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Community-Engaged Dramaturgy:
The Role of Young Audiences in New Work Development

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Community Engaged Dramaturgy:
The Role of Young Audiences in New Work Development

by

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Thesis

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Dedication

This document is dedicated to the life and memory of
my wonderful grandmother, Kathryn Franzoni,
who taught me how to listen to and learn from young people.

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This thesis document is the capstone to the incredible three years I've spent creating, working and learning at UT Austin. This document would not be here without the feedback, influence and participation of the wonderful mentors, friends, colleagues and collaborators I am lucky to have in my life.

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Abstract

Community-Engaged Dramaturgy: The Role of Young Audiences in New Work Development

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Theatre for young audiences (TYA) is a field defined by its intergenerational audiences, and TYA artists have the responsibility to engage this target audience as active participants at all stages of the creative process. While young people have opportunities to act as artistic agents in the related areas of youth theatre and theatre education, where their participation is the focus of the work, TYA needs to further explore the role of young people in professional theatre-making spaces. Building on emerging scholarship and practices of involving young people in new play development, this thesis documents significant current practices and examines the collaboration between first grade students and theatre artists at UT Austin in depth. The findings in this thesis invite TYA artists and scholars to consider how intergenerational collaboration affects new work development process and product and create space for youth to influence the theatre adult artists create with and for them in TYA.

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Chapter One: Introduction

My interest in youth participation in theatre for young audiences (TYA) began at Metro Theater Company in October 2011. Metro's commission of a new play by Wesley Middleton was in the early stages of development. To respond to tragic suicides of young people across the country, often as a result of intense bullying, Middleton hoped to write a play that would spark conversation around gender binaries in American culture. I participated in an advisory committee made up of Metro Theater Company artists, community activists, local educators, friends of Metro, and board members – all of whom came together so Middleton could crowd-source some of her questions.

At that meeting, Middleton and artistic director Carol North reported out on some of their recent visits to classrooms and conversations with young people. They shared a story of a kindergarten lesson they observed in which the teacher presented her students with a box of clothing to sort into a boy's pile and a girl's pile. Each time a student sorted something, the teacher asked the student to explain their choice. After sorting a few items this way, the teacher observed that there were red items in the boy pile, while girls in the class were wearing red that day. As the students worked through why it was okay for both boys and girls to wear red, along with other colors, Middleton and North reported that the students eventually created "a both pile" where all the clothing items ended up together again. Hearing this story stirred a range of emotions in me that day, and the "both pile" became the central concept for Middleton's play, *Unsorted*. In the whimsical world of *Unsorted*, the characters are clothing, and Jacket decides that all the clothing

must be categorized. Middleton's original focus was on gender binaries, but the emergent story engages intergenerational audiences about a variety of identity markers. Though the *Unsorted* script subsequently went through several more stages of development, when the kindergarten students created "the both pile" Middleton's play was born.

In youth theatre and theatre education, youth participation is the focus of the work. In professional TYA, where young people are the intended audience, professional artists, most often adults, produce theatre *for* youth to receive. However, a growing trend in TYA has some artists carving out a more active role for youth within professional theatre. Encountering the development process of *Unsorted* in its nascent stages piqued my curiosity about how the field of TYA might continue to include the ideas and perspectives of young people in the development of new work for young audiences. In my research of current practices, I discovered artists and companies who value the perspectives of young people and how youth viewpoints inform the theatre adults create. And yet, I noticed a lack of writing about these practices, including an absence of clear guidelines for artists who want to engage youth in their own new work development processes.

Since my encounter with *Unsorted* in 2011, my artistic and academic curiosities led me to study community engagement and dramaturgy in theatre for young audiences. This thesis explores the intersection of these two artistic areas, as well as the pedagogy and practices that inform how adult artists effectively engage young audiences in theatre experiences. I situate this intersection of community engagement and dramaturgy in theatre for young audiences in order to explore spaces for intergenerational engagement

between adults and young people through theatre-making. I call this practice of adult theatre artists engaging young audiences in new work development processes community-engaged dramaturgy.[1]

In this study I set out to explore what happens when adult artists and young people collaborate in the early stages of new work development. Specifically, I investigate the following research questions: What models and practices for engaging youth in new work development already exist? How do adult artists engage in meaningful collaboration with young people? And how do adult artists articulate their experience of collaborating with youth? Ultimately I wonder, what do community-engaged dramaturgy and intergenerational artistic partnerships between artists and audiences mean for the field of TYA? And how might a community-engaged approach to collaboration in theatre-making affect both the processes and products in new work development?

Background

A professional artistic field that serves young people carries both great possibility and great responsibility. I believe a core responsibility of artists working in TYA is to examine the assumptions or beliefs about children and young people that we bring to the theatre-making process. Some key assumptions that I bring to this research include: 1) TYA is created with specific audiences in mind; 2) the beliefs artists hold about young people inevitably shape the artistic process and product; and 3) young people possess experiences and perspectives on the world that are worthy of inclusion in professional

[1] In chapter two I delve into current influential practices in order to arrive at a more detailed definition of community-engaged dramaturgy.

theatre. These assumptions shaped my intentions behind the model of collaboration between youth and adults in this project, as well as how I researched the process.

For decades, playwrights working in TYA have sought out the feedback of young audiences on early drafts of scripts in development, a practice that can be traced back to our field's formative practitioners such as Winifred Ward and Charlotte Chorpenning. In her 2012 dissertation, scholar Kristin Ann Leahey documents how playwright Charlotte Chorpenning sought out the youth perspective on her plays and analyzes how Chorpenning's work shaped current practices of engaging young people in new work development. "When she began writing in the 1930s, Charlotte Chorpenning included children of all ages' (eight to fifteen year-olds) feedback in the development of her plays for young audiences, changing the relatively new field of children's theatre" (Leahey 33). Chorpenning's work demonstrates how an interest in how young people respond to theatre lives in the DNA of the field of TYA.

Leahey's dissertation is also one of few documents on engaging young people in new work development, which necessitates further research and documentation of specific practices and current models. Leahey coins the term "youth respondent method" to describe this interaction between artists and young people in new work development. Through four case studies that span from the 1940s to 2009, Leahey examines different applications of the youth respondent method that engage young people at various stages of the development process. Ultimately, Leahey argues that by making space for youth to participate in these processes, the youth respondent method strengthens the field of TYA. I share this perspective, and since encountering Leahey's dissertation, I found and

became involved with multiple models for engaging youth in new work development. I will give more detail on these models in chapter two, and my research ultimately will document existing models, while also offering new research on engaging young audiences in theatrical design through community-engaged dramaturgy practices.

Significance

Knowing that TYA includes many theatre artists who care deeply about young people and actively seek out their feedback on new plays and productions, I wondered what a more active role for young people might look like in professional TYA. In studying collaboration between artists and audiences, it is necessary to address the inherent separation that often exists between the two. In his keynote speech at TYA/USA's One Theatre World conference in May 2013, "The Why, the How and the What" Australian playwright Finegan Kruckemeyer reminded TYA artists that we are not the target audience of the field we work in, and this fact influences the how, what and why of our creative work. How do we know we are creating work that resonates with our audiences since we are no longer children? What is the role of young people in professional theatre for young audiences? My research operates on the assumption that involving young people in the new work development process proves a valuable endeavor for all involved. Kruckemeyer points out that, "Just as the vast majority of professional artists are not children, the vast majority of children are not professional artists" (2). In other words, professional adult artists and young people both have expertise to bring into a theatre-making collaboration. While the majority of young

people are not professional artists, young people have lived experiences and wisdom that could inform the what, how and why behind the theatre we make in TYA. This study offers a model for bridging the artist/audience divide and examines what happens when adult artists and youth collaborate early on in the development of a new theatrical piece.

The signature difference between theatre for young audiences and other theatre is the younger age of the audience members. In *Theatre, Education and Performance*, Helen Nicholson defines the term: "*theatre for young audiences* involves professional performance that is particularly designed for children and family audiences within the cultural sector" (86). An important element in Nicholson's definition is the intentional design for a specific audience. How does this awareness of a young audience manifest in TYA adult artists' theatre-making practices? Who are we *really* thinking about when we make plays for young people? Playwright Steven Dietz challenged TYA artists to honestly examine these questions in his 2012 blog post, "Theater of the Young, For the Young" on Howlround:

> I would respectfully ask my fantastic playwright peers to consider what percentage of our creative time is spent really (really) thinking about what kids want from our plays… 'What kind of plays are you looking for?' is something we regularly ask our gatekeepers—but seldom, I'm afraid, ask our kids. (Dietz)

The parents, caregivers and teachers – the gatekeepers that Dietz refers to – that accompany and bring youth to the theatre are key stakeholders in TYA, and, like Dietz, I see a danger in overvaluing their opinions about what kind of theatre we should make. In getting to know our audiences, TYA artists need to engage multi-generational audiences in conversations about what is important to them. With this thesis I document the

experiences of adult artists directly engaging with their intended audience in order to understand how the perspective of young audiences can inform the theatre-making process and product. In a field defined by the presence of youth in the audience, community-engaged dramaturgy acknowledges the ideas and perspectives of young audiences by integrating these ideas into the artistic processes and products that adult artists create.

While TYA artists have involved young people in their creative processes for decades, a practice that goes by many names, I've observed an increased interest in community-engaged dramaturgy from practitioners across the field. Artists want to know how this process works, and how young people might participate in professional theatre-making processes. As a theatre-maker and a dramaturg, I share this desire to engage with young audiences early on in the new work development process. I believe young people have something to teach me, and I want to see what happens when we create new work together. By exploring the discoveries, challenges and tensions that arise around engaging young people as dramaturgical collaborators in the performance development process for *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa*, I hope to inspire further dialogue among TYA artists and scholars about how to include the perspectives and experiences of young people at all stages of the new work development process. The growth and strength of our field depends on bringing in diverse voices and perspectives, and I believe that diversity of experience must include young people.

Project Overview

In order to study the inner workings of a partnership between artists and audience, I collaborated on the development of an interactive installation performance, *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa*, which immersed the audience in the visual and aural experience of the Russian fairy tale by the same name. This new performance for young audiences was created and performed at the University of Texas at Austin in collaboration with a class of first graders in Austin, Texas. In my role on this project as community engagement dramaturg, I planned and facilitated six workshops in the first grade classroom to explore the characters, environments and themes of the story over the course of five weeks. With an artistic team composed predominantly of designers, and a production timeline planned intentionally around the involvement of young people, the characteristics and logistics of creating this new work differed in multiple ways from theatre production processes I had previously experienced. The project team included two creative team leads: Rachel Alulis, a lighting designer, and myself, a teaching artist and dramaturg. Together, we planned classroom workshops and rehearsals, created the residency and production timeline, and shared directorial responsibilities. Throughout the month of October 2014, rehearsals, production meetings and classroom workshops happened simultaneously on a weekly basis. After completing the classroom workshops, Alulis and I shared the role of director in rehearsals with our actor/facilitator and stage manager as we experimented with ideas that emerged from both production meetings and the classroom workshops with young people in order to devise this performance.

METHODOLOGY

This thesis is a qualitative study of the collaborative relationship between a group of adult theatre artists and a classroom of sixteen first grade students. The artistic team included Rachel Alulis (lighting designer and project lead), Becca Drew Emmerich (actor/facilitator), Erica Hohn (costume designer), Michael Krauss (scenic designer), Victoria Solorio (stage manger), and myself (community-engagement dramaturg and researcher). Creating an opportunity for young people to participate as artistic collaborators was the priority for me in this development process. Through six arts-based classroom workshops, the artistic team discovered how our first grade collaborators imagined the characters, physical environment and mood of the fairytale. Young people created drawings and asked questions that informed the adult design team's process and production choices.

In many ways young people were at the center of this theatre-making process, and while this document contains youth contributions to the theatrical process and product in order to illustrate moments of artistic exchange, my research does not include youth perspectives on their own experience of participating in the project. In designing the artistic partnership and this research study, I thought intentionally about how to create developmentally-appropriate ways for youth to participate in this collaboration. While I document youth participation in the residency through my observations of classroom workshops and the inclusion of youth-created drawings as well as through the adult participant responses to the workshops, I ultimately chose to focus this study on the adult artist perspectives in hopes of inviting more artists to practice community-engaged

dramaturgy. In the future, I would like to investigate young people's experience of collaborating with adult artists on new work.

Guided by my research questions, I documented my observations of classroom workshops and rehearsals in field notes, conducted individual interviews with each member of the adult artistic team at various points throughout the development process, and facilitated a focus group with the adult artists following public performances of the show. I observed how the adult participants spoke about the artistic contributions of young people throughout the process, and documented their reactions to youth ideas. In the interviews, I listened for how artists articulated their own core values, their experience of collaborating with young people, and their perceptions about how this partnership shaped their own artistic process and their views of TYA. I transcribed audio recordings of individual interviews, the focus group and select production meetings. I then analyzed these data sources for emergent themes related to the experience of partnering with young people in the artistic process.

In addition to studying the artistic team, I also studied my own artistic process as a dramaturg and teaching artist engaged in this collaborative partnership. I designed and facilitated the workshops with young people and documented my thoughts and feelings about this process. I also recorded my expectations before each workshop and reflections on surprising and striking moments from each workshop immediately following each session. Lastly, I documented moments from the workshops in which I was aware of the disruption of power between adults and youth and among the youth in order to understand how adults and young people engage in collaboration.

My research questions led me to organize my data in two parts: 1) examining the adult/youth collaboration and 2) understanding the adult artist experience of participating in a community-engaged model of new work development. In order to understand this intergenerational collaborative relationship, I analyzed my field notes, debrief meetings with Alulis and adult team members after workshops as well as what adult artists said about the workshops in their individual interviews. I wanted to examine the exchange of knowledge and skills at the heart of this intergenerational collaborative relationship in order to understand community-engaged dramaturgy more deeply. Patterns of dialogic exchange surfaced from the data, and this became my lens for examining the nature of the intergenerational collaboration. To explore my second research question about the adult artist experience in this new work development process, I analyzed interview transcripts and my field notes in order to understand how adult artists articulated their experience collaborating with youth throughout the process. After organizing the emergent themes from this data analysis, patterns emerged from the ways artists talked about how this collaboration affected their individual experience working on the production and the collaboration with the other adult artists as well as their relationship to youth.

Core Values of This Study

In the development process for *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa*, I prioritized the opportunity for youth to be active, artistic agents in the artistic team. Leading practitioners in early childhood education including Maria Montessori, Vivian Paley and Loris Malaguzzi emphasize the importance of youth agency in early grades. Jennifer

Adair, scholar and professor of early childhood education, defines school-based agency as "being able to influence and make decisions about what and how something is learned in order to expand capabilities" (3). In other words, agency encompasses more than choice; agency is about decision-making and having influence over one's experience. Adair argues that agency in the early grades creates opportunities for young children to expand their capabilities by having influence over their learning process (15).

Childhood studies scholar Allison James distinguishes between "a social actor… someone who does something" (41), and "a social agent… someone who does something with others, and in doing so, makes things happen" (41). In other words, agency encompasses actions and the consequences of the actions, in relationship to other people. I believe community-engaged dramaturgy with youth can create opportunities for youth to make decisions and choices that influence an artistic process. Locating youth agency as a core value helped frame my findings surrounding what community-engaged dramaturgy with youth means for the field of TYA, as I search for spaces for youth to influence and inform a field defined by their presence in the audience. Specific to this thesis document, the word "agency" encapsulates the idea of young people influencing the creation of a piece of theatre for which they are also the target audience. As a core value, youth agency guided the intentionality of this project's model around community-engaged dramaturgy, and shaped how I viewed my adult collaborators' interaction with youth throughout the process.

Outline of Chapters

This thesis explores what happens when adult artists engage with young people in community-engaged dramaturgy at the earliest stages of new work development. In this chapter, I outlined my research methodology and provided background and significance for engaging young people in the new work development process. In chapter two, I locate community-engaged dramaturgy at the intersection of community engagement and dramaturgical practices in order to frame my intentions for this project. I also spotlight three current models of community-engaged dramaturgy in TYA and reflect on how these three approaches shaped my intentions in leading community-engaged dramaturgy in *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa*.

In chapter three, I explore and analyze my intentionality related to the classroom workshops and building an intergenerational collaboration. Specifically, I investigate the role that dialogic exchange between youth and adults played in creating pathways for youth to contribute to the theatrical process and product. In chapter four I analyze my data from interviews, focus groups and field notes to understand the adult artists' experiences of this collaboration, including how adults named their own artistic roles in terms of youth, the different ways young people contributed to the production, and how collaborating with youth affected how adults collaborated with one another.

In chapter five, I reflect on how this practice and research invite artists to pay attention to our audiences, our development processes and each other. Chapter five also

includes my reflections on future research opportunities that I identified through this study’s findings, as well as its challenges and limitations.

Chapter Two: Models of Community-Engaged Dramaturgy

INTRODUCTION

In *Theatre, Education and Performance*, Helen Nicholson highlights the importance of recognizing the value of including young people in the landscape of theatre, both as audience members and artists:

> Without a willingness to learn and engage in dialogue, all theatre becomes intellectually stale, artistically lifeless and emotionally moribund, and enlightened theatres have learnt to listen to the voices of young people both as audience members and as fellow artists. (209)

Metro Theater Company in St. Louis models a commitment to engaging young people in a meaningful way. The company's mission states, "Inspired by the intelligence and emotional wisdom of young people, we create professional theater, foster inclusive community, and nurture meaningful learning through the arts" ("About Metro"). This mission manifests in a regular habit of engaging with young audiences during the new work development process. For example, Carol North, former artistic director at Metro explains that in the initial development of Suzan Zeder's *In a Room Somewhere* in 1985, "The stories we were generating were largely from our own experience, and we thought, we better do a litmus test on this and make sure that there is some deep truth that transcends generation and age" (Pederson, North, Zeder, Middleton). In 2011, twenty-six years later, when Metro commissioned playwright Wesley Middleton to write a new play about gender binaries, Middleton and North didn't do a "litmus test," nor did they explicitly intend to work in any particular model of community-engaged dramaturgy. But

by listening to youth and adults speak about gender and identity, community-engaged dramaturgy was exactly what North and Middleton did.

In this chapter, I locate community-engaged dramaturgy at the intersection of community engagement practices and dramaturgical practices in the arts. From here, I document some of the ways that artists in TYA are currently engaging youth in the new work development process before honing in on three specific approaches to community-engaged dramaturgy in TYA in the United States: Metro Theater Company's *Unsorted*, Trusty Sidekick Theatre Company's devising model, and Suzan Zeder's new play, titled *Aviatrix*. I explore the practice and questions these three approaches raise and how each model informs my understanding of community-engaged dramaturgy, which ultimately underpinned my work on *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa*.

LOCATING COMMUNITY-ENGAGED DRAMATURGY

As I encountered practical models of artists involving youth in the new work development process, I searched for a name to describe this practice. After experimenting with terms like "interactive dramaturgy" and "participatory dramaturgy," in my early research and writing, I arrived at "community-engaged dramaturgy." In her 2008 master's thesis, "Collaboration, Context and Common Ground: A Model for Community-Engaged Dramaturgy, " Erica Nagel explores how principles of community-based theatre work inform a production dramaturg's practice in a regional theatre context. Nagel's research stems from an overlap she noticed as she moved through literature on community-based practices:

> What interested me the most was that these goals [of community-based work], such as raising awareness, building relationships, encouraging civic engagement and participation, practicing imagination, and reclaiming theatre as a site for regional pride, self reflection, and conversation, were the very goals I had heard articulated in artistic staff meetings of major regional theatres. (4)

A focus on relationship-building, active participation and the act of reclaiming theatre as a site for dialogue are three elements that define and shape the approach to community-engaged dramaturgy with youth in TYA that I wanted to enact. Also, like Nagel, I wanted to "explore the possibilities for integrating community-based practices and exercises into a new play development process" (Nagel 6). Nagel's thesis offers rich analysis of community engagement and dramaturgy practices and uses systems intelligence theory to identify their similar functions and structure. My research builds on Nagel's understanding and plants community-engaged dramaturgy in the landscape of TYA to explore new work development through an intergenerational collaboration, necessitated by TYA's intergenerational nature as a field.

Community Engagement: The Art of Building Relationships

Many artists and organizations use the terms "audience engagement" and "community engagement" interchangeably, but these two terms, often used to describe activities that happen in the relationship between artists and audiences, diverge in each one's use of time and space, and in the nature of the artist/audience relationship. The 2011 WolfBrown study, *Making Sense of Audience Engagement* defines audience engagement as "a guiding philosophy in the creation and delivery of arts experiences in which the paramount concern is maximizing the impact on the participant" (Brown and

Ratzkin 5). In other words, audience engagement practices focus directly on creating a meaningful arts experience for the audience member or participant. The same audience engagement study compares audience engagement and community engagement: "[community engagement] aims to serve the broader community, while [audience engagement] aims to serve those who attend. In reality, many engagement activities serve both purposes" (Brown & Ratzkin 29). While these two areas of engagement may share many qualities, I see community engagement as a practice rooted in building and sustaining meaningful relationships between artists and community members, who may or may not also be in the audience.

Community engagement prioritizes participation. The 2011 report, *Getting In on the Act: How Arts Groups Are Creating Opportunities for Active Participation* articulates the rising popularity and increasing significance of participatory arts practices as we undergo "a seismic shift in cultural production, moving from a 'sit-back-and-be-told culture' to a 'making-and-doing culture'" (Brown and Novak-Leonard. 3). This report also offers a spectrum of audience involvement for arts organizations to consider the variety of ways in which audience members might be engaged in arts practices. This spectrum encompasses a range of practices that the report organizes on a spectrum of receptive to participatory practices. Near the participatory end of the spectrum is an area called co-creation, or opportunities for "audience members [to] contribute something to an artistic experience curated by a professional artist" (Brown and Novak-Leonard 4). Engaging audiences as co-creators makes space for audiences to contribute significantly and creatively to an artistic product. Though community-engaged dramaturgy

encompasses many forms of engagement, I searched for practices that put audiences in this co-creator role.

Defining Dramaturgy: An Awkward but Necessary Term

In *Dramaturgy in American Theater: A Source Book*, one of the most significant collections of writings on dramaturgy in American theatre, Geoff Proehl writes,

> Dramaturgy can refer to an attribute, a role, or a function… the use of the term asks for some rethinking of assumptions about how theater works, suggesting that plays are made not just by playwriting, directing, designing and acting but also by something called 'dramaturging.' An awkward noun becomes an even more awkward verb. (124)

This awkward term, "dramaturgy," describes an integral function of theatre-making. While the specific tasks of a dramaturg vary widely, theatre-makers often share the artistic responsibility for dramaturgy, as it is a collaborative process of storytelling and creative problem solving. Even in projects with a designated dramaturg on the artistic team, dramaturgy happens across artistic teams with each collaborator engaging in some form of text analysis and research. Community-engaged dramaturgy often invites potential audience members into the process as dramaturgs by involving audience perspectives, ideas and questions in the development process. The artistic exchange that happens between artists and audiences in these models are often filled with acts of dramaturgy.

In *The Art of Active Dramaturgy*, Lenora Inez Brown defines production dramaturgy as "the art of taking the critical thinking tools developed to dissect a dramatic text's structure or form and use this to actively transform art by posing questions that

inspire creativity" (xvii). In other words, dramaturgy describes a process of change or transformation, and questioning is a key tool for enacting this process. Transformation also comes up in dramaturg Michael Mark Chemers' definition of a production dramaturg: "a member of the artistic team of a production who is a specialist in the transformation of a dramatic script into a meaningful living performance" (5). Community-engaged dramaturgy complicates this notion of a specialist as one could argue that a six-year-old may or may not be an expert in anything related to the production. But in community-engaged dramaturgy situated in TYA, adult artists recognize that a six-year-old has experience and perspectives that could be an asset to developing a story or creating the theatrical world of the play, particularly in theatre for young audiences.

In addition to working with playwrights, directors and actors to bring a play to life, dramaturgs also contribute significantly to crafting the audience experience, a process that often begins before the audience walks into a performance. This could include creating study guides, designing a pre-show engagement in the theatre lobby, or working with the marketing team to engage potential audience members in the community to see the show, all tasks I classify as audience engagement strategies. Community-engaged dramaturgy brings relationship-building into the dramaturgical landscape as it invites theatre artists to include the audience in dramaturgical dialogue.

In his 2003 *Theatre Topics* article, "Thinking Through the Audience," Paul Kosidowski emphasizes the theatre artists' responsibility to engage with audiences. Speaking of artists in American theatre, Kosidowski says, "We perhaps *hear* the

members of our audience (and certainly observe moments in our plays that ‘work’), but we are more interested in bringing our aesthetic to them than in understanding their perceptions and assumptions about what they see on stage” (84). Kosidowski implies that a narrow focus on theatre aesthetics that excludes the questions, experiences and interests audiences bring to the theatre is where the arts engagement falls flat. He also argues that the ways in which theatre artists think about and listen to their audiences impact how and what we make for them. In TYA, adult theatre-makers’ beliefs and assumptions about youth shape our theatre-making, and often these assumptions go unnoticed. Kosidowski concludes his article with this musing and call to action:

> I wonder, sometimes, if dramaturgs and other theatre professionals live too much in the theatre and not enough in the world, or at least in the world of our audiences… just as a playwright needs to have empathy with his or her characters, we need to have empathy with our audience, to see a play through its eyes. (86)

I see the act of understanding audiences as a key function of both community engagement and dramaturgy. With definitions of community engagement and dramaturgy in play, next I describe the range of ways artists in TYA are involving young audiences in new work development in order to situate the models I explore later on in this chapter.

The Role of Young Audiences in New Work Development

Artists across the field of TYA are forging a variety of pathways for seeking the youth perspective in developing new work. These pathways go by many names. In addition to Kristin Ann Leahey’s “youth respondent method,” I encountered other terms for the practice of engaging youth in new work development such as, “youth dramaturgy” (Greene) and “interactive dramaturgy” (Pederson, North, Zeder and Middleton). Models

for gathering audience feedback, such as post-show discussions, also fall within the scope of current efforts to involve young people in new work development. While the forms, structures and timing of engaging audiences in the development process varies by project, the variables I grew the most curious about in my research were the questions, motivations and goals of the adult artists as they seek out the perspectives of young people in creating new productions. The questions artists bring to this practice drive all other decisions in community-engaged dramaturgy, including the role young people occupy in the process. As the specific examples in this chapter illustrate, the various forms of community-engaged dramaturgy stem from the artistic questions driving the engagement with youth. In other words, the artistic "why" or research questions of the artists inform how the artists engage with youth as well as who they engage with and at what point in the creative process.

In her 2014 book, *Post-Show Discussions in New Play Development*, Teresa Fisher delves into considerations for how to gather audience feedback through post-show discussions specifically in TYA. Though I would classify post-show discussions as an audience engagement strategy, this form is also an important vehicle in new work development. Fisher argues that, "adults creating theatre for youth do well to remember that youth offer a perspective on the script that adults no longer have" (91). Fisher oversees New Plays for Young Audiences (NPYA), an incubator for new work at NYU Steinhardt. In NPYA playwrights clamored for more engagement with the young audiences they write for, so Fisher recruited individual youth advisors to work with the playwrights. These high school volunteers attend rehearsals and readings, and offer

feedback directly to playwrights through one-on-one meetings and email after the development week concludes.

The increasing desire to engage with their young audiences that Fisher writes about also manifested in a Theatre for Young Audiences/USA (TYA/USA) webinar in November 2013. I moderated this webinar, which brought playwrights José Cruz Gonzalez and Suzan Zeder, and Drew Peterson, Associate Artistic Director of Trusty Sidekick Theatre Company together to share their experiences around engaging young people in the creative process with the TYA field. In this webinar I learned that José Cruz Gonzalez has continually pursued feedback from young people on his work throughout his career. When his play, *Lily Plants a Garden*, was developed at the 2003 Bonderman Symposium (since renamed, Write Now), Gonzalez and the creative team explored the visual world of the play with a group of first grade students. The students responded to a first reading of the play through drawings, which Gonzalez called "visual dramaturgy." The creative team incorporated the students' images into the final, public reading at the festival. In response to this experience, Gonzalez reflects, "We just have to have young people involved in this process because I'm no longer their age, and I need that dramaturgy from these really smart, talented little people to keep me truthful" (Gonzalez).

In addition to involving young people as dramaturgical advisors for new plays, some artists engage youth even earlier in the process to develop the narrative. This is the case with Peter Wynne-Wilson's work at Birmingham Repertory Company in the UK. In 2003 Birmingham Rep commissioned Wynne-Wilson to write a play and to involve

students and teachers in the process. A primary goal of this project was to collaborate with students and teachers. In the chapter, "The Peter Pan Approach" from *Theatre for Young Audiences: A Critical Handbook*, Wynne-Wilson describes how he immediately positioned himself as a person in a mess who needed the students to help him make a play. This dramatic frame, similar to Dorothy Heathcote's mantle-of-the-expert framework (Heathcote 4), along with a box of objects related to stories (such as a blank story book), were the main tools for Wynne-Wilson's story-making process with the students. One of the big lessons he articulates from this project is, "Imposing a psychological reason that makes sense to an adult may confuse children, spoiling the story and the way it operates on the level of a child" (Wynne-Wilson 53). In other words, when collaborating with young people to create a story, adults need to be mindful of their own assumptions about how stories work. Instead of an asset, these assumptions about story structure could hinder the process when the goal is to understand the youth perspective on the story.

Community-engaged dramaturgy, as defined by many of the artists I talked with, does not necessarily work toward education-based outcomes for youth. It is important to distinguish this discussion of community-engaged dramaturgy from artistic models that create an original performance based on stories that young people write through an arts integrated residency model. Arts education programs, such as Story Pirates in New York City and Story Wranglers in Austin, TX facilitate creative writing workshops with young people, in which youth create original stories. The professional performers adapt these stories into scripted performances with the intentional goal of representing the stories as

exactly as possible. I do not deny that both community engagement and dramaturgy exist in this model. But in this document, I specifically locate the practice of community-engaged dramaturgy in TYA that does not necessarily operate with learning outcomes for youth, nor do adult artists use every idea generated by young people.

SPOTLIGHT ON CURRENT PRACTICES

From generating new stories to offering feedback to playwrights, the dramaturgical role of young people in new work development takes many forms. In researching the ways that young people participate in new play development, I am drawn to models of dramaturgy that value young people as co-creators with space for youth to have a significant impact on the theatre that is developed. For these reasons, this chapter includes a spotlight on two artistic projects, *Unsorted* and *Aviatrix*, as well as Trusty Sidekick Theatre Company's devising model. These three approaches to community-engaged dramaturgy strongly informed my choices as the teaching artist/dramaturg for *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa*, particularly my design and participation in the artistic partnership with our first grade collaborators. In an effort to describe these models, I provide an overview of when – or at what point – audience involvement took place in the development process, how artists engaged with audiences and the artistic goals surrounding youth engagement. Next, I offer an analysis and synthesis of these three models, which informed my approach to community-engaged dramaturgy for *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa*.

Metro Theater Company's *Unsorted*

As stated earlier in this chapter, Metro Theater Company has a long history of involving young people in new play development. I first encountered *Unsorted* before playwright Wesley Middleton had written anything, under its working title, "The Gender Project." I participated in an initial meeting of the play's advisory committee, a group of adults that included teachers, Metro staff, Metro board members, activists, and others in the St. Louis community who shared Metro's investment in creating arts experiences for young people. In addition to this advisory committee and the kindergarten class' sorting activity, Middleton and North followed their curiosity to middle school classrooms. To spark discussion, they brought writing prompts, questions and open-ended drawing activities to middle school students such as, "Draw the perfect boy world, the perfect girl world, and then draw your perfect world." Of these multiple engagements with young people, Middleton said,

> I didn't come out of all these sessions thinking, 'I've got the central metaphor for the play!' but they added to this big, beautiful mixture of elements we knew we needed to incorporate in some way. And in a way, it added a little bit of chaos… That chaos is actually the way a lot of young people experience gender in our culture. (Pederson, North, Zeder, Middleton)

In terms of how these engagements impacted the play, not every moment carried the magnitude of the kindergarten sorting exercise. In other words, not every activity ended up directly and visibly impacting the story or script. In speaking about the utility and relevance of the information she gathered from the youth engagement in the *Unsorted* process, Middleton demonstrates an inherent value and respect for the youth perspective.

Even after witnessing the pivotal moment in the kindergarten classroom, Middleton didn't immediately have a play. Another year would go by before the title *Unsorted* even emerged in December 2012 (North Interview). Middleton and Carol North had several months of phone meetings following the initial encounter with the pile of clothes in the kindergarten classroom. In an interview, North describes her role as a cheerleader as she encouraged Middleton to trust the pile of clothes. North says, "Our mantra along the way was to embrace the weirdness" (North Interview). In the *Unsorted* process, artists bravely asked questions they didn't know the answer to, and listened deeply in order to learn more about the youth experience of gender binaries.

Working through moments of uncertainty is a familiar tension in any creative process, and it's also present in models of community-engaged dramaturgy. While it may be tempting to go into a classroom or conversation with young people already having it figured out, artists who are open to learning something new, like North and Middleton, emerge from the process with rich artistic fuel for creating a script.

Two major lessons emerged from that the *Unsorted* process that inform my understanding of community-engaged dramaturgy: the necessity of an open-mind, and the importance of knowing what you don't know. Both of these qualities serve theatre artists well in many theatre-making endeavors, but these two elements hold specific weight for me in the context of community-engaged dramaturgy. It's easy to look at the *Unsorted* process and think that these artists were luckily handed the central metaphor for the play on the day they visited that kindergarten classroom. But that event has nothing to do with luck or chance, and has everything to do with an open artistic mind, and checking

adult hubris at the door. North and Middleton entered this process aware of what they didn't know about the youth experience of and perspective on gender binaries, and both artists remained open, flexible and curious as they moved through engaging with young people.

***Aviatrix* by Suzan Zeder**

Community-engaged dramaturgy can happen at any stage of the new work development process. For playwright Suzan Zeder, interacting with youth came later in the process than it did for Metro Theater Company's *Unsorted*. Imagination Stage commissioned Zeder to write a play based on female pilot Amelia Earhart. After lots of research and daily solo writing sessions, Zeder had a first draft. The play *Aviatrix*, which was recently re-named in March 2015 as *When She Had Wings*, is about B, a nine-year-old girl determined to figure out how to fly. In the play, B meets A, a mysterious character who is part woman, part bird, and part something else – this something else reminds B of her beloved hero, Amelia.

Zeder's friend and colleague, Victoria Brown is the founder of the Lucy School, an arts-based elementary school in Middletown, MD. Hearing about Zeder's new play inspired Brown to launch a school-wide exploration of flight. After getting her teachers on board to implement this year-long exploration of flight through all areas of the curriculum, Brown invited Zeder to observe classroom activities as part of her research for the play. I accompanied Zeder on this trip in my role as one of two community engagement dramaturgs brought on to document and record our observations of the

process. Brown and her drama teacher, Elizabeth Gekas, facilitated drama classes that explored flight, and we recorded student voices and wrote down their responses to questions posed by Gekas, Brown and Zeder throughout the lessons. We spent two days at the Lucy School, engaging with students in each grade level at the school from pre-K to fifth grade. The pre-K and kindergarten students engaged in sensory explorations of flight, the second and third graders used classroom materials to build their own flying machines, and the fourth and fifth graders took on roles of female aviators and reporters that they explored through improvisational interviews.

With a first draft of the *Aviatrix* script completed, Zeder's goals for her days at Lucy School differed from artists who engaged with young people earlier in the new play development process. In the case of Trusty Sidekick's devising model and the process for *Unsorted*, artists engaged with youth well in advance of having a draft of a script, or even a narrative structure for the piece. But having a script does not mean a new play is finished, and Zeder frequently located this partnership with Lucy School in the "generative stage" of her own writing process and in describing her way of working with youth (TYA/USA Webinar). Leading up to the school visit, Zeder anticipated acquiring quotes or lines of dialogue for the play based on how students spoke about flight and what it means to them. But she left with something different:

> Whereas I thought I might get more good quotes or swipe actual lines of dialogue… what I did get was [a real] understanding [of] how I needed to look at ways of communicating in the multiple vocabularies and not just automatically my self-preference [for the] verbal. (Zeder Interview)

Zeder approaches this work believing that young people have something meaningful to teach her about the play and what the play needs next in the process. Even though her original expectations were not fully realized, a new understanding of how young people use and respond to visual and kinesthetic vocabularies moved her next draft forward by contributing to Zeder's conceptualization of the world of the play.

After an immersive two days at Lucy School, Zeder went into rehearsal at Imagination Stage with director Kate Bryer to stage a first reading with adult actors. Third, fourth and fifth graders from Lucy School attended this reading at the end of the week. After the reading, Zeder and Lucy School director, Victoria Brown divided the students into three groups with teachers and actors in each one. Within their groups, they responded to the questions: "What do you remember?" and "If you were to tell someone at home about this play, what would you say it's about?" and "What questions do you have about the play?" In an interview several months later, Zeder reflected on the two days she spent at Lucy School as well as the post-reading talkback with the students and said, "I think certainly the discussions that we got from the kids even after the play were useful, but much more limited use than just watching them exploring the concept that we were doing in those first two days or so" (Zeder Interview). From this comparison between the two forms of engaging with youth, Zeder suggests that physically being in the room with young people and observing how they explore the concept of flight brought something new into Zeder's creative process that the talkback couldn't tap into in the same way.

Even with a full first draft of the play, Zeder still identified the timing of her visit to the Lucy School as early in the development. The *Aviatrix* approach exemplifies the ways community-engaged dramaturgy can adapt to fit each play and process according to what the play, process and artists need and want to learn from engaging with young people. Zeder's engagement with Lucy School students in the form of a two-day visit to the school also shows how community-engaged dramaturgy invites artists to step outside of their artistic habits by visiting new spaces, asking questions and observing how youth explore and engage with an idea through embodied drama activities.

Trusty Sidekick Theatre Company

While community-engaged dramaturgy requires some artists to break out of their typical creative patterns, this is not the case for Trusty Sidekick Theatre Company. Launched in 2011, this New York-based company prioritizes the audience. In a 2012 press interview for *Brooklyn Today*, founding artistic director Jonathan Shmidt Chapman said:

> When we were coming up with the mission of the company, we imagined all of our performances to feel like the audience is taking a big adventure… the young person seeing the show is the Hero, and the company acts as their Trusty Sidekick, accompanying them on these great big journeys. (Fink)

With the young audience as Hero and the adult artists as their sidekick, Trusty Sidekick already stands out against the landscape of American theatre and the traditional audience/artist relationship with power located in the artists. This commitment to young people is matched in their creative development processes.

Trusty Sidekick's first foray into theatre for the very young (young audiences under the age of six) propelled this devising ensemble to invite their intended audience into their development process. Somewhat serendipitously, the ensemble's rehearsal space, the University Settlement house in New York, also contained a preschool. The artists wanted to get to know this new target audience and fill in the gaps in their knowledge about how the very young experience live theatre.

The company's website describes their current model: "Beginning with a 'spark question' that activates the imaginations of both the kids and Trusty Sidekick artists, we develop our shows through a series of workshops that generate inspiration through artistic collaboration with young people" ("The Quest"). For *Shadow Play*, the artists started with the question: what happens when your shadow goes to sleep? ("Trusty Sidekick" Video) Beginning with a question that excites both young people and the adult artists demonstrates a power dynamic that positions youth and adults as collaborative peers and values the imaginative power of both groups.

Trusty Sidekick's model has four distinct phases of development, each including rehearsals with the adult artists and drama workshops with young people. In phase one, "Exploring the Idea," artists and young people explore the 'spark question' for the piece. Based on what the artists learned in phase one, in phase two they "chart the narrative" and make decisions about the story structure. In phase three, "constructing the theatricality" the artistic team experiments with different ways to bring the story to life through theatrical elements and "a first draft of the show is presented to the young people who participated in the workshops" ("Trusty Sidekick" Handout) The final phase,

"finalizing the theatrical event," focuses on a professional production of the new work and aligning pre and post-show activities with the theatre experience.

Engagement with the audience at all stages of development sets Trusty Sidekick's work apart from other approaches I've encountered in researching audience involvement in TYA and community-engaged dramaturgy. The company's devising work predisposes the artistic members to embrace open exploration, particularly in the early stages of their dramaturgy with youth. While most company members are professional teaching artists, artistic director Jonathan Shmidt Chapman says that their classroom workshops "almost require you to switch off your teaching artist brain" (Chapman Interview). Instead of lesson planning, Trusty Sidekick artists seek to create a rehearsal environment in the classroom. "The process itself is the lesson," Chapman says. "And rather than work toward a specific outcome you're actually trying to create a space where that kid can teach you something, where a new idea can emerge that they might not have thought they were capable of" (Chapman Interview). In the way Chapman talks about his work with youth, he clearly focuses on the young person's experience and believes that kids as young as two and three can teach an adult something new. Trusty Sidekick flips the teaching dynamic upside down. Chapman also recognizes the intrinsic value of a drama workshop for young people instead of using educational standards or student learning outcomes to measure the workshop's value for youth. These core principles drew me to Trusty Sidekick's work, and also challenged me to imagine what classroom workshops looked like outside of my routine arts integration thinking patterns.

Similar to the *Unsorted* process, Trusty Sidekick's model leans into trusting in the unknown in the way the adult artists bring an exciting initial question that they genuinely do not have a complete answer to. Chapman also noted that a deeper understanding of young people is also a byproduct of this work because their creative process gets artists and audiences in the same room to play and explore together. The impetus for Trusty Sidekick to engage with preschoolers in creating *Shadow Play* was to discover how young people aged two through five might experience or engage in theatre and story. For the members of the design team, who do not also work as teaching artists, Chapman observed enormous value in getting adults and youth in the same room during this process: "By just being in a classroom with them and interacting with them for a period of time, they get so much more comfortable and understand how to adapt a performance for that age group" (Chapman Interview). In addition to the dramaturgical and story-building contributions of the preschoolers, engaging with their intended audience also deepened the creative team's understanding of young children's capabilities.

Trusty Sidekick's model involves youth in all stages of new work development and works to create a collaborative, peer relationship between young people and adults through drama workshops in classrooms. Adult artists deepen their understanding of young audiences by spending time and sharing space with them throughout the creative process. Trusty Sidekick's practices challenge artists with a teaching background, like myself, to let go of working towards concrete outcomes and instead replicate an exploratory, play-based rehearsal environment within the walls of a classroom. All of these defining characteristics of Trusty Sidekick's development process played a major

role in shaping my intentionality behind the classroom residency model that brought artists and young people into the same space for *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa*.

Guiding Tenets of Community-Engaged Dramaturgy

One idea underpinning all three of the models I've highlighted in this chapter is that young people have a lifetime of experience and that their perspectives on the world around them have value. Even more specifically, the artists in all three models assume that youth have something unique to contribute to professional theatre that is created with youth in mind. *Unsorted*'s development process stands out as a prime example of how young people inspire new ideas in professional TYA. Trusty Sidekick's model brings youth into every stage of development by bringing adults and young people together in a collaborative, exploratory rehearsal space. The opportunity to learn more about how youth engage with central thematic elements in *Aviatrix* inspired Suzan Zeder to dive deeper into the theatrical vocabularies this play employed so that it included the visual and kinesthetic engagement she saw in young people's exploration of flight.

Community-engaged dramaturgy in TYA relies on intergenerational engagement, as age separates adult artists from young audiences. For *Unsorted*, not only did the artist-audience engagement include adults and youth, but the communities they engaged also spanned multiple generations. By involving kindergarteners, middle school students and adults in the process, Middleton and North gained a multi-faceted understanding of the youth experience of gender. Something similar happened for Suzan Zeder researching flight at Lucy School for *Aviatrix*:

> I think the primary thing that just blew me away was the velocity and the level of excitement that we saw from all levels of kids about this topic. It was the whole business of engaging the kids, and quite frankly the adults, the teachers, parents at Lucy School just around the topic of flight, memories of flight and of that whole subject matter. So to really realize how deeply ingrained both intellectually and psychologically people are connected to the subject of the play was really eye opening for me, and very reassuring, in a way. (Zeder Interview)

Working with an idea that excites both adults and young people is also a key component to Trusty Sidekick's exploratory, devising model. In order for young people and adults to truly collaborate as artistic peers, all need to be creatively engaged. In creating new work through community-engaged dramaturgy, the adult perspective is not privileged, and neither is the youth perspective. Instead, community-engaged dramaturgy brings these perspectives together to create something new.

Though great artistic potential exists in these intergenerational partnerships, an inherent tension occurs between adults and young people. Community-engaged dramaturgy disrupts the established power dynamic between adults and youth, in which adults to lead and young people to follow. Creating a peer relationship between youth and adults can feel challenging for all involved because of this ingrained traditional power dynamic between adults and youth, particularly in a classroom setting. Teresa Fisher writes about the effects of this power dynamic on post-show discussions: "If the post-show discussion too closely resembles the classroom environment, youth may focus less on their experience of the play and more on what they believe the adults in the room want to hear" (93). Though Fisher writes about post-show discussions, her point applies to these models of community-engaged dramaturgy as well. Adult artists engaging in community-engaged dramaturgy with youth as peers should be prepared to disrupt these

power dynamics. Creating a peer relationship in which young people feel comfortable expressing their opinions, ideas and questions to the adult artists in the room is necessary to their participation as true collaborators in the process. A focus on relationship-building influenced our choice to set up a residency model with our young collaborators for *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa*, as well as our choice of community partner, both of which I detail more specifically in the following chapter.

In all three of these current models of community-engaged dramaturgy, artists brought dramaturgical questions to their audiences. How adults articulate and ask these questions became a focus of this practice from my vantage point as documentarian for *Aviatrix*. After pre-K and kindergarten students at Lucy School participated in sensory activities related to flight (such as jumping on a trampoline with a fan blowing in their direction, and "flying" in a hammock swing), the adults asked the students, "What was it like to fly?" The responses were between one and three words, such as "Fun!" and "I was swinging!" and "I liked it!" The enthusiasm overflowed, but the artists came up short on the verbal input they had hoped to gather through these brief interviews following the activities. I realized the importance of the questions we pose to young people in order to learn more about their perspectives on play content. Kindergarten students at Lucy School eagerly and loquaciously articulated where they would like to fly, but their responses to the question Zeder wanted to investigate were much shorter.

Fourth and fifth grade students at Lucy School, who were in role as aviators from Amelia Earhart's era had richer responses to Zeder's question about the feelings of flight, with one young girl saying, "Flying is freedom from all the things that tie you down"

(Zeder Interview). My experience with Aviatrix at the Lucy School alongside Zeder brought the importnace of developmentally appropriate questions to the forefront of my workshop planning for *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa*. Alulis and I frequently checked in with each other about how to craft questions and activities that would engage our young collaborators and also serve the artistic questions we had about the youth's perspectives on characters and environments in the story.

By involving youth in the process, all three of these models of community-engaged dramaturgy works to diversify the perspectives in play throughout the development of the new work. When I asked Jonathan Shmidt Chapman how Trusty Sidekick decides which ideas to use, and how they feel about the mix of ideas generated by youth and adult artists, he said, "We're not precious about ideas with fellow adult collaborators, so we don't get precious about kids' ideas either" (Chapman Interview). I found Chapman's comment both striking and liberating as I imagined navigating a similar process in *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa*. Chapman also points out that the preschoolers they worked with on *Shadow Play* and *Off the Map* "are not thinking about their ideas turning into a piece of theatre in the same way we are" (Chapman Interview). Instead of viewing this as a limitation of young people, community-engaged dramaturgy invites artists and young people to each bring their different expertise to the table and see what happens when they collaborate.

In bringing these artistic questions outside of the rehearsal room and inviting the audience into the early stages of development, community-engaged dramaturgy also necessitates a willingness to engage in ambiguity and the unknown. Chapman identifies

not knowing as central to Trusty Sidekick's process of moving a rehearsal environment into a classroom. This willingness to embrace ambiguity also existed in Suzan Zeder's engagement with the Lucy School students in developing *Aviatrix*. Zeder described a conversation she had with director Kate Bryer after hearing the students' questions.

> Another conversation with other directors that I know in TYA might have gone, "Well the kids were really confused so I think we need to be clearer." I never got that [from Kate]. What I think what we needed to do is to be sure that whatever vessel we create for this play, it is evocative enough to contain many different answers to the questions, but not so limited that there's only one right one. (Zeder Interview)

Zeder plays with ambiguity and multiple possibilities through a central character in *Aviatrix*, and she didn't shy away from mystery and a multiplicity of answers when she started working with the Lucy School students. In pursuit of clarity, it can be tempting for adults to over-simplify when it comes to a young audience. Reflecting on the *Unsorted* process, playwright Wesley Middleton talked about this temptation:

> There was a real temptation to put it in a definite safe package. It asked that we, and I as the playwright, really develop an awareness of what and how identity, gender and identity binaries were working within the community. So it was a very different process from creating any play, and absolutely the right process for this play. (Pederson, North, Zeder, Middleton)

Embracing the ambiguity in the *Unsorted* process challenged Middleton to work in new ways as a playwright. This discomfort and ambiguity that Middleton describes is a cornerstone of community-engaged dramaturgy. Learning about how the artists in these three projects embraced the necessary gray area, and relished the messiness of the content and the process became a touchstone for me as I moved through the process of creating *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa*.

CONCLUSIONS

Locating community-engaged dramaturgy at the intersection of community engagement practices and dramaturgy creates a specific lens through which I'm viewing the range of current practices artists across use to involve youth as participants in TYA. This lens, which values building and sustaining a strong and meaningful artist/audience relationship and recognizes dramaturgy as a transformative, integral process in theatre-making, focused my research on three specific current models. This chapter works to fill a gap in current scholarship by documenting in detail the development processes for *Unsorted*, *Aviatrix* and Trusty Sidekick's devising approach. These models laid the foundation for my intentions and practice as the community engagement dramaturg for *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa,* which I explore in detail in the next chapter. The fluid and dynamic nature of community-engaged dramaturgy, as well as its novelty make this foundation I've built through reviewing these practices function more like a launching pad. In chapter three, I leap full-force into my next research question: how do adult artists engage in meaningful collaboration with young people in professional theatre-making?

Chapter Three: Dialogic Exchange in Intergenerational Collaboration

INTRODUCTION

My artistic mission behind this project was to include young people as artistic collaborators in developing a new theatre performance for young audiences. In this chapter I address the research question: How do adult artists engage in meaningful collaboration with young people in creating a new theatre production for young audiences? This chapter investigates how this project complicated my understanding of how youth contribute to the theatre process and product through community-engaged dramaturgy. In my field notes, before each workshop, I documented my expectations around what artists wanted to know and might learn from young people. After each workshop, I recorded moments that surprised or stuck with me, and my reflections on how each workshop shaped my understanding of community-engaged dramaturgy. My data also includes audio recordings of dialogue with young collaborators, drawings by young collaborators, and post-workshop debrief meetings with Alulis and other adult collaborators who attended the classroom workshops. These debrief meetings provided space for the adult artistic team to reflect collectively on what we were learning from young people as the residency progressed.

While community-engaged dramaturgy encompasses a spectrum of practices that includes many different ways for artists to engage with youth, collaboration was at the heart of my intentions for the process of developing *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa*. As I reflected on my intentionality related to the classroom residency and studied my data

detailing the experiences and observations of the adult artistic team, dialogic exchange emerged as a central theme of my understanding of the collaboration between adults and youth. Critical pedagogue Paulo Freire defines dialogue as "an encounter among men and women who name the world" (89). In other words, humans make meaning of the world and their lived experiences through dialogue with each other. Through this project's intergenerational collaboration, I observed what happened in the creative process when adults and young people engaged in spaces of dialogic exchange with one another. Freire also points out that "dialogue is broken if the parties (or one of them) lacks humility… men and women who lack humility cannot come to the people, cannot be their partners in naming the world" (90). In other words, humility allows people to engage in dialogue by not overvaluing one's own importance in the dialogue. Humility emerged as an important piece of how adults participated in this intergenerational partnership and created multiple pathways for youth to contribute to this process and product. Spaces of dialogic exchange between adults and young people became a lens for understanding how adults and young people made meaning of this intergenerational collaboration.

In this chapter, I describe and analyze how my intentionality around creating opportunities for dialogic exchange between adults and young people played out in this collaboration. I begin with how my intentions grew out of my background research on community-engaged dramaturgy and informed the structure of the residency model and the adult artists' questions for youth that guided the workshop activities. Second, I explore what happened when I put these intentions into action throughout the six workshops with our first grade collaborators. Specifically I describe moments of dialogic

exchange that I observed and analyze how these moments of dialogic exchange functioned in the intergenerational collaboration. Throughout the chapter I reflect on the tensions and challenges I encountered in this process. Finally, I return to my research question to reflect on what I've learned about how and why adult artists might work towards spaces of dialogic exchange in their collaboration with youth on a theatrical production.

SETTING THE STAGE FOR DIALOGIC EXCHANGE

Rachel and I walked to the front of the room and found a seat. We introduced ourselves, and as I took in a breath to ask my next question, the classroom exploded with voices as students called out things about theatre and plays: "I've been to a play!" and "I've been in a play!" and "Me too!" were some of the phrases bubbling out of our young collaborators. "If you have ever heard the word theatre before, put your hand on your head," I said. One hand of every student flew confidently to the top of their head. "Great! You can put your hands down now," I said. I lowered my voice, leaned in a little bit as I said, "Rachel and I are here today because we really need your help." The classroom quieted and sixteen pairs of eyes focused on me. "We are making a play, a play for kids and families to come see, but we have a really big problem. We want this play to be the most fun for all the kids that will come see it, but we're not kids anymore. We grew up! It's been a long time since we were your age. Mr. Wright told us that you would be able to help us make our play the best it can be. What do you think?" All sixteen focused faces immediately lit up with beaming smiles. Heads nodded vigorously,

bodies wiggled with excitement in their chairs, and several young people called out variations of "Yes!" and "Yeah!" and one stood up in front of his chair, lifted a fist up to the sky like a superhero and called out, "We can help you!" The classroom buzzed with anticipation and excitement. I thought to myself: This is it. We're starting. Let's make a play together.

The field of TYA is inherently intergenerational, and relationships between youth and adults impact the field in multiple ways. TYA audiences span multiple generations including youth of varying ages, parents, grandparents, caregivers and teachers sharing a theatre experience. As interactive performance continues to gain momentum across the field, particularly in the growing area of theatre for the very young (audiences aged 0-6), adult artists and young audiences connect verbally and sometimes physically with one another during performances as the theatrical fourth wall evaporates.

In a field whose artistic products are inherently intergenerational, because children depend on adults to gain access to theatre, our artistic collaborations and processes are still adult-driven and often adult-focused. Given all of the ways that adults and youth interact in TYA, I see an opportunity for these intergenerational connections and exchanges to infiltrate our new work development processes. In this project my main priority was to engage youth as full-fledged artistic collaborators alongside adult theatre artists. Ultimately, this intention shaped the design of this research, raising questions such as: What does intergenerational collaboration in TYA look like? I wanted to know if and how adult theatre artists would be open to collaborating with youth, as well as, would youth be interested in collaborating with adults? And how will a collaborative artist-

audience relationship affect the theatrical product and development process? I wrestle with these questions throughout this chapter and seek to illuminate the discoveries, tensions and challenges that came out of this intergenerational theatre collaboration through a lens of dialogic exchange. By studying the adult/youth engagement in the development of *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa* I hope to inspire more artists to engage with youth through intergenerational collaborations while realistically attending to challenges around engaging young people in TYA.

When lighting designer Rachel Alulis and I joined artistic forces to create this production, we talked at length about how youth would participate as collaborators and what their contributions to the theatrical product would look like. I was confident that the theatrical product would be engaging, and I knew I could create a fun, participatory in-class workshop experience for the first grade students. But would the areas of TYA production and in-school theatre workshops integrate and feed each other as I hoped they would? I felt nervous to bridge the world of professional theatre production with my teaching artist practice. I remained unsure of what other adult artists might get out of this engagement with youth, and how collaborating with youth might inform their design process. These initial tensions also underpinned my curiosity about intergenerational collaboration in TYA, and I used them as a springboard for diving into this new project and facing some of my own assumptions about how adult artists view young people and TYA.

Residency Overview

Early on in the planning process, Alulis and I discussed possible options for how to engage with youth in this process: we could facilitate several workshops with one class, or we could conduct the same one or two workshops with a larger number of students. The latter would allow us to gather a higher quantity of perspectives and ideas from a wider age range of young people. However, we decided to use a longer-term residency model for this collaboration, working over multiple sessions with a singular group of young people. Facilitating several different workshops in the same classroom, we decided, would afford us the time to engage more deeply with our young collaborators and to include a focus on each design discipline. More time with the same class also gave us the opportunity to build a longer-term collaboration between adult and youth artists.

From the beginning of the project, theatrical design was the focus of the theatrical product we wanted to create, as we intended to create an immersive, sensory experience for the audience who would literally travel through the world of the story during the show. The design focus of the piece helped us determine that we would engage youth primarily as designers and dramaturgs in our devising process. With multiple workshops, we were able to involve youth as collaborators in all areas of design; this meant that students explored costumes, set, lighting and sound. The table that follows provides an overview of how we used our workshop time in the classroom and the artistic questions that guided each session we facilitated with young people:

Date	Focus	Objectives/Guiding Questions
Sept. 26th	Project pitch, research forms	What will we be doing together? What is research?
Sept. 30th	Sharing the Story	What are the youth's first impressions of the story?
Oct. 7th	Exploring Environment	How do youth visualize and imagine the environments in the story?
Oct. 14th	Character and Costumes	How do youth describe the main characters? What clothing do they imagine these characters wearing, and why?
Oct. 21st	Set Design	What do youth think the inside of Baba Yaga's house and Vasilisa's house look like?
Oct. 28th	Exploring Lighting	How do youth describe the mood of the story and the environments?

Table 1: Residency Overview

While the residency was underway during the month of October, so were weekly rehearsals and production meetings. Alulis and I spent every Tuesday morning of October in the classroom, and on Wednesday evenings we brought anecdotes, drawings and sound recordings to rehearsal to share with our actor-facilitator and stage manager. These artifacts and ideas from the workshops mixed in with our dramaturgical process in the rehearsal room as we explored staging, characterization, verbal storytelling and moments of audience participation.

Artistic Questions

In researching other models of community-engaged dramaturgy (detailed in chapter two), I discovered that the artistic and dramaturgical questions from the adult artists directly informed the form and function of engaging young people in the development of new work. Just as Metro Theater Company's development of *Unsorted* was led by a desire to learn about how youth of multiple ages experienced and perceived

gender roles and gender binaries, *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa* was guided by questions for our team:

- How do our young collaborators imagine and visualize the characters and world of the story, *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa*?
- What elements of the story excite our young collaborators?

We explored these questions in the workshops through discussion, embodied drama activities and drawing. Almost every workshop culminated with time for the young collaborators to apply their growing knowledge and perspectives on the story through a drawing activity. The prompts for these activities varied over the course of the residency. On the first day, as I circulated with research forms to each young person, we invited the class to draw a forest – any kind of forest – and give their drawing a title so that it read, "The ______ Forest." In our next workshop, after sharing the story for the first time, we used the drawing time to learn about the initial impression the story had on our young collaborators, and invited them to draw their favorite part or a part of the story they remember the most after hearing it. As we explored specific design disciplines the drawing prompts also became more specific, according to that day's focus.

In addition to the artistic questions Alulis and I brought to this project, the characteristics of the theatrical product that we intended to create also informed the shape of the residency. First, we entered this process with a narrative in place. Knowing the story of *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa* from the beginning of our process enabled us to dive deeply into the world of design. We did not use sessions to create a narrative. In this way, our workshops most resembled phase three of Trusty Sidekick Theatre Company's

devising model, "Constructing the Theatricality," in which they "experiment with a variety of theatrical techniques and construct the staging, storytelling style, and aesthetic of the production using the narrative outline as an anchor" (Handout 6). In other words, this stage of Trusty Sidekick's process focuses on the staging and aesthetic world of the production. In a similar way, Alulis and I began by identifying that we wanted young people to help us figure out *how* we would tell this story on stage.

ARTISTS AND AUDIENCE IN DIALOGUE

Creating Connections

"Kids don't make very good designers." It's our first production meeting for Baba Yaga, and this is one of the first lines out of a designer's mouth. I looked at the other collaborators sitting around the table and noticed them nodding in agreement. I sat back in my chair, trying to make sense of what I just heard. "Am I in this with the wrong people?" I thought to myself. "Is this going to be an uphill battle from day one? Kids aren't good designers – what does that even mean?" I had no idea what this meant because I didn't really know anything about design. I wanted to challenge this opinion, but I had no fuel for a rebuttal. "Is this about age? Experience? Craft, creativity – or something else?"

In my hybrid role of dramaturg/teaching artist, I served as the connector between the two groups of collaborators. I entered this collaboration with confidence in my ability to create an engaging experience for youth, but it remained to be seen if this exchange

would hold any engaging value for the adult designers. Immediately after our first production meeting with the adult artists, I recorded the following in my field notes:

> I'm feeling oddly responsible for the youth in this project. What if the design team is disappointed by the kids' ideas? I hope they will be open and let themselves be inspired, but if that doesn't happen, I feel strangely responsible for that already. (Field Notes 18 Sept. 2014)

From the first moment of the project I worried that I would be the only one to see value in the youth's perspective. What if the other adult artists didn't see what I saw? And what if my knowledge of design was too shortsighted to understand what the adult designers might be looking for in this collaboration with youth? Early on, this collaboration balanced precariously in between two traps I hoped to avoid in this process: I didn't want adult artists to feel pressured to include or limited by the young collaborators' ideas solely because this collaboration was set up with youth at the center of it. On the other hand, I was also afraid that adult designers might dismiss ideas solely because they came from young people.

Another concern I had about the nature of working with youth in the early stages of setting up this project was, would young people tell the adults what they really thought about the story or would they tell us what they thought we wanted to hear? This question played into my choice of a community partner for this project in a major way. In my experience, young people are capable of discerning what answers adults want to hear. I chose our partnering class based on a particular teacher, Mr. Wright, who was highly recommended by an education professor at UT Austin. From my initial meeting with Mr. Wright, I had a feeling that his pedagogy and classroom environment would be a good fit

for our collaboration because he valued multiple opinions and dialogue in his classroom. Throughout the residency, the adult artists marveled at Mr. Wright's attentive listening and engagement with his students, and how this classroom was particularly well-suited to this project.

Youth Participate as Dramaturgs

Exchange is an integral piece of dramaturgy. In the 2003 *Theatre Topics* article, "What Makes a 'Turg Tick" dramaturg Liz Engelman explains, "It's in the exchange of interests, in the questioning, interaction, active listening, the intimate sharing, that ideas are born" (93). Creating and sustaining exchange in intergenerational collaboration necessitated an understanding of the skills, values and perspectives that everyone brings to the process. From our first meeting with the young collaborators, Alulis and I articulated the expertise we hoped they would bring to this project: we wanted to make a theatre performance that young people would enjoy, and we sought their help hoping they would tell us what they think is fun, scary, interesting or even boring about this story and ultimately inform the design choices for staging the story. In exchange for youth bringing their perspectives to the collaboration, the adult artists brought extensive knowledge of theatrical design. Each group brought something with potential to excite and engage the other and everyone was positioned to learn something new from someone else in the room. In this way, reciprocity emerged as a guiding principle of how I moved through this process.

"Sravya, which house did you decide to draw?" I crouched next to the low table where six-year-old Sravya and three of her classmates sat, all focused on their drawing at the end of the our workshop on set design. I had just facilitated a class brainstorm and mapping activity to record the words the class used to describe the inside of Vasilisa's house and the inside of Baba Yaga's house. These were two physical locations that the audience would experience in the production. Now, each young person chose a house to draw the inside of, and the class was working away with crayons and markers at their tables. "I'm drawing Vasilisa's house" Sravya answered. Then she asked me a question, "How come Vasilisa's stepmother doesn't know about the doll?" I thought for a moment. "Well," I started, "Maybe Vasilisa's stepmother is just a really good secret keeper." I waited to see how Sravya would respond. Sravya was already shaking her head, "But she's a witch, and witches know things." I had no idea what to say to that. "You know, I think you're right, Sravya. You're absolutely right." As I stood up to go check in with another table of young collaborators, I flagged this moment in my memory. I couldn't wait to bring this question to tomorrow night's rehearsal.

Here, Sravya became a dramaturg, questioning how the stepmother character functions in the story. I was surprised by Sravya's insight into the stepmother character and the magical properties of Vasilisa's doll, as well as by Sravya's beliefs about witches, which she applied to the stepmother character. She offered insights on something none of the adults, including myself, had given much, if any, thought to. I shared this anecdote in rehearsal the next day, and we talked about how the story would change if the stepmother did know about the doll. While we decided that the stepmother didn't know about the

doll, Sravya's dramaturgical question inspired an important dialogue and led our group to clarify what the stepmother did and didn't know. Sravya's question pushed the adult collaborators to reconsider the story at hand.

Sravya's question about the stepmother is one of the many ways young collaborators brought new ideas and perspectives for the adult artists to consider during the development process. In *The Performers' Guide to the Collaborative Process*, Sheila Kerrigan argues, "The beauty of collaboration springs from this very contamination of one person's idea with another's. People who didn't dream up the original idea perceive it differently, and try out tangents and skewed visions, which the originator might never imagine" (95). Kerrigan articulates the crux of my curiosity surrounding community-engaged dramaturgy: what happens when adults and young people engage in a creative process together? What new ideas and perspectives might this collaboration generate? And how do we bridge the generational divide in order to create a collaborative relationship based in reciprocity and dialogic exchange?

Youth and Adults in Dialogue as Designers

Dialogic exchange surfaced throughout our workshop on costume design. In this workshop adults and young people collectively made decisions about the storyteller's costume. Costume artist E.L. Hohn joined Alulis and me in the classroom for this workshop, and Hohn brought an array of clothing options for Vasilisa and for Baba Yaga. We invited the class to choose items to dress up Hohn as Vasilisa, and dress up Alulis as Baba Yaga. We were open to anything the young collaborators chose, and following each

choice, I asked, “Why?” and individual collaborators would explain the reasoning behind their choice of clothing items. One moment Hohn remembered vividly from the workshop was when the class chose to dress her in a red skirt, red shirt and red vest. As soon as we added the vest, the class called out, “Too much red!” and chose a black vest and a purple sash instead. After the workshop, Hohn recalled: “They saw the problem immediately and picked up on it. It had been my instinct that they might pick all red, but it was amazing to see them immediately solve it” (Debrief 14 Oct. 2014). It would have been easy for Hohn to jump in and tell them it would be too much of the same color, but by leaving space for youth to figure it out, she got to see their reaction of “too much red” and make another choice.

After debriefing about this workshop with Hohn and Alulis, I wrote about this same moment in my field notes:

> The kids don’t appear to be worried about a right answer – they just go with their instincts and they told us immediately what pieces they were drawn to. They’re also not afraid to change it later – this is a skill so key to any creative process. The kids definitely have us beat on that! They are way more forgiving of themselves than I am of myself when I make a mistake. (Field Notes 14 Oct. 2014)

How young people made decisions and revised their own decisions stood out to me from this moment in the costume design workshop. While I tend to put pressure on myself to complete a task correctly the first time, I left this workshop thinking about how easily they made the switch from one costume piece to the next, and they were not afraid to revise a choice. While I originally focused on how the adults’ artistic skills played out in this intergenerational collaboration, the costume design workshop made us pay attention to the importance of making and revising artistic choices. This is a skill that the young

collaborators had for adults to engage with and learn from, which an exchange of skills bilaterally between young people and adults.

Seeing youth solve the design problem themselves was also significant for Hohn, who brought this moment up again months later during our post-mortem with the adult team: "They [the young collaborators] have a really great costume design eye. I wouldn't have picked all red, but it looked amazing. Those [costume pieces] are all things that I pulled, but it was a surprise [to see] how little I had to guide them" (Post-Mortem 14 Dec. 2014). In addition to the choice of red clothing pieces, this moment in the classroom also represents how collaborating with youth expanded Hohn's understanding of the young collaborators' artistic sensibilities.

Illuminating a Reciprocal Relationship

A striking example from my field notes of how the workshops created a space for reciprocity and exchange was in the workshop on lighting design. I introduced the focus of the workshop with a brief description of what each kind of theatre designer does. For example, at the beginning of our lighting design workshop, I told the class about the big lights that hung down from the top of the theatre: some are different colors, and they shine in different directions, and they are connected to a computer to control which ones are on and off at certain times throughout the performance, and the job of the lighting designer is to make those decisions.

To explore the connections between lighting and time of day, emotion and mood, we asked the class to create frozen statues with their bodies to show how different colors

and times of day made them feel. The variation of responses surprised Alulis, who reflected after the workshop:

> I thought the faces [that youth made] were really great. And it's also really interesting with that age group. I'm thinking about the way that blue makes me feel, and there's so many different ways blue can be used that I'm like, "I don't know what to do" and they just did it. I thought it was really great that they had their intuition right there and weren't being clouded with anything else.
> (Debrief Meeting 28 Oct. 2014)

Alulis compared her own participation in the activity with what she saw young people doing in the classroom. While she felt overwhelmed by all the possible options, she noticed how quickly young people made a choice and committed to it.

After exploring feelings associated with different colors and times of day, Alulis handed out light brown paper and pastels to the class who drew a moment from the story, with instructions to focus on the light sources. Some of the questions we invited the class to think about as they drew were: how bright is the light? What time of day is it? Where is the light in the scene coming from? As Alulis and I floated between the tables, I asked one collaborator, Lyrah, if she would tell me about her drawing. Lyrah drew Vasilisa at the end of the play (Figure 1). I asked her about the round, colorful shapes at the top of her picture, and Lyrah replied, "Those are the lights." I asked if they were the lights in the palace. "No, " she said. "They're the lights in the theatre. In the play. You said they were on the ceiling."

When I showed this drawing to Alulis after the workshop and told her about my interaction with Lyrah, Alulis' face lit up with excitement about a young person

representing her design discipline so specifically. She then went on to think about how this image of colored lights could be incorporated into the production:

> I was thinking that maybe for the palace or the widow's house at the end of the play, we could have lights hanging down that are all different colors to signify that we're in a happier place now. It would show where we are and use [Lyrah's] elements. (Debrief Meeting 28 Oct. 2014)

Figure 1: Lyrah's drawing of the theatre lights.

Lyrah's drawing shows that she paid attention to our initial explanation of lighting design and what we said would be in the theatre. Including the lights in her drawing could also indicate Lyrah's awareness of the story as a production.

Through the residency model, I intended to position each group of collaborators to learn something from the other, with adults bringing theatrical design knowledge and youth bringing their ideas and perspectives to the story. I hoped that bringing these two groups together would spark new artistic ideas for the production. While this did happen, I also discovered that this dialogic exchange inspired more than a transactional trade of skills and knowledge back and forth between youth and adults. Instead, I observed adult artists navigate the collaboration with youth and allow youth ideas to shape their perspectives on the story. Over time, our adult design team talked about their responsibility to look for the theatrical possibilities in the ideas that youth offered about the story. Thomson writes that, "Dramaturgical collaboration is an expansive landscape that includes dialogue not only between artists, but also between artists and their materials (text, research, settings, clothes), and between makers and audience" (119). This model of community-engaged dramaturgy brought artists and audiences into dialogue with each other and in dialogue with the material.

CONCLUSIONS

When I interviewed Jonathan Shmidt Chapman, artistic director of Trusty Sidekick Theatre Company, about the company's development process with young people, he shared that the adult artists in his company learned a lot from devising with youth: "By just being in a classroom with them and interacting with them for a period of time, they get so much more comfortable and understand how to adapt a performance for

that age group" (Chapman Interview). When I started this project, I wondered if something similar might happen for the adult artists working on *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa*.

Working towards community-engaged dramaturgy, I wanted to get adults and young people in the same space and see what new material around design we could generate together. I began this project focused on youth engagement and making space for them as legitimate collaborators alongside adult theatre artists. However, I had no idea how this collaboration was going to work and if it would amount to anything more than a pre-show audience engagement strategy for youth. Would the adult artists pay attention to what youth have to offer? Would youth ideas become a valued resource to the adult designers? Would the adult artists recognize the artistic capacity of young people? With no guarantees, I dove into the messiness that defines collaboration. I emerged from this messiness with new understanding around how community-engaged dramaturgy and this intergenerational collaboration shaped the adult artists' relationship to the artistic material and to youth and young audiences.

When I began my initial research on community-engaged dramaturgy and the various ways adult artists engaged with youth in creating new work in TYA, I was fascinated by the concrete contributions that youth were able to make to the theatrical products. Examples of youth solving artistic problems and how youth made indelible marks on new scripts and productions continue to excite me, but in this project, I became less focused on whether or not adult artists used ideas generated by youth. As I let go of tracing the source of ideas, I began to see how these spaces of dialogic exchange brought about new perspectives on the artistic material itself. This shift in focus allowed me to see

how youth challenged artists to think about the characters and environments in new ways through their reactions to and questions about the story.

Engaging with young people as artistic collaborators also contributed to the adult artists' understanding of young audiences and what they understand and appreciate about production content and aesthetics. More often than not, Alulis and I would leave the classroom each week, marveling at the advanced level of vocabulary our young collaborators used to describe characters and environments from the story. Though I did not set out to study how being in the room with youth affected adult artists' views of youth and young audiences in general, adult artists often expressed surprise and delight over the questions and reactions youth vocalized in this process. Adult artists recognized the similarities between how youth participated in the workshop sessions and their own design processes. The problem-solving, attention to detail and innovation that adults reported seeing in youth drawings and workshop activities built common ground between the two groups of collaborators.

In this project, adult artists engaged with the young collaborators whose role was something of a hybrid of performance-maker and audience for the production. I hoped that this intergenerational collaboration would stir some new understanding in the adult artists around young audiences. Embedded in this hope were assumptions I held about my collaborators' prior knowledge, experience and values regarding TYA: I assumed I would have to convince my adult collaborators that young people could contribute to this project in meaningful ways. But as I observed adult artists engage with youth through the residency and as I listened to them talk about their experiences in the classroom, I found

that my assumptions were incorrect; these artists respected our young collaborators and were eager to learn about the young collaborators' perspectives on and ideas about the story. The adult artists came to the project with respect for young people, and this project illuminated a deeper understanding of the young audience's artistic capacity. The dialogic relationship between artists and audience created the opportunity for the adults to recognize how young people pushed them to think about the story differently and how these new perspectives could move into the adults' design choices.

When artists and young people engage in dialogue and adults are actively listening to youth, new understandings of our audiences emerge. Brian Edmiston, professor of drama in education at Ohio State University reflects, "When I was starting out in the classroom, I believed that differences in age and social role created a significant divide between teachers and students. Now I know that whatever our age, in dialogue we can author meaning together" (2). In TYA, a divide in age and artistic training exists between artists and audiences, and it is through intergenerational dialogue that we begin to form a bridge.

Chapter Four: The Experience of Collaborating With Youth

INTRODUCTION

As stated in earlier chapters, my mission of this practical project was to include young people as co-creators of a new theatre piece for audiences of all ages. In the previous chapter, I explored how creating and discovering spaces of dialogic exchange functioned in an intergenerational collaborative process. In this chapter, I examine the adult artist perspective on the development of *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa* in order to provide a detailed understanding of the inner workings of the collaboration with youth. I hope that a thorough understanding of what happened in this intergenerational collaboration, as seen through the adult collaborators' eyes, will inspire other adult artists to integrate community-engaged dramaturgy into to their theatre-making practice.

In this chapter, I address the research question: what is the adult artist experience of collaborating with young people in creating *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa*? To explore this question, I conducted individual interviews with each member of the adult artistic team at various points throughout the development process. In these interviews, I asked each team member to describe their previous experience creating TYA and new work, articulate how this development compared to ways they have worked in the past, and to articulate the role of young people and their own artistic position within this collaboration. I also facilitated and participated in a post-mortem discussion with our adult artistic team following public performances to reflect collectively on our collaboration. In my analysis of the interviews and post-mortem meeting transcripts, I paid attention to the language adult artists used to describe their collaboration with youth,

collaborating with each other, youth contributions to the artistic work, and their individual role in the collaboration. Within these categories, I looked for patterns and recurring themes that spoke to how artists felt about collaborating with youth and with each other, as well as how this model of community-engaged dramaturgy affected their experience of the theatrical process and product. I also documented and analyzed my observations of how artists participated in the classroom workshops and rehearsals. Taken together, what artists said and did throughout this process led me to understand how the intergenerational collaboration functioned within this model of community-engaged dramaturgy.

In analyzing and synthesizing my data, I found that the artists on this project talked about their experience of collaborating with youth in three major ways: 1) adult artists named and defined their own roles in relation to youth; 2) youth ideas were incorporated into production choices; and 3) artists perceived the influence of collaborating with youth on their collaboration with one another. In this chapter I offer a descriptive analysis of each of these areas and ultimately reflect on what each one suggests about how intergenerational collaboration operates within community-engaged dramaturgy.

CONTEXTS OF COLLABORATION: DEFINING ADULT ROLES IN TERMS OF YOUTH

"So, can we talk about the program?" I say one night in rehearsal after coming back from a ten-minute break. We're a month out from performance weekend, and I have no idea how to organize this program content. Ever since my interview with Michael

[Krauss], our scenic designer, I can't stop thinking about how this model of making theatre is shifting my normal mode of working. He adamantly said he is NOT the designer because the kids are the designers. Once again, community-engaged dramaturgy has thrown off my routine and my traditional understanding of creative team roles. "How do we want to name ourselves?" I ask. "Rachel, do you want to be listed as the lighting designer/playwright?" After trying on some titles, Rachel [Alulis] lands on the title of "generative artist." I scribble this down. Becca Drew [Emmerich], our solo performer, shares that she's gravitating towards "storyteller" instead of "actor" because that feels more comfortable and accessible for her. Someone asks me how I want to name my role. I make a face as I brainstorm out loud, "Teaching artist/dramaturg/director/community engagement coordinator… well that'll never fit in the program." After some more thinking out loud, I land on community engagement dramaturg and feel good about that. Then I look at Victoria [Solorio] who says with a smile, "Stage manager. Yeah that still works."

Collaborating with youth in a practice of community-engaged dramaturgy caused the metaphorical ground underneath us to shift, even on the small scale of naming our roles in the program notes. I believe that in all theatre collaborations, the naming of individual roles both reflects and shapes an artist's understanding of their part in the collaborative process. Often, these roles are given to them, but in some cases, such as this one, artists have the opportunity to name their artistic role for themselves. This particular discussion in rehearsal stuck with me for a couple of reasons: first, it was a moment when four of us on the adult artistic team actively theorized our work together, what it meant

and how we wanted to name it. Working with youth shaped this naming process. Second, this was one of many moments during the project when my research methodology stimulated something in rehearsal in that an interview with a research participant inspired this discussion.

Prior to this rehearsal, in which four artists theorized the naming of artistic roles, I interviewed another member of the adult artistic team, Michael Krauss. In the interview, I asked Krauss to describe his role in this theatre-making process in order to understand if and how the collaboration with youth affected how he identified his role in this process. His answer, below, followed me to that evening's rehearsal:

> I would not call myself a scenic designer on this show – I would title my role more as a scenic facilitator. I look at the ideas these students come up with and what they envision this world to be and interpret them in ways that are theatrically possible but with holding the integrity of their ideas.
> (Krauss, Interview 5 Nov. 2014)

Krauss positions himself in relation to youth and he identifies them as the designers on this project. When I analyzed this alongside the rehearsal dialogue that I outline above, I saw how working with youth played into how we each defined our roles and responsibilities in the project. What emerged from intentional thinking around our roles in relation to our young collaborators was a collection of titles that represented a more democratic relationship between collaborators than I had encountered previously in most other production programs. Where Krauss might have been listed as a scenic designer in another process, what he said in his interview made us shift the language to scenic artist. While this may seem like a minute detail to change from "designer" to "artist," Krauss' title on the project located the designer decision-making, power and agency in the young

people, and Krauss identified as a collaborator responsible for carrying out the youth vision on stage.

In addition to naming some of our roles in relationship to the young collaborators, adult artists also used specific verbs to describe how the intergenerational collaboration functioned on this project. When asked to describe their own artistic participation in this project, adult artists used words like, "interpreter," "translator" and "scenic facilitator." Multiple adult artists articulated a responsibility to "represent youth viewpoints" or to "honor youth ideas." Costume artist E.L. Hohn described her role as "a polisher or tailor. They [the youth] chose from the raw materials, and it's my job to knit that together" (Hohn, Interview 22 Oct. 2014). It surprised me that both Hohn and Krauss, who were recruited for this project as costume and set designers, respectively, deliberately did not choose to name their own involvement as "designer," and opted for language that prioritized youth participation as artists.

A focus on youth as artists came up in the ways that the whole adult artistic team talked about young collaborators. They identified the young collaborators as: "guides, dramaturgs, designers, participatory audience, idea-generators, the think-tank, problem-solvers, drivers, experts, absolutely integral, a fusion of an audience and a maker" (Artist Interviews). This vocabulary also reflects an awareness of the dual role of artist and audience member that youth occupied in this process. The language adult artists used to describe the role of youth aligned with how I saw adult artists interact with the young collaborators in the classroom workshops. Each adult artist who visited the classroom

engaged in conversation with youth about their drawings, listened intently to what youth had to say and seemed to have a genuine interest in what youth had to offer to the project.

Critical pedagogue Paulo Freire argues that, “To exist, humanly, is to *name* the world” (88). In other words, how we name, describe and make meaning of our experience is the essential action that makes us human. The intention of creating connections between artists and audiences drives this model of community-engaged dramaturgy. How artists named their experience connecting with youth both reflected and shaped their participation in this project. Throughout the residency, I saw adult artists show up excited to be in the room with youth, and listen intently in production meetings to my reports from the classroom workshops. By identifying youth as the designers, and emphasizing the importance of the dual audience/artist role of young people in this project, the adult artists located artistry, power and agency in our young collaborators. While adult artists made final decisions about staging, text and design elements, all members of the team strongly identified the collaboration with youth as a central component of this project. The involvement with youth remained at the forefront of the adult artists’ process of creating *Baba Yaga*. This focus on the young collaborators manifested in the adult artists’ continued engagement with youth and how youth ideas influenced the process and product, which I will continue to illustrate in this chapter.

YOUTH CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PROCESS AND PRODUCT

I sit in the back of the crowd, watching necks crane and eyes widen to soak in the rich, new environment: A fence of bones surrounds the house, one illuminated skull

stares back at us, and a lighted chandelier of bones hangs from the ceiling, hovering over the table. After a winding journey through the dark forest, the audience had arrived at the house of the dreaded Baba Yaga. I watched the audience take everything in with voracious, focused eyes and ears as Becca Drew [Emmerich], the storyteller on stage, continued with the story, now transforming into Baba Yaga herself. As I listened, I stared at the chandelier of bones. I marveled to myself at the creepy yet pleasing way it occupied vertical space in the theatre and completed the environment of Baba Yaga's house. "And a young person made that happen," I thought to myself.

In this process, adult artists identified the theatrical possibilities within the ideas youth offered in the classroom workshops. Adults took their cues from youth drawings of characters and environment and from the questions young people both asked and answered about the story. As discussed in chapter three, the intergenerational collaboration led adult artists to shift and build new perspectives on the story as we figured out how to stage it, based on how young people questioned character motivations and visualized the world of the story. Collaborating with youth inspired adult artists to consider new possibilities and ideas about specific design choices, particularly around the physical environment. One example of this is the bone chandelier that hung so perfectly on stage in Baba Yaga's house. On stage, a bone fence surrounded Baba Yaga's house. Inside, a kitchen table sat on a wood platform. On top of the kitchen table sat a heavy, cast-iron witch pot that Baba Yaga ate from with a large wooden spoon. A lighting fixture made out of bones hung above the kitchen table. It filled the space perfectly, and

as soon as it went up during technical rehearsals, all of the adult artists talked about how they couldn't imagine Baba Yaga's house without this creepy chandelier (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Production photo of Baba Yaga's house

This chandelier that so delighted the adults artists emerged from our workshop with youth on scenic design[2]. Alulis and I chose to focus that day's workshop activities on exploring the inside of Vasilisa's house and the inside of Baba Yaga's house. After I led the class in a brainstorm to recall and record details about these two places, each young collaborator chose a house to draw. Krauss joined Alulis and me in the classroom that day, and the three of us floated between tables in the classroom to talk to the young

[2] See Appendix A, workshop plan #5

collaborators about their drawings. At one point, Alulis waved me over to the table she crouched next to. We both watched as one young collaborator simultaneously drew and described the inside of Baba Yaga's house. Her drawing included a chandelier made of bones and organs hanging from the ceiling above a Baba Yaga figure that the young collaborator described as "part woman, part monster" (Figure 3). We motioned to Krauss to join us, and his face lit up when he saw the drawing. After the workshop, as the three of us walked to our cars in the school parking lot, we couldn't stop talking about the bone chandelier. We knew we had to have one in our production.

Figure 3: Young collaborator's drawing of the inside of Baba Yaga's house.

The drawing time in the workshops enabled youth to represent their ideas about the story and characters visually, and the artifacts they created became important research material that adult artists used throughout their process. I looked through the drawings with Alulis and Krauss multiple times, and often the artwork from young people communicated patterns or important themes that informed the adult artists' process of bringing these environments to life through lighting and set design. The bone chandelier was an exciting example of a drawing literally coming to life on stage in a three-dimensional way. But youth contributed in multiple ways to the production. While Alulis and I did not set up this collaboration specifically around the literal translation of youth ideas directly and to the stage, the bone chandelier is an example of how this happened anyway. The bone chandelier in Baba Yaga's house offers one example of how a workshop activity inspired new production choices that adult artists hadn't yet considered. Similarly, in a soundscape activity, youth introduced new ideas about the physical environment of the story:

"Hoo! Hoo! Hoo! Ooo, ooo –ah-ah! Ooo, ooo –ah-ah! Whooooooossssssh! Whoooooosh! I'm gonna eat you! Awooo! Awooo! Hoo! Hoo!" Voices filled the first grade classroom, as I cued each young person one-by-one to use their voice to build our vocal soundscape of the forest. The class kept their sounds going, while the circle of sixteen faces focused on the iPhone in the center of the carpet recording their soundscape. I cued them again, one by one, to stop making their sounds. The room was quiet for a split second before erupting with excited voices: "Can we hear it? Can we listen to it? I

wanna hear it!" As I played it back to them, all of them were silent, stifling giggles and whispering to each other, "That was me! I hear my voice!"

I chose this activity for our third classroom workshop[3] to generate some research material for sound design and to offer another medium for youth to offer their ideas on the story in addition to drawing and group discussion. Before creating the soundscape, the class and I brainstormed some of the sounds we might hear if we were Vasilisa, walking through the forest to Baba Yaga's house. After the workshop, Alulis reflected on how useful the sound activity was for her:

> [Sound] is also so important for scenic. Thinking about what sounds they chose informs how the house looks, what the woods are. It's going to create a different picture than some of the other sounds they could have chosen.
> (Debrief 7 Oct. 2014)

Alulis relied on the soundscape activity in the classroom as a source for clues about other design areas that contribute to creating the world of the production. While she still had freedom and agency to make design decisions, this quote shows how Alulis took youth contributions seriously enough to follow their lead, even if it took her in a different direction than she had originally planned.

After youth created the soundscape in the workshop, Alulis and I decided that we wanted to layer the recording of youth voices into the production itself. It sounded so perfectly creepy, and included sounds that we hadn't thought of before, such as Baba Yaga's voice in the distance and the flapping of bat wings. In the performance, the audience gets up out of their seats and follows the storyteller out of the stepmother's

[3] See Appendix A, workshop plan #3

cottage and into the deep, dark woods. Once they reached the forest, the storyteller invited the audience to create specific sounds with their voices of owls, wind and wolves, just like the class did in the workshop. Cued by audience voices, pre-recorded sound cues of owls, wind and wolves gradually filled the space. The pre-recorded sound cue intensified as the audience traveled deeper into the forest, and ultimately built to the recording of the soundscape the class created in the workshop.

In addition to the theatricality that youth contributed, adult artists also shared that they enjoyed being in the room with young people. Krauss expressed excitement around seeing the young collaborators engage in the design process:

> I'm still left thinking about the excitement – not only the excitement of their class work and getting to draw and explore ideas on paper, but their excitement of getting to see how their ideas come to life, and getting to see the finished product. Being able to come into the Brockett and walk through the world that they've created. (Krauss, Artist Interview 5 Nov. 2014)

Here, Krauss connected the workshop activities to his own experience and process as a scenic designer. Seeing the physical world of a production in a theatre space excited him as a designer, and he reflected an eager anticipation for the young collaborators to have a similar experience when they attend the performance. This quote, while specific to scenic design, also represents the energy I observed in other designers when they visited the classroom on the day devoted to their design discipline. Witnessing young people participate as designers emerged as a benefit for designers that I had not anticipated nor thought about at the beginning of this project.

My interviews with the adult artists on this project demonstrated that the value of collaborating with youth can extend beyond what did or did not end up on stage. Instead,

for this artistic team, collaborating with youth brought new ideas and perspectives on the story to light. The process of deciding how to use the ideas and artistic material that youth generated was an ongoing negotiation among the adults and between adults and young people. Throughout the development process, I saw how the implicit and explicit ways that youth ideas informed the production choices relied heavily on how the adult artistic team chose to participate in this collaboration. In this project, the adult artists, myself included, learned by doing, figuring out how to navigate this process as we moved through it. Paying attention to how the young collaborators engaged with the story inspired new questions. Then, youth responses to these questions invited us to think in new ways about the production. This pattern emerged from the reciprocal nature of the artistic exchange embedded within this process.

Youth Collaboration As a Model for Adult Collaboration

In addition to how adult artists responded to youth contributions, this project demonstrated that collaborating with youth can shape the collaborative dynamics among adult artists in specific ways. In this project, collaborating with youth shaped how our adult team connected with the audience, appreciated one another's expertise, and created an inclusive, supportive collaborative environment. While this study does not suggest a causal relationship between the youth/adult collaboration and the collaboration among adults, adult artists drew clear parallels between the ways they worked with youth and the ways they ultimately worked with one another.

During the production post-mortem, I asked the artistic team what they will remember most from working on *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa*. As part of this dialogue, storyteller Becca Drew Emmerich made a connection between the practice of community-engaged dramaturgy and her experience working with this particular artistic team:

> Part of the reason we were so kind to each other is that we had kids as collaborators and the ideas weren't just our ideas. They were ideas coming from first graders. So the respect for their ideas was huge and it carried over into all of us respecting each other's ideas because we were representing this class.
> (Post Mortem 14 Dec. 2014)

Here, Emmerich described a carry over of respect from working with youth into the ways adult artists worked with one another. I hadn't intended to study the collaboration among adult artists, but as I read through my data, I recognized that several artists suggested similar ideas in their interviews and the post-mortem meeting.

Costume artist E.L. Hohn said, "The kids sort of set the tone. And also the timeline and lack of time pressure let people be kind to each other in a way that isn't always there in something with a shorter timeline or higher demands in some way in terms of pressure" (Post Mortem 14 Dec. 2014). Here, Hohn made two important connections: first, she articulated that the energy involved in working with youth inspired a similar patience and kindness among adult collaborators. This connection caused me to reflect on my own interactions with youth, compared to interactions with adults. When I interact with youth, I am highly aware of my words, the tone of my voice and the phrasing of questions or feedback, but I think about these elements of communication differently when interacting with adults. These interactions can also have different

qualities in terms of energy. In this project, each time I walked into the first grade classroom, young people greeted me with smiles, laughter, and excitement. I found their unrestrained physical expression of enthusiasm contagious. This energy kept me grounded and present in that space and time. This might be similar to what Hohn experienced when she expressed that working with youth “set the tone” for the collaboration.

Second, Hohn connected the characteristics of the project’s timeline with the adult artistic team’s ability to best serve and support one another with kindness in a theatre-making process. The context of a graduate thesis project provided a semester’s worth of time from first production meeting to performance, and the project’s four-month duration is also one of the longest processes I’ve participated in recently. Recognizing that this amount of time is a luxury, this elongated timeline affected how the adult artists interacted with one another. I felt seen and heard in rehearsal and meetings, and I felt that everyone was engaged and ready to create together. This engagement, readiness and listening could be attributed to the timeline that allowed us to be patient and kind with one another and engage in meaningful ways as collaborators.

In the above quote, Hohn’s claim that working with youth set the tone for how we worked with one another also implies that these two relationships might be different outside of this process. Emmerich reflected a similar idea about how she responded to suggestions that came from the young collaborators in this project compared to how she might have responded to adult designers in the past:

> I wonder if we are honoring their ideas more because they are young people than we would adults. I feel like there's some push back with adult designers because it's not feasible, or that's not comfortable in my body, which you would tell an adult designer. But I feel like if the kids asked me to do something, I'd do it! Maybe that's playing in because I'm an educator, but also because they're young and I want to honor their ideas. And that's an interesting question: just because they're young, do we listen more? Or do we listen less?
> (Emmerich Artist Interview 17 Nov. 2014)

Emmerich suggested that her identity as an educator shapes her interactions with youth, and she wonders if that causes her to overcompensate for how often youth are not listened to in our current society. Something I've observed about myself in the past is that I am more patient with youth than I am with adults. I tend to be more open to the unexpected, and as a result more flexible, when I am working with youth. This project invited all of us to level the playing field between youth and adults. For some, like Emmerich and myself, this means extending the patience and willingness to be flexible that we bring to our interactions with youth into how we work with adult collaborators. For the other artists on the team without a teaching artist background, this could mean recognizing the deep thinking and artistic contributions that young people are capable of bringing to this project, as I explored in detail in chapter three.

Building a Relationship Between Artist and Audience

When Alulis and I originally mapped out this project together, our original intent was for every artist to attend at least one classroom workshop. But it was only feasible for two adult artists (Hohn and Krauss) besides Alulis and myself to do so, due to schedule constraints. Initially, I felt nervous about what this difference in direct engagement with youth would do for our collaboration and creative process. Alulis and I

brought voice recordings, drawings and stories from the classroom to each rehearsal with Emmerich and Solorio, most frequently when rehearsals and classroom workshops were happening simultaneously. While the role of community engagement dramaturg was new for me, I developed this habit of bringing stories, reports and artifacts from the classroom to rehearsal as a way to foster the adult-youth connection within the creative team.

Both Becca Drew Emmerich and Victoria Solorio, the two adult collaborators who weren't able to attend a classroom workshop identified their own artistic responsibilities in relationship to what young collaborators brought to the project. Storyteller Emmerich articulated a responsibility to "infuse input from the class into the storytelling" (Emmerich, Interview 17 Nov. 2014). Stage manager Solorio described what was happening in this collaboration in a similar way: "The language we use has really, really been informed by the language our young collaborators have used surrounding the story. Even having not met them, a lot of what I do [with keeping track of the script] is informed by what they have said" (Solorio, Interview 1 Dec. 2014). These two artists did not have in-person interaction with the young collaborators until the day of the performance. And yet, Emmerich and Solorio both articulated a connection to the young collaborators that informed their individual artistic responsibilities.

The adult artistic team expressed enjoyment, excitement and anticipation in how they spoke about collaborating with youth who would also later see the production. Costume artist E.L. Hohn eagerly anticipated watching the young collaborators experience the production: "It's great to know that when we bring this to life, there's a core group of kids who are so excited to see it. I want to hang out with these kids more.

Can they be my collaborators for all my design projects?" (Hohn, Artist Interview 22 Oct. 2014). Hohn's desire to bring youth on as collaborators for her future projects, although said with a smile, laughter and some facetiousness, also reflected her connection with the young collaborators and her positive experience building the storyteller's costume with them.

While Hohn desired more time with the young collaborators based on her initial experience in the first grade classroom, storyteller Emmerich didn't have the opportunity to meet the young collaborators until the performance. In an interview a month before the performances, Emmerich anticipated what it would be like to share the production with them: "It's almost like little nods and inside jokes for the kids we've been working with, and I think that's really cool that they are so connected to the process" (Emmerich, Artist Interview 17 Nov. 2014). It's interesting to me that Emmerich expressed feeling connected to collaborators that she hadn't yet met. In the rest of my interview with her Emmerich elaborated on how and why she felt the young collaborators' presence in rehearsals because their ideas, voice recordings, quotes and questions were intentionally brought into the rehearsal room. Even without occupying the same space as the youth during the development and rehearsal process, Emmerich described having a connection with the young collaborators.

Two Collaborative Relationships with Similar Qualities

The connection that Hohn and Emmerich expressed in relation to the young collaborators also came up in the adult artists' description and reflection on what it was

like to work with one another. Stage manager Victoria Solorio noticed, "Everybody had a positive attitude towards creating this together with everybody's opinions in mind. There were no conversations that didn't turn out to be productive" (Post-Mortem 14 Dec. 2014). Solorio identified productive dialogue as a necessary part of positive, respectful collaboration, and she also acknowledged this as a pattern in her experience of this particular collaboration.

Emmerich described the process similarly: "I feel like there's a lot of listening in this process. And maybe that's the big thing – I feel like because not everyone was in the room, everyone is really listening and trying to honor each other's ideas" (Emmerich, Artist Interview 17 Nov. 2014). The "everyone" Emmerich referred to included young collaborators and designers. Though rehearsals were open to all, most rehearsals only included Emmerich, Solorio, Alulis and myself working through the script and staging. Throughout her interview, Emmerich frequently used the verb, "honor" when speaking about her role in relation to young collaborators: "Having not met them [the young collaborators], I want to honor them more. This is their imagination, and I don't know them. I want to make sure that I'm honoring their wishes" (Emmerich Artist Interview 17 Nov. 2014). Emmerich's use of similar vocabulary in describing both parts of the collaboration suggests that similar qualities of respect, care and intentionality lived in the two collaborative relationships.

Stage manager Victoria Solorio also identified respect and care in the adult collaboration. When I asked Solorio to describe the differences she saw and felt in this process compared to past productions she has worked on, I anticipated she would say

something about how youth ideas were informing the production. Instead, her answer surprised me:

> The major difference for me is the level of contribution that I feel I am able to give to the process – whether that be hearing and listening to everybody and giving feedback or giving a complete opinion on what would happen if we do this – which is a lot more than is usually asked of a stage manager.
> (Solorio, Artist Interview 1 Dec. 2014)

Because stage managers are often viewed as objective, silent observers in rehearsal rooms, it was gratifying for me to hear Solorio express her comfort with offering artistic opinions and feedback. This comfort level could have a range of sources. One possibility is that our rehearsals ran more similarly to a devising process than a hierarchical one with a director at the helm, mostly due to the fact that we chose not to bring a director on board. Alulis and I shared the directorial responsibility, and as we figured things out, it made sense to open up our dialogue and decision-making to everyone in the room, including the stage manager. Another possible explanation for why Solorio felt a difference in her level of participation in this process as the stage manager could be the beliefs and values that fueled the creation of this model of community-engaged dramaturgy. Alulis and I set up a model in which we intentionally sought out the expertise of young people. In leveling the playing field shared by youth and adults in this process, we may have also helped level it among the adult artistic team.

Though I began this project worried I would have to justify and defend the value of including youth and their ideas, or even the value of TYA in general, I felt that the dramaturgical and pedagogical skills I brought to the project were recognized and appreciated by my adult collaborators. Sharing the director responsibilities with Alulis

kept both of our visions in play and required us to dialogue with each other about our ideas throughout. Each person recognized the gifts or expertise that others brought to the collaboration. Our team gave and received feedback clearly and gracefully, and everyone brought an eagerness to do their best work.

While I never intended to study the adult collaboration on this project, my data pointed to several examples of adult artists talking about how the nature of the collaboration with youth spilled over into their collaboration with one another. This model of community-engaged dramaturgy relied on the inclusion of potential audience members in the artistic process. In a project with an intentionally widened, inclusive scope of collaboration, adult artists also articulated feeling seen, heard and valued by one another. Community-engaged dramaturgy offers an inclusive approach to theatre-making by disrupting traditional artistic hierarchies, and this intentionality around inclusion seemed to carry over into how the adults on our team worked with one another, creating a positive experience.

This project required navigating the interplay between ideas from adult artists and ideas from young collaborators. This project activated my extensive background research and ideas around how I wanted to involve youth as collaborators in this production. From the beginning I wanted to disrupt the traditional youth/adult hierarchy and power dynamic. Though I did not intentionally set out to do the same within the adult collaborative model, I discovered that's what was happening in our process. A lighting designer adapted the script, two artists shared the directorial responsibilities, and we created space for collective decision-making around design, text and staging. Reciprocity

became a distinguishing quality of the adult collaboration, as well as the youth/adult relationship. Looking at the similarities between these two collaborative relationships, I see a willingness to collaborate in an inclusive way that values individuals while supporting reciprocal artistic exchanges as a vital component of community-engaged dramaturgy.

CONCLUSIONS

My initial fascination with community-engaged dramaturgy revolved around how this theatre-making practice created pathways for youth to leave their mark on scripts and productions intentionally created for young audiences. While creating these spaces for youth to participate as artists alongside professional, adult theatre-makers was a guiding intention for the shape of this project, researching this intergenerational collaboration illuminated so many more facets of community-engaged dramaturgy including how it invites artists to name and understand their individual roles in collaborative model, how including the audience in the process can contribute to an inclusive collaborative environment, and the reciprocal nature of artistic exchange and decision-making that played out. Cumulatively, researching how these elements operate within a theatre collaboration leads me to understand community-engaged dramaturgy as a relational practice of making theatre. Cultural policy scholar Diane Grams offers a definition of how relational practices function in arts participation:

> Rather than the emphasis being exchanges of authority or money, relationship building is defined as a collaborative activity involving exchanges of trust, reciprocity and shared interests… Relational practices are designed to set in

> motion social and cultural interaction geared toward building shared understanding among diverse people. (15)

Many of the elements of relational practices that Grams offers on an organizational level as a strategy for arts engagement and participation also apply to this study of community-engaged dramaturgy. Many of the adult artists described this model as youth-centered and identified the young collaborators as important members of the creative team. The youth-centric characteristic of this collaboration model came through in how designers understood and articulated their own roles in relationship to the young collaborators. As many adult artists in this study noted, the investment in listening to and honoring the ideas of young people extended beyond the classroom and influenced how the adult collaborators interacted with one another. Reciprocity and inclusion emerged as core values to both the youth/adult relationship and adult collaboration.

In the rehearsal room, collaborators shared that they felt comfortable contributing artistic opinions and feedback. I cannot say that the inclusion of youth as collaborators directly shaped the adult collaboration. But inclusion, or the act of creating space of belonging where individuals feel valued, emerged as a shared value among the adult artists. The collaborative activity inherent to the relational practices that Grams defines above, involves trust, reciprocity and shared interests. Before this research, I probably would have identified these components as necessary parts to the youth/adult relationship in community-engaged dramaturgy. Now, I see how these function effectively and positively within the adult artistic team as well, and I believe that reciprocity, trust, and shared interests belong in all theatre collaborations, and that theatre artists benefit from a

careful examination of what these words mean to them and their collaborators in order to arrive at a deeper understanding of the values that guide our collaborative processes.

Chapter Five: Paying Attention

In *The Young Audience*, Matthew Reason draws comparisons between children's literature and TYA when observing the power dynamics between youth and adults. Of TYA, Reason writes, "the adult comes first as author, maker, performer, programmer, and the child comes after – as audience" (18). I leapt into this research eager and excited to push against this established model of producing TYA. I wanted to see what happened when we disrupted traditional power structures between adults and youth, between artists and audiences. I discovered that reversing this power structure is complex and often messy. In creating space and oppotunity for intergenerational collaboration between professional artists and young people, we worked to level the playing field. This leveling of power between youth and adults generated unanticipated outcomes in both the artistic ideas and qualities of collaboration that adult artists value.

This document explores what happens when adult artists and young people collaborate to create a new theatrical work for all audiences. Researching this collaboration required an acute awareness of the often intangible components of making theatre, such as decision-making, artistic exchange, collaboration and idea generation. Researching this process taught me the value of paying attention: to our audiences, to our own creative process, and to each other. I began this production and my research excited to center our theatre-making around the ideas and perspectives of young people. I had no idea how my fellow adult collaborators would feel about collaborating with young people. I never imagined that collaborating with youth would impact how adult artists collaborate, or that research would provide opportunities for the whole collaborative team

to learn more about each other. While I initially focused on how youth ideas would or would not make it into the production – this was a measure of success for community-engaged dramaturgy in my mind at the start – this research illuminated the multiple and different ways that working with youth affected the theatrical product and the collaboration involved in creating the show.

In this chapter I reflect on how new understandings of intergenerational collaboration, youth agency and reciprocity emerged from the act of paying attention: to youth, to each other, and to the process itself. I then reflect on some of the limitations and challenges of this study as well as the future research opportunities these challenges present. I conclude this chapter by applying the outcomes of this project to the field of TYA, inviting new perspectives and questions about the function of community-engaged dramaturgy in our field.

REFLECTIONS ON OUTCOMES

Paying Attention to Young Audiences

Community-engaged dramaturgy involves artists and audiences sharing space, time and ideas early on in the development of a new theatrical work. From the beginning of my research on community-engaged dramaturgy, I've been excited by the ways this attention from artists created space for young audiences to participate as artists and leave their mark on new scripts and productions. Inviting audiences into the process and listening to their ideas demonstrates a commitment to relevance, inclusion and

transparency of the artistic process. This early invitation is also a vulnerable act. Jonathan Shmidt Chapman of Trusty Sidekick Theatre Company said in an interview,

> 80% of US-based work is either coming from artists independently or its driven by a playwright or a playwright and director together in a really closed space. Then once that team of artists feel that thing is ready to be shared, it's already a thing at that point. People don't really know what to do with devising – it scares them, group collaboration scares them… but when you invite others into that really early phase of the process, I think the work can be much more exciting. (Chapman Interview)

The beginning of a theatre-making process contains so many unknowns, and more unknowns accumulate when you bring audiences in closer to and earlier on in the artistic process. For me, the vulnerability manifested at the beginning of this project as I worried about what the adult artists would think of the youth collaboration, and if they would participate or find artistic value it at all.

Community-engaged dramaturgy broadens the collective creativity at play in the process of making new theatre by including potential audience members as co-creators. This broadening requires humility and open-ness from artists who participate in this kind of process. *Baba Yaga* costume artist, E.L. Hohn reflected this in how she spoke about her experience in the room with young collaborators: "I tried to think about what they would want to choose between. It's refreshing to give up some of that control. It's also tough, but it's refreshing because usually I'm very particular" (Hohn, Artist Interview 22 Oct. 2014). Collaborating with a group of young people over multiple weeks at the beginning of the development process challenged adult artists to pay attention to young audiences, invite them into the early stages of the process, engage in dialogue, and in some cases turn over some decision-making power to young people. These actions

enabled adult artists to recognize the artistic capacity of the young people, build new perspectives on the story and incorporate this knowledge into the production design. Artists and scholars across the field of TYA frequently discuss what works or doesn't work for young audiences. Community-engaged dramaturgy provides a new way to participate in this dialogue: if we want to truly know our audiences and what is working, then we need to invite them in, pay attention, share space and ideas, ask questions, and listen authentically to their responses.

Throughout this process, the adult artists wondered if the young collaborators would recognize their ideas on stage. Over time this recognition became a lower priority and ultimately my findings led me to new understandings of how youth agency functioned in this intergenerational collaboration. As stated in chapter one, I began this project focused on including young people as full-fledged artistic collaborators. My intentions around this stemmed from childhood studies scholar Allison James' definition of "a social agent… someone who does something with others, and in doing so, makes things happen" (41). At the beginning of this project, I imagined this definition of youth agency to manifest in both the decision-making power and influence of the young collaborators. As I moved through this model of community-engaged dramaturgy, the agency of the young collaborators seemed to live more in the influencing space than in the decision-making space. The adult artists made production decisions, but from how the adult artists talked about their process, our young collaborators strongly influenced how adult artists arrived at these decisions. Artists were also inspired and influenced by being

in the room with young people, by what youth said about the story and by the ideas that showed up in the drawings youth created.

Paying Attention to Each Other

Through paying attention to youth throughout our process, this study revealed that the ways in which adult artists paid attention to each other while creating this production influenced their experience of working together. Many artists reflected on how welcoming and responsive this collaboration felt to their needs, ideas and contributions to the production. While this study does not prove a causal link between how artists collaborated with youth and how they collaborated with one another, many artists made this connection anyway. Listening to young collaborators and recognizing the expertise they brought to the project seemed to spill over into our work with each other. And so we listened intently to one another and acknowledged the specific skills each of us brought to the collaboration. The adult artists reflected that they felt seen and heard by other collaborators and that this had a positive effect on their investment in and experience of working on this show. In addition to working with youth, artists also recognized that the timeline of the project gave them more space to be mentally, physically and emotionally present with one another. While I acknowledge that not all companies or theatre-making collectives have the luxury of the four-month timeline of this project, this research reinforces the importance of artists making the time to truly see, hear and value each other.

Discovering the similarities between these two collaborative relationships also raises new ideas about reciprocity in community-engaged dramaturgy based on how it functioned in this project. This project brought young people and adult artists together as collaborators, with both groups positioned to learn something from one another. Instead of the transactional trade of the youth perspectives and ideas for adult design knowledge, the intergenerational exchange in this process took on a different shape than I had anticipated. Instead of a back-and-forth trade of knowledge and skills, I experienced and observed a more cyclical, ongoing and dynamic relationship between what happened in the classroom workshops and what happened in rehearsal. Each week, Alulis and I brought stories and ideas from the classroom into our rehearsals and production meetings, and often what happened in rehearsals influenced how and what we planned for the next workshop. Instead of taking shape as a measurable transaction, artistic exchange happened through dialogue between adults and youth and in the dialogic approach the adult artists took to collaborating with each other.

Paying Attention to the Process

Researching the collaborative process required me to pay attention to my collaborators, both adult and youth, in ways I hadn't before. After Alulis and I decided to work together, she took the lead on assembling our team. *Baba Yaga* was my first time working on an artistic project with any of these collaborators. Each of us came to this collaboration with different skills and ways of working. In the beginning I worried that this model of community-engaged dramaturgy and design asked too much of my design

collaborators. I worried that I would be alone in my advocacy for and attention to what youth had to offer. These worries stemmed from a set of assumptions about my design collaborators: I assumed they were more rigid in their process than me and they wouldn't see the value of youth ideas in a development process. I assumed I was alone in valuing youth as collaborators.

The individual interviews with adult artists far exceeded my expectations as they quickly became more than a means of data collection. Though the adult artists shared an academic community at UT Austin, these interviews gave me a unique opportunity to get to know them better. In these interviews I learned that our scenic artist formerly taught high school technical theatre for years, and that our costume artist had prior experience teaching summer camp. I learned that my design collaborators highly valued TYA from how passionately they spoke about having the same level of expectations for artistic quality in TYA as they do for theatre that falls outside this field. I listened to them identify elements of the drawings by young collaborators that taught the adults something new about the story. As I listened to designers tell me what a worthwhile experience it was to visit the classroom, I learned I wasn't alone.

Paying attention to the theatre-making process through my research gave me an opportunity to learn about my collaborators on an artistic and personal level. While Alulis and I spent the most time together as co-leads of the project, and held weekly rehearsals with Emmerich and Solorio, I saw Krauss and Hohn less frequently. But collecting data created opportunities for me to connect with my collaborators through meaningful spaces of reflection at various points during the development process. In the same way that

assumptions about young audiences influence the theatre we make for them, the assumptions we make about one another thread throughout our collaborative process, and can go unnoticed. It's easy to make assumptions about new collaborators based on limited information. Researching this process made me confront my own assumptions, check them, and in many cases replace them with new, real knowledge about my collaborators' backgrounds, values and beliefs about theatre, youth and TYA.

RESEARCH CHALLENGES, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

Studying the dramaturgy and collaboration of a new work has many layers of research that often overlap, but at other times diverge and separate. I encountered this challenge at every turn in my hybrid role of artist/researcher on this project. As a participating member of the creative team, my engagement with youth served as dramaturgical research for the production, but I also needed to pay attention to the collaborative relationships at play to serve the research study goals. Splitting my focus between these two layers of research, dramaturgical and study-related, was a constant challenge. Sometimes I found myself so engaged as an artist that documenting the context of a quote or a moment in rehearsal fell to the wayside. In other moments, my awareness of my researcher role led me to question my level of participation in spaces like our collective post-mortem. Was this a space for me to reflect deeply with my collaborators, or was it a place for me to step back and listen to what research participants said about the process? The answer to both of these questions is yes. Therein lies the

challenge of researching your own artistic work, particularly when your research participants are your artistic collaborators.

In a thesis that intends to explore an intergenerational collaboration, I'm aware that this document may seem one-sided given its focus on the adult experience. This study does not address the youth experience of collaborating on this project and how they would name their role. This act of self-reflection requires research participants to engage in metacognition, or thinking about one's thinking. With developmentally appropriate practice in mind, I chose to focus this research on the adult artist experience in order to inspire other adult artists in TYA to consider how young people might participate in their theatre-making practices. While youth voices do not live in this document exactly in the way I'd hoped, their ideas and perspectives were alive in every rehearsal, production meeting and post-rehearsal car ride home. I chose to focus on involving youth as artistic collaborators and establishing a collaborative relationship that valued their ideas, questions and opinions about the story.

Many of the research challenges and limitations I encountered can also be viewed as opportunities for future research. For example, throughout this project, I learned more about a designer's creative process as Alulis and I figured out how to activate this in the classroom with young collaborators. Though I brought significant teaching artist experience to this collaboration, I realized how much of this was new for me. The more I worked with Alulis to craft our workshop plans, the more I realized how much arts integration in theatre and drama in education privilege acting skills. More often than not, my entry point for engaging young people through and in drama and theatre is the actor's

toolbox of body, voice and imagination. As embodied, kinesthetic learning is my typical teaching mode, particularly with first graders, I had to get used to the amount of time we spent sitting in desks in our classroom workshops. I learned that this served our purpose well as we made character and story analysis visible and prioritized drawing time in our workshop plans. While I may have touched on design in the past, now I am thinking more deeply about how to engage young people of all ages in theatrical design as I move forward in my teaching artist practice.

Another opportunity for future research that this study presents is how adult perceptions and beliefs about childhood influence how we make theatre for and with young people. In researching the adult experience of this intergenerational collaboration, I saw how adult assumptions of childhood shape the way we see, talk about and interact with children. This came through in my interview with scenic artist, Michael Krauss, who spoke at length about the value of a child's imagination and creativity:

> As children we are blessed with this innate ability to create in our heads. We don't have to be told everything. As we get older, we tend to lose that. We trade it out for ideas of having to do work, earn a living. But as children we don't have those blocks. We're able to freely imagine whatever. You want a house with chicken feet? Alright, let's do it. I can imagine that.
> (Krauss, Artist Interview 5 Nov. 2014)

While the positivity of his experience in the classroom with the young collaborators comes through clearly in this quote, also reflected are Krauss' perceptions of childhood and the assumption that a free imagination is inherent in every child. This quote reflects the development in theatre training at the turn of the twentieth century that scholar Helen Nicholson describes in her book *Theatre, Education and Performance*: "accessing

childhood became the way to liberate the adult self, play became characterized as the rediscovery of the actor's inner child" (51). The freedom of imagination that Krauss named as a major takeaway from his experience in the classroom reflects Nicholson's idea that accessing one's inner child gives adults more freedom to imagine and play. This left me with more questions around how our perceptions of childhood shape our creative processes in TYA: How does an idealization of childhood shape the theatre we make with and for young people? How do our own memories of childhood influence how we interact with young people, and the theatre we make in TYA? Identifying the assumptions we make about youth is a necessary action for adults who work with youth, including artists who make theatre with and for young people.

MOVING FORWARD

In her contribution to *Dramaturgy in American Theater: A Sourcebook*, playwright Suzan Zeder names effective production dramaturgy as "the most pressing need" (456) in theatre for young audiences for this purpose:

> If theatergoing is to become a life-long habit, children and young people must be fully franchised participants in the theatrical event, not necessarily as performers, but as audience members who see their lives, their concerns, their perceptions and points of view reflected on the stage (448).

Community-engaged dramaturgy answers Zeder's 1996 call. Community-engaged dramaturgy is a shared, inclusive approach to dramaturgy, in which artists and audiences collaborate to create new work. This approach to dramaturgy and new work development in TYA operates in the following ways: it recognizes the valuable perspectives and experiences of young audiences, it disrupts traditional power dynamics between youth

and adults; and it values intergenerational engagement in the process as well as the product.

TYA is an inherently intergenerational field, and community-engaged dramaturgy provides the opportunity for this defining characteristic of our theatrical products to move into our collaborative processes. As a theatre-maker in TYA who is clearly invested in community-engaged dramaturgy practices, I acknowledge and value the myriad of ways we can and do create theatre in our field. My advocacy for community-engaged dramaturgy and theatre-making does not exclude or invalidate the innovative, thoughtful work that playwrights, designers, directors and actors across our field do independently from a community-engaged dramaturgy model. We need those stories too. Community-engaged dramaturgy is also not a complete handing over of authorship to our audiences. Instead, it's a relational practice that involves sharing artistry, sharing space, demystifying the theatre-making process and valuing audiences and their experiences.

At the beginning of this research, I wondered if I would arrive at a model for community-engaged dramaturgy that could be repeated. To be sure, the multi-session residency focused on design could be replicated in other development processes, and likely with some success. Instead of arriving at a tried-and-true model for community-engaged dramaturgy, I conclude this research with a collection of important ingredients that will guide my future work in the areas of community engagement, dramaturgy and the hybrid of the two that I've explored in depth in this document. Community-engaged dramaturgy encompasses a range of possible practices, engagement strategies and paradigms that I believe are guided by several core values. Building off of the working

definition I offered in chapter two, my core values around community-engaged dramaturgy include:

- A curiosity or core question that guides engagement with the community or audience;
- A genuine interest in what the audience has to say and offer to a theatre-making process and product;
- The willingness to engage in ambiguity;
- The awareness of blind spots and what we don't yet know;
- Creating spaces of reciprocity that foster artistic exchange between artists and audience.

These core values of community-engaged dramaturgy reflect what I learned from this research, and they also represent what I hope for the future of the field of TYA.

You might start with the seed of an idea for a play, like the team behind *Unsorted*, and seek out the perspectives of your community to guide your process, and who knows what you might find: an idea that shifts your thinking, or a central activating metaphor for the play. Or, you might have a full first draft of a new play, as Suzan Zeder did with *Aviatrix*, but you're curious about what your own blind spots, and so you go find out more about how youth experience a central theme, and maybe they help your play take flight. Like Trusty Sidekick Theatre Company, you might be making theatre for a new audience and wonder how two-year-olds experience story, or what kinds of plays a teenager wishes they could see. Or maybe, like the team behind *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa*,

you're curious about how young people imagine the physical environment of a story, and their visions mix with yours as you bring a new piece to life on stage. In addition to the core values listed above, artists' intentions shape the engagement strategies and process of community-engaged dramaturgy in important ways.

Our field's fierce passion for creating quality theatre experiences for young people is why I choose to situate my professional theatre career in TYA. This shared commitment to young people motivates intentional, careful decisions about what we put on our stages, and I believe this passion can and should live in our theatre-making processes as well. Our field is also excellent at engaging audiences around theatre productions before and after they walk through the theatre doors. Community-engaged dramaturgy offers us the chance to engage our audiences in the development and production process itself. Let's invite young people to the table, listen to what they have to say, and see what happens in our field.

There are no guarantees in any creative process, and I don't argue that young people can and will solve all of our artistic quandaries. But if we don't invite young people into the process, we lose the opportunity to deepen our understanding of our audience – an understanding that can inspire and sustain our creative process. We live in a society whose systems often marginalize and silence young people. I believe that artists in TYA are uniquely positioned to counter-act this reality because we are in control of creating intentional spaces for youth to engage with theatre. Recognizing and acting on our power to create these spaces of participation enable youth to contribute to and inform what they later see on stage, and feel seen and heard. Our field will grow and strengthen

as it embraces more diverse voices, and that must include young people, who are our primary stakeholders.

Appendix A: Classroom Workshop Plans

Workshop Plan #1

Goals:
- To introduce ourselves and the project to the class
- To explain research forms to the class and complete IRB paperwork

Materials:
- Blank paper for drawing
- Crayons
- Research forms

9:05-9:30am

Introduction:
Hi Everyone. Thank you for having us in your classroom today. Rachel and I are excited to get to know you today. We are going to be in your classroom five more times doing some drama and art activities with you.

We will be exploring a fairy tale together called, Baba Yaga and Vasilisa. Rachel and I are making this story into a performance for kids like you and families to come see. We are hoping you'll help us out with making it. This performance will be for kids, but Rachel and I aren't kids anymore, so we need your help. We want to know what you think about this story that we'll be playing with together.

What is Theatre?
- *If you have ever heard the word theatre before, put your hand on your head.*
- *If you have ever seen a play, put your hand on your head.*
- *If you have ever been in a play, put your hand on your head.*

Meredyth will ask students about the plays they've seen, or what they know about the word, "theatre" and explain that theatre is a performance with real, live people right in front of you – no movie screens!

Research
We are doing research about how we make this performance. When you research something it means you learn more about it and ask a lot of questions. We would love to use your great ideas, your drawings and photos of drama activities that we're doing together as part of our research.

Just like you have to ask adults permission for things sometimes, it's the rule that we ask you for your permission to write about you in our research.

Today we want to know from each of you if it's okay to include the things you make in our workshops in our research. You get to choose yes or no, if it's okay for us to ask you some questions about your drawings and take pictures of our work together. If you don't want to, you don't have to, and that is totally okay. You still get to do all the fun activities with us even if you don't want to be in the research. You can also change your mind later on, and that is okay too.

When researchers write about people, sometimes they will give the people a fake name so no one can tell who they are writing about. When we ask you if it's okay to write about you, we also want to know if you want us to write about you using your real first name or a fake first time. You get to decide.

Drawing Activity: The ______ Forest
In a moment, Rachel and I will come around to ask each of you if it's okay with you if write about what you and do and say during our workshops together. But before we get started, we have a drawing activity for you to do.

Each student will draw a forest and title it: The ______ Forest.
What kind of forest will you draw? Will you draw a spooky forest? A candy forest? A purple forest? You get to decide. Make sure you give your forest a title by filling in the blank.

As students draw, Meredyth and Rachel will each take some research forms and ask each student:

1. Is it okay with you if we write about what you do and say in our workshop together?
2. When we write about you, do you want us to use your real first name or a fake first name?

Workshop Plan #2
Tuesday, September 30th

Goals:
- To share the story of *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa* with the class.
- To gather initial impressions from young people about the story.
- To learn about which moments/images from the story stand out to young people.

Materials:
- Blank paper for drawing
- Crayons

9:40-10:10am

Check-In
One thing theatre artists do when we start rehearsal with each other is to check in so we can see how everyone is feeling today. It's important to know how other people are feeling when we are working together.

Everyone show me with your thumbs where you are today: thumbs up for super awesome, thumbs down for not super awesome, or you can put your thumb anywhere in between if you're kind of in the middle. One, two, three, thumbs!

Keep your thumbs in front of you and look to see where everyone is. Great. You can put your thumbs down.

Share the Story
Meredyth will tell/share the story of *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa* with the class.

Think, Pair, Share
Imagine you are telling someone at home about this story. What would you tell them it was about? Think about it, then turn to a partner to tell them what you think this story is about.

After a few minutes, ask for a few people to share what they talked about with their partner.

Drawing Activity: What do you remember most?
What do you remember the most? You might draw your favorite part, a character you remember or a picture you made in your head as you listened to the story.
After they've gotten started on drawing, Meredyth and Rachel will check in with individual students as they draw and ask them:
- *Tell me about your drawing. Why did you choose this moment?*
- *How did that moment in the story make you feel?*

Workshop Plan #3
Tuesday, October 7th

Goals:

- To find out how our young collaborators describe and imagine the environments and places in this story.

Materials:

- Blank paper for drawing
- Crayons and markers

<u>9:45-10:25am</u>

Check-In **5 mins**
One thing theatre artists do when we start rehearsal with each other is to check in so we can see how everyone is feeling today. It's important to know how other people are feeling when we are working together.

Everyone show me with your thumbs where you are today: thumbs up for super awesome, thumbs down for not super awesome, or you can put your thumb anywhere in between if you're kind of in the middle. One, two, three, thumbs!

Keep your thumbs in front of you and look to see where everyone is. Great. You can put your thumbs down.

Today's rehearsal focus: environments in the story. *What is an environment?*

Frozen Pictures: Environments **15 mins**
Today we're going to make some pictures with our bodies of what the places in this story look like. Let's practice with a place we know well – let's make a picture of your school playground since Rachel and I have never seen it.

Meredyth facilitates creating a group frozen image of the playground as one student at a time adds something to the picture by making the shape of it with their body.

After the playground: create Baba Yaga's house. *What are the most important parts we need to include? What do you imagine those parts look like?*

Soundscape Hallway **15 mins**
Form two seated lines facing each other. *Another way to create an environment is through sounds. What are some of the sounds that Vasilisa might hear in the forest as she travels to Baba Yaga's house?*

When I tap you on the shoulder, you'll choose a sound to make and start making your sound. It's okay if people do the same sound, but let's try to have as many different ones as we can think of. When I tap your shoulder a second time, that's when your sound will turn off.

Practice building the soundscape this way – and record it!

Now we have a chance for someone to walk through the forest sounds to hear what Vasilisa might hear. We have enough time for three people to get a turn to do this.

Reflection **5 mins**

- What do you remember most about the forest?
- How do you think Vasilisa felt as she walked through the forest to Baba Yaga's house? Why?

Workshop Plan #4
Tuesday, October 14th

Goals:

- To find out how our young collaborators describe and imagine the characters of Baba Yaga and Vasilisa.

Materials:

- Costume pieces for Baba Yaga and Vasilisa

9:45-10:25am

Check-In/Intro **5 mins**

One thing theatre artists do when we start rehearsal with each other is to check in so we can see how everyone is feeling today. It's important to know how other people are feeling when we are working together.

Everyone show me with your thumbs where you are today: thumbs up for super awesome, thumbs down for not super awesome, or you can put your thumb anywhere in between if you're kind of in the middle. One, two, three, thumbs!

Keep your thumbs in front of you and look to see where everyone is. Great. You can put your thumbs down.

Today's rehearsal focus: Vasilisa and Baba Yaga. We are going to put on our costume designer hats today, and the first step is to figure out what we know about these characters from what we heard in the story and our own imaginations.

Role on the Wall: Vasilisa **10 mins**

Meredyth will draw an outline on the board of a person – Vasilisa. On the outside, ask the group to brainstorm important things we know about Vasilisa: what has happened in her life? Who are the people in her life? What do people in her life say about her?

On the inside of the outline, brainstorm how Vasilisa feels on the inside. Draw connections from the outside comments/events/people to the feelings inside.

Character Dress Up and Movement **10 mins**

Meredyth will show the students the clothing pieces we brought, and facilitate the group choosing pieces they think Vasilisa would wear. Based on what we brainstormed about Vasilisa, what kinds of clothing would she wear? Ask youth to explain their choices of clothing pieces.

How do you think Vasilisa would move? Slowly or quickly? Heavy steps or light steps? WHY?

Next, we'll dress Rachel up as Baba Yaga. What would Baba Yaga wear, and why? How would Baba Yaga move? Slowly or quickly? Heavy steps or light? WHY?

Reflection **5 mins**

- How would YOU describe Vasilisa? What about Baba Yaga?

**Additional activity if time: turn our reflection discussion into a drawing exercise. Choose a character (Vasilisa or Baba Yaga) to draw and write three words that describe that character on your paper.

Workshop Plan #5
Tuesday, October 21st

Goal: To find out how our young collaborators describe and imagine the inside of Baba Yaga and Vasilisa's houses.

Materials:
- Paper and drawing materials

9:45-10:25am

Check-In/Intro **5 mins**
One thing theatre artists do when we start rehearsal with each other is to check in so we can see how everyone is feeling today. It's important to know how other people are feeling when we are working together.

Everyone show me with your thumbs where you are today: thumbs up for super awesome, thumbs down for not super awesome, or you can put your thumb anywhere in between if you're kind of in the middle. One, two, three, thumbs!

Keep your thumbs in front of you and look to see where everyone is. Great. You can put your thumbs down.

Today's rehearsal focus: *Last week we got to put on our costume designer hats, and this week are going to think like set designers. The set designer for our production is here today, and he's excited to learn about what you think some of the settings in our story look like.*

Setting Brainstorm **15 mins**
Today we're going to think about the inside of Baba Yaga's house, and the inside of Vasilisa's house. Let's start with Vasilisa's home where she lives with her stepfamily.

Meredyth will draw an outline of a house on the board. *What actions or events in the story happen in this house?* Scribe responses on the board inside the house outline.

What words would you use to describe this place? Write responses on the outside of the house.

Repeat this process for the inside of Baba Yaga's house.

Drawing Activity **15 mins**
Now that we've brainstormed all the things we know about these two places, our next step is to draw our ideas. We need some people to draw the inside of Vasilisa's house and

some people to draw the inside of Baba Yaga's. Think for a minute about which one you would like to do. Raise your hand if you are going to draw Vasilisa's house. Make sure we have multiple artists working on each setting, and get started!

Workshop Plan #6
Tuesday, October 29th

Goal: To find out how our young collaborators imagine light and talk about our perception of colors.

Materials:
- Construction Paper and drawing materials
- 2 LED Par Lights
- 2 Extension Cords
- M&Ms

9:45-10:25am

Check-In/Intro **5 mins**
One thing theatre artists do when we start rehearsal with each other is to check in so we can see how everyone is feeling today. It's important to know how other people are feeling when we are working together.

Everyone show me with your thumbs where you are today: thumbs up for super awesome, thumbs down for not super awesome, or you can put your thumb anywhere in between if you're kind of in the middle. One, two, three, thumbs!

Keep your thumbs in front of you and look to see where everyone is. Great. You can put your thumbs down.

Today's rehearsal focus: *Last week we got to put on our scenic designer hats, and this week are going to think like lighting designers. Rachel is the lighting designer for our production.*

Setting Brainstorm **10 mins**
Today we're going to think about how light makes us feel. As we think about how we feel we are going to make frozen statues in our chairs using our faces.

How does a sunny day make you feel? And how about a rainy day?
How do you feel at night? Why do you think it's scary?
Rachel will write the words down on the board and take pictures.

What about color?

M&M Activity **15 mins**
We are now going to split into two groups and look at how colored light changes how we see other colors.

Rachel & Meredyth will place a bunch of colored M&Ms on 2 plates and shine LED lights over them.

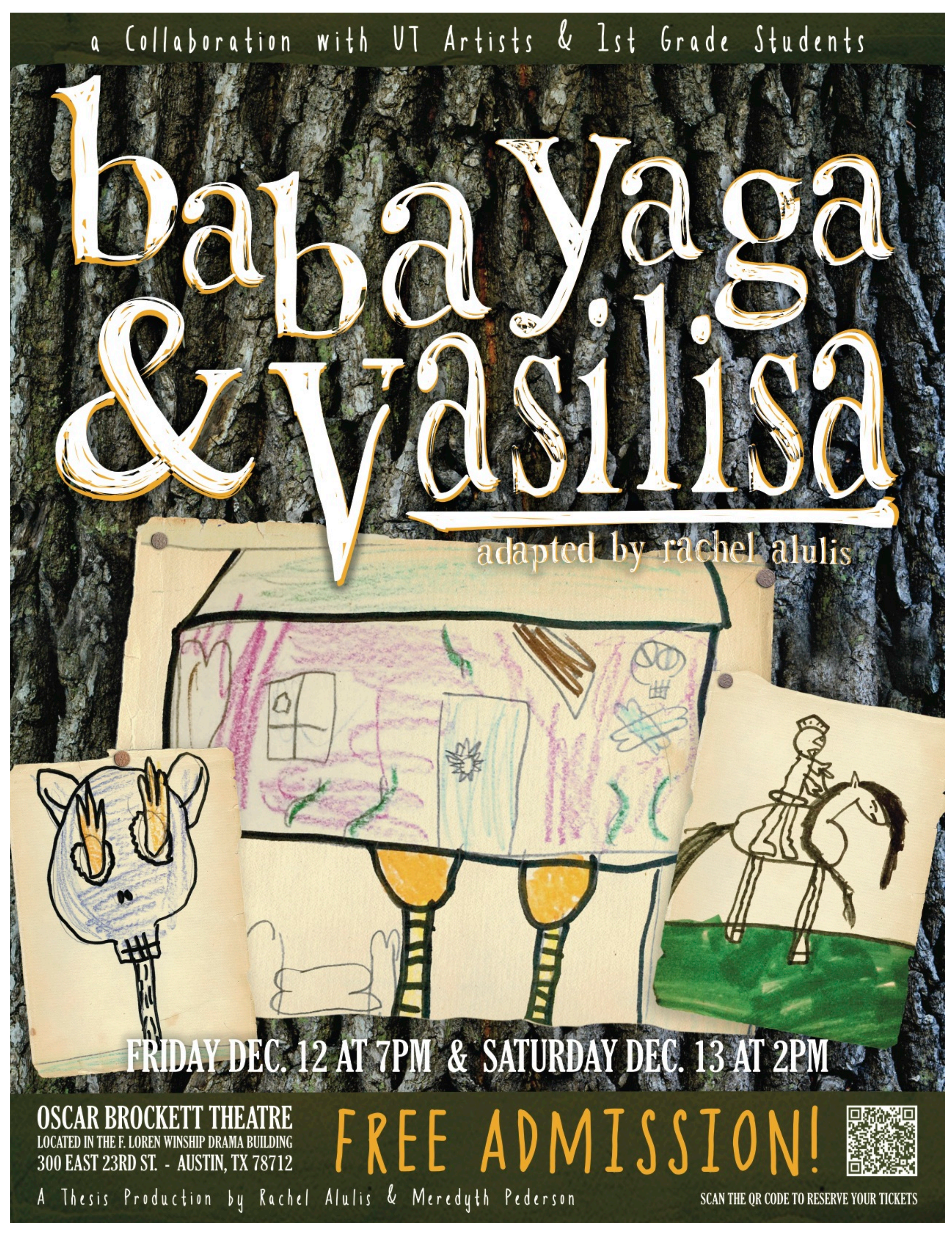
Red LED light: *How does the red light make you feel? I need a volunteer to separate the M&Ms by color.*
Green LED light: *How does the green light make you feel? I need a volunteer to separate the M&Ms by color.*
Blue LED light: *How does the blue light make you feel? I need a volunteer to separate the M&Ms by color.*

See how color changes out perceptions. And now if we shine all the colors together we get white light.

Drawing Activity **15 mins**
Now that we've brainstormed let's draw a picture of our favorite places in the story paying attention to the light that is in those places. We have the forest, Baba Yaga's house, the Stepmother's House, and the Palace. I have special paper for you to help draw the light. Think for a minute about which one you would like to do.

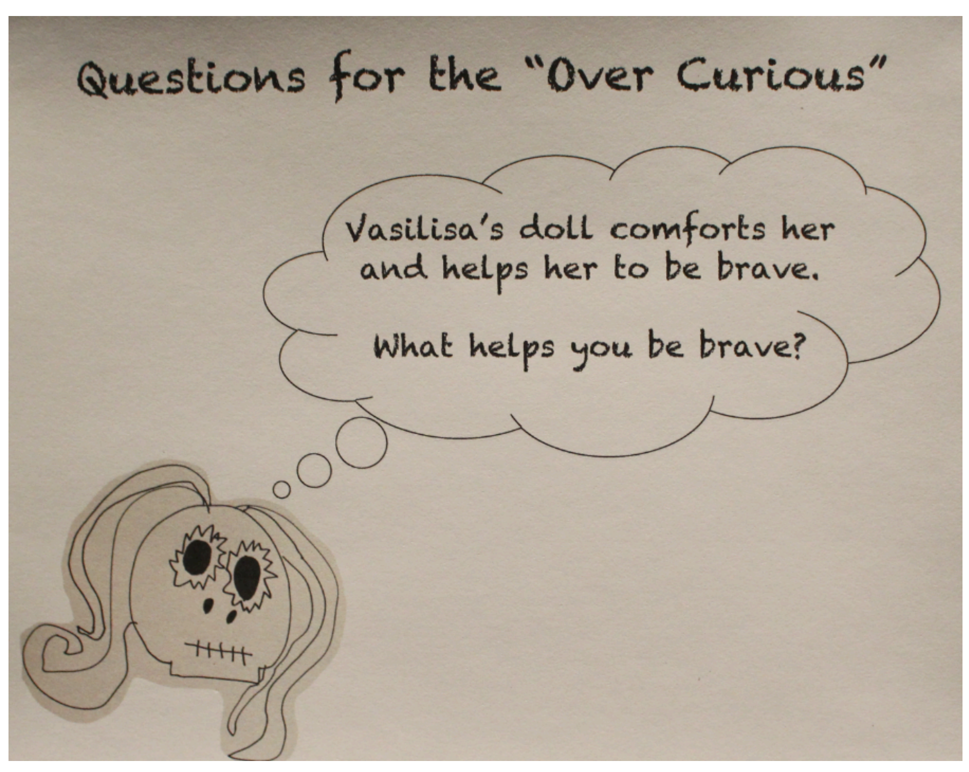
Mini-Reflection
Go around in a circle and each person says one word that is the most important thing they would want people to know about the story.

Appendix B: Production Poster



Appendix C: Production Photos

Appendix D: Lobby Display



Appendix E: IRB Letter of Approval

OFFICE OF RESEARCH SUPPORT

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

P.O. Box 7426, Austin, Texas 78713 · Mail Code A3200
(512) 471-8871 · FAX (512) 471-8873

FWA # 00002030

Date: 08/12/14

PI: Meredyth Franzoni Pederson

Dept: Theatre and Dance

Title: Community-Engaged Dramaturgy: The Role of Young Audiences in New Work Development

Re: IRB Expedited Approval for Protocol Number 2014-06-0068

Dear Meredyth Franzoni Pederson:

In accordance with the Federal Regulations the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed the above referenced research study and found it met the requirements for approval under the Expedited category noted below for the following period of time: 08/12/2014 to 08/11/2015. *Expires 12 a.m. [midnight] of this date.* If the research will be conducted at more than one site, you may initiate research at any site from which you have a letter granting you permission to conduct the research. You should retain a copy of the letter in your files.

Expedited category of approval:

☐ 1) Clinical studies of drugs and medical devices only when condition (a) or (b) is met. (a) Research on drugs for which an investigational new drug application (21 CFR Part 312) is not required. (Note: Research on marketed drugs that significantly increases the risks or decreases the acceptability of the risks associated with the use of the product is not eligible for expedited review). (b) Research on medical devices for which (i) an investigational device exemption application (21 CFR Part 812) is not required; or (ii) the medical device is cleared/approved for marketing and the medical device is being used in accordance with its cleared/approved labeling.

☐ 2) Collection of blood samples by finger stick, heel stick, ear stick, or venipuncture as follows: (a) from healthy, non-pregnant adults who weigh at least 110 pounds. For these subjects, the amounts drawn may not exceed 550 ml in an 8 week period and collection may not occur more frequently than 2 times per week; or (b) from other adults and children2, considering the age, weight, and health of the subjects, the collection procedure, the amount of blood to be collected, and the frequency with which it will be collected. For these subjects, the amount drawn may not exceed the lesser of 50 ml or 3 ml per kg in an 8 week period and collection may not occur more frequently than 2 times per week.

☐ 3) Prospective collection of biological specimens for research purposes by non-invasive means. Examples:
 (a) Hair and nail clippings in a non-disfiguring manner.
 (b) Deciduous teeth at time of exfoliation or if routine patient care indicates a need for extraction;
 (c) Permanent teeth if routine patient care indicates a need for extraction.

(d) Excreta and external secretions (including sweat).
(e) Uncannulated saliva collected either in an un-stimulated fashion or stimulated by chewing gumbase or wax or by applying a dilute citric solution to the tongue.
(f) Placenta removed at delivery.
(g) Amniotic fluid obtained at the time of rupture of the membrane prior to or during labor.
(h) Supra- and subgingival dental plaque and calculus, provided the collection procedure is not more invasive than routine prophylactic scaling of the teeth and the process is accomplished in accordance with accepted prophylactic techniques.
(i) Mucosal and skin cells collected by buccal scraping or swab, skin swab, or mouth washings.
(j) Sputum collected after saline mist nebulization.

☐ 4) Collection of data through non-invasive procedures (not involving general anesthesia or sedation) routinely employed in clinical practice, excluding procedures involving x-rays or microwaves. Where medical devices are employed, they must be cleared/approved for marketing. (Studies intended to evaluate the safety and effectiveness of the medical device are not generally eligible for expedited review, including studies of cleared medical devices for new indications).
Examples:
(a) Physical sensors that are applied either to the surface of the body or at a distance and do not involve input of significant amounts of energy into the subject or an invasion of the subject's privacy.
(b) Weighing or testing sensory acuity.
(c) Magnetic resonance imaging.
(d) Electrocardiography, electroencephalography, thermography, detection of naturally occurring radioactivity, electroretinography, ultrasound, diagnostic infrared imaging, doppler blood flow, and echocardiography.
(e) Moderate exercise, muscular strength testing, body composition assessment, and flexibility testing where appropriate given the age, weight, and health of the individual.

☐ 5) Research involving materials (data, documents, records, or specimens) that have been collected, or will be collected solely for non-research purposes (such as medical treatment or diagnosis).
Note: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(4). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.

☒ 6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

☒ 7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.
Note: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.

☒ Use the attached approved informed consent document(s).

☐ You have been granted a Waiver of Documentation of Consent according to 45 CFR 46.117 and/or 21 CFR 56.109(c)(1).

☐ You have been granted a Waiver of Informed Consent according to 45 CFR 46.116(d).

Responsibilities of the Principal Investigator:

1. Report immediately to the IRB any unanticipated problems.

2. Submit for review and approval by the IRB all modifications to the protocol or consent form(s). Ensure the proposed changes in the approved research are not applied without prior IRB review and approval, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subject. Changes in approved research implemented without IRB review and approval initiated to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subject must be promptly reported to the IRB, and will be reviewed under the unanticipated problems policy to determine whether the change was consistent with ensuring the subjects continued welfare.

3. Report any significant findings that become known in the course of the research that might affect the willingness of subjects to continue to participate.

4. Ensure that only persons formally approved by the IRB enroll subjects.

5. Use only a currently approved consent form, if applicable.
   Note: Approval periods are for 12 months or less.

6. Protect the confidentiality of all persons and personally identifiable data, and train your staff and collaborators on policies and procedures for ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of subjects and their information.

7. Submit a Continuing Review Application for continuing review by the IRB. Federal regulations require IRB review of on-going projects no less than once a year a reminder letter will be sent to you two months before your expiration date. If a reminder is not received from Office of Research Support (ORS) about your upcoming continuing review, it is still the primary responsibility of the Principal Investigator not to conduct research activities on or after the expiration date. The Continuing Review Application must be submitted, reviewed and approved, before the expiration date.

8. Upon completion of the research study, a Closure Report must be submitted to the ORS.

9. Include the IRB study number on all future correspondence relating to this protocol.

If you have any questions contact the ORS by phone at (512) 471-8871 or via e-mail at orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Sincerely,

James P. Wilson

James Wilson, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chair

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Vita

Meredyth Pederson holds a BA from American University in Theatre. After graduation, Meredyth's full-time professional career as a teaching artist took her to Lexington Children's Theatre in Kentucky, Trinity Repertory Company in Providence, Rhode Island and Metro Theater Company in St. Louis, Missouri. During her time at UT Austin she worked intensively with the Drama for Schools professional development program, focusing on integrating drama into early childhood classrooms. During her graduate career, Meredyth explored the intersections of theatre-making and teaching artistry in TYA, which encompassed projects in arts integration, dramaturgy, community engagement and theatre for the very young.

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This thesis was typed by the author.