oh, Helena, O Helena, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine! To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne? Crystal is muddy. Oh, how ripe in show thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow! That pure congealèd white, high Taurus' snow, Fanned with the eastern wind, turns to a crow When thou hold'st up thy hand. Oh, let me kiss This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss!

HELENA: Damn it, I see what you're doing! You're trying to humiliate me, both of you. I know you both are really disgusted by me. So... you're competing for Hermia's love! And now you're competing to see which one of you can make fun of me the most! That's a great idea! A really manly thing to do! REAL mature! I hope you're getting your fun out of it!

LYSANDER: You are unkind, Demetrius. Be not so. For you love Hermia. This you know I know. And here, with all good will, with all my heart, I love Helena, and I COMPLETELY renounce all rights and claims to Hermia!

HELENA: Oh my goodness! Listen to you two! Excuse me, she's not a possession, and for that matter, neither am I!

DEMETRIUS: Seriously, Lysander, keep Hermia!

HELENA: Hello, did you not hear me? I'm not a thing, I'm a person! Standing right here, hearing this!

DEMETRIUS: Don't insult a deep love that you don't understand! Look! Here comes the woman you love!

**Hermia enters.**

HERMIA: It's hard to see clearly in the dark of night. But I hear thee well. Thou art not by mine eye, Lysander, found. Mine ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound. But why unkindly didst thou leave me so?

LYSANDER: Why stay, when love tells thee go?

HERMIA: But what love could make my Lysander leave me?

LYSANDER: I had to go find my fair love, Helena. Why seekest thou me?

HERMIA: What are you talking about?

LYSANDER: Don't you get it? I left you because I hate you.

HERMIA: What? Why do you say such things?

HELENA: Oh, I see! You're in on this too!

HERMIA: I have no idea what you're talking about...

HELENA: Yeah, sure. You can come clean now; I know what you're doing.

HERMIA: Seriously, I don't know what you're talking about.

HELENA: You know what, I'm over it! Play your little game, but I'm not interested.

**Helena goes to leave.**

LYSANDER: Stay gentle Helena, hear my excuse, my love, my life, my soul, Helena.

HELENA: Yeah, right. That's a good one.

HERMIA: Don't insult her like that, Lysander.

DEMETRIUS: Look, if you're not going to listen to Hermia, well...why don't we just take this outside?

LYSANDER: ...We ARE outside. You can't force me any more than Hermia can beg me. Your threats are no stronger than her whining.

HERMIA: her what? WHAT? Are you serious?!

DEMETRIUS: I say that I love you more than he does.

LYSANDER: Well, if that's what you say, then let's step outside.

FAERIES/TREES/ETC: We ARE outside!!!

Comment 80 The forest adds to the comedy.

**The four of them turn and look around for the voices.**

DEMETRIUS: You're on!

**Demetrius and Lysander start moving off, and Hermia grabs Lysander's arm.**

LYSANDER: Get off me, you rich little witch!

DEMETRIUS: Oh, yeah, you know you love it!

LYSANDER: Let go of me, would you?

HERMIA: Make me!

LYSANDER: Let go of me or I'll kill you!

HERMIA: **\*all composed\*** you're joking, right?

HELENA: **\*stares in shock\*** Perhaps he is serious...

LYSANDER: RIGHT! I'm ready to fight you as promised!

DEMETRIUS: Well. I should have gotten a legal contract there. Doesn't look like you can. Can't trust you, now can I?

LYSANDER: What? You want me to hit Hermia? I can't hit her, she's a girl!

HERMIA: What? What has THAT got to do with anything? **\*throws him to the ground\***

DEMETRIUS: **\*walks over and helps him up\*** Are you right? You alright? **\*turns to Hermia\*** What were you thinking? Won't be a fair fight if he's injured!

HELENA: Guys, you can stop the joke. Seriously, just stop the joke. The whole thing is just not funny anymore, you can't joke about killing-

HERMIA: What are you talking about? Those two aren't joking. They're serious. They're like seriously... serious.

DEMETRIUS: Seriously? You couldn't have thought of a better line? You said seriously serious...Seriously? You cannot be serious!

LYSANDER: No, don't! This IS serious! It's just-

DEMETRIUS: Seriously? Your love for Helena is not serious, you're just joking.

HERMIA: Your love for Helena? Seriously?

HELENA: I seriously don't understand this.

TREE: IS THIS SERIOUSLY HAPPENING?

TREES: **\*mockingly\*** serious, seriously, (etc.)

HELENA: This is ridiculous! I'm leaving!

HERMIA: Well I'm staying!

HELENA: Well, girlfriend, if you heard what they were saying earlier, you wouldn't want to stay.

**Comment 81** The students didn't appreciate the two girls being so "pathetically" love sick and "blind." Instead they decide to unite the two and make them a little wiser to the guys.

**Helena exits.**

HERMIA: What? What did they say? Tell me!

**Hermia exits. Lysander and Demetrius exit the other way.**

OBERON: This is all your fault! If you had just done what I told you to!

PUCK: Well, actually, I did do what you said! I just didn't know who to find, you could have given me a picture or something! Sheesh! NEWSFLASH \*right in his face\* There are more than two mortals in the world!

OBERON: Can you just! Just make it all foggy and I'll sort this out!

AVON: Look to thee the puppeteer and all the puppets sewn by goddesses!

PUCK: Well, the sun's going to come up soon, don't know if I can do it, so who knows?

OBERON: Puck!

PUCK: Well, we've got to act fast then, my lord of the faeries, the night's fading quickly.

OBERON: We still have time to get everything done before daybreak!

PUCK: Watch me! I'm so quick.

**Puck exits. A tango starts and Oberon talks over it. Starts tangoing with the faeries.**

**Marionette – Written by Dayle Kerr and Caitlin Crosbie**

OBERON (spoken): Everything is falling into place. I've definitely helped them, in this case. Their love will still be strong, it shall no longer be wrong. And my queen, shall be so love struck, with help from my trusty servant Puck. And that changeling shall be mine.

OBERON (sung): See the way I've got them all on strings  
They'll all do my bidding, countless things  
And all because they're too in love to see  
That I run this show, as it should be

**Comment 82** Written by the students, spoken/sung by Oberon. They see Oberon as a puppeteer. The choreography saw the forest faeries dancing as marionette dolls to Oberon's every whim. Words do not do this piece justice, an amazing creation.

Everything is falling into place.

My queen, that fool in lust  
She can't see what it is I am doing  
My queen, that fool in lust  
She will give me that changeling

And when I tell them  
They fall down to their knees  
Unknowing marionette  
Why don't you dance for me?

DARK FAERIES: Our queen, that fool in lust  
Does not see he runs things here  
Our queen, that fool in lust  
Only runs things off her fear  
Oh my King Oberon  
Oh we will follow you  
Unknowing marionettes  
Oh, we will dance for you.

**Dance break.**

OBERON: With every whim I have  
They will obey me  
Unknowing marionette  
Why don't you dance for me?



## INTERMISSION

### ACT TWO, SCENE ONE

**Comment 83** This song was cut as the student cast in this role was too young. The character was still well developed.

**Dante enters, alone.**

DANTE: She might be right... there's no way we can be together. Ugh! What is her problem? Stupid faerie comes out of nowhere and actually makes me feel something for her, when I swore I never would again! Women and their damn charms!

#### Forbidden Love – Tom Dice

DANTE: I'm in love and she feels the same, and we are meant to be  
I can see it in your eyes, it sparkles everywhere  
You're so afraid to lose me  
No one can come between us  
We're just two souls with one connection  
We are meant to be  
I need the powers from above to resist my true love  
This is forbidden  
And I was laying, still the thought of you makes my heart complete  
I can see it in your eyes, darkness everywhere  
You're afraid to hurt me  
Someone can come between us  
But still I'll love you forever  
Love, you're just not meant for me  
I need the powers from above to resist my true love  
'Cause this is forbidden love, this is forbidden love  
I need the powers from above to resist my true love  
This is forbidden love, this is forbidden love  
We need the powers from above to resist this true love  
This is forbidden love, this is forbidden love  
I need the powers from above to resist my true love  
This is forbidden love  
This is forbidden love  
This is forbidden love

**Sighs and sits down.**

DANTE: I don't know what to do! We can't be together, I can't feel this way! I shouldn't feel this way...

**Sissia spins onto stage happily.**

SISSIA:                   **\*getting progressively faster throughout speech\*** Okay, so I've got it! The whole forest has heard about your friend Demetrius who is going after the girl Hermia, who is eloping with Lysander! I mean, this is big talk, I think even a few people are betting on it. Anyway! So I was talking to Ollio who I know I shouldn't be because of that friend of hers Nyx, with all her vile-ness, and because she's a dark faerie, but Ollio is on my side, she wants me to be happy, at least one of us faeries to follow our dreams, and I'm not making any sense and I'm talking too fast aren't I? I do that sometimes!

DANTE:                   Follow your dreams...Ollio said so... Nyx is vile?

SISSIA:                   Right! She's just a...vile woman. So Ollio reminded me of Hermia and Lysander eloping, and she just... suggested we should do that. That way we can be together. **\*Dante doesn't reply\*** Dante? I thought you'd be happy about this?

DANTE:                   It's just... too much.

SISSIA:                   What is?

DANTE:                   Everything! I mean... We've known each other not even for one night! In all the legends people who get carried away with all of this feeling in this short of time, they all die romantically and tragically, and you know, I kind of love being alive!

SISSIA:                   So do !! I don't understand what you're saying... Has this all just been a game to you?

DANTE:                   No. But what I'm saying is that I can't see you anymore.

SISSIA:                   Well, that's just ridiculous! You definitely can see me, I'm right here. I don't know why, but you can see faeries, and somehow, we found each other. Shouldn't that count for something? The fact that somehow we draw each other in, and even though it's all just wrong to everyone else, it's right for us! Shouldn't that count-

**Comment 84** With this Dante actually loses his ability to see Sissia. The suspension of disbelief for the audience grew at this point as we had the two actors onstage with Dante unable to see Sissia.

**Dante suddenly can't see her.**

DANTE:                   Sissia?

SISSIA:                   Don't interrupt me, you've had your say! Which, FYI was a really stupid say, but that's what you get, you and all your human-ness!

DANTE:                   Sissia? Where did you go?

SISSIA:                   I said- wait. You can't see me? I'm standing right in front of you and you can't see me?

DANTE:                   Where did you go? Come back! We need to talk! Don't do all your weird faerie magic! Come back! This is real mature!

**Runs off to find her.**

SISSIA:                   You can't see me... Why can't you see me?

**Sissia exits.**

## **ACT TWO SCENE TWO**

**Comment 85** This inability to see each other is reiterated here.

**Lysander stumbles across the stage.**

LYSANDER:               DEMETRIUS! Where are you, you arrogant fool! I'll find you!

PUCK:                    **\*as Demetrius\*** I'm here! Let's go to a place we can fight more easily!

**Lysander exits.**

**Demetrius enters.**

DEMETRIUS:             Lysander, speak again! Did you run away again, you coward?

PUCK:                   **\*as Lysander\*** you coward! Come over here, you coward! Come here, and I'll beat you with a stick!

TREES:                  **\*GASP and hide their branches\***

DEMETRIUS:             Are you there?

PUCK:                   **\*as Demetrius\*** Follow my voice, voice, voice, voice, **(to the audience)** You hear that there's an echo, echo, echo, echo! I know I'm a pretty talented and powerful faerie, faerie, faerie.

DEMETRIUS:             Is that you Lysander? Lysander?!

PUCK:                    Yes this way, way, way.

**Lysander lies down and sleeps. Enter Puck and Demetrius.**

PUCK:                   **(In Lysander's voice)** Ha ha ha – hey you where are you? Running in the opposite direction – scaredy cat, scaredy cat!

DEMETRIUS:             Oh I am nearly there you better look out!

PUCK:                    Here I am over here! Come find me.

DEMETRIUS: **Yawns** Oh I will find you – I am just going to rest a while but I'll find you as the fog lifts. **(lies down and sleeps)**

**Hermia and Helena enter from opposite sides. The two sing together.**

**But A Dream – Written by Dayle Kerr and Reuben Morgan**

HERMIA: You were looking straight through me  
Like I wasn't even there  
And you were saying that you love her  
And not me anymore  
Sure, I know, *true love never runs smooth*  
*But why isn't it me that you choose?*  
*Oh, how I wish, I wish this was all but a dream...*

**Comment 86** Written to take the place of the fight between Hermia and Helena. This was also to help make *A Midsummer Night's Dream* a musical.

HELENA: You were all simply mocking me  
"Radiant, beautiful Helena!"  
What kind of men makes a lady cry?  
Sure, I know, I know  
I'm not pretty enough, like her  
But for that you should not hate me, just pity me!  
Oh, how I wish, I wish this was all but a dream...

HERMIA: I don't think you realise  
That I'm not just a thing  
I have a heart that beats widely  
Every time you touch my skin

HELENA: And I don't think you realise  
That I'm a person also  
I care about so much  
You can't see it, but I matter too!

HERMIA: You're just so condescending.

HELENA: You're such a cruel person.

HERMIA: Not the man I thought I knew

HELENA: Not the man I hoped to know

HERMIA, HELENA: I don't know why I ever loved you so  
Oh, I hope this is only a dream

I never knew you could be so cruel  
Never knew you could treat me so  
Oh, I hope this is all but a dream!

HERMIA,  
(HELENA OVER  
SECOND HALF):

I'm just so over this! (Oh how I wish!)  
Why must you treat me so? (I'm so over this!)  
Why do men do this? (What's the point of these games?)  
Why did this have to happen now? (Oh how I wish...)  
I hope that this is all simply- (Please be simply just-)

HERMIA, HELENA: I hope this is all but a dream!

HERMIA: There is something wrong with these men, Helena!

HELENA: Oh, Hermia, I see that! What happened to them? Are they under some kind of spell? Is there an enchantress doing this?

HERMIA: I do not know, but perhaps you are right. Or perhaps this is merely the men showing their true colours.

HELENA: Perhaps so. I certainly hope not.

HERMIA: Oh, I hope it is not so, but it is quite logical that this is why they are like this. Perhaps they're not enchanted, perhaps we were the ones who were by their kind words and sweet smiles.

HELENA: Perhaps. Oh, weary night, oh long and tedious night! I wish it would end! Confused, befuddled... How tired I am, Hermia!

HERMIA: Never so weary, never so in woe, Bedabbled with the dew and torn with briers, I can no further crawl, no further go. My legs can keep no pace with my desires. Here will I rest me till the break of day. Heavens shield Lysander if they mean a fray!

**Both women lie down and sleep.**

PUCK: On the ground Sleep sound. I'll apply to your eye. Gentle lover, remedy.  
**\*squeezes flower juice into each of their eyes, one after the other\*** When thou wakest, thou takest true delight in the sight of thy former lady's eye. And the country proverb known, that every man should take his own—  
In your waking shall be shown. Jack shall have Jill. Nought shall go ill. The man shall have his mare again, and all shall be well.

**Exit Puck.**

**ACT TWO, SCENE THREE**

**All the faeries minus Oberon, Puck, Titania and Sissia are talking again.**

ALALIA: Has anyone figured out what to do?

MOTE: Well, Titania has her weird donkey boy, so she's not really caring.

NERETTA: WHAT do you mean by weird donkey boy?

COBWEB: You haven't heard?

MUSTARDSEED: She's gone crazy!

PEASEBLOSSOM: I'm sure she's just projecting it all onto him, she can't really love him!

ORDELLA: Oh, this is too good! Oberon and Puck-

DARK FAERIES: NO! Don't!

ALALIA: Oberon and Puck, what? What did they do?

ORDELLA: Nothing. I'm just saying that they'll find it amusing to learn of Titania's new love. That's all I'm saying.

ALALIA: Ordella, you must share this with me! If those two have done something to Titania-

ORDELLA: Oh no, they wouldn't. You know that, I know that, everyone knows that!

ALALIA: Ordella!

NYX: Ordella, go! You've done enough damage!

ALALIA: What do you know, faeries of Oberon? Care to share?

LILLIE: We know nothing.

WARREN: Nothing at all.

FAYE: Zilch.

ORIEL: Nada.

ALALIA: I WILL find out, and I WILL do something about it. But for now, has Sissia's human problem been resolved?

NISSA: You haven't heard?

NERETTA: Oh, it's tragic.

COBWEB: Poor darling.

FAERYDAE: Serves her right!

MAURELLE: Don't be mean. She's hurting.

ALALIA: Explain what happened, somebody.

BESS: Word is, she was going to run away from here.

RHOSLYN: Away from Titania? She wouldn't dare!

MAURELLE: Word is, she's heartbroken, the poor dear.

NYX: Serves her right, why'd she think he cared?

NERETTA: Does anyone know where Sissia is now?

ORIEL: I saw her flying earlier.

MOTE: I think she's just trying to forget everything.

LORELLA: She's heartbroken. He can't see her.

OLLIO: **\*to herself\*** Bloody humans and their logicity. I need to find that woman, the slightly manic one!

**Ollio runs off, passing Titania entering, but no one notices either's actions.**

PEASEBLOSSOM: She's just torn apart, no wonder we're not meant to fall in love with humans.

TITANIA: WHO fell in love with a human?!

LIGHT FAERIES: No one, Queen Titania!

NISSA: We're just talking of the legends once told!

NYX: **\*to herself\*** Like THAT'S going to convince her...

TITANIA: WHAT was that, little dark one? **\*grabs her by the chin and turns her to her, and thunder sounds\***

ORDELLA: It's Sissia! **\*everyone stares at her\*** What? I'm just sick of this weather changing...

TITANIA: What...? Sissia would never- Oh, help! SISSIAAAAAA!!!!!!!!!!!!

**Blackout. Ophelia is on stage, setting up for the wedding with her assistants.**

**ACT TWO SCENE FOUR**

OPHELIA: LATIFA! MARIA! How goes the search for the acting troupe? I want everything to be absolutely perfect!

LATIFA: Girl, we found one, but they ain't that good!

MARIA: They are better than nothing, though!

OPHELIA: **\*sighs\*** Hippolyta is trying to choose between two dresses, go and help her! All of you!

**The assistants leave and Ophelia walks around, still setting up the wedding. Ollio enters and rushes over to her.**

OLLIO: Ophelia! Ophelia!

OPHELIA: **\*turns to Ollio in fright, jumping\*** Oh, you don't jump out at people like that!

OLLIO: Yes, yes, I apologise! I need your help, I know someone who is distraught, a faerie, her love doesn't want to be with her, he's afraid!

OPHELIA: Oh, the poor girl! Who's the man?

OLLIO: His name is Dante, and he's been around here in the forest-

OPHELIA: Oh, yes, Dante! Nice guy! I'm on it!

**Blackout. Lights up, only the trees on, the fog starts to spread.**

**Comment 87** Transiency, written by Yr. 8 student, while Year 11 student choreographed.

FAR AWAY: Oh I feel to sleep so light so light I might.....

**Original Piano piece - He breaks free and begins to dance slowly the faeries enter and cut his roots free so that he can dance.**

TWIGGY: Oh I never have felt so very tired – what hath come over me?

HOLLOW: Is that a draft I feel? Ooh the cool air rushing through makes me (yawn) so sleepy.

WILLOW: I (YAWN) I can barely keep my branches upright.

**Faraway begins to snore.**

OAK: What's up? Why's everyone so tired all of a sudden? (He yawns) Who it's happening to me – this is weird!



FLY:                               **Droops over and begins to snore.**

DANDI:                       **\*Lies flat\*** I can't stand any longer – my stem is but paralysed.

CHLORA:                   Oh no not me too!

BIRCHA:                   Ha, I must be immune! Look I am the only one still standing! Potted plants are far more resilient and I've just proved it!

WOODY:                   Well not the only one, actually if I moved you over here I think you too will succumb. **(He moves Bircha into the fog)**

WOODY:                   And that leaves me, only I don't mean 'leaves' I mean it's because I have no leaves, I am not breathing this toxin in so I am eyes wide open. I could talk all night! I like having the stage to myself. That FARAWAY TREE!! Never stops talking! O oh who is that approaching this sleeping forest?

**Comment 88** The upside to having had all his branches cut off was that he could not succumb to the potion. We discussed looking at things positively, like every cloud has a silver lining.

## **ACT TWO SCENE FIVE**

**Titania is in the middle of the stage, arms crossed, angry, alone. Thunder and lightning. Sissia enters, having finally come back from flying.**

TITANIA:                   Great! NOW you show up! WHY can't you just be where you're meant to be and do what you're meant to do?! **\*weather starts going crazy\***

SISSIA:                   You're not my mother! You're my sister, and you're barely THAT. Just leave me alone.

TITANIA:                   That's what I HAVE been doing, and you decide in that time that it's okay to go and fall for a mortal!

SISSIA:                   Oh, so you can have YOUR mortals, but I can't even talk to them? YOU'RE allowed to go and mess with their lives, but I have to sit back like a little girl while you get to do what you want simply because you're the damned Queen? I'm not a kid, Titania!

TITANIA:                   Well, you're acting like a brat!

SISSIA:                   And you're acting like a witch! Just because you're Queen, it doesn't mean that you can do just ANYTHING you want! You can't use your magic to make the world better for you! You're not a God!

**Comment 89** Quite a point of discussion, about living forever - wouldn't necessarily make you happy.

TITANIA: A HUMAN, Sissia? A HUMAN? DO you have no sense about you? Humans grow old and wither and die! We do not! We live forever! We live forever young, and we do NOT fall for humans! Why would you let this happen? Why would you let yourself be seen, you stupid little girl!

SISSIA: Leave me alone! So what I see humans! Why suddenly be interested in my life now? Just because I'm shaming your perfect life? Perfect Titania and her perfect husband, her perfect faeries and her just...damned perfectness! YOU'RE NOT PERFECT! YOU'VE NEVER BEEN PERFECT, AND YOU NEVER WILL BE PERFECT! **\*shrieks\*** JUST LEAVE ME ALONE YOU EVIL OLD WITCH!

**Sissia leaves angrily.**

TITANIA: **\*quietly\***...Don't you think I know that? And humans what does she mean humans, I thought it was just the one!!!!

**Titania's faeries and Bottom enter.**

TITANIA **(to BOTTOM)** Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed

While I thy amiable cheeks do coy, And stick musk roses in thy sleek, smooth head, And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy.

BOTTOM: Where's Peasebottom?

PEASEBLOSSOM: It's Peaseblossom! And I am here!

BOTTOM: Scratch my head Peaseblossom. Where is Cobweb?

COBWEB: Ready!

BOTTOM: Alright then pop off will you and get me some honey. Lots of it! I like it still warm and sticky. Chop, chop!

**Cobweb exits.**

BOTTOM: Where's Mustardseed? Mutardseed!

MUSTARDSEED: Yes here! What would you like for me to do?

BOTTOM: Does my head look small?

MUSTARDSEED: Quite the opposite me thinks!

BOTTOM: Then think you not to help Peasebottom to scratch my head?

**Comment 90** Sarcasm, the students used sarcasm to create comedy. They wanted the audience to laugh at Bottom.

**Comment 91** All of the faeries showing their disgust in their queen's love interest.

PEASEBLOSSOM: It's Peaseblossom.

BOTTOM: That is what I said!

TITANIA: What wilt thou hear? Some music my sweet love?

BOTTOM: Good dry oats, grass and hay, a bottle of hay.

TITANIA: I hath a good faerie that will bring you all the flowers of our forest.

BOTTOM: Oh no I'd rather dry peas! But, I pray you, let none of your people stir me. I have an exposition of sleep come upon me.

TITANIA: Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms. Faeries, be gone, and be all ways away. So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle Gently entwine. The female ivy so Enrings the barked fingers of the elm. Oh, how I love thee! How I dote on thee!

**Titania and Bottom sleep.**

**Enter Puck.**

OBERON: Aah welcome Puck, look I with pity upon this my faerie queen as she lies with this ugly ass. I got what it was that I wanted – when she was infatuated with this here transformed mere mortal posing as an ass – I easily convinced her thus! I would take the boy from her hand to free her to dote upon he! Now I hath what I set out to gain, you Puck must transform this mortals head back and make the magic of the flower in thine young lovers' eyes to put right the events of this wayward night. May they all return them to their mortal worlds and think no more of this night's accidents but as the fierce vexation of a dream. But first I will release the faerie queen. **He squeezes flower juice into Titania's eyes.** Be thou what thou wast, see what thee sees and now Titania awaken my sweet queen.

TITANIA: **(waking)** My Oberon, what visions have I seen! Methought I was enamored of an ass.

OBERON: There lies your love.

**Comment 92** Titania speaks of her dream which was Faraway's reality.

TITANIA: How did this unfold, now I look at him with disgust!

OBERON: **\*He removes his sleeping face and reveal the true ass beneath.\***

TITANIA: I hath more visions of the forest trees! To see it was more beautiful than a star lit night I saw a tree fly with delight. His roots were cut bit by part until he was free to dance like a faerie in full flight.

OBERON: What potion, what strength did see you more?

TITANIA: The forest was alive and oh my head it pounds. What is it you have done?

OBERON: What I hath done is to become once more your friend! Come let the music start and all shall dance and rock gently these sleeping mortals to complete their dreams.

PUCK: Faerie King, attend, and mark. I do hear the morning lark.

OBERON: Time to dance and then we'll away.

**The faeries dance –  
Faerie Realm Dance of the Wild Faeries  
Oberon and Titania Dance.**

FAERIES: I wandered alone to the forest one night  
Led by a music strange to hear  
And followed the glow of a shimmering light  
That seemed to grow distant as I grew near

The woods were alive with the fragrance of spring  
But winter was everywhere clear to see  
The moon shone bright and a bat on the wing  
Beckoned me closer and said to me:

"A clearing close In the forest you'll find  
A fabulous banquet, a fairy ball  
If you close your eyes and you open your mind  
The veil disappears and you'll see it all\*

Come and play as the wild fairies play  
In a magical circle, a fairy ring  
You won't want to leave and forever you'll stay  
Where the vision is bright as spring

When I closed my eyes to the shimmering light  
All memory faded and I could see  
That a mushroom circle of red and white  
And myriad fairies surrounded me

OBERON: Now my fair queen let us disappear before the mortal's light.

TITANIA: And hence you tell me how I found myself asleep upon the ground with those there humans that I'd found.

OBERON: Let's just say – it's a better day upon us than behind!

**They exit.**

## **ACT TWO, SCENE SIX**

**Ophelia enters to find Dante.**

OPHELIA: Right! Okay! So I hear you're in love! That's a bit cute!

DANTE: Uh... I'm not in love. Who told you that?

OPHELIA: Oh, it's so adorable! Dante in love! Find that girl! Tell her!

DANTE: You don't know how-

OPHELIA: The faeries told me. And you can't see her now you don't have faith in her with you and that's just-

DANTE: You don't know anything, so don't pretend to.

OPHELIA: EXCUSE ME? I'm a wedding planner, I know these things! And from what I hear, it's love, so stop moping about and go find that faerie!

**Dante runs off, Ophelia looks at the audience.**

OPHELIA: **\*flips hair over shoulder\*** Oh, I'm good!

**Ophelia exits. Theseus and Philostrate enter. Theseus is in a trolley, Philostrate is pushes it.**

THESEUS: Come let us jog through the forest so that my love will see me fresh beside you! Older I am but more manly when you are tired puffing and out of breath. Let her hear your whistle blow and she shall think me fit and full of vigour.

**Enter Egeus.**

Dear friend say you to a ride?

**Comment 93** Comedic relief. Almost like clowning.

EGEUS: Looks to be a bit of fun. **He begins to climb in, it takes some time.** Hold it still you fool, still I say.

**They run across stage and exit. They enter on the other side as Hippolyta enters on the opposite side.**

THESEUS: Aah here we are. We hath been jogging through the forest – look upon this poor servant, Philostrate – say you he younger than me by 10 years suppose yet I behave 20 years his junior.

**Comment 94** Hippolyta comments here on pop culture.

EGEUS: And I perhaps 20 years his junior too.

HIPPOLYTA: WHY are we not hunting with the hounds? They are much more interesting than this simple jogging.

THESEUS: My beautiful queen, we'll go up the mountain and listen to the hounds as their barking echoes in the cliffs and sounds like music.

HIPPOLYTA: I was with the heroes Hercules and Cadamus once. When a wood of crepe the dogs bayed a bear. I'd never heard such impressive chiding, you know, and I've not since. The skies, the fountains, every region near seemed all one mutual cry. I never heard so musical a discord, such sweet thunder.

THESEUS: My dogs are no less than those dogs. My dogs are, in fact, bred from those dogs.

HIPPOLYTA: **\*patronizing\*** Of course they are, dear.

THESEUS: Hush. What are these nymphs?

EGEUS: Oh what is it that I see? My daughter asleep? And three more – that makes four! Why are they out here and asleep all four together?

THESEUS: No doubt they woke up early for the May Day celebrations! And if it May Day be is it not the day that Hermia must share with us her decision. Blow your whistle let them wake!

**Comment 95** The student who played this role decided to make Egeus very dopey, yet extremely pompous which got quite a few laughs.

**Philostrate struggles to blow his whistle. They awake.**

THESEUS: Good morning friends May Day is over - up you four!

LYSANDER: Oh my Lord, I have to confess we were here your daughter and I as we planned to elope!

EGEUS: Enough, you hath admitted your wrong doing the law shall be upon you!

LYSANDER: The fair Helena followed me into the forest as she wore her heart upon her sleeve and I... **\*He is cut off by Helena\***

HELENA: I hath not the time of day nor night to listen or to have thee in my sight! My dear friend, Hermia. I think we should to a foreign land and spend a year with nap sack and adventure. These rogues spoke of women as possessions and I refuse for one to be slipped into a shopping bag and placed upon the shelf.

HERMIA: Oh I would go anywhere if I was sure you were again my friend as I dreamt it to be that you and I were no longer friends but foes.

HELENA: We shall pack our sacks the night after the wedding and away to foreign lands we shall go.

EGEUS: Let me understand? You and you are going nap sacking rather than marrying him and him? And what then will you two do?

DEMETRIUS,  
LYSANDER: Eat pizza and drink ale and fart aloud yeah and belch the cows home! **\*They laugh\***

EGEUS: So, you will not be wed? Not one of you?

HIPPOLYTA: For the record, one of them could not marry. You need at least two.

EGEUS: But this was all arranged! Hermia, you were to marry Demetrius, and that arrangement will stand!

HIPPOLYTA: Egeus?

EGEUS: Yes, your grace?

HIPPOLYTA: Since the last time you attempted to force nuptials upon your daughter, she eloped and got lost in the forest, do you truly believe that forcing the same nuptials upon her would work now? Especially now that she does not want to marry either man?

EGEUS: Yes... perhaps you are right, my lady. What of your wedding? What entertainment do thou hath for us?

HIPPOLYTA: OPHELIA!!!!

**Ophelia enters.**

OPHELIA: Madame?

HIPPOLYTA: The entertainment what hath thou employed for us to decide upon?

OPHELIA: We have an amazing acting troupe for you this afternoon and others among for you to choose.

PHILOSTRATE: A play there is, my lord, some ten words long, Which is as brief as I have known a play. But by ten words, my lord, it is too long, Which makes it tedious. For in all the play There is not one word apt, one player fitted. And tragical, my noble lord, it is. For Pyramus therein doth kill himself. Which, when I saw rehearsed, I must confess, Made mine eyes water—but more merry tears The passion of loud laughter never shed.

THESUES: What troupe are they then?

PHILOSTRATE: They are working class.

THESEUS: Let us see this play!

HIPPOLYTA: Let us not! They aren't even professional actors I don't wish to look upon poor amateurs!

THESEUS: Be us kind and look upon their work! Get us ready here!

**They sit on the steps up the theatre.**

BOTTOM: **\*Just waking\*** I know my line, I know my line...It's...Quince, my dear Quince...  
**\*Fully alert\*** Where is Quince? Starveling? Snout? They've left me in the night to be eaten by wild boars! I have had a dream—past the wit of man to say what dream it was... I would be an ass to try and explain my dream. But it was such a strange dream, such a strange dream. No eye has seen, no hand has felt, no tongue has tasted something as strange as the dream I have presently awoken from. Oh, where is Quince?

**Comment 96** The students spoke about the reduction of these lines, deciding the most important part to keep was the idea that a dream is something as difficult to explain as the intangible idea of God.

## **ACT TWO, SCENE SEVEN**

**Enter Quince, Flute, Snout, Starveling.**

QUINCE: Have you sent to Bottom's house any messenger? Is he come home yet?

STARVELING: He can be neither heard of nor reached. Well, I'm sure he's been kidnapped; he's never kept quiet for this long by choice!

FLUTE: If he doesn't show up, the play will be ruined. It goes not forward, doth it?

QUINCE: No, it is not possible. He is the only person in Athens who can truly play Pyramus.

FLUTE: How true, Bottom quite simply the smartest and most witty working man in all of Athens.

QUINCE: Yes and the best looking too. And his voice is as sweet as honey. When he sings, each note is more charming than a bray!

FLUTE: A bray... isn't that a bad thing? Isn't that the sound a donkey makes like \*makes donkey noise\*



QUINCE: I thought that was an ass?

**Snug enters.**

SNUG: The duke and the duchess are leaving the church from being married presently. The event was most merry, oh, and the crowd doth itch with joy! If the play had only gone forward we would all have become men!

**Awkward pause.**

FLUTE: Oh, curse that sweet, jolly Bottom. Thus he hath lost the chance of earning a sixpence a day. I'm sure the duke would have happily paid Bottom a sixpence a day for playing Pyramus! And he would have deserved it too!

DANDI: What are pence? No one uses pence. Meet decimal currency. Mortals are so slow...

**Everyone looks around. Enter Bottom from the side of stage the actors are looking away from.**

BOTTOM: Where are my besties? Where are all my bros?

QUINCE: Bottom! Oh most courageous day! Oh most happy hour!

BOTTOM: My friends, I've got some most wondrous things to tell you, if only was I not sworn to silence. Oh, the adventures, the most magnificent tales I could tell. You would tell me I had been dreaming, but I swear by the moon and the stars that it was as true as I stand here now. But no, I swear by my very being that you will never get even a single word from my lips. Never will I speak another word on the night just passed!

QUINCE: Let us hear, Bottom.

BOTTOM: I say; not a word of me. All I will tell you is that the Duke and his Lady hath dined. Get together your costumes, find strings to tie on your false beards and new shoe-laces; I would never let a play be ruined by ratty shoe laces! Meet me at the palace just now and read over your lines. We will be the best play the duke and duchess ever saw! Away...go away!

**Blackout.**

## **ACT TWO, SCENE EIGHT**

Sissia is sitting alone in the middle of the stage, singing a few lines of "Take my Heart" to herself, quietly, heartbroken. Dante enters and at first can't see her, but as she continues singing, he can suddenly see her.

SISSIA: If I take your heart, I will cherish it every day  
If I take your heart, I will heal these old wounds  
If I take your heart, it's to make it happy  
I take your heart, it's forever close to mine  
But not every heart belongs to any other... **\*pauses, realises that the song no longer applies, continues sadly\***  
You and I...

**Sissia stops singing, quite upset, and buries her face in her hands.**

DANTE: **\*sung\*** You and I, you and I were meant to be.  
I'm the one for you, you're the one for me.  
You love me as much as I do.

**Sissia stands up slowly and faces him, and he smiles slightly at her. Titania silently enters and watches them. Sissia rushes at him, and instead of hugging him, she hits him in the chest, shoving him. She continues to shove him as she speaks.**

SISSIA: Who do you think you are?! You can't just leave and then just come back, act as if it's all okay! You and your stupid human-ness!

DANTE: Okay, firstly, the word you're looking for is "humanity", not human-ness! And secondly, I'm sorry. It's just... You drive me crazy! I can't concentrate when you're around, I'm distracted by your beauty and laughter

SISSIA: Dante-

DANTE: No, let me finish. You get to have your speeches, so I get to have mine! You're just always there in my mind and... I don't know. I guess I'm finished. I guess it wasn't really a speech...

**Beat.**

SISSIA: May I speak? **\*Dante nods\*** Oh my, you are infuriating! I swore to myself that I'd never be one of those girls who falls apart when her guy leaves. Told myself that I'd be strong. The whole comatose-because-I'm-suddenly single thing is just stupid and completely against what a woman should be-

DANTE: Ooh, I got it! I know where I was going with it! Sissia, I-

SISSIA: **\*annoyed\*** This is my speech, hello? I just-

DANTE: I had a life! A neatly planned out, organised life that I could deal with! A life that didn't include you or that stupid pesky little thing called love! You're just like that crazy little pixie-like girl that you hear about-

SISSIA: PIXIE?! Didn't we go over this?! I'm not a-

DANTE: Somehow I just love you more than I intended to, and it scares me!

SISSIA: It's because I'm a faerie, isn't it?

DANTE: Yeah... I guess a part of it is. But it's also because it wasn't part of my plan, to love. And especially not someone as wonderful as you are.

SISSIA: So what if it wasn't in your plan? Life gets pretty boring if you plan it all out. I should know. I'm going to live forever.

TITANIA: That's not true.

**Sissia and Dante turn as Titania steps out.**

SISSIA: What do YOU want?

TITANIA: Just wanted to see the *human* **\*said with disgust\*** that makes my sister lose all respect for her sanity as well as her heritage.

SISSIA: Titania, I'm not like you! I've never been like you. And I don't want to be like you. I don't want to. I don't want to live forever. I don't want to live forever without him **\*gestures to Dante\***

TITANIA: You know, you'll have to give up your wings if you become human. And I just don't think you have the will to do that. Flying is your life.

SISSIA: Take my wings. Take anything. I would give anything to be human.

**Titania starts chanting something as an instrumental of "Human" plays and faeries come onto stage, dancing around Sissia, so close she can't be seen. When the faeries move away, Sissia no longer has her wings.**

TITANIA: I hope you're happy, Sissia. Now that you've chosen this. Now that you've chosen HIM.

**Sissia hugs Titania, and Titania, though shocked at first, hugs her back. Titania steps back, with tears in her eyes.**

TITANIA: **\*sadly to her faeries\*** Let us leave.

**Titania and her faeries leave, and Sissia touches her back, where her wings no longer are. Dante touches her back too, and she turns to him.**

SISSIA: Oh, help! I'm going to grow old!

DANTE: **\*laughs\*** You'll still be beautiful, my fair Sissia.

SISSIA: Yours? I am not “yours”! You do not own me-

**Dante kisses her.**

DANTE: I believe you told me to take your heart, did you not?

SISSIA: Oh, do shut up, Dante!

**Sissia hugs him tightly. Blackout.**

## **ACT TWO, SCENE NINE**

**Theseus, Hippolyta and Philostrate enter, along with a number of servants.**

HIPPOLYTA: ‘Tis strange, my Theseus, what these four who frolicked in the forest do speak of.

THESEUS: More strange than true. I never believe these strange fairy tales and old legends. Lovers and madmen have such seething brains, such shaping fantasies that we sane people just can’t understand. Lunatics, lovers and poets are all ruled by they imagine to be, not what is. Lunatics see things which we know to be false, and lovers are just equally as bad. Poets see something confusing in the mundane and complicate reality with meanings and fantasies.

HIPPOLYTA: But all the story of that night told over, and all their minds transfigured so together. Theseus, this makes me believe that there is more going on than imaginings – their story is bizarre and astounding and fantastic, but it’s solid and consistent and honest. I think it’s true.

**Enter Helena and Hermia, followed by Lysander and Demetrius.**

THESEUS: Here come the lovers, not in mirth but in woe, they look like no lovers I did ever know.

**Lysander and Demetrius approach.**

LYSANDER: Good luck, duke. You’ve got your work cut out for you because women are completely mad.

HIPPOLYTA: Need I remind you that I am the duchess? Dare you offend me? You will feel my wrath.

LYSANDER: See?

**Lysander and Demetrius move away. Helena and Hermia approach.**

HERMIA: We wish you joy and that you find joy every day when you walk, every time that you talk, when you take your bread and when you're in...

THESEUS: ...Now, what kind of entertainment do we have to fill in the time between this moment and bedtime. What play has been prepared? What performances are to come to fill in this tortuous wait to bedtime? Bring forward Philostrate.

PHILOSTRATE: Here, mighty Theseus.

THESEUS: Do tell, what entertainment have you prepared for the evening? Plays, music, what? We shall never survive without entertainment.

PHILOSTRATE: Here's the selection of prepared acts. You can choose which one you would like to see first.

THESEUS: Of course I can chose, I'm in charge. \*reading down the list\* Well, "The battle between Hercules and the Centaurs" is no good. No, we won't see that. I've already told that that story to Hippolyta while praising my cousin Hercules, haven't I?

HIPPOLYTA: Yes, at least ten times of more, but it never gets boring, dear. \*deeply sarcastic\*

THESEUS: What else? "The riot of bacchanals who rip the singer Orpheus to shreds"? I've seen it. **\*running a finger down the list\*** Blah, blah, blah, Shakespearean, blah. Oh, wait. "A tedious short drama about young Pyramus and his love Thisbe, a very sad and tragic comedy." A sad comedy? Short but still tedious? That's like burning ice and frozen lava. How can this drama be so many contradictory things?

PHILOSTRATE: I would say, my lord, that the play is about ten words, and it's probably about eleven words too long. That makes it tedious. Not one word is well written, not one actor is right for his part. Pyramus kills himself, you know. I cried. Tears ran down my face, but they were tears of laughter.

THESEUS: Who are the actors?

PHILOSTRATE: No-one with talent, but they've worn out what might be their brains to perform for your nuptial.

THESEUS: Do you want to see it, dear? It sounds excellent.

HIPPOLYTA: It sounds awful.

THESEUS: We'll see it.

PHILOSTRATE: No, my noble Lord. It is not for you, it is not for anyone. I have heard it over and nothing, oh, nothing in the world should make you see it, unless you think their bad acting and misremembered lines is perversely funny...?

THESEUS: We'll watch the play. It's the thought that counts and I'm sure they've tried mightily hard.

**Exit Philostrate.**

HIPPOLYTA: I love not to see wretchedness over charged and duty in his service perishing.

THESEUS: Why, gentle sweet, you shall see no such thing!

HIPPOLYTA: He just said that they're no good at acting. Why are you being ridiculous?

THESEUS: We'll be making them feel good, then, by allowing them to perform.

HIPPOLYTA: Please, no...

**Enter Philostrate.**

PHILOSTRATE: If you're certain about this, I have the person doing the prologue ready, your Grace.

AVON: **Enters and sits in the audience.** Oh how I long to see them play and give him credit for what he hath done, Bottom the Bard.

SISSIA: **Enters audience with Dante** What are you doing here?

DANTE: Who doth thou speak of Sissia.

**Sissia and Avon look at each other, smile and hug.**

QUINCE: **\*Prologue\*** If we offend you, it's because we want to. We didn't actually come here specifically to offend you, but we offend you with our best intentions. We are going to show off some talent and then get executed. What? Uh... That doesn't make sense? Why are you executing us? Uh... Anyway, we're here because we don't like you at all. We don't want you to be happy; actually we'd like you to be absolutely miserable, please. The actors are here to come out and make you regret asking us here. Now watch the show. Okay, go.

THESEUS: This guy doesn't pay much attention to grammar. Or punctuation. Or politeness.

LYSANDER: **\*to Demetrius\*** He rode that prologue like a wild horse. He didn't know how to stop it.

DEMETRIUS: **\*to Lysander\*** The moral of this story is that it's not enough to speak; you have to speak grammatically.

HIPPOLYTA: He performed his prologue like a child plays a recorder—he can make sounds, but they're out of control.

THESEUS: His speech was like a tangled chain. It went on and on and was a total mess. **\*louder\*** Who's next?

QUINCE: **\*prologue\*** Perhaps you are wondering what is going on. Well, keep wondering, I'm not going to tell you. This man is Pyramus, if you want to know which might help....you understand...the play. This beautiful lady is definitely Thisbe. This man with the...wings...is portraying Wall, the wall that kept these lovers apart. They whisper through Wall's little hole. This man, with his lantern, portrays Moonshine, because, if you want to know, the lovers were not ashamed to meet each other at night to go on dating. This lion is called "Lion," scared away Thisbe when she arrived at the meeting place. As she ran away from him, she dropped her cloak, which the horrible Lion stained with his bloody mouth somehow. Maybe he brushed his teeth with it. I don't know. Anyway, soon Pyramus comes along and finds his Thisbe's cloak. He thinks she's quite very dead. At this point, he takes his sword, his bloody blameful blade, and bravely breaks open his boiling bloody breast. And he dies, and then he's very quite dead. Thisbe, hiding in the shade of the mulberry bushes, took his dagger and killed herself too. Then everyone else stands here because that's where they're standing.

**Comment 97** This scene is amazingly funny, performed with impeccable timing and wit. The commedia dell arte workshops had really paid off here. The students; acting and connection with the comedy was awesome. To perform with this level of meaning and timing was a great achievement and this showed that the students were bettering their acting skills and their understanding of the text and characters.

THESEUS: I hope the lion has a speaking part.

HIPPOLYTA: If you're letting these twits talk, I don't see why the lion shouldn't.

SNOUT: I play a wall. These bits of fabric are actually bricks. **\*flapping arms\*** Well, they're not real bricks, but imagine they are. The lovers speak through a hole right here **\*makes a circle with his index finger and thumb\***

THESEUS: Would you desire brick to speak better?

DEMETRIUS: It's the wittiest wall I ever heard, my lord.

**Enter Bottom, playing Pyramus.**

THESEUS: Shut up. Pyramus is to speak. Silence!

BOTTOM: **\*Pyramus\*** Oh. It is night. It is dark. I am sad. Where is Thisbe? Wall, where is Thisbe? Where is the hole to whisper through?

**Snout curls fingers to make a circle.**

BOTTOM: Thanks, courteous Wall. But what see I? No Thisbe do I see. Oh, wicked Wall through whom I see no bliss! Damn you, wall, you disappointed me.

THESEUS: Since the wall is really a person, it should curse back.

HIPPOLYTA: **\*under breath\*** I'm about ready to curse back.

BOTTOM: Uh, begging your pardon, my lord, but it's not really his turn to speak. It's Thisbe's turn here. It really works better when you follow the script.

**General snorting from the non-actor characters.**

FLUTE: **\*as Thisbe\*** O Wall, full often hast thou heard my moans, for parting my fair Pyramus and me! My cherry lips have often kissed thy stones.

BOTTOM: **\*as Pyramus\*** It that you, fair Thisbe?

FLUTE: **\*as Thisbe\*** Pyramus, that is you, is it not? My love?

BOTTOM: **\*as Pyramus\*** It is your love, and I your love will always be!

FLUTE: **\*as Thisbe\*** I will be as faithful to you as someone else very faithful, my love.

BOTTOM: **\*as Pyramus\*** Kiss me!

FLUTE: **\*as Thisbe\*** I can't. If you didn't notice, there's a wall in the way.

BOTTOM: **\*as Pyramus\*** Let us meet in the next town over.

FLUTE: **\*as Thisbe\*** I will be stopped by nothing but death.

SNOUT: **\*as Wall\*** I'm done.

**Wall exits.**

THESEUS: if they hadn't had left they could have just waited for the wall to go away. Talking walls are so unreliable.

HIPPOLYTA: This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.

THESEUS: A truly excellent play allows you to fill in what they leave out yourself through true imagination.

HIPPOLYTA: In that case, it's your mind which is interesting, not the play

THESEUS: If we imagine these guys as they imagine themselves, then they're first-class actors. Look, here come two noble animals, a man and a lion.

HIPPOLYTA: What's wrong with you?



**Lion and Moonshine enter**

SNUG:                   **\*as lion\*** I'm a lion! Roar.

THESEUS:               He's quite good, isn't he?

DEMETRIUS:           He's a better lion than he is actor

LYSANDER:            He's as brave as a fox.

THESEUS:             Quite. And more wise than a goose.

DEMETRIUS:           He's not brave enough to be wise.

THESEUS:             He's not wise enough to be brave.

STARVELING:          **\*as Moonshine\*** My lantern is the moon and I'm the man in the moon.

THESEUS:             This is the greatest error of all the rest. The man should be put into the lantern.  
How is it else the "man in the moon"?

DEMETRIUS:           He dares not come there for the candle.

HIPPOLYTA:           I'm tired of this moon. I wish he'd wax or wane off the stage.

THESEUS:             It appears by his small light of discretion that he is in the wane. But yet, in  
courtesy, in all reason, we must stay the time.

LYSANDER:            Proceed, Moon.

STARVELING:          **\*as Moonshine\*** I can't. There's nothing more to say.

DEMETRIUS:           Then...shut up!?

FLUTE:                **\*as Thisbe\*** I am here, but where is my love?

SNUG:                 Hey there. I mean...Roar.

**Thisbe runs away, dropping her cloak.**

DEMETRIUS:           So that's how you make an annoying girl leave you be! Excellent roaring.

THESEUS:             Good running Thisbe.

HIPPOLYTA:           Nice shining of the moon, moonshine.

THESEUS:             Well moused, lion!

**Exit Snug as Lion.**

THESEUS: And so the lion vanished

BOTTOM: \*as Pyramus\* Sweet moon, you shine brighter than the light in my heart on this fair night as I await my love. Oh, where is fair Thisbe? \*pacing\* But what is this old cloth? Do my eyes deceive me? No! It is Thisbe's bloodied cloak! Some wicked beast has hurt my gentle love, my darling Thisbe. Oh, cruel fate, why have you taken my Thisbe?

THESEUS: Watching this magnificent actor's passionate lament is enough to bring a grown man almost to tears.

HIPPOLYTA: Beshrew my heart, but I pity the man.

BOTTOM. \*as Pyramus\* Why, Mother Nature, did you insist on creating Lions, the beast of brutality which destroyed my dear love? She was the most beautiful woman that lived, that loved, that liked, that looked with cheer. Come, tears, confound! Out, sword, and wound! Thus die I, thus, thus, thus. Now am I dead. Now am I fled.

**Exit Starveling as Moonshine.**

BOTTOM: \*as Pyramus\* Die, die, die, die, die, I am dead.

DEMETRIUS: Is he the kind of die you play cards with?

LYSANDER: Oh, no, he couldn't be dice; he has no dots, which makes him a dead.

HIPPOLYTA: How is Thisbe meant to find her dead lover without the moonlight? **\*Pause\*** This is awful.

Enter Thisbe

HIPPOLYTA: Methinks she should not grieve long one for such a Pyramus.

DEMETRIUS: she's spotted him...

LYSANDER: ...Here come the waterworks.

FLUTE: \*Thisbe\* Asleep, my love? What, dead, my dove? O Pyramus, arise! Open your eyes! Tongue, not a word. Come, trusty sword. Come, blade, my breast imbrue. \*stabs herself\* And, farewell, friends. Thus Thisbe ends. Adieu, adieu, adieu. \*dies\*

THESEUS: Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.

LYSANDER: The wall might help too.

**Comment 98** Delivery of this part exceptionally comedic. The student understood and was able to read between the lines and had impeccable comedic timing.

BOTTOM:                   \*out of character\* No, the wall won't help. Would you like to hear the epilogue now? It's quite good. Or we could dance.

THESEUS:                I believed you to be dead \*indignantly\*No, no epilogue. The dead don't apologise for being so, no. Let's see the dance, then.

HIPPOLYTA:             Why are you letting them stay longer, Theseus?

**The actors dance and exit.**

**Enter Puck.**

PUCK:                   The charred logs glow in the fireplace, and the owl's hoot makes the sick man think about his own death. Now is the time of night when graves open wide and release spirits to glide over the graveyard paths. And we faeries, who run away from the sun just like the goddess of the night, following darkness like a dream, are getting antsy. But I'm here to make sure that not even a mouse disturbs this house.

**Enter Oberon, Titania and other faeries.**

OBERON:                Let the dying fire shine and glimmer light. Let all faeries, sprites and elves dance

TITANIA:                Let them dance just so softly as to break a twig.

OBERON:                Let this moon be told that happiness may arise tonight.

TITANIA:                And let this be so always, and let there be sweet dreams found here in many moons to pass.

OBERON:                And in every dawn that follows.

**Titania sings.**

**Dream by Priscilla Ahn**

TITANIA:                I was a little girl alone in my little world  
Who dreamed of a little home for me.  
I played pretend between the trees,  
And fed my houseguests bark and leaves,  
And laughed in my pretty bed of green.  
I had a dream  
That I could fly from the highest swing.  
I had a dream.  
Long walks in the dark through woods  
Grown behind the park,  
I asked God who I'm supposed to be.

The stars smiled down on me,  
God answered in silent reverie.  
I said a prayer and fell asleep.  
I had a dream  
That I could fly from the highest tree.  
I had a dream.  
Now I'm old and feeling grey.  
I don't know what's left to say  
about this life I'm willing to leave.  
I lived it full and I lived it well,  
there's many tales I've lived to tell.  
I'm ready now, I'm ready now,  
I'm ready now to fly from the highest wing.  
I had a dream

**All but Puck exit.**

#### **ACT TWO SCENE TEN**

PUCK: If we shadows have offended, think but this, and all is mended— That you have but slumbered here while these visions did appear. And this weak and idle theme, no more yielding but a dream, Gentles, do not reprehend. If you pardon, we will mend. And, as I am an honest Puck, If we have unearnèd luck Now to 'scape the serpent's tongue, We will make amends ere long.  
Else the Puck a liar call. So good night unto you all. Give me your hands if we be friends, And Robin shall restore amends.

**Comment 99** We retained this

**END.**

**From the audience Avon makes her way upon stage and claps PUCK.**

**The cast enter a little way onto stage and clap AVON she takes a curtsy.**

AVON *The End*

**CURTAIN CALL BEGINS!**

**The forest remains in place  
Enter Philostrate takes a bow  
Enter the dancers in a dancy manner  
Enter the faeries dark and light on opposite sides  
Enter Thesues, Hippolyta and Egeus.  
Enter Lysander and Demetrius**

**Enter Sissia and Dante**

**Enter the actors Quince – “Where’s Bottom?**

**Enter Hermia and Helena in back packer clothing**

**Enter Bottom**

**Enter King Oberon with the Changeling**

**Enter Queen Titania**

**Enter Puck**

**Puck leads applause for musicians and technicians.**

**Reprise of final song**

**They exit!**

## CHAPTER SIX SCRIPT OVERLAYS

The following are transparencies that overlay the pages of the script that they explore.

### **Page 4 explored:**

Sissia's character came about as an expression of the child in a family, who feels they do not fit in.

I had asked the question: What is a Midsummer Night's Dream about? I was first met with many students' stating, "I have no idea." Or "I don't know." For those who had some idea the answers were varied and included: family, dreams, sexism, other worlds, class systems, how bad actors are treated. From this Rose spring-boarded offering a personal comment:

Rose: "I don't know about you guys but I have always been the black sheep in my family."

Catriona: "I can see that now, ha ha. We should have a black sheep somewhere."

Then another student commented, "I heard A Midsummer Night's Dream wasn't even written by Shakespeare." (Heath) This was something he investigated and came back the following week and explained further to students. The students then created the character of Avon the ghost who spends her entire performance in soliloquy to the audience. She comments upon the action as if she had written the script.

Sissia has the ability to see Avon while other characters are oblivious. This indicates Sissia's 'black sheep' status as she has different beliefs to her family. One student raised the idea that she was like a child who doesn't want to blindly believe her family's religion.

Emily decided to have Sissia's actions in the initial scene to foreshadow what would happen later in the script. This added much later. Sissia sets the faeries free here just as her decision later in the script to give up her wings so that she can love a mortal sets the faeries free from their immortality.

**Comment 7** The choice of the song and its lyrics allowed students to make bigger picture connections.

**Page 6 explored:**

**Comment 10** The idea that the students would be able to demystify the Elizabethan language for the audience is shown. One student stated, “If I was in the audience I wouldn’t have any idea what Egeus was saying.” Rose.

**Comment 11** I refer to Kevin a student who picked up the part of Egeus the week before the performance as the student who was supposed to play the part had a death in the family. He had trouble remembering this line so he changed it to what’s here. This artistic licence afforded to the students with the script right up until performance, has a very practical base in that it covers problems like this and allows students to write their own lines so they can easily remember them. It’s also very retrospective of how Shakespeare worked with his actors. As scripts often weren’t completed actors would have to adlib to get through the play, some plays were prompted throughout. Shakespearean and indeed Elizabethan actors worked from the handwritten ‘foul papers’ which rarely became a fair script edited version until after it had been performed (De Grazia and Wells 2010, 37). The script within this thesis is akin to the foul copy of Shakespearean times in that it holds notes and has not been edited for punctuation and grammar. It is however akin to the fair copy in so far as it has been rehearsed, performed and does hold stage directions.

**Comment 12** Here Avon says she had to make this woman look doomed so that people would not question that a man had written her script. The ensuing discussion that came from the line, “man-made” sexism showed a level of philosophical thought. “If things were written from women’s perspectives then there wouldn’t be so much sexism.” (Emily)

“Oh, really? Who do you think raised the sexist males; it’s not just that simple you see. Women!” (Flynn).

**Comment 13** Characters began to take on the traits of people in the participants’ worlds.

## **Page 7 explored**

**Comment 15** The use of asterisks came from mobile phone language. When I asked,

‘Why are you using asterisks here?’ I was told it is what they use on their phones. This is evidence that the students felt comfortable enough to use this familiar form of textual language. It is also evidence of a language evolving.

**Comment 16** The discussion ended with a profound comment from Flynn – “It’s left over hype from when women weren’t equal to men and sorry to say this to all of you who think it’s because your dad cares, I’d have to say it’s probably got more to do with him being a Neanderthal.” Students were quite passionate about this point. Varying comments stated that it’s a dad’s job, that dads have no right, that mums would make better decisions coming from an experienced point of view.

**Comment 17** This couldn’t be decided so they simply cut off the thought. The way ideas were cut if they couldn’t collectively decide was a way of them saying, if we can’t agree we need to take another approach.

**Comment 18** The wedding planner was introduced with delight and opened up a whole cast of assistants. The students discussed how they thought it ridiculous that people have so much money that they throw it to a complete stranger to organise a day that is supposed to signify their love. The discussions entered the realm of how wasteful the developed world is and that when they grow up they’ll put a stop to how unfair the world is. The character and her entourage were a sophisticated satire of today’s wasteful society that categorises love through purchase.



### **Page 10 explored**

**Comment 21** The song chosen summed up Helena's view of herself. The discussion around this decision was about whether to keep her as a really insecure character or to empower her. This struggle went on throughout. One particular student continued to fight for this character to redeem her self-confidence – we see the result of this at the end when she decides to go backpacking.

### **Page 11 explored**

**Comment 22** Dante was invented as, “The guy who thinks he’ll never fall in love but then when he does is the one to fall most intensely” (Rose). This discussion showed that the students had a real understanding of the changeability of thoughts and feelings.

**Comment 24** Students developed their own theory around the idea that perhaps a woman had written Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and she wrote Bottom in to represent Shakespeare himself as a mere actor and not a very good one at that. On page 10 we see Avon break the fourth wall, as the students referred to it from their Drama education. What they had actually done with this character was to do more than break this fourth wall that they have been taught to hold in high esteem. They had thought about the writer and the history around the text and made a comment upon this for their audience. This is like Boal’s political theatre. Their script was becoming mindful of humanity, thinking of the previous statement about the developed world’s waste.

#### **Page 14 explored**

**Comment 29-31** Introduce a speaking forest who helps the audience understand what is happening in the play. This shows that the students know that their community cannot access the Shakespearean script, they understand that their parents, families and friends have not learnt Elizabethan language the way that they have. They also show empathy for how this can be difficult if you haven't been immersed in it and they wanted to bridge the gap for their audience so the audience could enjoy the storyline.

**Comment 32** Showed the androgynous state of Puck and there was some discussion about tying this with Avon and how she felt, in the end it was considered that there wasn't enough time to explore this. Discussions around the idea that in Shakespeare's day it was probably ok to be gay and questioning why our society is so prudish. One student informed other students that it was politics and even though we think we have a right to freedom of speech and the like that in actual fact we are all just puppets of a bigger picture. This is where the idea for the marionette song and dance performance came from (**See DVD 2 01:26:28**).

### **Page 15 & 16 explored**

**Comment 34 & 35** Bring into focus the powers that Titania and Oberon have over the forest, the fairies and the human realm. This followed on from the discussion of leaders influencing the masses. One student spoke about Silvio Berlusconi and how he had manipulated the people of Italy by owning all media outlets. I was thrilled by the connections being made. The discussions ended in the very philosophical questions: How did we get here? Who really controls us? How do we really know? Meanwhile Titania represented the 'light' side of control and Oberon the 'dark' their moods were reflected by the weather. One student said they are like Gods.

**Comment 37** The power of mother-nature raised quite a feminist debate.

**Page 17 explored**

**Comment 40** Students likened the moods of the king and queen to the moods of their parents. When their parents are in a good mood everything is good and then the opposite applies. This showed how the students felt about their relationship with the significant adults in their lives. The norm was that they were under the adults' control as they were the adults' responsibility. There was one particular student who questioned this, "My folks aren't like that, I'm accepted as an equal. I have responsibility for myself and their moods only affect me if I let them." (Sienna) Sienna's experience was not the norm and the other students responded with the idea that she was so lucky and that they would never have the same experience.

### **Page 18 explored**

**Comment 42** Some very purposeful writing here, foreshadowing what will happen with Dante. They are using language to have an effect on the overall storyline for their audience which shows sophisticated and mindful writing. The exciting thing about observing this is that children who had no idea what terms like foreshadowing mean, were asking questions. Tobin questioned, “Hang on, wind back a sec – WTF if foreshadowing or whatever?” (Tobin)

### **Page 19 & 20 explored**

**Comments 43 & 44** The students were really excited by this idea that Dante and Sissia could see each other. They imagined how it might play out on stage and got caught up in how each line should be delivered. They laughed and at one stage a girl was practically rolling on the floor with laughter as the person who was playing Sissia in the workshop performed the lines.

**Comment 45** Far Away the tree starts to talk about her dreams of freeing her roots. This foreshadows what happens later for Far Away in the script. Again there was projection into what would happen later in the script through the characters the students invented. If they were not creating new characters and sub-storylines they would not be able to visualise the future for their character. This reminded me why the students' freedom to write their own script was important. They were creating roles and characters and using these characters to explore themes and make connections.

## Page 22 explored

**Comment 49** The personification of the black star was amazing (*See DVD 1 33.31*). The students believed that they could personify the black star through song and the character. Titania was considered to be a black star. They described her as a the gravitational matter for everything in a Midsummer Night's Dream and her sister Sissia as being a part of the black star collapsing. The idea was that Titania prevents the space time collapse thus meaning she had a control over this, so she allowed this collapse of her sister to enter the mortal realm. When we think of a Midsummer Night's Dream, stars come to mind the discussion was bright and fresh.

"So if Titania is like Avril's Black Star, then you can understand the whole mortal realm thing." (Clare)

"Exactly, I love that idea. If she has a power over space and time why couldn't she make an immortal, mortal?" (Rose)

"It's like her forest, she represents mother-nature." (Karlie)

"She is mother nature. In the music when they fight, we'll totes affect the whole feel like the lights and stuff." (Kevin)

These are moments of profound philosophical insights that inspired the students' development of the character Sissia. They've not only rewritten Shakespeare's AMSND they have developed it through their own interpretation. Rather than imitation the students found the confidence through freedom to think and create (Weor 2008).

**Comment 50** Oberon's magic was used here to freeze the scene and manipulate the physical movement of Titania. It was fascinating to watch as students discussed where Oberon should place Titania. Their thinking was in line with what came next which gave me an insight into their reading. They were reading ahead to manage to make sense of the script. One student in particular would allude to what was about to happen and why they needed to think things through



**Page 23 explored**

**Comment 52** The Kardashian joke received such a laugh, backstage students commented, “We should have put more TV stuff in, they get that!” (Sarah) This resonates with the initial desire for the mainstream, familiar musical. Popular culture and social media are accessible to the audience. The audience laughed at these jokes. It differs to performing a Broadway Musical in that they were not performing the Kardashian’s show, they were making a reference.

**Page 25 explored**

**Comment 56** Students made reference to another of Shakespeare's plays in understanding the concept of once bitten twice shy, however I'm not sure that they really understood the nature of Romeo, they were focused on the idea that he thought he'd never love another and, "Then it all goes out the window though with Juliet." (Danika)

### **Page 27 explored**

**Comment 60** The analogy of the struggle between Ophelia and Hippolyta to a teacher and a student here is remarkable. The discussion was that, "A teacher has the power in the end," (Casey) which I found intriguing. I asked why students thought that teachers had the power. "Dah you're the adult!" (Josh) I was immediately reduced to the powerful teacher, which did not sit well with me because I try to allow the students freedom to feel that they are empowered. I wondered if this is simply a state that we've all come to accept.

### **Page 30 explored**

**Comment 63** Emily stated, “This would be the perfect contrast to Far Away. I mean they both reside in the same forest so it makes sense, it’s just like reality in many ways.”(Emily) This gave a perfect example of how to use contrast in writing and the discussion further explored this concept. Some of the younger students were really listening and learning about how to write effectively. The conversation wound up in a discussion around opposites and the need for one opposite to understand the other. They were exploring the concept of a dichotomy between an imagined world and the real world and at the same time were living this dichotomy in so far as they were in a school exploring real world problems which can be related to the study of real world maths in the classroom and how this motivates students (Chazan 2000).

**Page 34 explored**

**Comment 66** There was a discussion around peer group pressure here. One student summed it up perfectly. “It’s like testing the waters, you have to be careful at first but once you have your toes and ankle in, you might as well just plunge in.” (Flynn)

### **Page 36 Explored**

**Comment 68** “Let’s face it, all humans are voyeurs!” (Pete) Everyone went quiet, “You know, like to watch other people.” (Pete) The idea that people like to watch each other and that people enjoy it when another person ‘gets into trouble’ was quite a hot topic for debate. One student stated, “When you grow up a little more you probably won’t enjoy someone getting into trouble, because you start to realise that what they’re going through is not good and you feel their pain.” (Brady) It seemed to me that Brady was talking about empathy.

#### **Page 44 explored**

**Comment 74** When reading the script it is impossible to understand how these characters were played. It is really important to watch the video in the appendices to understand the disparity between the written word and the performance.

Quite naturally the students understood this to be the funniest part of the entire script. Bottom's death was performed in such a way that no one in the audience was immune to laughter. I had given the students a workshop in Commedia dell Arte to experience comedy making, timing and how to manage the rhythm and relationship with the audience (Syssoyeva, Proudfit, and Connect 2013). When I watch this performance the character Bottom playing Pyramus in the death of the lovers, I do not see a teenage student actor; I see a skilled performer who understands the medium in which he is working. The other mechanics' characters too are actors. When students understand how to perform and what enhances their performance they can develop their acting. This small troupe of actors was directed and supported by me. The students wanted to learn, they would ask meaningful questions about how to play their part, which I would often answer with a question for them to further develop their performance. They worked as a team, supporting each other and developing the characters through reciprocity. Students who perform with such depth understand more than their lines, they understand how their part affects the other character's part and the importance that this plays, no matter how small the role. These students worked with timing, rhythm, spatial awareness, vocal intonation, accent and comedic physicalisation. Their performance remains one of my favourite versions of this scene that I have experienced and if I were to cast actors on a world stage in this scene I would cast these young performers because I know they can be directed and they understand what it means to fulfil a role and character. Underlying this is my education in the performing arts, without my embodied knowledge I could not begin to imagine that I could facilitate these students to achieve what they did.

#### **Page 46 explored**

**Comment 77** Very deep discussions around souls and connection and how, “We can’t know for sure.” (Jaimie) The students discussed what a soul was and what the meaning of life was and they all had ideas and ideals and they shared these through a very long discussion. At times it became a debate where students put forth their ideas on religion and afterlife. I was impressed with the maturity in which this discussion took shape. I wondered if these students would have had this opportunity to have this type of discussion if they were not writing this script, working as a collective imagination. It was fascinating to observe the conscious exploration of a collaborative collective decide where the groups’ beliefs amalgamated. The final words in the conversation were, “There’s no right or wrong just all different experiences and ideas and it’s what makes us unique and who we are.”



**Page 52 explored**

**Comment 81** We see here that the students decide to rectify the pathetic females.

**Page 53 explored**

**Comment 82** Again the need to watch this dance piece, Marionette (*See DVD 2 01:26:28*).

### **Page 55 explored**

**Comment 84** The discussions around this were endearing. Students spoke of how sad they were when they realised the tooth fairy wasn't real anymore. One girl stated, "I cried and cried and didn't believe my ears. I loved the tooth fairy so much; she made losing my teeth bearable." (Vanesse) Another student asked her how she found out. "My mum told me. She said, oh come on Vanesse you must know, your younger brother knows." (Vanesse)

**Page 61 explored**

**Comment 87** Faraway's dance is a piece where the composition played by the composer on piano must be heard and the dance performed by the choreographer seen to understand what these two students achieved (*See DVD 2 10:42*).

### **Page 68 explored**

**Comment 96** Flynn stated, “This dream stuff is the same as being able to believe in stuff, like God. If you can imagine it, isn’t it real? It is like Bottom is somewhere between realms too.” (Flynn) This is really noteworthy as it aligns with the theory that this speech was inspired by the bible (Barber and McGrath).

Flynn stated, “Bottom is the weaver of dreams because he is a weaver and his dream is the thread between the dream world and reality.” (Flynn) This idea was laughed at as being ‘too deep’ by his peers; however I found his thinking quite profound. Here was a student who could understand on a very sophisticated level what a character represented and the meaning of this within the play. He had developed this understanding through character development where he objectively considered his character and what his character represented. Workshops where students would at times swap roles to have a greater understanding of their character along with other character development workshops allowed students to explore their characters and make important connections (Davison 1997).

This is another scene that needs to be watched to truly understand the development of the students as comedic actors. When viewed the level of understanding reached cannot be ignored.