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# The Engagement Practices of Performing Arts-Makers: A Phenomenological Case Study of Prometheus Bound, the Rock Musical: A Dissertation

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THE ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES OF PERFORMING ARTS-MAKERS:  
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL CASE STUDY  
OF PROMETHEUS BOUND, THE ROCK MUSICAL.

A DISSERTATION

submitted by

Peter J. Cormier

In partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Lesley University  
August, 2011

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## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to the memory of my father,

Robert E. Cormier

and

to all prisoners of conscience,  
especially the following Amnesty International Appeals,  
who were made visible by the production of Prometheus Bound:

Jafar Panahi, Iran

Dhondup Wangchen, China

David Kato, Uganda

Tran Quoc Hien, Vietnam

Doan Van Dien, Vietnam

Doan Huy Chuong, Vietnam

Norma Cruz, Guatemala

Survivors of Sexual Violence, Democratic Republic of Congo



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## Chapter 1. Introduction

Instead of bearing witness to another's experiences, the actor attempts to come even closer, to experience it herself or himself. In this regard, she is more than anthropologist, more than psychologist, more even than storyteller: she is an empathic journeyer among fellow humans, trying on different lives, connecting to others through her own wondering core. (Cohen, 2001, p. 53)

I am interested in the engagement practices of performing arts-makers and the impact of such practices on the arts-makers themselves. Performing arts-makers are individuals involved in the production of live artistic performances such as actors, actresses, musicians, dancers, directors, choreographers, story tellers, technical and backstage crew members. Although the subject of Cohen's passage above is one specific kind of performing arts-maker, the actor, I chose this quote because she conveys the multiple roles experienced by performing-arts makers as they try on 'different lives' in their effort to connect with their audiences. Cohen also weaves the concept of empathy into her description of an actor, a concept that emerged from both the literature and the research.

Engagement practices are actions taken by performing artists in order to deepen the impact of the artistic experience on the audience. Engagement practices may involve the venue, use of space, use of movement, use of collaborators, and various other aspects of a live performance. Engagement practices may bring about deep reflection and experiential learning because the boundary normally separating artist and audience is transformed and sometimes completely removed. Engagement practices allow artist and audience member to move into the special zone that exists during a performance. The

name for this space is the liminal zone, which is a threshold, border, and neutral space, where reality can be contested and constructed (Garoian, 1999).

I am interested in the effect of engagement practices on the artist, more so than the audience. My assumption is that engagement practices that occur in the liminal zone between artist and audience member and result in deep reflection may lead to experiential learning and may create an acute awareness of the 'other' within the artist. I question if the experiential learning and awareness of the other that result from engagement practices may also lead to a proclivity for other-oriented behavior such as volunteerism.

### **A. Research Questions**

In order to explore the engagement practices of performing arts-makers in a deeply intensive manner, I conducted research on one specific production, *Prometheus Bound*, a rock musical produced by the American Repertory Theater (A.R.T.) in 2011. My research questions were focused upon the engagement practices and the impact of those practices on the performing arts-makers who were involved in that production.

What kinds of engagement practices were utilized in the production of *Prometheus Bound*, the rock musical and how were those practices implemented?

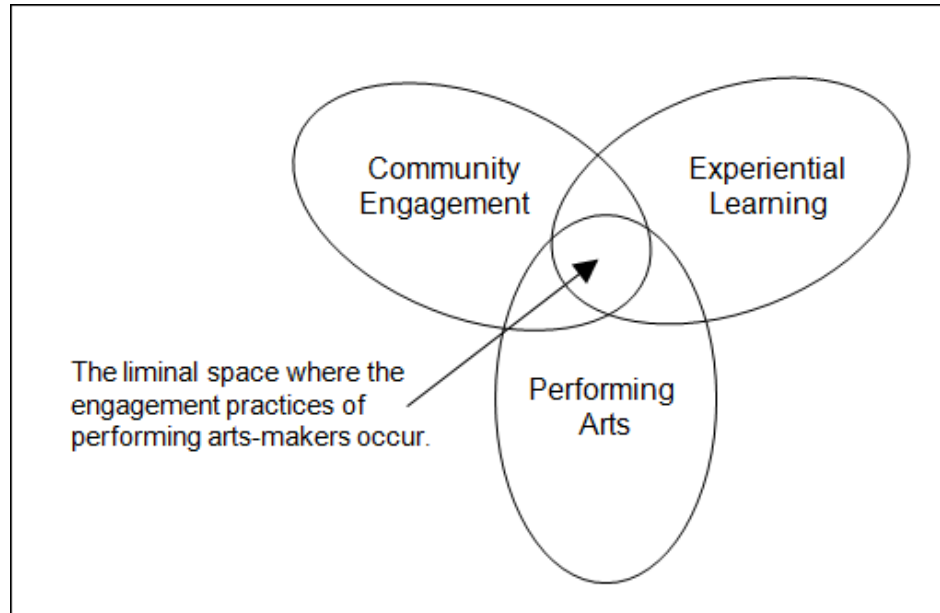
How do performing arts-makers who participated in the engagement practices of *Prometheus Bound* as a lived experience, perceive and describe the meaning of those practices?

What kinds of other-oriented behavior or learning experiences, if any, have been experienced by performing arts-makers as a result of their participation in the engagement practices of *Prometheus Bound*?

Figure 1. below, depicts my conceptualization of the intersection of the three domains that inform my course of study: performing arts-making, community

engagement and experiential learning. This diagram illustrates the liminal space that exists at the intersection of these domains.

Figure 1. Engagement Practices of Performing Arts-Makers in the Liminal Space



## B. Definitions

According to philosopher, John Dewey, “*Art* is the living and concrete proof that man is capable of restoring consciously, and thus on the plane of meaning, the union of sense, need, impulse and action characteristic of the live creature” (1934, p. 26). An *artist* is “a person who by virtue of imagination and talent or skill is able to create works of aesthetic and/or cultural value in one or more arts discipline” (Cleveland, 2002, p. 6). The term *artist* is synonymous with *arts-maker*, however I prefer the latter because of the connotation of process it conveys. A *performance* is, “a highly organized product of a complicated process and organization” (Sarason, , p. 16).

I have defined *performing arts-making* as the processes of planning, creating, designing, rehearsing, and performing the live art forms of music, dance, theater, and story-telling. I adopted this inclusive definition of performing-arts-making because I believe that the pre-performance activities noted above are key aspects of the artistic experience and provide arts-makers with unique opportunities for reflection. *Performing arts-making* includes but is not limited to *performance art-making*, which is a more specialized art form often used by socially conscious activists to influence public opinion. Although I will refer to several performance art-makers and their work in this paper, my focus is broader than the specialized genre of performance art-making because I am interested in the more expansive concept of performing arts-making, which is more popular and widely understood.

My definition of *community* is any group of people with a common interest and I view *community engagement* as the process by which people in a community interact with one another. Artist and activist William Cleveland (2002) defined *community-based* as, “activities created and produced by and with community members that combine significant elements of community access, ownership, authorship, participation, and accountability by place, tradition, intention or spirit” (p. 6). Artist Suzi Gablik’s characterization of community denotes an interesting shift in focus from the personal to the social, “community is the starting point for new modes of relatedness, in which the paradigm of social conscience replaces that of the individual genius” (1992, p. 114).

Gablik’s quote resonates with me, in particular, the first five words, because community is where my interest lies, outside of myself and within the people and organizations that provide context in my life. Community is the starting point for me as

an artist because I consider the act of performing arts-making a powerful form of community engagement. Community-based arts organizations are where I spend my time, and direct my energy, and my money. Therefore the first five words of Gablik's quote provide a grounding context for me. The arts inspire me but community-based performing arts-making gives meaning to my life; connecting me to neighbors and colleagues, practitioners and consumers, activists and arts-makers.

*Civic engagement* and *social capital* are concepts related to community engagement. Civic engagement is a broader concept than community engagement and can be defined as citizens working together for the common good (Schneider, 2007). Social capital is defined as, "social relationships based in patterns for the common good of reciprocal, enforceable trust that enable people and institutions to gain access to resources such as social services, volunteers, or funding" (Schneider, 2007, p. 575). Schneider (2007) suggests that social capital and civic engagement share similar characteristics such as trust and the nature and extent of connections established between people, however they differ in who benefits from the engagement: civic engagement activities generally benefit the broader community while social capital represents the benefits obtained by those involved in the network. From my standpoint, community-based performing arts-making is a form of civic engagement that contributes to the social capital of the arts-makers and audience members alike.

I have defined *other-oriented behavior* as empathetic action performed in the service of others. Penner and Finkelstein (1998) define *other-oriented empathy* as, "the tendency to experience empathy for, and to feel responsibility and concern, about the well-being of others" (p. 526). My interest in other-oriented behavior stems from my

involvement and experiences in community-based organizations. I am also interested in the phenomenon of *volunteering*, which is a form of other-oriented behavior and can be defined as any activity where time is given freely to benefit another person, group or cause (Mesch, Rooney, Steinberg & Denton, 2006). Penner (2004) considered volunteerism as a form of prosocial behavior, which he defined as “behavior intended to provide some benefit to another person or group” (p. 645). My interest in volunteering has been nurtured through my own personal volunteerism experiences as well as the volunteering experience of colleagues, co-workers, and performing arts-makers I know.

Finally, an *experience* is a unified interaction between a person and his or her environment (Dewey, 1934) and *experiential learning* is the process of learning through the transformation of experience (Kolb, 1984). Although the definitions above present a greatly simplified explanation of experience and experiential learning, both concepts are meaningful for me because they provide a deeper context to the notion of experience. While Dewey’s definition expands the context of experience to include the environment, Kolb’s concept of experiential learning values the transformative powers of experience. Both concepts resonate deeply with me because of the unique role and empowering nature of experience within the context of performing arts-making.



## Chapter 2. Literature Review

### A. Community Engagement

Community is the starting point for new modes of relatedness, in which the paradigm of social conscience replaces that of the individual genius. In the past, we have made much of the idea of art as a mirror (reflecting the times); we have had art as a hammer (social protest); we have had art as furniture (something to hang on the walls); and we have art as a search for the self. There is another kind of art, which speaks to the power of connectedness and establishes bonds, art that calls us into relationships. (Gablik, 1992, p. 114)

In this section, I explore the literature on community engagement, civic engagement, and social capital. I consider the role of the arts in the context of community engagement and I present research that has been conducted on a specific type of community engagement with an other-oriented focus: volunteerism.

#### **1. Community Engagement, Civic Engagement and Social Capital**

In *Democracy in America* originally published in 1835, Alexis de Tocqueville spoke highly about the associations formed by early Americans, “Nothing, in my opinion, is more deserving of our attention than the intellectual and moral associations of America....In democratic countries the science of association is the mother of science; the progress of all the rest depends upon the progress it has made” (1990, p. 110).

Political scientist Robert Putnam (2000) studied community engagement and civic engagement and he defined two types of civic engagement: political and community civic engagement. Political civic engagement represents activities involved in the democratic process and includes voting, contributing to a candidate or political party, and volunteering on behalf of a candidate while community civic engagement includes

activities such as participation in clubs, community associations, unions, professional societies, and religious bodies. Putnam also included volunteering, attending public meetings, serving on a committee, and a myriad of informal activities such as card parties, bowling leagues, ball games, and picnics as part of community civic engagement.

Social capital is a construct frequently associated with civic engagement defined by Robert Wuthnow (2002) as a “particular kind of relationship within communities to strengthen their communities, to mobilize resources needed to solve problems” (p. 63). Whereas civic engagement is a process, social capital is both a resource, which can be accumulated as well as a structural feature of a community. Social capital facilitates the achievement of goals that would otherwise not be as attainable without additional resources (Coleman, 1990). Coleman suggested that social capital may be useless or even harmful to some depending on the circumstances of the individual. Like physical capital and human capital, social capital may also be unequally distributed, thereby providing advantages to some more than others. Putnam distinguished social capital from the other forms of capital, “whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals, social networks, and the norms of reciprocity that arise from them” (2000, p.19).

Putnam (2000) identified two types of social capital: bonding social capital is inward looking, exclusive, and creates strong group connections such as those displayed by ethnic fraternal organizations, while bridging social capital is more outward looking, inclusive, and connects people together who do not share common socioeconomic characteristics. Putnam believed that bridging social capital was more beneficial to social

networks than bonding social capital because it could unite people with disparate interests. Similarly, Granovetter (1973) proposed that the weaker ties between acquaintances were more beneficial to job seekers than the strong ties between friends because the weak ties enabled job seekers to ultimately reach more networks as a result of their contacts with acquaintances. Sirianni and Friedland (2001) considered social capital a key element of their concept of civic innovation, claiming that it could be used to “promote broad democratic norms, enhance responsible and inclusive citizenship, and build the civic capacities of communities and institutions to solve problems through the public work of citizens themselves” (pp. 13-14).

In 2000, The Saguaro Seminar, an organization affiliated with the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, sponsored a survey entitled the Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey that measured civic engagement and social capital (Saguaro Seminar, 2001). This survey was made available to researchers through The Roper Center public opinion archives and assigned a community quotient (CQ) to each of the 40 U.S. communities surveyed across various dimensions of social capital including social trust and civic leadership. Community quotients reflected the performance of a community on a dimension given the ethnicity, education and age of its members. A score above 100 showed more community connectedness than would be expected based on its demographics. Scores below 100 showed the opposite effect. For example, Boston had the lowest CQ score of 71 for the dimension of giving and volunteering indicating Bostonians volunteer less than residents of South Dakota who registered the highest CQ score of 127 for this dimension (Saguaro Seminar, 2001).

Putnam (2000) wrote of the decline in civic engagement when he referred to a study that measured participation in civic activities over the twenty-year period from 1973 to 1993. Like Putnam, Robert Wuthnow (2002) reported declines in most areas of civic engagement and social capital over time however Wuthnow found growth in one category of civic engagement over the past two decades: volunteering. Wuthnow cited a significant increase in the percentage of Gallup survey respondents who volunteered from 26 percent in the late 1970s to 46 percent in the early 1990s.

Researchers have used the Saguaro Seminar study data to perform further analysis on social capital and civic engagement. In her dissertation, Katherine Loflin (2003) used the Saguaro Seminar data to study bonding and bridging social capital to determine if a relationship existed between social capital and civic engagement. She found that as bonding and bridging social capital increased, community and political engagement also increased. However, Loflin (2003) also found those with high levels of bonding and bridging social capital were predominantly middle-aged (35-64), had high incomes (greater than \$100,000), had high levels of education, were longtime residents (more than 20 years), and were Caucasian. According to Loflin, “people in positions of privilege are further advantaged by having large and diverse social networks, which can be utilized for various individual and group benefits” (p. 66), implying that the privileged continue to strengthen their already strong social networks.

Robert Wuthnow (2002) also studied civic engagement among populations that were both socially and economically marginalized. Wuthnow developed a marginalization index based on the dimensions of family income, father’s education, marital status, a respondent’s education, race, and number of children. Like Putnam, he

found a decline in civic engagement. However Wuthnow found lesser rates of decline in civic engagement for the privileged when compared to marginalized members of society.

In the last chapter of *Bowling Alone, The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Putnam (2000) identified the areas of youth and arts as worthy of special focus for civic engagement in the future. He noted that programs in which young adults improve their civic knowledge, increase their social responsibility, and learn communication and leaderships skills offer great potential for connecting young adults with their communities. He noted that “volunteering in one’s youth is...one of the strongest predictors of adult volunteering” (p. 405).

Regarding the arts, Putnam (2000) suggested that cultural activities, like arts festivals and community theater performances, are powerful ways to create bridging social capital because they provide opportunities for participation instead of mere observation. Wuthnow (2002) considered the arts a form of cultural capital and proposed that these areas are the ones where the most hope lies for the future.

## **2. Role of the Arts in Community Engagement**

In *Better Together: The Arts and Social Capital* (Saguaro Seminar, 2000) the arts are identified as an excellent means of creating social capital because they provide opportunities for shared understanding and they inspire honesty, tolerance, and respect by the performer, producer, and spectator. The arts are a unique way to build social capital because the artistic experience is enjoyable, as described below in the report:

The arts have a singular advantage in rebuilding social capital: cultural activities are enjoyable and fun. Unlike attending meetings or voting – what we call “civic broccoli” because they’re good for all but unpleasant to many – artistic

performance is akin to civic fruit. We have fun and enjoy the arts, even as they do us good. The enjoyable nature of the arts makes them perhaps the most promising if neglected means of building social capital. (Saguaro Seminar, 2000, p. 5)

However, to create an all-inclusive aspect to the arts, one must focus on the art-making process instead of the outcome, according to Karkou and Glasman (2004). The authors suggested that de-emphasizing the artistic product effectively overcomes the perception that the arts are restricted to the gifted few. This attitude of valuing the process over the outcome encourages creative self-expression and facilitates participation in the arts by anyone with an interest in doing so. Others have valued the process of art-making over the product including Dewey (1934), Gablik (1992), Adams and Goldbard, (2005), and Lacy (1995).

The arts have been found to enhance personal development skills of young adults in addition to connecting them to their communities. Heath, Soep and Roach (1998) described the positive impact of arts organizations in their report on a research project that ran from 1987 to 1998, which surveyed non-school youth organizations that focused on the performing arts. The researchers compared the results of their survey of 100 participants in arts organizations, ranging in age from 8 to early 20's, with a national longitudinal survey by the U.S. Department of Education to determine how their participants matched up in terms of academic achievement and leisure time choices. They reported that participants of non-school arts organizations were four times more likely to have won school wide academic awards despite being five times more likely to live in a family recently involved with the welfare system. Further, Heath et al., (1998) reported that participants in arts organizations performed community service more than

four times as often as those in the national sample despite being more than twice as likely to have parents who divorced or lost their jobs in the last two years. These findings are compelling they represent tangible positive personal development and civic engagement results attributed to the arts.

### *The 'Ripple Effect' of Music*

One of the arts considered particularly effective in bringing people together is music. By its very nature, music has a tendency to expand outward beyond its source. Pavlicevic and Ansdell (2004) assigned great agency to music: "Music is not designed for privacy or containment – it naturally reverberates, permeates, goes through boundaries and walls. And in doing so it calls to others, attracts, gathers, connects people together. It creates community" (p. 16). Another way of viewing music in a community context is that of the "ripple effect." Pavlicevic and Ansdell (2004) credited music therapist Stuart Wood with using the analogy of ripples in a pond to represent the unique ability of music to connect people together in a widening manner. An individual performing music may eventually interact with people that he or she would otherwise not have come in contact with. The ripples not only represent the sound of music emanating outward, they represent the ever-widening socio-cultural connections that community members experience as they relate to each other through music (Pavlicevic and Ansdell, 2004). There is growing support for considering music as more than just an aesthetic experience; music is being now considered by some as a socio-cultural action and as a political force.

The term musicking was created by Christopher Small to emphasize the process-oriented nature of music (Ansdell, 2004). According to Small (1998), the musical

performance is more complex than simply focusing on the musical work or the individual performer. Small noted that “the fundamental nature and meaning of music lie not in objects, not in musical works at all, but in action, in what people do” (p. 8). Musicking refers to all of the activities remotely associated with music which include practicing, listening, dancing, composing, conducting and performing. Similar to Wood and his interpretation of music as ripples that connect people together, Small (1998) conceptualized musicking as an action that results in a rich set of relationships, “the act of musicking establishes in the place where it is happening a set of relationships, and it is in those relationships that the meaning of the act lies” (p. 13).

With these references to ripples, relationships and the socio-cultural nature of music, one can see how the act of music-making and by extension, other performing arts-making activities, may contribute to the social connections and relationships that constitute community engagement.

### **3. Volunteerism as a Form of Other-Oriented Behavior**

As referenced earlier, other-oriented behavior is empathetic action performed in the service of others and volunteerism is a specific form of that behavior, which can be defined as any activity where time is given freely to benefit another person, group, or cause (Mesch et al., 2006). According to Clary, Ridge, Stukas, Snyder, Copeland, Haugen, & Miene, (1998) the defining characteristics of volunteerism involve voluntary, sustained, and carefully planned helpfulness. Mesch et al., (2006) found that volunteers often seek out opportunities to help others, carefully consider the nature and extent of their voluntary service, and then make a commitment to serve for a considerable period of time. Penner (2004) considered volunteerism as a form of prosocial behavior, which



he defined as “behavior intended to provide some benefit to another person or group” (p. 645). Like, Clary et al., (1998) he characterized volunteerism as being non-obligated, planned, and long term behavior. However, unlike Clary et al., (1998), Penner included one more key attribute of volunteerism: that it occurs within an organizational context.

Why do people volunteer? There are several theoretical constructs and conceptual models that have been developed to attempt to answer this question and better understand the phenomenon of volunteerism during the last 2 decades (Marta & Pozzi, 2008; Erez, Mikulincer, van Ijzendoorn, & Kroonenberg, 2008; Van Vianen, Nijstad, & Voskuil, 2008; Penner, 2004; Omoto & Snyder, 2002; Grube & Piliavin, 2000; Clary et al., 1998). The Volunteer Process Model (Omoto & Snyder, 2002) is particularly informative to understanding volunteerism for two reasons. First, it is a broad framework that conceptualizes volunteerism as both a process, which occurs from one stage to another over time, as well as a relational context that considers the interaction between actors at three different levels of engagement. See Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Volunteer Process Model

	<b>STAGES OF VOLUNTEERISM</b>		
<b>LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT</b>	<i>Antecedents</i>	<i>Experiences</i>	<i>Consequences</i>
<i>Agency</i>	Identify volunteers Recruit volunteers Train volunteers	Assign volunteers Track volunteers Delivery of service	Quality & quantity of service Retention & reenlistment
<i>Individual</i>	Demographics Prior experiences Personality differences Resources and skills	Volunteers' choice of role Volunteers' performance Relationship with client Support from agency	Changes in knowledge, attitude, behavior, motivation Identity development
<i>Social System</i>	Social climates Community resources Cultural context	Recipients of services Volunteers' social network Clients social network	Social diffusion Public education Systems of service delivery

Second, because of its comprehensiveness, this model is useful to situate and evaluate other conceptual models that warrant consideration. For example Marta & Pozzi (2008) explored the variables that influence the intention to volunteer. Their conceptualization of young people's sustained volunteerism is situated at the experiences stage and the agency and individual levels. Meanwhile, Penner (2004) explored the antecedent stage in his model, which considered the influence of variables at multiple levels of engagement. The models presented by Marta and Pozzi (2008) and Penner (2004) are useful because they attempt to explain the factors that influence one to volunteer. Although many factors have been found to influence volunteerism, meaningful research has been conducted in three specific areas: personal attributes, organizational context, and volunteer role identity.

### *Personal Attributes*

Penner (2004) credited his own research and that of others, as having demonstrated that personal attributes have been found to be, “relatively strong predictors of voluntary characteristics and related behaviors” (p. 649). Personal attributes are such things as values, needs, motives, thoughts, and feelings. Two of the models referenced above (Volunteer Process Model and Young Persons Sustained Volunteerism) considered the influence of personal attributes of volunteers and were informed by functional analysis, an approach that was based upon the psychological processes that initiate, direct, and sustain action, described below by Snyder (as cited in Clary et al., 1998).

We have adopted the strategy of functional analysis, an approach that is explicitly concerned with the reasons and the purposes, the plans and the goals, that underlie and generate psychological phenomena – that is, the personal and social functions

being served by an individual's thoughts, feelings and actions (p. 1517).

Clary et al., (1998) conducted a series of studies using the functional analysis approach and conceptualized six distinct functional areas served by volunteerism that underlie the motivation for volunteerism. These functions represent the personal attributes of values, understanding, enhancement, career, social, and protection. See Figure 3. below for a brief description of each function.

Figure 3. Functions Served by Volunteering Used by the Volunteer Functions Inventory

Values	Having compassion and concern for others; demonstrating altruistic or humanitarian tendencies
Understanding	Having a desire to learn about a particular group
Enhancement	Having the need to expand one's skill set for personal growth
Career	Having the desire to better oneself and gain career-related experience
Social	Having the desire to meet new people and expand one's social network
Protective	Having the need to be occupied in an activity to prevent oneself from getting involved in self-abusive behaviors

The functions listed above formed the basis for the creation of an instrument called the Volunteer Function Inventory (VFI), which was developed by Clary et al., (1998) to assess the motivation of volunteers. The VFI contained 30 questions which were grouped into 6 clusters of 5 questions each, to represent a specific motivation (Marta & Pozzi, 2008).

Several groups of researchers have utilized the VFI to extend this research. For example, Omoto and Snyder (2002) found that "values motivation tends to be endorsed most strongly" (p. 851) among AIDS volunteers while Marta and Pozzi (2008) found a similar result: that values motivation, which they referred to as other-oriented motivation, was the top ranked function in their study of 158 young adult participants with a mean of

3.69 on a five-point scale (1 = not at all, 5 = very much). In a survey study of 242 performing artists, Cormier (2010) found similar results where values were found to be the top rated function while utilizing the same five-point scale, which yielded a mean of 4.14.

Houle, Sagarin and Kaplan (2005) used the VFI to study introductory psychology college students and determined that volunteers do not randomly select tasks but base their selection on getting their needs met. Marta and Pozzi (2008) used the VFI to test their model of sustained volunteerism on young people and determined that both dispositional and organizational factors are critical in determining long term volunteerism. Erez et al., (2008) used the VFI to examine the contribution of attachment insecurities to motives for volunteering while Esmond and Dunlop (2004) used and extended the VFI in the course of developing the Volunteer Motivation Inventory, a more comprehensive instrument, which they used to measure volunteerism in Australia.

In summary, I suggest the VFI is an appropriate tool with which to examine volunteerism for four reasons. First, it is comprehensive; it measures respondent motivation in six broad areas that represent the full range of motivational factors one might consider. Second, it utilizes a series of context sensitive, grouped questions to assess motivation in six areas and the questions are randomly ordered and posed in an indirect manner. Third, the VFI has been found to be reliable as a result of internal consistency estimates and test-retest correlations (Allison, Okun, & Dutridge, 2002). Lastly, the VFI continues to be used by researchers in the recent past, more than 12 years after it was created (Marta & Pozzi, 2008).

Penner (2004) used a different instrument to measure motivation; the prosocial personality battery (PSB) which measured two dimensions: other-oriented empathy and helpfulness. His findings from a national survey indicated that both dimensions distinguished volunteers from non-volunteers. Of particular interest however, is Penner's work that related the other-oriented empathy and helpfulness dimensions to three measures of volunteer activity, all associated with organizations, which are described below.

### *Organizational Context*

Penner (2004) found a *significant correlation* between two dimensions of prosocial personality (other-oriented empathy and helpfulness) and the number of organizations worked for, the length of time worked at the organization, and the amount of time spent at the organization. Penner conceptualized the process of the initial decision to volunteer, which he claimed was based on the influence of both personal attributes and environmental or situational factors. He described the importance of the organizational factors below.

It is not enough just to understand why a person decides to volunteer; one must also consider the characteristics of the organization in which the volunteering takes place, the exchanges between the individual volunteers and the organization and the changes in these relationships over time (p. 648).

Furthermore, Penner (2004) suggested that volunteers rarely have personal connections with the recipients who benefit the most from their efforts; in most cases the volunteers are only in contact with the organizations that actually deliver the products or services to

the recipient. Penner's finding, that a significant correlation exists between prosocial personality and organizational characteristics, gives weight to the notion that volunteerism may be influenced by both personal attributes and organizational features (2004).

In research very similar to Penner's work which focused on the initial decision to volunteer, Marta and Pozzi (2008) conceptualized a process, referred to as the intention to volunteer. They attempted to determine if the intention to volunteer could be predicted by four factors: values motivation, organizational context, support of family and volunteer's identity. The model they tested was based on the assumption that other-oriented motivation, group integration, satisfaction with the group, and other factors influenced volunteer role identify, which in turn influenced the decision to volunteer. They used a 17 item scale to assess volunteers' satisfaction with the organization. This instrument measured satisfaction with the organization, the group, and the activity.

Although the models developed by Marta and Pozzi (2008) and Penner (2004) differ slightly, their results were similar and consistent. Both groups of researchers found that concern for others and certain organizational characteristics were found to influence volunteerism. Additionally, Marta and Pozzi (2008) found that, "role identity is the best predictor of volunteer activity" (p. 43) and that "other-oriented motivation, group integration and satisfaction with the organization, are strongly related to young people's volunteer identity" (p. 43). Role identity theory will be discussed in more detail in a later section.

Another example of research which considered the influence of the organization on volunteering is a study conducted by Stukas, Worth, Clary, and Synder (2009) that focused on the volunteer environment and the influence of contextual modifiers, which are practices that may encourage or inhibit a volunteer's own motives, such as the extent of rules and procedures that support structured and organized channels of behavior. Stukas et al., (2009) found that organizations with less rules and structure enabled the volunteers in their survey to be more self-directed and autonomous, outcomes which ultimately led to higher levels of volunteer satisfaction and retention.

Similarly, research by Taylor, Mallinson and Bloch (2008) focused on the structure of the organization as well as the interaction between the individual volunteer and the organization to explain volunteerism at two nonprofits. The researchers used the structuration theory (as cited in Taylor et al., 2008) to interpret their work and argued that volunteerism should be conceptualized as an interactive process giving more weight to the role of the organization than that of the motivations of the volunteer. This position, that the organization has more influence over the volunteerism than an individual's motivations, is notable because it represents a shift from some of the earlier research informed by the VFI and PSB instruments described above, that suggested volunteerism was influenced primarily by motivational factors.

Another theoretical construct that is related to organizational context is that of role identity, which was found to be a predictor of volunteerism as noted above by Marta and Pozzi (2008). Grube and Piliavin (2000) undertook research to determine the impact of organizational experiences on volunteer role identity and volunteer performance. Their finding that, "role identity is the most important factor in predicting the amount of

time given to ACS (American Cancer Society)” (p. 1116) is consistent with what was reported by Marta and Pozzi. In 2005, Finkelstein, Penner and Brannick reached a similar conclusion. They found that

Identity and perceived expectations emerged as important predictors of volunteer participation and were strongly associated with most motives for volunteering. In addition, a volunteer identity and other’s expectations were positively related to an altruistic, other-oriented personality. (p. 417)

In summary, the research noted above clearly describes the influence of personal attributes (specifically other-oriented behavior), organizational context and role identity on volunteerism, with strong correlations between personal and organizational variables. Volunteer role identity was also determined to be a predictor of volunteerism. In the next section, methodologies that have been utilized in the body of research that is focused on volunteerism will be presented.

#### *Methodologies Used to Research Volunteerism*

Many of the studies that have been conducted on volunteerism during the last two decades have involved quantitative research. For example, Omoto & Snyder (1995) mailed questionnaires to 26 AIDS service organizations throughout the U.S. Clary et al., (1998) conducted 5 different studies in the process of developing the VFI, which involved administering questionnaires to various volunteer groups in Minneapolis. Penner and Finkelstein (1998) sent mail questionnaires to volunteers at a large organization in southeastern U.S. that serves HIV positive patrons. Penner (2004) conducted a national internet survey of volunteers from various services organizations in the U.S in conjunction with USAWeekend.com. Other researchers utilized similar



quantitative survey approaches (Marta & Pozzi, 2008; Mesch et al., 2006; Houle et al., 2005; Grube & Piliavin, 2000; Erez et al., 2008; Finkelstein et al., 2005).

Some researchers utilized mixed methods approaches, notably Stukas et al., (2009), who sent out questionnaires and conducted phone interviews with representatives of 85 organizations to collect information about the organization, such as whether they utilize volunteer coordinators, the type of clients serviced, the characteristics of board members, and organization resources. Taylor et al., (2008) conducted participant observation at two organizations from where they attended volunteer meetings, board meetings, and organization events. Field notes were handwritten and recorded and unstructured interviews were conducted with board members. They also conducted archival analysis of organization newsletters and other published material which gave them insight into the culture and history of the organizations.

Allison et al., (2002) undertook a study to compare volunteerism motives using two measures of assessment: Likert ratings scale and an open-ended probe which asked participants to describe why they volunteer in their own words. The purpose of their work was to determine the extent of correlation between measures and which measure was better at predicting frequency of volunteerism. The researchers used the VFI with a 7-point scale (1 = not at all an important/accurate motivator to 7 = very important/accurate motivator), which yielded results consistent with other research, indicating *the values function was the top ranked function* with a mean of 6.1, followed by the understanding function at 4.76, and the esteem function at 4.37. Findings from the open-ended probe indicated that the esteem function was chosen most frequently (71%) while the values function ranked second at (67%). Their findings concluded that,

“clearly, motives for volunteering are better predictors of frequency of volunteering when they are assessed by the VFI as opposed to an open-ended probe” (p. 252).

Mesch et al., (2006) researched survey methodology, in particular the length of the survey and the detailed nature of the questions and found, “highly significant, positive correlations between the number of questions and module means, for giving and volunteering” (p. 575). Despite the fact that Mesch et al., (2006) characterized their results as mostly inconclusive and preliminary, their findings could lead one to consider utilizing more elaborate survey instruments than might otherwise be considered.

### *Demographics*

In 2010, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported, “about 63.4 million people, or 26.8 percent of the population, volunteered through or for an organization at least once between September 2008 and September 2009 (p. 1). Their findings showed that women volunteered more than males, older people more than younger people, whites more than non-whites, married people more than unmarried people, and well-educated more than those with less education (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). In Massachusetts, approximately 1.4 million people volunteered in 2009 yielding a volunteer rate at just slightly below the national average at 26.6% (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2010). This represented a 17% increase from the year before where 1.2 million Massachusetts residents volunteered and the volunteer rate was 24.1%. During the period from 2006-2008, the Massachusetts volunteer rate ranked 33<sup>rd</sup> among states in the U.S. (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2009). Cormier (2010) found a volunteer rate of 72%, more than twice that of the national and state wide rate, in a

survey of 242 performing artists from New England, which will be covered in a later section.

### *Effect of Volunteering on the Volunteer*

Volunteering is an activity that clearly benefits the recipients of the volunteering actions be they individuals or organizations. However, studies have shown that volunteering may actually provide tangible benefits to the volunteer (Brown, Nesse, Vinokur, & Smith, 2003; Corporation for National and Community Service, 2007; Johnson, Beebe, Mortimer, & Snyder, 1998; Wilson & Musick, 2000; Liang, Krause, and Bennett, 2001). In 2007, The Corporation for National & Community Service published *The Health Benefits of Volunteering*, which cited numerous studies that established a connection between volunteering and positive health benefits, both in mental and physical health. Many of these studies explored the reciprocal nature of both factors by recognizing the key question - does volunteering lead to improved health or does improved health lead to volunteering? The report stated, “while it is undoubtedly the case that better health leads to continued volunteering, these studies demonstrate that volunteering also leads to improved physical and mental health” (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2010, p. 2).

### *Seniors*

With regard to physical health, Wilson and Musick (2000) reported on several longitudinal studies which used mortality rates to evaluate the health benefits of volunteers and concluded that volunteering leads to living longer.

These various studies of the effect of volunteering on mortality using different data sets based on good random samples of the general population and employing longitudinal data all point in the same direction – that volunteer work does help people live longer. (p. 152)

For example, Oman and Thoresen (1999), as cited in Wilson and Musick (2000), conducted a longitudinal study of elderly people in four age groups starting at age 55 and found that mortality rates were lower for highly-involved volunteers. However, lower mortality rates were not reported for moderately-involved volunteers. Similarly, in a longitudinal study of data derived from the report, *Changing Lives of Older Couples*, Brown et al., (2003) found that, “older adults who reported giving support to others had a reduced risk of mortality” (p. 324).

With respect to mental health, Wilson and Musick (2000) used an edited version of the depression scale from the Center for Epidemiological Studies to analyze the data obtained from 3,617 interviews and found statistically significant results in volunteers aged 65 and older, which indicated that volunteering lowered depression. Similar results were reported by Liang et al., (2001) who studied non-institutionalized seniors aged 65 and older and concluded that “encouraging older people to adopt helping roles may be an effective way of reducing psychological distress” (p. 530).

Looking at age groups other than seniors, Johnson et al., (1998) researched 9<sup>th</sup> grade students in Minnesota and found that volunteering did not have a positive influence on self-esteem. However volunteering did provide certain benefits to the volunteers including the enhancement of community focused values and work-oriented values. In a related longitudinal study of women in the workplace, Wilson and Musick (2000) found

that volunteering was responsible for a sharp increase in the occupational achievement of women over an 18 year period.

In the preceding sections community engagement, civic engagement, social capital and volunteerism have been examined. Literature and research studies have been presented in an attempt to describe the nature and extent of community and civic engagement as well as volunteerism. This literature review has also identified potential factors which may influence volunteerism such as concern for others, organizational context and role identity as well as some of the benefits that may be associated with volunteerism. In this section, we also looked at different methodologies utilized to research volunteerism and considered the role that arts and arts-making have on community and civic engagement. Art-making will be the primary focus of the next section in this literature review.

## **B. Arts-Making, Engagement and Activism within the Performing Arts**

To search for the good and make it matter: this is the real challenge for the artist. Not simply to transform ideas or revelations into matter, but to make those revelations actually matter. (Lacy, 1995)

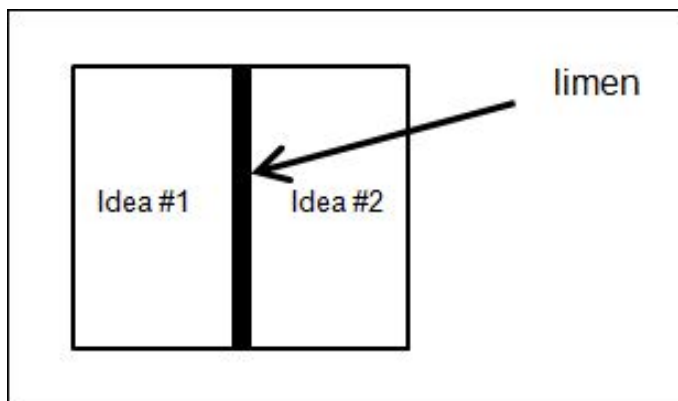
The performing arts are uniquely positioned to facilitate and deepen community engagement. Research conducted by artists, researchers, educators, and community practitioners provide insights into the nature, extent, and meaning of the community engagement practices utilized by arts-makers. Performing arts-makers and performance art-makers who actively seek out ways to engage constituencies or communities with their art in order to promote or call attention to a compelling social issue will be profiled in this section to illustrate the range of techniques and methods employed. In particular,

the arts-making of performance artist, Suzanne Lacy, will be highlighted to call attention to the engagement practices utilized by both performance artists and performing arts-makers, including the arts-makers who produced *Prometheus Bound*.

### 1. The Liminal Zone

As noted earlier, the liminal zone, which is derived from the Latin word *limen* is a threshold area; the area that exists between the artist and the audience, see Figure 4. below (Garoian, 1999). The liminal zone is a mysterious space because performers are generally representing another persona during a performance and therefore this space holds multiple meanings for the artist; their contrived persona and their actual persona. Performance artist and educator George Garoian defines a *limen* as, “a neutral zone between ideas, cultures or territories that one must cross in order to get from one side to the other (1999, p. 40).

Figure 4. A Limen



This zone may also be contextualized as a border area, that space between the private and public experiences of culture. Philosopher Maria Lugone’s definition of liminal space (as

cited in Irish, 2010) is “a place where one becomes most fully aware of one’s multiplicity” (p.13).

Artist and poet, George Quasha provided a generous explanation of this concept using *Viewer*, a visual art piece which contained life-size images of marginalized men staring out at the audience, (2010). Quasha described how the threshold, the ‘art space’ occupied by the art and the audience member as he or she views the art *is* the liminal space.

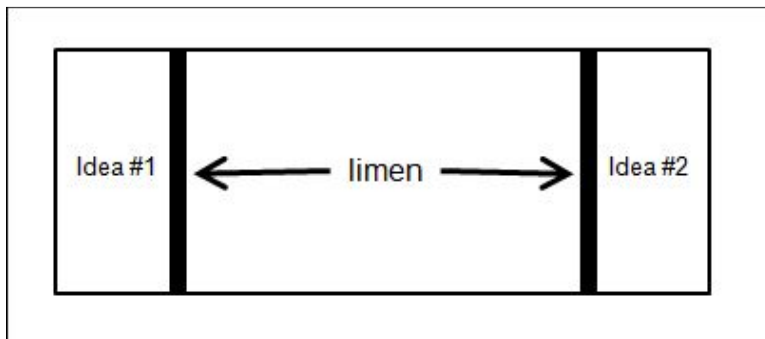
Only here in this liminal (but safe) space of art (as opposed to actually standing in front of them on a street corner), do we get to be this kind of viewer, in all its resonance. In this very moment, standing as we are at the threshold of self-awareness, the viewing is the limen, the barely appearing crossing point into newly reflective awareness. And the work, *Viewer*, is itself the limen - the actual threshold – that makes all this happen. (p. 81)

Performance artist, Suzanne Lacy, paid particular attention to the use of space in her performances, not only selecting public spaces but choosing spaces that contained special meaning. In 1977, Lacy joined with the Los Angeles Police Department, city leaders and several community groups to promote awareness of the frequency of rapes in the city. This project, *Three Weeks In May*, had several components including a large public mural in the form of a map which identified every location in the city where rapes had taken place and another large map where rape intervention centers were located (Garoian, 1999). Lacy strategically placed this twenty-five foot map in City Mall, a heavily used underground shopping area, which was frequented by city employees. Lacy also organized a press conference with the city attorney and a series of performances by artists and activists to create awareness of the project. In one event, she marked

sidewalks in Los Angeles with outlines of bodies where rapes had taken place, while at the same time women-only performances were held at various locations in the city which included rape prevention workshops and self-defense classes.

It is helpful to contrast the concept of space considered by the liminal space construct and the concept of place, which is a more traditional location for art performances. A place represents a particular location that is infused with cultural meaning such as a town hall, church, museum, school or any other institutional gathering place. In contrast, a space may be the artist's body itself or the public or private area where the art-making takes place. It may be a deliberately culturally rich space or a space devoid of any obvious or recognizable culture. Garoian explains that some artists occupy and expand the parameters of this liminal space; using it as a zone of contention. See Figure 5. below.

Figure 5. An Expanded Limen



According to Garoian, “contention is a desirable state. It is the principle means by which spectators/students become critical thinkers and participate in society as critical citizens” (1999, p 43). In “Rendering Dimensions of a Liminal Currere”, Sameshima and Irwin (2008), described the juxtaposition of the roles of artist, researcher and teacher/educator

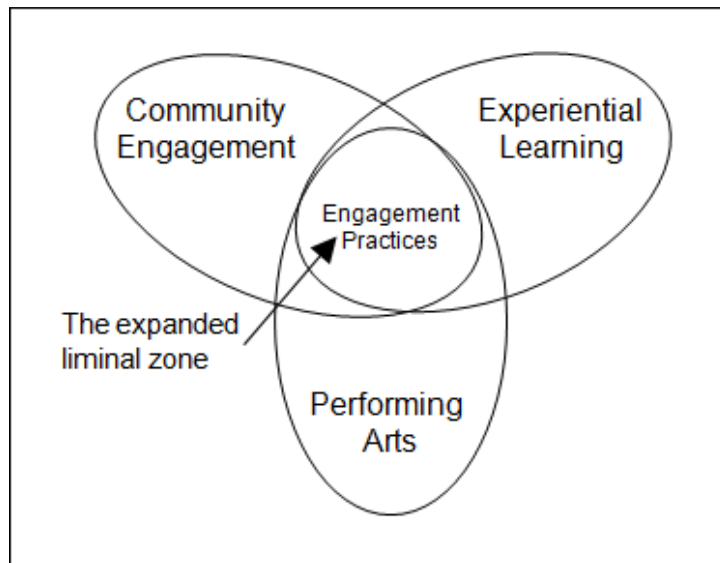


and recognized a key element of the relationship between these roles is liminality. Like Garoian, Sameshima and Irwin suggested that liminality is an unsettled space.

The spaces of liminality speak to a place of agitation. The in-between is unsettled....The arts offer practices that are inherently liminal because they highlight taken-for-granted experiences or conversely, make strange experiences seem familiar (2008, p. 7)

I propose that the engagement practices of performing arts-makers are inherently liminal and occur in the space represented by the expanded limen because they may create discomfort, may challenge traditional views of performing arts-making and may encourage critical reflection. Figure 6. below is a modified version of the diagram that was presented in the previous section of this literature view. The modified diagram depicts the engagement practices more explicitly within this expanded liminal space.

Figure 6. Expanded Liminal Zone



The engagement practices described briefly in the introduction will be explored in greater detail in the next section.

## 2. Engagement Practices of Performing Artists

Jane struggles to lift a heavy section of the portable dance floor on to her shoulder then carries it across the street on this balmy evening in June, 2009 in Fitchburg, Massachusetts. Most of the people have left the town common after the 20 minute modern dance performance. Only Jane, her dancers, and a few volunteers remain. They are laughing, joking, and reliving the experience as they strike the set, which involves removing wooden staging, signage, and dismantling the portable dance floor and sound system.

When all is done, the volunteers leave and Jane and her five dancers climb into her car. They drive off in high spirits, music blaring from the car's CD player. Jane will buy them all dinner and drive them to their homes while providing critical feedback, both positive and negative, on their performance. Then she will drive home, unload the trunk of her car, and sit at her laptop sending out emails to promote the next community dance gig. (P. Cormier, personal reflection, 2011)

Holding a performance in a public place like a town common is an engagement practice. There are several reasons one might hold a performance in a such highly visible community venue: to engage community members in a random manner, to deepen the artistic experience by staging it out of doors, or to hear the echoing quality of the amplified sound as it bounces off of the downtown buildings. There are other reasons one might stage an event like the one described above out of doors but regardless of the motivation, the act of doing so expands the liminal space between artist and audience.

Performing arts-makers and performing arts organizations employ various engagement practices to deepen the meaning of the performance experience for the audience including such things as selection of venue, configuration of performance space, interaction with the audience, use of movement of the actors, collaboration with other organizations, opportunity for dialogue with the audience, and use of public or common spaces to name a few. The motivation behind the use of these practices varies as well and

may involve artistic, political, social, economic, cultural, aesthetic, practical, social, or community considerations.

For example specific engagement practices like collaboration with a human rights organization may be used to call attention to an injustice or advocate for a particular position or social issue. This is where art-making becomes powerful. The quote by Suzanne Lacy at the beginning of this section and repeated here conveys this concept.

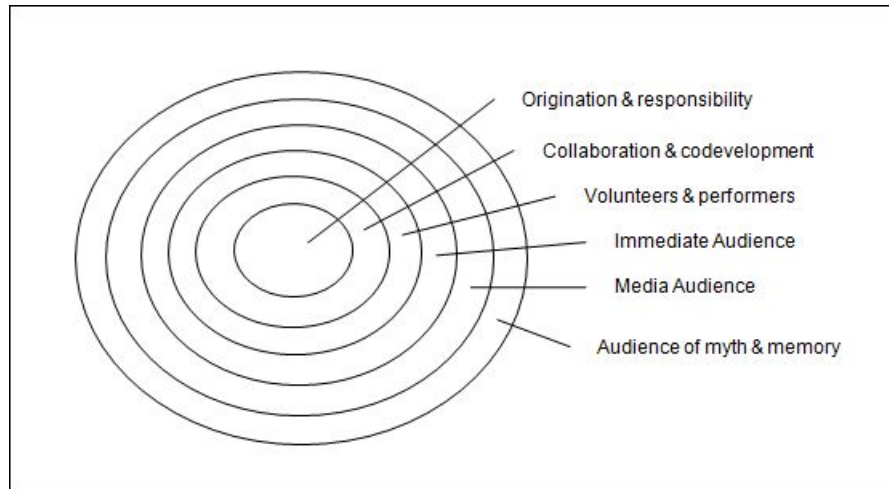
To search for the good and make it matter: This is the real challenge for the artist. Not simply to transform ideas or revelations into matter, but to make those revelations actually matter (1995).

When performing arts-makers are able to create art that succeeds on both the aesthetic level as well as on some other level be it, social, political, cultural etc., the effect on the artist and audience is more meaningful than if it was merely artistically successful. Engagement practices like question and answer sessions between actors and audiences after a show create an opportunity for meaning-making by both audiences and arts-makers. The rock musical, *Prometheus Bound* involved virtually all of the engagement practices mentioned above. In the next section, Lacy's Audience Engagement Model is presented, which is a useful construct that explicates the various levels of interaction between participants of an artistic engagement.

### **3. Audience Engagement Model**

Lacy's Audience Engagement Model, shown in Figure 7. Below, is made of up six concentric circles or bands with the self positioned at the center. The widening circles represent, "individuals or groups of people who assume different degrees of responsibility for the work" (Lacy, 1995 p. 178).

Figure 7. Audience Engagement Model



This model describes the process of performing arts-making from the perspective of the audience, which is originated within the artist's self and forms more fully as it radiates outward. In the bands closest to the self, the art-making experience is more intensive and one's contributions more significant than in the other bands. In the second circle, collaborators may include other artists, community activists, government officials, and any ordinary citizens or stakeholders who are emotionally invested in the art-making process or the rationale behind the performance (Lacy, 1995).

The third band represents volunteers and performers. This is the space where technicians and other support roles come into play, often changing roles as needed. In my experience, it is not uncommon to see volunteers step into performance roles and performers take on support duties depending on what happens during a production or who might suddenly drop out of a performance. The second and third bands are usually where strong bonds are formed between the collaborators, the technical production team and performers, creating a temporary community of practice for the duration of the performance, and often beyond. This temporary community often becomes a tightly-

knit, extremely close group due to the shared nature of the art-making process and the risk-taking that occurs in the creative process. They share knowing glances, smirks and a variety of other gestures, which cement their relationship and enhance their agency as collaborators. The occupants of the third band are of great interest to me and are the primary focus of my inquiry, which will be described in greater detail in a later section.

The fourth band contains the immediate audience and the fifth band represents the media audience. These two bands are witnesses and consumers of the performing art. They may have deliberately attended the performance or they may have been drawn into the role of audience member quite randomly by virtue of their physical proximity to the performance, their position, role or acquaintance with a person involved with the performance, or their interest in the subject matter or art form (Lacy, 1995). In Lacy's model, all bands are described as permeable indicating that the occupants of any band can easily move through the various levels of engagement as their experience is deepened or lessened based on need or circumstances. Lacy's model is not a hierarchical model; it is the exact opposite of hierarchical and is designed to portray a fluid interaction between bands (Lacy, 1995).

The sixth and final band contains what Lacy terms "the audience of myth and memory" (1995, p. 178). This last band represents people who have a more distant relationship with the performance because of seeing images of it, hearing about it in conversation, reading about it, or learning about it in other ways. This band also includes people who carry knowledge of the performance with them in their memory, long after a performance has taken place (Lacy, 1995).

Lacy's Audience Engagement Model, with its gradually deepening levels of engagement, is based on a deep consideration for the other. Garoian (1999) described this engagement as an empathetic process, "for Lacy, community collaboration and critical awareness is accomplished through an empathetic process. Empathy is essential to aesthetic experience because it provides an embodied connection between the artist and the world" (1999, p. 149). The conceptualization of audience engagement as an empathetic process that connects an art-maker to the world implies the profound impact of art-making on the artist. In some artists, this empathy manifests itself as activism. The next section contains examples of artists who have moved into this realm.

#### **4. Artists and Activism**

In *Creative Arts in Interdisciplinary Practice, Inquiries for Hope and Change*, (2010) editor Cheryl McLean enlisted a talented and passionate group of researchers and practitioners to share their experiences using various art forms to change lives. Artist Nancy Viva Davis Halifax's art-making combined storytelling, photographs, poetry, and knitting to capture the compelling personal stories of the homeless with great empathy. Davis Halifax described her unique engagement approach which resulted in a common language that arose from the art-making:

In this group we eat and drink, take photographs, draw, knit, crochet, braid our lives, and selves together. We move in our roles from teacher to learner to teacher. Speaking through the development of a collage, a knitted scarf, the creation of a series of friendship bracelets language unfolds. (2010, p. 53)

Homelessness was also the subject of "Mining the Depths: Performing Stories of Home and Homelessness," which described how a theater project involving a cast made up of health care workers, faculty members, and homeless persons engaged each other in

deep listening during rehearsals. In another example, artist and scholar Johnny Saldana (2010) tackled issues like cancer and HIV/AIDS by presenting several examples of ethnodramas, which are theatrical performances that dramatize the narrative of a participant's experiences. The script excerpts provided by Saldana based on the words of people dealing with their illness pulled the reader into the liminal space between the hospital room and the stage.

Clinician Susan MacRae, R.N. (2010) used narratives to convey her empathetic relationship-based approach to healing, "I realized that narratives were giving people space to release tension and address unresolved experiences in their own practice. Forgotten and forgiven content was allowed to breathe" (p. 287). Her stories conveyed the power and empathy that narratives can provide by releasing the stress inherent in the healthcare field. A specific type of empathy, called kinaesthetic empathy was described by April Nunes Tucker and Amanda Price (2010) when healthcare workers engaged patients on a human level.

The relationship between the patient and nurse, in empathetic encounters, is one in which the nurse ceases to use his/her professional role as a defense against suffering and in a moment of shared humanity, identifies with both the suffering and the patient in order to be able to respond appropriately to their experience. (p. 191)

These practitioners created an empathetic response to patients' experiences by committing their bodies to a simulated process so that they could experience it themselves.

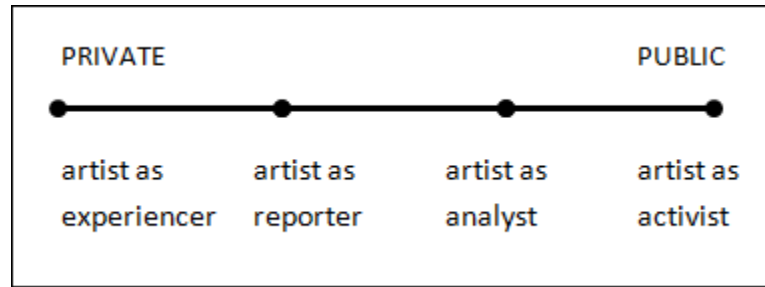
On a political and social justice level, a national art exhibition was in held in South Africa on December 10, 1988, International Human Rights Day to, "to shine a light

on the government's human rights abuses and remind the country, that in 1948, National Party-led South Africa was one of only six countries that refused to sign the accord," (Cleveland, 2008, p. 119). A group of courageous arts practitioners, operating under the auspices of the non-violent Black Sash organization, came together on this, the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that UN Human Rights declaration, to use art to call attention to the continued abuses in South Africa. The non-violent Black Sash organization was made up of mostly professional white South African woman who were able to use their social standing to promote social justice through art-making (Cleveland, 2008).

Suzanne Lacy compiled the work of eighty-five artists in her text, *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre of Public Art* (1995), which included Guillermo Gomez-Pena, who explored cross-cultural issues, Susan Leibovitz Stennman, whose art work focused on ecological issues, and artist Allan Kaprow, who developed The Happening, an early performance art form that has influenced many performing artists. The artists demonstrated how activism started with compassionate feelings awakened within oneself, "empathy begins with the self reaching out to another self, an underlying dynamic of feeling that becomes the source of activism" (Lacy, 1995, p. 36). Lacy's Continuum of NonFixed Roles for Artist Activists model, see Figure 8. below, traces the development of an artist across a spectrum that has four distinct roles, in which empathy plays an important part.



Figure 8. Continuum of NonFixed Roles for Artist Activists



In the first role, artist as experience, the artist attempts to enter the domain of the other, to give witness to the other. Lacy (1995) described how sometimes the act of witnessing is all an artist can do.

To make oneself a conduit for expression of a whole social group can be an act of profound empathy. When there is no quick fix for some of our most pressing social problems, there may be only our ability to feel and witness the reality taking place around us. This empathy is a service that artists offer the world. (p. 174).

Lacy's last sentence above, "this empathy is a service that artists offer the world" is a description of the artist's role within the broadest possible context, reflecting how artists serve others through the empathy implicit in their art-making. Garoian (1999) makes a similar global claim, "empathy is essential to aesthetic experience because it provides an embodied connection between the artist and the world" (p. 147).

In the artist as reporter role, the artist may attempt to persuade an audience through the aesthetic choices she makes while in the artist as analyst role, she approaches her choices in a broader, sociological, or political context and may sacrifice the aesthetic qualities of her art to ensure the clarity of the message (Lacy, 1995). In the last role, artist as activist, the artist takes on the role of community organizer and learns to how to

build consensus. According to Lacy (1995), one requires a whole new set of skills to function as an artist activist.

Entirely new strategies must be learned: how to collaborate, how to cross over with other disciplines, how to choose sites that resonate with meaning, how to clarify visual and process symbolism for people who are not educated in art. In other words, artist activists question the primacy of separation as an artistic stance and undertake the consensual production of meaning *with* the public. (p. 178)

The achievement of real life effects resulting from activist arts-making is an important element of activism and a distinction between the role of art as a tool of activism and the role of art as an object to be appreciated. Performance artist, Guillermo Gomez-Pena (as cited by Lacy, 1995) explained that “artists are media pirates, border crossers, cultural negotiators and community healers” (p. 40). Characterizing artists in this dramatic way describes the multiple roles activist artists play, evoking images of the contested political landscapes they maneuver to reach the audience and community. The next section contains several examples of performance art, an art form that has become representative of activism.

## **5. Performance Art**

Performance art represents multiple art forms including those that involve the body such as theater, dance, music and storytelling and those as well as visual art forms. Performance art challenges hegemonic practices of traditional modern art in both form and content (Garoian, 1999). Performance art appeared in the 1960’s when some artists began to integrate multiple performing arts with visual arts. By doing so, they moved away from the traditional institutional structures, like museums and galleries and moved

into art forms like the *Dark Madonna*, which explored interdisciplinary strategies and utilized various materials and contexts (Lippard, 1995).

At 7:45 on an evening in late May, forty women of various ages, racial, and ethnic identities and body types formed the Light Tableau; they posed as living statues in the garden while a soundtrack by composer Susan Stone provided an aural accompaniment. The women were dressed in all-white costumes; over one thousand audience members around the edges surveyed the tranquil scene for forty-five minutes. As the light dwindled at 8:30, ten “shadows” (women in black, cued by Lacy) raced from the edges of the garden and cloaked some of the women in black. Others removed their white clothing to reveal black underneath. One pivotal point was that half of a minute when the scene went dark; the light fell off the lavender flowers on the jacaranda trees, and the women, now all in black, merged with the night.

Following this quick, spectacular snuffing of color in the garden, 120 other women in black emerged on cue from the perimeter in groups of four to six. They held flashlights and slowly wandered to their places on the lawn. They roamed through the dark with thin columns of light marking their movements. When they sat to form discussion circles on the grass...the women who had been statues left their pedestals and joined in the conversations about race and racism in Los Angeles. By 9 p.m. the audio track ended ... and the audience members were handed flashlights to move into the garden and watch or join the discussions. (Irish, 2010, p. 92)

In 1986, performance artist and activist, Suzanne Lacy staged the public *The Dark Madonna*, described above, in the sculpture garden of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) to create a public discourse about race and gender. *The Dark Madonna* engaged the audiences on a physical, political, environmental, aesthetic, and social level by inviting the public to confront and reflect on the issues being exposed through the art. Suzanne Lacy has been active for four decades and has used art as a real-life art form; making art by placing people and objects in front of live audiences in real time (Irish, 2010).

Lacy is fascinating as a performance artist for several reasons. First, she has produced many, large-scale, provocative, public art exhibitions and performances that engaged entire communities. Second, her view of art-making considers art as both a product and a process and she routinely invites spectators and audiences into the creative process, which is a domain that is typically occupied by only the artist. Third, Lacy's projects involve community collaborators in the art-making process from the early planning stages and therefore provide for multiple perspectives and contexts, greater ownership by community members, and the potential for a greater social impact upon the communities she works within. Lastly, Lacy has developed conceptual models like the audience engagement model described in the preceding section and other models that are helpful in deconstructing the performing arts-making process.

*The Dark Madonna* referred to at the start of this section, succeeded on a number of levels. From an aesthetic standpoint, it involved a visually stunning production based on the use and deployment of performers, light, and sound. Environmentally, it was staged in a public venue, rich with symbolism, and made accessible to the general public. On a physical level, performers used their bodies and clothing to represent art work in a striking and symbolic manner. On a social level, it was created through a collaborative process with community leaders, involved large numbers of performers, and included audience members as participants. On a political level, it created a forum and opportunity for discussion about race and gender. To Irish (2010), *The Dark Madonna* “represented one way in which white society collected its negative characteristics, transferred those onto non-white people, and then rejected those enshadowed people” (p. 94). This type of

multi-layered meaning-making is representative of what audiences may take from performance art like *The Dark Madonna*.

In *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*, Lacy described how public art became, “a recognizable field” (1995, p. 23) in the late eighties. Also referred to as site-specific art, this movement spawned a group of artists who were motivated by a growing awareness of various medical, environmental, gender, and racial social issues. Public art and performance art became tightly integrated with the realization that site-specific performance art provided unique visual qualities. Some of the artists who used these strategies to explore social issues as well as community and civic engagement in their art include Lacy, Garoian, Allan Kaprow, Rachel Rosenthal, and Guillermo Gomez-Pena. Garoian described performance art as postmodern phenomena.

A method of exploration and expression grounded in postmodern thought, performance art has enabled artists to critique traditional aesthetic, to challenge and blur the boundaries that exist between the arts and other disciplines and those that separate art and life (1999, p. 19).

Performance art is also referred to as installation art, conceptual art, video art, and happenings and often includes the artist’s body as part of the art form (M. Vann, personal communication, 2011). Unlike the traditional art forms of theater, dance and music, performance art has come to mean art-making that is conducted and shared in a participatory manner among community constituents. In these cases, the art product becomes less emphasized than the process of art-making (Kaprow, 1995). This type of meaning-making allows art to merge more easily into the everyday life because it extends the creative process to all collaborators and by doing so re-positions the artist as a

community activist. In the next section, we will examine arts-based community development.

## **6. Arts-Based Community Development**

The arts began to be used as a tool to facilitate community development in the 1970s when many artists and community arts organizations received funding through the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) and the efforts of the Ford and Nixon administrations (Adams & Goldbard, 2005). The numerous community cultural development organizations which exist today make use of the arts to form collaborations between artists and community members, position the artist as a cultural worker, and emphasize the broader view of culture as opposed to the narrower view of art (Adams & Goldbard, 2005). Organizations like these attempt to empower communities by using art-making to celebrate the diversity of culture and the recognition of cultural minorities, which many believe can lead to a more dynamic and open community.

Artist and scholar William Cleveland (2002) developed a model to represent arts-based community development. As noted earlier, arts-based community development was defined by Cleveland to be, “arts-centered activity that contributes to the sustained advancement of human dignity, health and/or productivity within a community” (p. 6). Cleveland’s model displayed in Figure 9 below, illustrates the four areas of community development: to build and improve, to educate and inform, to inspire and mobilize, and to nurture and heal. This model is a useful tool to plot specific projects and determine which dimensions of community development they occupy. The numbers on this model represent projects that were evaluated during a workshop Cleveland led and illustrates how individual projects may address multiple areas of interest to communities.

Figure 9. An Ecology of Arts-Based Community Development



However, there is an inherent tension between community cultural development organizations which value the process over the end result and more traditional arts organizations which tend to value the product over the process. Artist and critic Arlene Raven (1995) acknowledged that she valued art based on her own preconceptions and biases.

My pre-selection of themes and subject matters based on my own preferences may explain why I don't write so-called bad reviews. The moral and ethical aspects of art making, showing and interpreting, moreover, concern me more than other evaluative issues – aesthetic, didactic, or monetary. (p. 162)

Adams and Goldbard (2005) suggested that community cultural development projects are most effective if they are owned and directed by the participants, “projects must be open-ended, leaving the content and focus to be determined by

participants...social and cultural history are paramount. Freedom to experiment and fail is essential to the process” (2005, p. 68).

This theme of having the freedom to experiment and fail can also be found in the pedagogical and learning strategies of the scholars and educators, whose work will be examined in the following section, the third and final part of this literature review.

### **C. Pedagogical and Learning Strategies**

In this section, the pedagogical strategies of Paulo Freire, Augusto Boal, Charles Garoian and Kathleen Keys will be considered within the context of art and arts-making. The philosophy of John Dewey that relates art and experience and David Kolb’s experiential learning strategy, which values experience as a source of knowledge and learning will be also reviewed. The art-making of Lacy, Garoian and others are referenced to provide a context for the theoretical concepts that will be presented.

#### **1. Pedagogy of the Oppressed**

Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire presented his educational theory in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), which he developed as a methodology to liberate oppressed peoples and their oppressors. Freire’s powerful ideas have resonated deeply with educators, scholars, and artists such as Boal, (1979) and Garoian, (1999) who credit his influence in their work. Freire introduced his pedagogy with these words in the first chapter of his book.

This book will present some aspects of what the writer has termed the pedagogy of the oppressed, a pedagogy which must be forged *with*, not *for*, the oppressed (whether individuals or peoples) in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity. This pedagogy makes oppression and its causes objects of reflection by the oppressed and from that reflection will come their necessary engagement in the



struggle for their liberation. (1970, p. 33)

Freire's pedagogy is based on the close interaction of theory and practice. Freire was both a theorist and a passionate activist (West, 1993). Freire's pedagogy treats oppression and the causes of oppression as objects of reflection. Praxis is a key concept of Freire's which represents the simultaneous effect of reflection and action. According to Freire, "men's [sic] activity consists of action and reflection: it is praxis; it is transformation of the world" (1970, p. 119). Freire's concept of praxis is based on the idea that knowledge informs experience and experience informs knowledge (Mutnik, 2006). Freire's insistence that this pedagogy must be created *with* and *not* for the oppressed is deeply held and mirrored by performance art-makers like Suzanne Lacy, Allan Kaprow, Augusto Boal, and Charles Garoian who's art-making deliberately engaged community members in the art-making process.

There are similarities between Freire's praxis, the process of action and reflection incorporated into his educational model, and the process of action and reflection that occurs naturally in performing arts-making. There is also a similarity in the level of engagement Freire espouses; working *with* people instead of *for* people, and the level of engagement that occurs in performing arts-making. Individuals involved in the performing arts-making process may share in the same accrued benefits Freire's pedagogy suggests, namely: the ability to critique existing discourse, the ability to see oneself within a greater social perspective, and the ability to think critically about one's place in society. The reflection that occurs as a result of the interaction of artist and audience member transpires through a collective act of knowing engaged in by both parties.

Freirean pedagogy is not just based on reflection, it is based on critical reflection which requires interaction with others and cannot occur in isolation. Scholars Peter McLaren and Tomaz Tadeu da Silva provided this definition of critical reflection in *Paulo Freire: A Critical Encounter*:

Critical reflection is a social act of knowing undertaken in a public arena as a form of social and collective empowerment. To reflect critically is not something which can be achieved in isolation from others, for this merely valorizes personal transformation or empowerment at the expense of collectively making and remaking history with and for others. (1993, p 55)

The critical dialogue that may emerge during the process of critical reflection represents the transformation of thought and reflection into an informed and enlightened action (McLaren & Silva, 1993). Freire is considered by many to be both a theorist and a pragmatic, man of the people as West notes below:

Freire has the distinctive talent of being a profound theorist who remains 'on the ground' and a passionate activist who gets us 'off the ground' - that is he makes what is abstract concrete without sacrificing subtlety and he infuses this concrete way of being in the world with fire that fans and fuels our will to be free. (West, 1993, p. xiii)

Freire recognized the profound power of reflection when focused upon critical social issues by citizens passionately concerned with their agency. His work became a catalyst for another Brazilian artist and activist who developed a specific theatrical approach to empowering citizens, referred to as Theater of the Oppressed.

## **2. Theater of the Oppressed**

In 1973, Brazilian artist and activist, Augusto Boal carried out a series of experiments in Lima and Chiclayo, Peru under the auspices of the Integral Literacy

Operation, which was a program conducted by the government of Peru to eliminate illiteracy within 4 years. Boal was a participant in the theatrical sector, one of several art-form sectors, which, “tried to show in practice how the theater can be placed at the service of the oppressed, so that they can express themselves and so that, by using this new language, they can also discover new concepts” (Boal, 1979, p. 121). In 1979, Boal wrote *Theatre of the Oppressed*, which described the experiments above and contained his theatrical methodology, based on Freire’s pedagogy, to use theater to empower and give voice to those in the grip of oppression. Boalian theatre is an example of embodied learning in that all the senses are involved as a result of stepping into the persona or role of another (Mutnick, 2006).

Boal’s methodology involved four stages of awareness and action that became a rehearsal for real-life action by the participants (Boal, 1979). In the first stage, the spectators discovered their bodies by performing exercises designed to help them understand their physical limitations and boundaries. In stage two, spectators played games to become familiar with expressing themselves. The third stage involved the use of theater as language where the spectators write, speak through images, and act. In the fourth stage the spectators performed a theatrical piece on a subject important with special meaning. Using art in this way literally empowered the spectator to act out their stories, which gave voice to their beliefs, and in some cases, provided a rehearsal for their future actions. According to Boal (1979), “theatre is a weapon, and it is the people who should wield it” (p. 122).

This concept of using art as weapon is at the core of an activist artist’s beliefs. Many mainstream artists have recognized this concept and utilized their art to make very

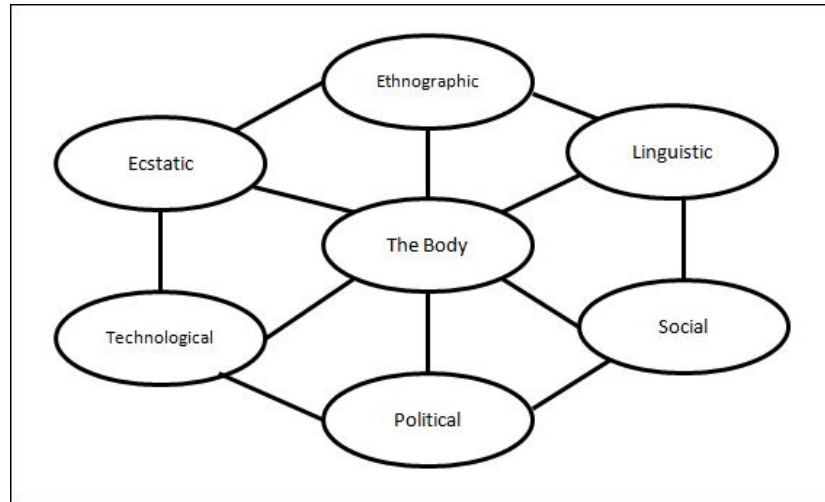
public statements about social causes important to them. For example, one of pop culture's most prolific song writers of our time, John Lennon, wrote the song, *Give Peace A Chance* in 1969, which became a symbol of protest over the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. This song was performed by Pete Seeger at a peace march on the Washington monument in 1969 where more than one quarter of a million people had gathered to protest the Vietnam war (Calkin, 2000). Another more current example of a mainstream artist is Grammy award winner, jazz legend, and anti-apartheid activist Hugh Masekela, who was exiled from his homeland because he used his music to call attention to the racist oppression in South Africa. Masekela risked torture and imprisonment every time he performed in his country once he became an international symbol of anti-apartheid sentiments through his art-making (Masekela, 2010). Another performing arts-maker who employed his art to reach out to the community was Charles Garoian, who's *Performing Pedagogy* is reviewed in the next section.

### **3. Performance Art Pedagogy**

Performing pedagogy was introduced in the text of the same name *Performing Pedagogy: Toward an Art of Politics* by Charles Garoian in 1999. It is an interdisciplinary instructive strategy based upon the use of performances to engage participants in a reflexive discourse that challenges all forms of reality. Performance pedagogy builds upon the educational approaches Freire developed which involve the critique and reflection of discourses and practice (Garoian, 1999). Garoian presented performing pedagogy as a new pedagogy in the field of art education, however I believe it can be a useful way to examine the engagement practices of performing arts-makers, because the six pedagogical strategies that Garoian introduced, depicted in Figure 10.

below provide a useful lens with which to view the dimensions of learning and experience that takes place in the liminal zone.

Figure 10. Pedagogical Strategies of Performance Art



Most performance art begins with the body and it is a belief among performance artists that the body itself is the holder of wisdom (Irish, 2010; Lacy, 1995). It is therefore no surprise that Garoian (1999) places the body at the center of his pedagogical strategies as he explained, “an interdisciplinary and intercultural pedagogy of the body, performance art enables to students to expose and transform the circumscribed space of their bodies into a liminal space wherein the politics of domination can be contested” (p. 11). Garoian’s performing pedagogy is an embodied curriculum that starts with one’s own physical and cultural experiences and uses those experiences as context for performance and performing arts-making.

### *Political Strategy*

A good example of the political strategy depicted above is *In Mourning and in Rage*, a collaboration between Lacy and artist Leslie Labowitz in response to the sensationalized media reporting about the victims of the so-called, Hillside Strangler, who was implicated in killing young women in the hills of Los Angeles during 1977. Garoian's pedagogical strategy aligns closely with Lacy's curriculum model, which suggests how art can be used to educate the public to stop oppression. Lacy and Labowitz organized a mock funeral procession comprised of 22 cars and 70 women dressed in black. Upon their arrival at City Hall, 10 women wearing headdresses that made them 7 feet tall, spoke into a microphone and bore witness to the stories of the murdered women (Irish, 2010).

The purpose of this performance was to create public awareness of the murders, re-claim the city-owned space in honor of the murdered women, and comment upon the media response to the violence and the public policy that enabled it to occur. *In Mourning and in Rage* is an example of how artists like Lacy and Labowitz functioned as activists and used performance art to obtain wide-spread media attention and make a powerful political statement. The engagement practices employed with this example included a public venue, a public spectacle, spoken word, visual art, movement and use of participants.

### *Social Strategy*

The social strategy of performing pedagogy addresses the cultural identities of communities and considers how performance art-making brings community members together to celebrate their uniqueness. An example of this strategy is *The Crystal Quilt*,

which involved 430 women from several cities in Minnesota, who gathered in an auditorium on Mother's Day in 1987 to celebrate the spirituality of women (Irish, 2010). In the performance, women entered the large auditorium in a procession and formed groups of four. They sat down at tables which held hand-sewn tablecloths that were covered in black. The women coordinated their hand movements and uncovered the tablecloths in sections while talking informally. Their discussions were amplified and broadcast to an audience of several thousand. As in most of her productions, Lacy brought disparate organizations together to focus on a social issue, in this case: aging. Her collaborators for *The Crystal Quilt* included representatives from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design, the Minnesota Board on Aging and the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute for Public Policy of the University of Minnesota (Irish, 2010). Engagement practices employed with this production involved a large-scale venue, collaboration with several entities, use of unscripted spoken-word dialogue, elements of visual art and movement.

### *Linguistic Strategy*

According to Garoian, "the performance of language represents a linguistic strategy to critique those cultural metaphors that codify and stereotype the self and the body in order to emerge a language of identity" (1999, p. 45). This strategy represents a key component of each of Lacy's performances. In *Three Weeks in May*, referred to earlier, Lacy used the language from rape victims to create a visceral awareness of the impact of violence against women. In one performance space she placed enlarged written testimonials from victims on the walls. A partial excerpt from one victim conveys the horror of the experience and by doing so creates the opportunity for identity sharing with

the victim, “take off your clothes, he says. My body is shaking. The dress peels from me like skin, a heap of feathers disordered, plucked live from the skin, a mound of fresh leather in a corner” (Irish, 2010. p. 66).

City sidewalks were another performance space used by Lacy. She identified places where rapes had occurred by writing large words in chalk on the sidewalks to let the public know that a rape had occurred near that spot. In this case, the words themselves called out to passersby (Irish, 2010). Another use of language was the press conference Lacy organized with city officials, law enforcement officers and other activists to call attention to the widespread rapes and to promote the self-defense workshops she organized. In this case, language was used to convey information, to promote awareness and to engage and unite a disturbed community. Lacy successfully integrated multiple engagement practices such as the body, collaboration with law enforcement and other groups, the use of public space and language to evoke learning and meaning-making within communities.

### *Ethnographic Strategy*

Ethnographic research seeks to understand the meanings of the behavior, language and interactions of a specific cultural group and usually involves prolonged observation or immersion with that group (Creswell, 1998). To me, performing arts-makers function a little like ethnographic researchers because they often seek to establish intense connections with the characters they become. Many performing arts-makers research the background, ethnicity and lived experiences of their characters in order to identify with them. Cohen’s quote at the beginning of this paper is consistent with the



view of an arts-maker as an ethnographer because she characterizes one such arts-maker, an actor, as one who, “is more than an anthropologist, more than psychologist, more even than storyteller: she is an empathic journeyer among fellow humans, trying on different lives, connecting to others through her own wondering core. (Cohen, 2001, p. 53)

Lacy used an ethnographic strategy in 1974 when she decided to conduct a project on prostitution in Los Angeles. Unsure of how to start, she began by asking her friends to see if any had tricked, a word Lacy used in her writings, which was common to that time and place and meant: to perform sex with a paying client. Among her circle of friends, Lacy learned some had tricked and others who knew of someone who had tricked (Lacy, 2010). Lacy sought out these people and began meeting with them. Although she was more interested in situating their story within her own experience, she also collaborated with her friends to experience the prostitution sub-culture herself, which she described below.

We’re going out tonight to see the places, just below the surface of straight life in Los Angeles. We take off, me with lots of makeup and wearing a dress and looking rather hard and ho-like. We drive to Selma Avenue and there Brian stands alone on a street corner. I lean against a church on the other side of the street watching. I am aware of men driving by who think I am tricking. Curiously, I’m not afraid, maybe because Brian is there and knows this world well. (Lacy, p. 15)

Lacy’s words in this passage, “Brian is there and knows this world well” calls attention to the multiple worlds temporarily inhabited by performance arts-makers like Lacy as she developed her ideas into productions of performance art.

### *Ecstatic Strategy*

The ecstatic strategy of this pedagogy refers to the impact of the aesthetic experience on the performer and audience member. Garoian (1999) suggests that the body is capable of absorbing this experience and actually becomes the primary conduit for the subjectivity being expressed. The following words are from one of the performers in *The Dark Madonna* who was interviewed by Lacy after the event, as cited by Irish, (2010):

I wore a white clerical robe over black clothing. The white robe was like the longing for acceptance and equality that in my youth had translated into wanting to be white. It became heavy and oppressive; a dead carcass on my back; the weight of forced assimilation. As I took off the robe to reveal only black, I felt strength, pride and healing. I straightened my back, placed my hands on my hips, and held my head high: gone was the ingrained shame. (p. 95)

The participant's words contain numerous references to her body and clothing demonstrating the impact of the performance on her physical self. This is an example of the transformative power of art-making that was described by Boal in *Theatre of the Oppressed*, where the performer is transformed through the art-making process. Actors expect to be transformed, but volunteers and collaborators who become engaged with a production like *The Dark Madonna*, may not expect or welcome the transformation.

### *Technology Strategy*

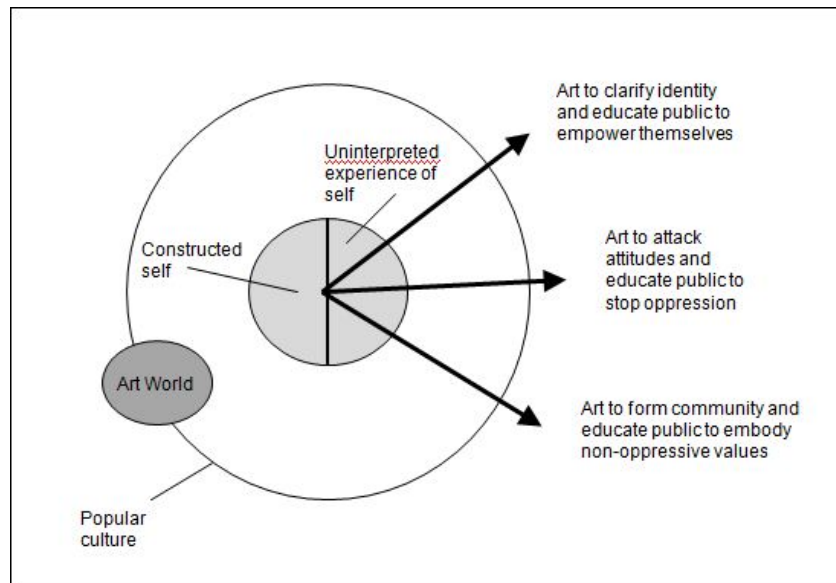
The technological strategy addresses the various technological methods and approaches available to the performance artist to accomplish his or her art-making. This strategy is often employed by activists hoping to create awareness and sway public opinion before, during, and after performances. Lacy used a variety of technological tools for both the promotion and execution of each of her performances such as amplified audio tracks, filmed sequences, as well as radio and TV broadcasts. Lacy also organized

press conferences, workshops, and planning meetings and had them filmed and recorded to reach even more people.

#### 4. Performing Arts-Making as a Curriculum Structure

Lacy's curriculum structure is presented in Figure 11. below illustrating how artists move beyond their worlds to engage audiences in their space, which exists outside of the self in popular culture and the art world (as cited in Garoian, 1999).

Figure 11. Curriculum Structure



Lacy's curriculum structure is consistent with Garoian's pedagogical strategies of performance art covered earlier since Garoian placed the body at the center of his pedagogical model as does Lacy. In fact, many of Suzanne Lacy's performances incorporated bodies in interesting and unique ways. For example, as we saw with *The Dark Madonna*, she utilized the posed bodies of 40 women to anchor her discourse on gender and race. Another performance, which utilized the women's bodies was *Three*

*Weeks in May*, in which Lacy focused on creating awareness of the rapes that were occurring in Los Angeles at the rate of 4-5 per day. In part one, victims wrote their personal accounts of rape on large maps placed on the wall. Part two involved a private dialogue between Lacy and 4 victims of sexual violence who joined in a ritualistic painting of each other with red paint. In the third part, the public was invited into the performance space in small groups to read the stories of rape inscribed on the walls, while being observed by the painted women suspended above them, which represented the complicity of society in allowing violence against women. The performance was orchestrated in such a way that visitors became participants in the art-making once they realized they were being observed by the woman suspended above them. Irish (2010) explains, “This is the moment of theatrical reversal that the artist desires, one that symbolically transforms the performers from traumatized flesh/objects to accusatory subjects (p. 65).

## **5. Art, Experience and Experiential Learning**

In *Art as Experience* (1934), Dewey drew a distinction between experience in general, which he claims, “occurs continuously, because the interaction of live creature and enviroing conditions is involved in the very process of living” (p. 36) and *an* experience, which he described, “is a whole and carries with it its own individualizing quality and self-sufficiency” (p. 37). Dewey’s view of art and art-making was based on this latter view of experience and an appreciation for the esthetics found in the events and scenes of daily life, “Works of art that are not remote from common life, that are widely enjoyed in a community, are signs of a unified collective life” (p. 84).

Dewey drew a distinction between ‘artistic’, which he associated with the production of art and ‘esthetic’, which involved the act of perception as well as an awareness of the art-making process, “The esthetic experience – in its limited sense – is thus seen to be inherently connected with the experience of making” (p. 50). Many of the artists referenced in the preceding chapter shared this view of esthetic perception being inherently connected to the art-making process as well as being integrated with the real-life, everyday experiences of the beholder. Dewey described this process of perceiving based on experience as a significantly active process, “For to perceive, a beholder must create his own experience....There is work done on the part of the percipient as there is on the part of the artist ” (p. 56). Experience not only plays a key role in esthetic appreciation, it also plays an important role in learning.

Experience was the key construct used by scholar David Kolb, to develop the experiential learning model, which he defined as, “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience” (1984, p. 41). Kolb developed the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) which is based upon the works of Dewey, Kurt Lewin and Jean Piaget. This model presents two dimensions of dialectical learning, each formed along an intersecting axis. One dimension describes the way people grasp experience as either concrete experience or abstract conceptualization and the other dimension describes how people transform experience as either reflective observation or active experimentation (Kolb, 1984).

An important element of experiential learning theory is the recognition that learners continually choose the specific way of learning for each situation and the choices

made reflect the preferred ways of meaning-making. In addition, people cannot effectively choose both learning experiences at the same time (Kolb, 1984). For example, one cannot choose both reflective observation and active experimentation as means to transform experience because these functions are dialectically opposed to each other.

Kolb also developed the Learning Style Inventory (LSI) which is a test that places learners in one of four distinct learning styles: diverging, assimilating, converging, and accommodating (1984). Diverging learners have broad cultural interests, are imaginative and interested in people. Assimilating learners are interested in ideas and theories more so than people and prefer learning from reading and lectures. Converging learners are good problem solvers and are drawn to practical applications of ideas and simulations as forms of learning. Accommodating learners rely more on gut feel than analytics and they tend to set goals and work in groups to accomplish tasks (Kolb, 1984).

One form of experiential learning is embodied learning. Scholar Janet Emig, explained that embodied learning, “can take place only through transactions with literal others in authentic communities of inquiry,” (2001, p. 273). Further Emig suggested that learning requires the interpersonal interaction that occurs through embodied learning, “there remains a bond between physical presence and engagement with learning that may now be part of our genetic being – necessary, inescapable, to be ignored at our peril. To learn, we need literally one another” (2001, p. 280).

I am not sure if I agree with Emig on this point because I believe learning can occur without the interpersonal interaction she expresses, however the learning that takes place between artist and audience during the engagement practice is of an embodied

nature precisely because of the human interaction that occurs during the engagement. In the next section, a pedagogical model that is based on this human interaction in the context of community engagement will be described.

## **6. Community Pedagogy**

In her dissertation entitled, *A Search for Community Pedagogy*, educator and artist Kathleen Keys (2003) interpreted her artistic, educational, and community experiences and her multiple identities of artist, educator, researcher, and administrator to explore the existence of community pedagogy. According to Keys, “a community pedagogy in part would describe a facilitative approach of group oriented learning and teaching that is undergirded by a commitment to utilizing community building principles and intentions” (2003, p. 36).

Keys provided a compelling argument for community pedagogy by building on the work of critical theorists and educators such as Freire, Giroux, and Boal and practitioners like Baca, Cleveland, and Ewel (2003). She articulated the components of a community pedagogy based on critical pedagogy, cultural pedagogy, and a series of pedagogical strategies used by community-based artists and activists. A community-based arts worker herself, Keys explained that this work, “is often linked to empowering community agency and action, and collective societal problem solving and thus a crucial component of social change” (2003, p. 10). Keys described the multiple roles performed by community arts workers:

Community-based arts workers tend to meet communities one on one with an arsenal-tool-kit-bag-o-tricks of community-based frameworks guiding their work...Often the community-based arts worker must simultaneously act as educator for boards, funders, constituents, community participants, peers,

students, other educators, artists, staff and colleagues and other entities on multiple issues. (2003, p. 12)

Keys connected community pedagogy to her own experiences as a community-based art worker to call attention to the process of utilizing the arts for enacting social change and empowering communities with independent agency. The linkage articulated by Keys between community engagement, art-making, and pedagogical and learning strategy is compelling and consistent with the domains that inform this research study.

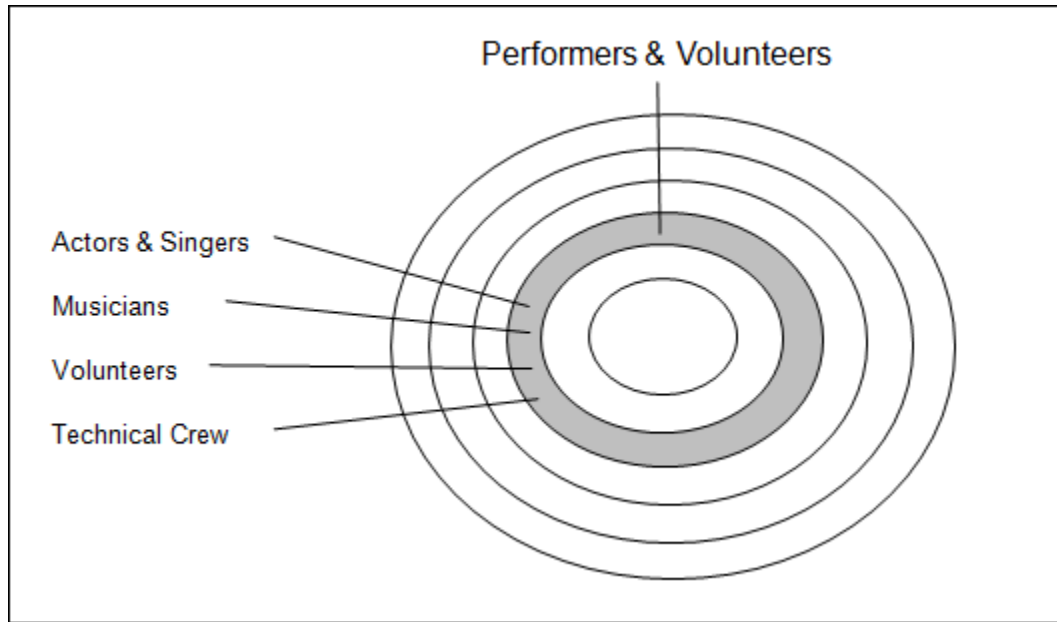
#### D. Conclusion

In this literature review I have explored three domains, which intersect in the liminal zone where the engagement practices of performing arts-makers occur: community engagement, performing arts-making, and experiential learning. Numerous examples of arts-making research have been identified along with a small number of conceptual and theoretical models. Several pedagogical strategies offering insight into the learning that may be taking place in the liminal zone have been considered and key constructs have emerged such as activism, reflection, action, empathy, and the liminal zone.

However, despite the plethora of arts-making examples and research identified in the literature, very little research has been found that explicitly addresses the engagement practices of performing arts-makers and the impact of those practices on the arts-makers and volunteers involved in a performing arts production. This realization contributed to my decision to focus my research on the engagement practices of performing arts-makers, a group, which is illustrated in a modified version of Lacy's audience engagement model (1995) I present in Figure 12. below.



Figure 12. Modified Audience Engagement Model



This modified diagram depicts the occupants of the third ring of Lacy’s Audience Engagement Model, which she identified as performers and volunteers. I have expanded this level of engagement to include four roles: actors and singers, musicians, volunteers, and technical crew. The individuals who occupy these roles and who function within this ring of engagement are the subjects of my research.

In the next chapter, the methods that may be appropriate to conduct research on the engagement practices of the performing arts-makers are described. I will also identify and describe the specific subjects of my research: the members of the cast, crew, musicians, and volunteers, who participated in the American Repertory Theater’s *Prometheus Bound* production in 2011.

### **Chapter 3. Methods**

By lived experience I mean experience that is conscious and pre-reflective...we may filter experience through various categories of reflection – the theories and ways of classifying reality we have developed in our lives. Phenomenologists however, do not focus on this. Instead they begin their analysis with descriptions of conscious experience as it is lived. This can only be done when researchers respect their subjects' perceptions of their experiences, when researchers attend to their subjects' expressions of their lived experiences. (Kasson, 1981, p. 3)

#### **A. Background Information**

In this section, I summarize a pilot research study I conducted during 2010 which explored the nature, extent, and motivation behind the volunteerism practiced by performing arts-makers. I refer to this study because the findings that emerged suggest that performing arts-makers may have a proclivity for other-oriented behavior. This idea intrigued me and ultimately led to this inquiry of the engagement practices employed and experienced by performing arts-makers.

##### **1. Pilot Survey Study – Volunteerism of Performing Art-Makers**

In research referenced earlier (Cormier, 2010), I utilized the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) to examine the nature, extent and motivation behind the volunteerism practiced by 242 performing artists in New England. The research participants were at least 18 years old and self-identified as performing artists in the fields of music, dance, theater, and storytelling. The data collection instrument was an internet-based survey ([www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)) consisting of 56 multiple choice and open-ended questions from which I hoped to determine the nature and extent of other-oriented behavior they were engaged in.

The questions were grouped into four sections. The first section asked volunteers to describe the nature and extent of their volunteering experiences. The second section contained the 30 questions that make up the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) mentioned above used to identify the functions associated with volunteerism. The third section consisted of demographic information, while the last section contained optional contact information for respondents who wanted to learn about the findings of the project or who were interested in participating in future qualitative research I might engage in.

The survey link was emailed to the management and staff at more than 50 performing arts organizations in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire and Maine from February 1, 2010 to May 1, 2010. At least three performing arts organizations distributed the survey link to performing artists known to them via email distribution lists. The survey was placed on [www.craigslist.com](http://www.craigslist.com) in Boston, Worcester, Western Massachusetts and Rhode Island and was distributed in several e-newsletters of [www.stagesource.com](http://www.stagesource.com), an industry web site used by New England performing arts organizations and artists to recruit, promote, and find auditions for local gigs. The link was placed on Facebook and directly emailed to performing artists I know and to non-performers who forwarded it to acquaintances whom are performing artists.

I conducted this study because I wanted to learn why performing artists volunteered. I had witnessed this other-oriented behavior in various artists during the ten years preceding the study and it intrigued me because of the amount of time, effort, and money performing artists donated to others. I was also interested in how much performing artists volunteered, where they volunteered, who they volunteered for, what

duties they performed when they volunteered, and what other types of other-oriented behavior they engaged in.

The responses to my survey indicated that performing artists from New England who participated in this survey reported a volunteerism rate at 72%, which was more than twice as high as Massachusetts residents (27%) and US citizens (27%), according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2010). The volunteer rate remained significantly higher than the statewide and national averages even when controlled for education, gender and employment, variables that have historically been associated with higher levels of volunteerism.

I also found that the values function, also referred to as a concern for others, was the primary reason performing artists in my study volunteered, a finding that is consistent with what was reported by researchers using the VFI to study other sub groups (Marta & Pozzi, 2008; Omoto & Snyder, 2002; Allison et al., 2002). Figure 13. below displays the mean response score for each of the 5 functions of the VFI and indicates the values function was ranked as the most important function for volunteering with a mean of 4.14 on a five position Likert scale.

Figure 13. VFI Function Ranked by Mean Score

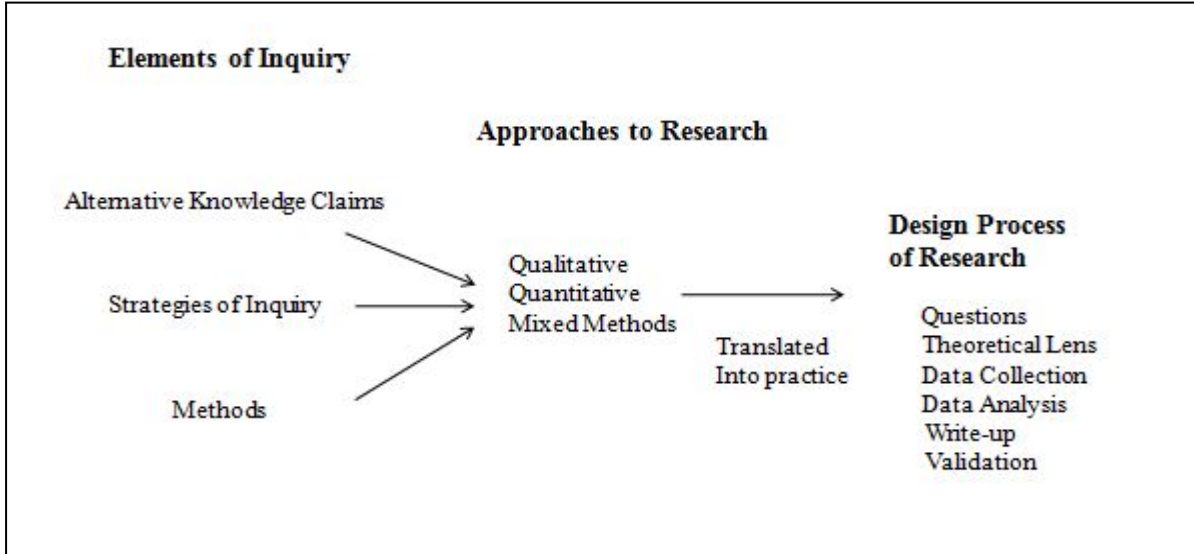
Function	Description	Mean
Values	Having compassion and concern for others; demonstrating altruistic or humanitarian tendencies	4.14
Understanding	Having a desire to learn about a particular group	3.57
Enhancement	Having the need to expand one's skill set for personal growth	3.01
Career	Having the desire to better oneself and gain career-related experience	2.88
Social	Having the desire to meet new people and expand one's social network	2.65
Protective	Having the need to be occupied in an activity to prevent oneself from getting involved in self abusive behaviors	2.40

I also found that performing artists, who volunteered, carried out a wide range of duties in various types of organizations and that 85% of respondents indicated performing was not the primary reason they volunteered. Although there were limitations with this study, such as the lack of questions with which to assess the characteristics and influence of the organization where the performing artists volunteered, the findings encouraged me to pursue research in this area because they implied that performing artists may have a proclivity for other-oriented behavior. In addition, the narrative responses to the open-ended questions yielded insights into the motivations for volunteering and indicated that a qualitative study might be the most appropriate method to learn more about this phenomenon. Therefore, the results of this study, informed my decision to consider a qualitative approach to research the production of *Prometheus Bound*. In the next section, I used Creswell's framework for design to validate and confirm this consideration.

## **B. Framework for Design**

John Creswell (2003) presented his Framework for Design in the second edition of *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Approaches*. This framework consists of three elements of inquiry (knowledge claims, strategies of inquiry, and methods). When carefully considered within the context of one's research topic, these three elements lead one to consider the research approach (qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods) most applicable to answer one's research question. Creswell's framework is presented in Figure 14. below.

Figure 14. A Framework for Design



### 1. Stating a Knowledge Claim

The first element of Creswell’s framework for design is accomplished by stating a knowledge claim. According to Creswell (2003) a knowledge claim is a set of philosophical assumptions that a researcher aligns herself with before beginning a research inquiry. There are three alternative knowledge claims presented by Creswell that I considered in reaching my decision to embrace the social constructivism knowledge claim. I will describe my objections to the postpositive and advocacy/participatory knowledge claims first and then I will explain why I embraced the constructivist knowledge claim.

I am in agreement with two of the assumptions that make up the postpositive knowledge claim: that absolute truth can never be known and that all research is imperfect and fallible (Phillips & Burbules, 2000). However, I do not believe that a researcher can ever fully “explain” a situation being studied nor am I convinced of the

value or the accuracy of attempts to explain the causal relationships of a phenomenon. Therefore I cannot embrace the postpositive knowledge claim in totality.

I find myself in agreement with the rationale behind the advocacy/participatory approach, which Creswell (2003) described as a philosophical approach that is concerned with empowerment of marginalized peoples, the importance of an action agenda and the inclusion of the research subjects as active participants. Although I maintain a deep interest in the marginalized within my community and I believe the performing arts may play a role in the growth and development of their access to more opportunities, the advocacy/participatory knowledge claim is not appropriate for my research because the focus of my research is not on those experiencing oppression or marginalization. The focus of my research is the effect of the art-making experience on the performers, volunteers and audience members, regardless of any marginalization being experienced.

The social constructivism knowledge claim feels right for my research for several reasons. I believe that individuals construct meaning in their lives based on their lived experiences, their social and cultural context, and their interactions with others. I believe that any researcher interested in understanding the meaning of a phenomenon or situation needs to consider the subject's own construction of meaning. Creswell (2003) told us that constructivist researchers focus on the processes of interaction and the context in which people live: "The researcher's intent, then, is to make sense of (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world" (p. 9). For example, I am interested in the meaning that performing art-makers make of the engagement practices they participate in. I am interested in the lived experience of the participation in the engagement practices from the viewpoint of the participant. My knowledge claim is that the performing art-maker

knows best why he or she rehearses and performs and that is why I have chosen the social constructivist knowledge claim.

## **2. Strategies of Inquiry**

The second element of Creswell's design framework comprises the strategies of inquiry which are associated with one of three approaches: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods.

A quantitative research approach is based on postpositivist knowledge claims and is used when one is interested in testing causal relationships, theories, or hypotheses (Creswell, 2003). According to Creswell, the two major strategies employed with the quantitative approach are experiments and surveys, both yielding statistical data useful with variable analysis. These strategies are most suitable when the data being collected is statistically measurable and therefore quantifiable. This, therefore, removes the quantitative approach from consideration for my study because my interest involves meanings that are not measurable by quantitative methods. A mixed-methods approach is also not suitable for my course of inquiry because of the quantitative component.

However, qualitative research is a reflexive practice that is based on a thoughtful, empathetic view of the uniqueness of the other. Creswell indicated this approach makes knowledge claims based on a constructivist philosophy and he describes five different qualitative strategies that may be used in qualitative research (2003, p. 14).

1. Ethnographies, in which the ethnographer studies and intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period of time.
2. Grounded theory, in which the research attempts to derive a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of the participants in a study.



3. Case studies, in which the researcher explores in depth a program, an event, an activity, a process or one or more individuals.
4. Phenomenological research, in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences concerning a phenomenon, as described by participants in a study.
5. Narrative research, a form of inquiry in which the researcher studies the lives of individuals and asks one or more individuals to provide stories about their lives.

Based on Creswell and on my interest in the engagement practices of performing arts-makers, it appears that the qualitative approach will work best for me for several reasons. First, my constructivist knowledge claim is consistent with that of qualitative research. Second, my interest lies in determining the meaning that performing arts-makers ascribe to their engagement practices and according to scholar Wendy Luttrell (2010), “qualitative research is defined by an effort to highlight the meanings people make and the actions they take, and to offer interpretations for how and why” (p. 1). Third, I am interested in the context, settings and environment from which performing arts-makers, make meaning of their lived experience, aspects that are well suited to qualitative research as Berg notes below (2007):

Qualitative research properly seeks answers to questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhabit these settings. Qualitative researchers, then, are most interested in how humans arrange themselves and their settings and how inhabitants of these settings make sense of their surroundings through symbols, rituals, social structures, social roles, and so forth. (p. 8)

### **3. Research Methods**

The third element of Creswell’s framework for design (2003) includes the methods of data collection and analysis. Methods can range from the collection of numeric or textual data that may be used in statistical analysis to interviews involving

open-ended or closed questions, observations or audio and video recordings of participants. According to Creswell (2003), “the choice of methods by a researcher turns on whether the intent is to specify the type of information to be collected in advance of the study or to allow it to emerge from participants in the project” (p. 17). It is clear that my inquiry will involve the latter as I will elaborate on in the next section. Luttrell (2010) encourages qualitative researchers to make visible what may be below the surface, to interact with their environment, to consider the iterative, non-linear nature of the process and lastly to unleash their imagination.

### **C. Research Plan**

In this section I situate myself as researcher, present my rationale for selecting *Prometheus Bound* as my research subject, and describe the data collection, data recording, and data analysis procedures I employed.

#### **1. Situating the Researcher**

My interest in the performing arts penetrates and defines my life in several ways. As an art-maker, I am at home in the creative realm and I take great satisfaction in rehearsing and performing both individually and as a member of an ensemble or cast. As a guitarist, bassist, and vocalist, I have performed at more than 100 events during the last 30 years, ranging from informal community concerts to paid performances. During these events, I have performed as a soloist, as a member of various small ensembles, and as a student member of the University of Notre Dame jazz band. In the last 4 years, I have acted in four theatrical shows produced by Cornerstone Performing Arts Center: *A*

*Christmas Carol, Secret Garden, Pride & Prejudice, and A Childs Christmas in Wales.*

Most recently, I was a member of the “miseries ensemble” in the opera, *Death and the Powers*, which had its U.S. premier at the Cutler Majestic Theater, Boston, MA during March, 2011.

I find that I am able to completely experience the moment when I am holding a guitar in my hands or acting in a theatrical production. These experiences have helped me recognize the value of deeply experiencing all other aspects of my life as fully as possible. My experiences as a musician and actor have also helped me to develop an interdisciplinary approach to meaning-making because of the integration of sensory, emotional, intellectual and social dimensions that art-making requires.

As a community arts practitioner, founder, and former managing director of two performing arts organizations (Sterling Music Exchange and Cornerstone Performing Arts Center), I have spent a great deal of my leisure time attending artistic productions which include theatrical productions, concerts, and dance performances. I have been entertained by productions featuring Shakespeare, classical literature, musical theater, and original plays. I have attended and participated in musical and dance events at small, medium, and large venues. I recognize that I have a bias about the arts. I believe the arts may have a positive impact on the members of a community and that the arts may empower arts-makers and audiences. I am aware of the significant challenges and obstacles that stand in the way of art-based community engagement and the sacrifices made by those who support and advocate for community-focused development.

Therefore as a researcher, I have had to be constantly cognizant of my bias, relative to the benefits of art and art-making, to ensure that I rendered accurate and authentic representations of what is being experienced by the artists in my study. Since I intend to function as a participant researcher, I will have the opportunity to reflect upon my own meaning-making in addition to the need to portray the accurate reflections of the participants in my study.

## **2. Rationale for Selecting *Prometheus Bound* as my Research Subject**

During my studies I contemplated potential research participants and visited performance venues and organizations that would provide the best opportunity to explore the engagement practices of performing arts-makers. In February, 2011, I was invited to participate in the rock musical, *Prometheus Bound* in Cambridge, Massachusetts as a volunteer activist because of my former membership in Amnesty International. I signed up and attended the world premiere of *Prometheus Bound* on February 25, 2011 at the Oberon in Cambridge, MA.

As I reflected upon this intense experience during and after the show, and the multiple engagement practices I had witnessed, I realized *Prometheus Bound* would offer unique opportunities and challenges. The opportunities seemed obvious; a professional theatrical production, an innovative set of engagement practices, and the opportunity to participate as a volunteer activist. The challenges were also obvious: I would need to negotiate access to the cast and crew of *Prometheus Bound* with A.R.T. management during the active run of a professional production, I would need to negotiate additional opportunities to participate as a volunteer activist, and I would need to identify and recruit appropriate research participants, to name three of the challenges.

With this study, I implemented two of the strategies of qualitative research: the case study and the phenomenology. The case study was necessary because my inquiry required an in depth study into a specific series of events: the performances of the *Prometheus Bound* rock musical and the individuals involved in that event. The case study was appropriate because it is a useful strategy to obtain a deep understanding of an event. According to Berg (2007), “case studies open the door to the ‘sense making’ processes created and used by individuals involved in the phenomenon, event, group or organization under study” (p. 285). Berg expanded on this theme:

Sense making is the manner by which people, groups, and organizations make sense of stimuli with which they are confronted how they frame what they see and hear, how they perceive and interpret this information, and how they interpret their own actions. (2007, p. 285)

Therefore the case study was the most useful qualitative strategy to capture the sense making, perception, and interpretation of those involved in the *Prometheus Bound* production.

The phenomenology was also an appropriate qualitative strategy because my intent was to explore, “the essence of human experiences concerning a phenomenon”, (Creswell, 2003, p.14) and the meaning of the lived experience of those involved in the phenomenon. In a more recent text, Creswell (2007) drew a distinction between a narrative study and a phenomenology, “whereas a narrative study reports the life of a single individual, a phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon” (p. 57). Creswell further clarified the goal of a phenomenology, “The basic purpose of a phenomenology is

to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence” (p. 58).

Some qualitative researchers have used a phenomenology to focus specifically on artists. For example, Cheryl Kasson (1981) studied the expressions of emotions through art. In the following passage, she described how a phenomenological approach looks at the lived experience of the artistic expression:

By lived experience I mean experience that is conscious and pre-reflective. ..we may filter experience through various categories of reflection –the theories and ways of classifying reality we have developed in our lives. Phenomenologists however, do not focus on this. Instead they begin their analysis with descriptions of conscious experience as it is lived. This can only be done when researchers respect their subjects’ perceptions of their experiences, when researchers attend to their subjects’ expressions of their lived experiences. (p. 3)

In *The Phenomenology of Dance*, Maxine Sheets (1966) explained that a phenomenologist approaches a subject with an intuitive mindset, not based on prior expectation or reflection. The phenomenologist thus has an open attitude which is, “neither objective nor subjective, but rather an attitude of being present to the phenomenon, fully and wholly, to intuit as it appears, without pre-shaping it in any way by prior interpretations or beliefs” (p. 12). The intuitive approach suggested by Sheets seems quite appropriate to me because it conveys the balance between one’s own personal insightful way of knowing and the phenomenon itself, without the bias of preconceived expectations. Further, using dance as an example, Sheets provided a clear and insightful explanation of what the phenomenologist looks for, “thus, if dance is the phenomenon, the phenomenologist describes the immediate encounter with dance, the lived experience of dance, and proceeds from there to describe the analyzable structures

such as temporality and spatiality, inherent in the total experience” (p. 12). Like Sheets suggested, I explored the “analyzable structures” of *Prometheus Bound* which included a range of those beyond time and space such as the script, venue, choreography, set, lighting, and music. I also explored the social structures of *Prometheus Bound* including the relationships between and among the arts-makers, management team, collaborators, volunteers, audience members, and other stakeholders.

As noted earlier there was also a participatory component to my inquiry because I volunteered as an activist in 4 performances. My first volunteer experience showed me that I would be invited into the performance space prior to the show in order to receive instructions on where I was to be stationed. This experience also showed me that I would have access to individuals like the artistic director, stage manager, and artistic associate prior to the show, which might prove beneficial to developing a useful working relationship. I also realized I would have the opportunity to develop a rapport with cast, crew and other volunteers, which could facilitate the study.

To obtain approval to access the actors, singers, musicians, technical crew and volunteers of Prometheus Bound, I contacted three members of A.R.T.’s management team: Diane Paulus, artistic director and director of *Prometheus Bound*, Allegra Libonati, artistic associate, and Ryan McKittrick, dramaturge, a position responsible for the historical and cultural research of a play. As a result of these communications, I received permission to contact the individuals who made up the production team of *Prometheus Bound* and the stage manager was directed to distribute an introductory email I had prepared to the cast and crew.

### **3. Data Collection Procedures**

In this section the individual research participants and the specific types of data that were collected are identified.

#### *Individual Research Participants*

Each performance of Prometheus Bound involved four groups of people: actors and singers, musicians, technical crew, and volunteers. There were 8 actors who were singers and 3 actors referred to as groupies who did not have any lines. The groupies performed crowd control and moved set pieces around the space. There were 8 musicians and a myriad of technical crew members. Crew members were responsible for lighting, sound, and set as well as stage management and house management, which involved ticket sales, ushers, coat check, and collection. The volunteer group included several volunteer coordinators and approximately 10 activist volunteers for each specific performance. A total 160 people volunteered as activists during the course of the 5 week run of the show.

I interviewed at least one individual from each of the four groups in the production: an actor, a musician, a technical crew member and a volunteer. I also interviewed a volunteer coordinator. My rationale for choosing a representative from each group was based on my definition of art-makers which considers everyone associated with a theatrical, music, or dance production to be an art-maker. I considered back stage crew, ushers, technicians, actors, and volunteers to be active participants and therefore, art-makers in a production. My goal was to understand and explore the lived-experience of *Prometheus Bound* from the perspectives of the art-makers of these four



groups as well as from my own perspective as a volunteer activist. The research participants will be described in more detail in the next chapter.

### *Observations*

I captured my first hand observations of *Prometheus Bound* in the role of ‘participant as observer’, which according to Creswell (2003) means the observing role is secondary to the participant role. My rationale for choosing this role instead of the other roles (complete participant, observer as participant, and complete observer) is because I had the unique opportunity to participate in *Prometheus Bound* as a volunteer activist. This opportunity provided a ‘deep dive’ into the production from the perspective of a participating art-maker and allowed me to notice aspects of the production that may not have been otherwise observable. I attended a total of 4 performances in this role as volunteer participant.

### *Interviews*

I conducted face-to-face interviews with selected performers, backstage crew, and volunteers because I believed this type of interview provided more complete data than an interview over the phone. I used a series of open-ended questions that related to the research questions identified in an earlier section of this document. The list of questions I prepared is contained in the appendix. I also conducted follow-up interviews with participants, both in-person and by phone and corresponded with them via email.

### *Artifacts*

I collected artifacts from the production including programs, posters, stickers, postcards, and flyers. The artifacts were obtained from the A.R.T. website and Facebook pages including background information, promotional material, photos, posts, and other written material. I collected artifacts from the research participants including emails, Facebook posts, and images of artwork. I prepared field notes and collected email correspondence between A.R.T. personnel and myself, and between research participants, and myself.

#### *Audio and Visual Material*

I used a digital audio recorder to record all interviews. I transcribed the interviews and presented the words of the interviewees in this paper as they were spoken, without making grammatical corrections. I chose to present their words in this manner because I felt this approach provided a more accurate rendition of their remarks. I also located digital photographs, audio files, and video files on the A.R.T. website and Facebook page, which included rehearsal footage and interviews with Diane Paulus, artistic director and Steven Sater, writer and lyricist. I obtained an audio file of one of the songs from the play, *It's Loud Enough Without You* from the website and a video of an interview with Diane Paulus from youtube.com.

#### **4. Data Recording Procedures**

I used an *observational protocol* for capturing field notes based on observations. This protocol contained three sections: descriptions, reflections and demographic data. Descriptions included factual accounts of people involved, activities and the physical setting of the performance and interview. Reflections contained my impressions,

feelings, and personal thoughts based on the performance or interview being experienced. The demographics section captured date, time, and location of the performance. All field notes were either captured by hand in a journal designated for that purpose or typed, printed and inserted into the journal.

I utilized an *interview protocol* to guide me as I posed a series of open-ended questions to the interview subject during the interview. The protocol was a template which contained the questions as well as spaces to record key responses, notes and reflections. Demographic data was recorded for each individual as well as the date, time and location of the interview. I inserted notes in the journal mentioned above to describe the artifacts I collected. All artifacts that were not inserted into the journal were consolidated and stored in a binder designated for that purpose.

## **5. Data Analysis and Interpretation Procedures**

I followed a step-by-step process based loosely on Creswell's data analysis procedures (2003, pp. 191-195). In the first step, I organized and prepared the data, transcribed the interviews, and categorized and stored the artifacts. In step 2, I read through all of the data to get a sense for the general meaning of the material and make additional notes as needed. Then I identified logical groupings, segments and chunks of data, a process that is generally referred to as coding. The coding process yielded a set of themes, which were further categorized as major themes and minor themes. Each theme was described in enough detail to distinguish it from another topic and also abbreviated so that it could be noted and "associated" to a portion of the text or written material. This list of abbreviations and associated descriptions became a legend or code table. Glesne (2006) described below how this code book is unique to every researcher.

Start the code book soon after beginning to collect data so that it will reflect the emerging, evolving structure of your manuscript. It is highly personal, meant to fit you; it need not be useful or clear to anyone else. (p. 154)

I think it is interesting how Glesne suggests beginning the code book, “soon after beginning to collect data” (p. 154) which appears to contradict the step-by-step procedures advocated by Creswell. I adopted a modified version of Creswell’s steps which incorporated Glesne’s suggestion to begin coding at an early stage noted above.

## **6. Validity and Reliability**

### *Validity*

According to Creswell (2003), validity in qualitative research involves a concerted effort to check the accuracy of research findings. In fact, Creswell presents eight different strategies that can be used by researchers to validate their findings. I used six of these strategies to validate my findings: triangulation, member-checking, thick description, researcher bias, discrepant information, and peer debriefing.

*Triangulation* involves the practice of checking different sources of data to justify themes (Creswell, 2003). I used multiple data sources to analyze and develop the emerging themes including the following: transcribed interviews, emails, Facebook posts, blog posts, audio files, you tube videos, visual artwork and written material. I used the *member-checking* strategy to determine if the research participants agreed with the quotes I obtained from them by conducting follow-up interviews. I also emailed quotes and entire sections of the final document to research participants to clarify my understanding of their words and verify the quotes I attributed to them.

Another validation strategy suggested by Creswell (2003) is *thick description*, “Use rich, thick description to convey findings. This may transport readers to the setting and give the discussion an element of shared experiences,” (p. 196). I used this strategy to describe the pre-show activities of three participants during the week leading up to the show in order to expose the reader to the daily experiences of the participants as they became deeply involved in the production. I also used thick description in my personal reflection of the opening night experience to bring the reader into the shared performance space with me. *Clarification of researcher bias* is another important strategy, suggested by Creswell (2003), to achieve an honest level of transparency with the reader. I explained my background in the section entitled, *Situating the Researcher* in the methods chapter and I described my experiences as a musician, actor and administrator of performing arts organizations. I also described my bias relative to the arts; my belief that the arts may have a positive impact on the members of a community and that the arts may empower arts-makers and audiences.

Presentation of *negative or discrepant information* is another useful validity strategy because it confirms that different perspectives exist (Creswell, 2003). For example, when describing each theme that emerged from the research, I identified the research participants whose words did and did not contribute or support the themes that I chose to elaborate. The sixth and final strategy I utilized was the *peer review* to ensure that the findings and interpretations were credible to an outsider; someone not familiar with the subject of my research. My peer reviewer was a colleague and scholar, employed as an administrator at a local university. This individual was familiar with

qualitative research but was not familiar with *Prometheus Bound*, the rock musical prior to reading the document.

### *Reliability*

Reliability is closely linked to validity and both are viewed as measures of trustworthiness within the context of qualitative research (Golafshani, 2003). In fact, sometimes reliability and validity are not even differentiated within qualitative research as Golafshani (2003) noted, “Although reliability and validity are treated separately in quantitative studies, these terms are not viewed separately in qualitative research. Instead, terminology that encompasses both, such as credibility, transferability, and trustworthiness is used” (p. 600).

While validity is focused on the accuracy of the findings, reliability is a measure concerned with the suitability of the procedures, as noted here by Creswell (2009), “Finally, an additional important step in planning a proposal is to mention the strategies that will be used to validate the accuracy of the findings, demonstrate the reliability of procedures, and discuss the role of generalizability (p. 201). The reliability of this research project can therefore be assessed through a review of the procedures that were used in this study. A detailed description of the procedures used in this study was presented in the *Research Plan* section of the methods chapter, which included the following sections: situating the researcher, rationale for selecting *Prometheus Bound*, data collection procedures, data recording procedures, data analysis and interpretation procedures and the current section: validity and reliability. The sub-sections of the

research plan presented information on individual research participants, observations, interviews, and audio and visual material.

## **7. Limitations**

This study was a first step at examining the engagement practices of a live theatrical production and the impact of those practices on the arts-makers involved in the production. There were several limitations of this study. First, the study was based on only one production, the rock musical *Prometheus Bound*, which was produced by the American Repertory Theater at the Oberon in Cambridge, MA. The study did not involve any other productions or organizations. Secondly, the research project was of a fairly short duration, bounded by the time period which began in February, 2011 and ended in April, 2011. The show itself ran for 6 weeks; from February 25 through April 2.

Third, the study was based on the experiences of only six individuals who participated in the production. While three of those individuals participated in every performance during the run of the show, the remaining 3 participants did not. The three individuals who participated in every performance represented the following roles: actors and singers, musicians, and technical crew. The remaining 3 participants, who did not attend every show, functioned as volunteers and included the researcher, a community member, and the individual who was responsible for coordinating volunteers, who also volunteered himself. This last individual participated in various planning meetings and events during the preparations for the show.

Therefore, four out of six participants were exposed to the full range of pre-production experiences, which included rehearsals, meetings and other pre and post show

activities. The two participants who did not participate as fully as the others were the researcher and community member because of the nature of their volunteer role, which did not begin until the show opened. The researcher only participated in four performances, which was a limitation of this study however the other volunteer, who was a community member, participated in 17 performances, more than any other volunteer.

The fourth limitation was the collaboration with Amnesty International, a social justice organization. I consider this collaboration a limitation of this study because it was very likely a contributing factor to the specific actions taken by two research participants during and after the production. These actions were the blogging by Meghan and the organizing of the Rock. Rebel. Revolt. concert by Miguel. One could reasonably assume that a production without such a collaborating partner as Amnesty International may not have resulted in the two actions described above. However, it is also clear from the data that the context of creating awareness of present-day prisoners of conscience provided by the collaboration with Amnesty, created an environment for inspiration, and as Dewey (1934) noted, context and subject matter can be powerful motivators.

When excitement about subject matter goes deep, it stirs up a store of attitudes and meanings derived from prior experience. As they are aroused into activity they become conscious thoughts and emotions, emotionalized images. To be set on fire by a thought or a scene is to be inspired. What is kindled must either burn itself out, turning to ashes, or must press itself out in material that changes the latter from crude metal into a refined product. (p. 68)



## Chapter 4. Data

This show (Prometheus Bound) is what theater is ABOUT. It is why we DO it, and does what theater was meant to DO. It will shock you, excite you, empower you, entertain you, and move you. (Anonymous fan, posted on the Prometheus Bound Facebook wall, 2011)

### A. Introduction

The rock musical, *Prometheus Bound* was produced by the American Repertory Theater (A.R.T.) at the Oberon, Cambridge, MA and ran from February 25, 2011 to April 2, 2011. I was in the audience for four performances and the intensity of those experiences has stayed with me. This chapter has three sections. The first section introduces *Prometheus Bound*, the drama written by the Greek poet Aeschylus more than 2,500 years ago and *Prometheus Bound*, the rock musical produced by A.R.T. in 2011. The introduction also includes a brief summary of the research participants. The second section contains a description of the engagement practices used in *Prometheus Bound* that I witnessed as a volunteer activist. In the third section, a description of the *Prometheus Bound* experience is presented in a chronological sequence from the perspective of the research participants as well as my own reflections as a volunteer activist.

#### 1. Prometheus Bound: The Greek Tragedy

*Prometheus Bound* is an ancient Greek tragedy written by the poet Aeschylus, who lived from c. 525/4 to 456/5 Before Current Era (BCE) (Constantine, Hadas, Keeley, & Van Dyck, 2010). The drama tells the story of the titan, Prometheus who is chained to a cliff by Zeus to punish him for giving fire and the Arts to humans, which helped them survive the tyranny of Zeus. In the passage below, taken from *The Greek Poets, Homer to the Present*, Prometheus described his benefits to mankind.

Who but I gave to humans what the gods keep to themselves...I taught them to think and to solve problems...I taught them numbers, the most useful tool and writing, the mother of memory...I yoked beasts for them...It was I who burned thighs wrapped in fat, and the sheek shank bone, and taught humans how to do the same...whatsoever skills the humans have they got as a gift from Prometheus. (Constantine et al., 2010, p. 112)

The story of Prometheus is one of unjust imprisonment that still resonates today, especially within the context of the suffering that continues to be experienced by those who have been imprisoned or mistreated because of speaking out against oppression. Prometheus's eloquent arrogance reflects his refusal to accept what he considers unjust mistreatment, "There's no shame to suffering blows from an enemy you well detest...O sky that circles all and sheds its light on all, look on me now and see how I suffer, and how unjustly" (Constantine et al., 2010, p. 115).

## 2. Prometheus Bound: The Rock Musical



The modern day rock musical, *Prometheus Bound*, presented this ancient drama in an innovative way deepening the meaning for those involved, as evidenced by the promotional sticker above, which was distributed at the shows (American Repertory

Theater, 2011b). The script was written by Tony Award-winning author and lyricist Steven Sater based on the play by Aeschylus. The composer was Serj Tankian, lead singer and songwriter of the Grammy Award –winning rock band, “System of a Down”. The following notice, presented in the Prometheus Bound program brochure described a unique collaboration between A.R.T. and Amnesty International.

The Prometheus Project is a partnership between the American Repertory Theater and Amnesty International and local Boston activists to bring the theater arts to the service of human rights work. By singing the story of Prometheus, the God who defied the tyrant Zeus by giving the human race both fire and art, this production hopes to give a voice to those currently being silenced or endangered by modern-day oppressors. Through our hero’s struggles, we experience the power of the individual to take action in the service of another human being. (American Repertory Theater, 2011a, p. 14)

As noted above, this play, was chosen for A.R.T.’s season, “to give a voice to those currently being silenced or endangered by modern-day oppression.” Steven Sater (2011a), the lyricist and writer, explained how the cry of Prometheus is also the cry of conscience as applicable today as it was more than 2,500 years ago.

At heart, this is a play about resistance. About the power of a tortured individual to stand alone against evil. And, the action of Aeschylus’ original drama is sublime. It embodies the truth of inaction – the Gandhian power of standing alone. Of saying no. Of defeating one’s enemy by mastering one’s own soul – and never acknowledging the legitimacy of anyone to rule over it. (p. 11)

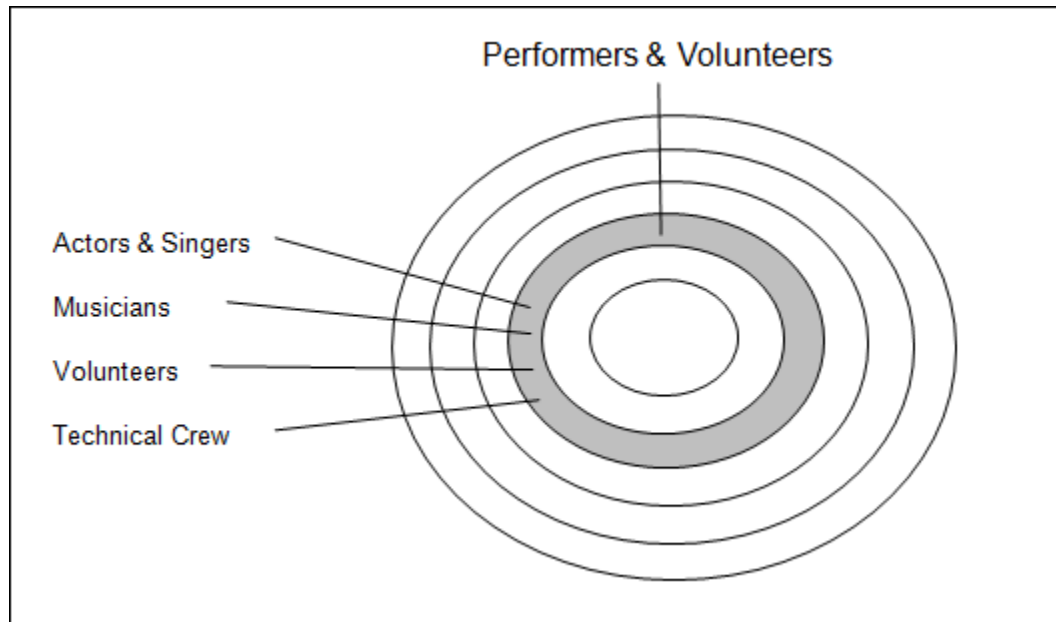
Serj Tankian (2011), the composer and activist was drawn to the project because of his belief in the power of music, “music has the ability to move people and change hearts, and the heart has the power to change the mind, and the mind has the power to change the world” (p.12). The parallel injustices experienced by the titan Prometheus

and today's imprisoned artists made a compelling connection for audience members and artists alike. As a volunteer in Prometheus Bound, I witnessed this connection firsthand.

### 3. Research Participants

There were 5 performing arts-makers involved with *Prometheus Bound* that I interviewed as research participants for this project. The individuals I interviewed occupied one of the four roles identified in the Modified Audience Engagement Model presented in the conclusion of chapter 2 and repeated here, see Figure 15. below.

Figure 15. Modified Audience Engagement Model



The names and characteristics of all but one person were changed to preserve their confidentiality. Meghan Robbins, her real name, is an undergraduate student at Massachusetts College of Art, who participated as a volunteer activist in 17 performances of *Prometheus Bound*. Meghan agreed to be identified because she offered her blogging and artwork as artifacts. Miguel is a professional actor who performed as a cast member in the production. He is also a member of an alternative rock band. Ron is a professional

working musician who performed with the band in the show. Dan is a graduate student at a local university who functioned as a volunteer coordinator. Janice is a spot light technician who was part of the technical crew. I participated in *Prometheus Bound* as a volunteer activist on 4 occasions and my experience, reflections and observations also informed this study.

## **B. Prometheus Bound: The Engagement Practices**

A.R.T.'s artistic director, Diane Paulus described her vision to expand the artistic experience in a youtube video posted in 2009, excerpted below:

I believe that moving forward in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we as theater producers and creators really have to think about the idea of the whole arts experience. It's not just the play we pick or the show that we program but the complete artistic arts experience that we provide for you, the audience. It is a very audience-driven mission and for me it connects directly to the A.R.T.'s core mission, which is to *expand the boundaries of theater...*that redefines what the experience of theater is and invites you the audience to *be an active participant*. (Paulus, 2009)

Paulus had a bold vision, "to expand the boundaries of theater." To accomplish this vision she brought the audience into the performance as, "an active participant." The way she achieved this vision was through the use of multiple engagement practices. I witnessed these engagement practices as part of A.R.T.'s production of *Prometheus Bound* on February 25, March 4, March 11 and March 30. These practices are presented in the following section and my description of them is guided by my first research question:

What kinds of engagement practices were utilized in the production of *Prometheus Bound*, the rock musical and how were those practices implemented?

## 1. Physical Space as an Engagement Practice

*Prometheus Bound* was staged at the Oberon, 2 Arrow St. Cambridge, MA described on the Oberon’s website as “the second stage of the American Repertory Theater (A.R.T.) a destination for theater and nightlife on the fringe of Harvard Square” (Oberon, 2011). Physical space is a critical element in the staging of any performing arts production and the selection of the Oberon by director, Diane Paulus for *Prometheus Bound* signaled her intent to encourage audience engagement in a manner consistent with that of a rock concert or dance club. See photograph in figure 16. below (American Repertory Theater, 2011b).

Figure 16. Oberon



The Oberon’s most obvious characteristic was an open floor space that could accommodate approximately 250 standing audience members. Surrounded by a high

catwalk on 2 sides and flanked by a stage in front and a bar in the back, this venue mimicked a space designed for a dance club or rock concert. The high ceiling was painted flat black and the walls were painted dark grey and were made of a unique sponge-like texture acoustically designed to absorb sound. The hallway and entrance were painted flat black, which gave one the impression of entering a cavernous space through a narrow, cave-like entrance. There were three black upright ladders in the floor space that extended all the way to the ceiling. There was a small mezzanine or platform on the left side of the room, which contained tables and chairs for approximately 30 people who could observe the show from a seated position.

The band, which was made up of 8 musicians was arranged on a stage, four feet high, which ran along the front of the room. The lead guitarist, bassist, and drummer were placed in the center of the stage on risers of varying height while the keyboard player flanked them on the left and the horn section was located on the right. The conductor was perched on the catwalk, high above the stage on the right side of the house, within the peripheral vision of the band and connected to them via microphone and ear monitors. There was an open, narrow space running the full width of the stage immediately in front of the band.

Choice of venue is a key engagement practice of performing arts-makers like Paulus because of the opportunities created for audience access and proximity to the performance. Venues like the Oberon challenge the traditional model for live theater because audience members are not confined to stationary seating. Instead, they are free to move within the space during the performance, which is a novel capability for an audience member. This situation allowed the director to break down the 'fourth wall', a

concept that separates the audience from the performer. *Prometheus Bound* is an example of a production where the choice of venue is a critical component of the performance because it immerses audience members into the show.

## **2. Choreography as an Engagement Practice**

The choreography of *Prometheus Bound* was designed to utilize the entire space of the venue and thus engage the audience in a physical way. The actors moved into the space occupied by the audience before, during and after the performance, claiming the audience's space as their own. Actors prowled overhead catwalks, straddled railings, jumped onto tables and towered over startled occupants. They crept up ladders and hung there suspended by their arms and legs. They pushed aggressively through the standing audience, glaring at people, barking commands, and demanding to be recognized. Audience members found themselves turning and spinning to observe scenes staged behind them, above them, in front of them, and right next to them. The choreography heightened the experience for audience members who could never be certain where the action was going to come from or move to. By these measures, the actors forced the audience to make room for the actors, which heightened the intensity of the experience and drew the audience into the drama that was unfolding immediately in front of them.

## **3. Physical Contact as an Engagement Practice**

*Prometheus Bound* had many opportunities for actor-audience interaction that resulted in physical connections. There was a large movable column, approximately five feet high and five feet in diameter, which functioned as a stage and was pushed through the audience by the groupies on several occasions. Groupies were actors who were



responsible for moving set pieces and audience members when the action called for it. Many people had to be displaced each time that large set piece, on which Prometheus was chained, was pushed through the crowd. To clear the way for set pieces, the groupies frequently placed their hands on the arms, shoulders and backs of startled audience members, to gently but firmly move them out of the way of the action at various times during the performance. The groupies not only pushed people out of the way, they also silently gestured with their hands and arms for people to move next to the set piece once it became stationary, inviting their participation.

The physical connections caused a heightened sense of the unexpected for audience members and kept them alert and focused throughout the show. This engagement practice, more than any other, removed the barrier of the ‘fourth wall’ because it infringed upon the personal space of audience members, and signaled that *Prometheus Bound* was a significantly different type of production. This engagement practice integrated the sense of touch into the production, in addition to the senses of sight and sound to enrich the experience.

#### **4. Social Justice as an Engagement Practice**

As mentioned earlier, *Prometheus Bound* included a collaboration between A.R.T. and Amnesty International, which was referred to as *The Prometheus Project*. The following excerpt came from the *Prometheus Bound* program brochure, which was given to every audience member as they entered the space:

The A.R.T. is therefore dedicating its run of Prometheus Bound to eight Amnesty Appeals calling to free prisoners of conscience and aid individuals at risk all over the world. The text, music and movement of this production fuse to create a work that inspires – and aspires to – social activism through artistic collaboration.

(American Repertory Theater, 2011a, p. 14)

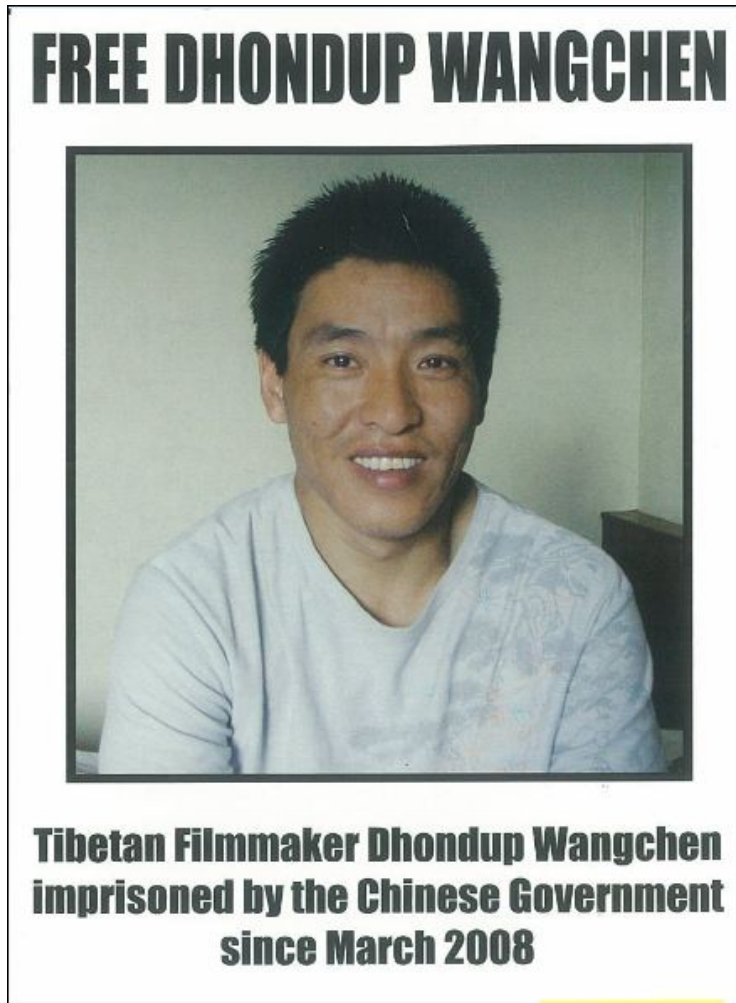
*Prometheus Bound* is certainly not the first production in which a human rights organization like Amnesty partnered with artists to promote a compelling social issue. However, what made this collaboration different was A.R.T.'s serious commitment to the Amnesty Appeals. *Prometheus Bound* brought the stories of these eight oppressed individuals into the open, illuminating the injustices perpetrated against them. A.R.T. used posters, postcards, banners, photographs and various printed material to create awareness of these Amnesty Appeals.

There was a huge Amnesty International banner prominently displayed in the performance space during the production. A.R.T. devoted 3 pages of the program brochure to explain the detailed circumstances of each Amnesty Appeal and then designated a different actor each night to read a statement at the end of the show, which described the appeal and asked audience members to become involved by signing postcards, if they were so inclined. Figure 17. below is an image of the front of the postcard for Dhondup Wangchen, which was handed out to audience members during the March 10, 2011 performance.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Postcards of Amnesty Appeals were obtained from American Repertory Theater during performances of Prometheus Bound.

Figure 17. Amnesty Appeal Postcard D. Wangchen



The following excerpt is from the *Prometheus Bound* program brochure on Wangchen:

Dhondup Wangchen, Filmmaker...Detained in Qinghai Province and held in various detention centers from March 2008 to December 2009 for this involvement in making a film that expresses Tibetan attitudes toward the Beijing Olympics and the Dalai Lama. He was sentenced to six years imprisonment for subversion of state power on December 28, 2009 after a secret trial by Xining City Intermediate Court. He has reportedly been tortured and is suffering from Hepatitis B, for which he has not been treated, and he has been denied access to a lawyer and family visits. (American Repertory Theater, 2011a, pp. 14-15)

## **5. Community Collaboration as an Engagement Practice**

The implementation of the community collaboration engagement practice occurred on several levels with *Prometheus Bound*. Artistic director Paulus created a cohesive community of arts-makers by involving cast and crew during the early stages of the project and asking for their input. She then integrated the social justice component mentioned in the previous section into the art-making process by forging a collaboration with local Amnesty International chapters thereby enlarging her community of arts-makers with local activists. She held orientation sessions on human rights abuses and torture for her arts-makers and by doing so, began to create a community of socially-conscious informed arts-makers.

By bringing arts-makers and activists together as participants in the creative process of the production, Paulus expanded both roles; transforming arts-makers into activists and activists artists. This tightly interwoven community of informed arts-makers and activists was eventually expanded to include volunteers from the general public, who became members of the production team giving them unique standing and agency. Paulus contributed to the closeness of these connections by engaging all parties involved in a deeply personal way, honoring the contributions of each person through her engaging, attentive manner.

This engagement practice also developed a community connection with audience members by inviting them to sign postcards and discuss the show with the performers who came out into the audience immediately following the show. Unlike most professional productions in which performers return to the back stage area after a show, Paulus had the cast and crew engage audience members immediately following the show

thereby creating a unique, intimate experience for all involved. This practice had the effect of turning the focus from the show to the real life story of the specific prisoner of conscience for whom the performance was dedicated.

## **6. Rock Band as an Engagement Practice**

A final type of engagement practice utilized by the A.R.T. in *Prometheus Bound* was the inclusion of a rock band in the production. This engagement practice appealed to at least two specific demographics who otherwise might not be interested in a theatrical musical: rock music lovers and young people. Use of a rock band gave a “cool” or “hip” feel to the production. What made this production even more compelling was the recruitment of Serge Tankian, lead singer and composer of the award-winning alternative band, “System of a Down”. Tankian was given the freedom to compose the music for *Prometheus Bound* in conjunction with the writer and lyricist, Steven Sater.

In this section the six engagement practices employed in *Prometheus Bound* that I witnessed as a volunteer activist and audience member were presented. In the next section, a description will be provided of the *Prometheus Bound* experience based on my reflections and those of the performing arts-makers who participated in this study as research participants.

### **C. Prometheus Bound: The Experience**

I have never been more inspired by or loved a show more; truly a life changing experience. I have seen it two times, and am so excited to see it at LEAST 3 more. GO PROMETHEUS, GO!!!! (Posted by a fan on the Prometheus Bound Facebook wall, 2011)

The following research questions guided my inquiry into the *Prometheus Bound* experience.

How do performing arts-makers who have participated in the engagement practices of *Prometheus Bound* as a lived experience, perceive and describe the meaning of those practices?

What kinds of other-oriented behavior or learning experiences, if any, have been experienced by performing arts-makers as a result of their participation in the engagement practices of *Prometheus Bound*?

In the Pre-Show section, the experiences of three of the five research participants during the week leading up to the opening night performance of the show are described. These experiences were fashioned from interviews conducted with Janice, Meghan and Dan during and after the run of the show, and from other artifacts I collected including emails, blog posts and Facebook posts. In the Opening Night section, I present my observations and reflections as a participant in the opening night performance, which includes excerpts from the songs and script.

## **1. Pre-Show**

On Friday morning, February 18, 2011, Janice, a free-lance spot light technician sat on a commuter rail train heading to Cambridge, Massachusetts for the first technical rehearsal of *Prometheus Bound*. Opening night was one week away. A diminutive red-haired woman, the 27 year old ‘techie’ graduated from a New England university several years earlier with a degree in Theater Arts and had been working as a free-lance lighting technician in the Boston theater scene. Janice lived in central Massachusetts and the train would become her method of transportation to and from Cambridge during the 6 weeks she was involved with the show.

Janice scored this gig from a lighting designer she had worked with in a recent production who reached out to her because he liked her work. She had heard the early buzz about the show and jumped at the opportunity when it came her way.

I can say that I was really excited just because, I mean world premiere? A lot of people who are big names or are people that interest me. Like the lighting designer Kevin Adams is huge right now on Broadway. And of course there is Steven Sater and Serj Jankian and then we have Lea Delaria, who I have seen before in various things on television. (Janice, personal communication, 2011)

After she got off the train at North Station, Janice headed downtown on the green line subway for several stops then changed to the red line at Park Street where she exited at Harvard Square, several blocks from the theater. When she walked into the Oberon for the first time on that Friday in February she had been on the road for about 2 hours.

It [Oberon] was so crazy! When you walk in, it definitely gives you a certain impression about what this is going to be like. I think that from the second I walked in, it's like 'OK, this is not a sit down and have your program in your lap' kind of theater, which is great! (Janice, personal communication, 2011)

After being introduced to the cast and crew Janice began implementing the lighting cues that had been specified by the lighting designer. At the end of the day, she retraced her steps, walked back to Harvard Square, took the red line to Park Street where she caught the green line, and eventually got to North station, where she caught the train back to Central Massachusetts. She would repeat this lengthy commute many times during the run of the show often using the time on-board to get familiar with the play.

Two days later on Sunday, February 20, an email appeared in the inboxes of a several dozen Massachusetts residents with ties to Amnesty International (AI) with the

following subject line: *Would You Like to Volunteer for AI at Prometheus Bound*

*Production?* The email went on to describe the event:

In honor of AI's 50th Anniversary AI's Northeast Regional Office is working with the American Repertory Theater in Cambridge, MA on a wonderful project that incorporates *Arts & Activism*. This winter the American Repertory will produce *Prometheus Bound*. Each show will be dedicated to one of AI's Individuals at Risk. We will prominently feature cases from Iran, Vietnam, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guatemala, Sudan, China, and USA. We will be looking for 10 volunteers per show! All volunteers will be able to see the show on the night that they volunteer. (Amnesty International, personal communication, 2011)

One of the recipients of the email was Meghan Robbins, a dark-haired, serious, 20 year old visual art major at Massachusetts College of Art. Meghan responded the email shortly after receiving it and indicated she wanted to volunteer. Later, Meghan explained how she came to hear about the show.

I first found out about it [Prometheus Bound] at a conference for Amnesty International last fall that they had at BU [Boston University]. I got involved with Amnesty during high school. We had high school meetings about it. We would write letters and we had some events. (M. Robbins, personal communication, 2011)<sup>2</sup>

Like Janice, Meghan had heard about this show in advance and having been involved with Amnesty International for several years it was a quick decision for her to respond to the email and sign up to attend.

I'd been trying to figure out ways to work with arts and activism because I go to an Arts school right now for college and I've done some projects that relate to Amnesty and I've just always been looking out for more ways to combine those two: arts and activism, so this was one really perfect project. (M. Robbins, personal communication, 2011)

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<sup>2</sup> The reference of M. Robbins is formatted in this manner because she has been identified as a source. All other research participants will be referenced using their first names only, which are pseudonyms.



Monday, February 21 was a ‘dark day’ for the *Prometheus Bound* production team, which meant there was no rehearsal. The cast and crew had rehearsed for three days and the director gave them a day off. Janice used the downtime to do housework and then visited her local library where she found a book on Greek plays including *Prometheus Bound*. She immersed herself in reading the play and brought it with her to read on the train and subway the following day.

I had that book in my hand when I got off the subway at Harvard on the way to the show and this guy noticed my book and started talking to me about it. It turned out he was a Greek Mythology major or something like that and he said – are you into Greek plays – and I told him all about the show. And he wanted to know how does it work with the Greek play and I said - surprisingly well, it is a rock musical, it is really cool and different you should definitely come and check it out. (Janice, personal communication, 2011)

Monday was also the day that Dan, the *Prometheus Project* coordinator composed an email to the first group of volunteer activists informing them that they were confirmed for the show. Dan, a tall, enthusiastic, 30 year old graduate student had a background in musical theater and volunteering. He took on the role of *Prometheus Project* volunteer coordinator because it involved two of his passions.

It was a perfect confluence of the things that I care about. I had been doing professional musical theater for the past five years. I have done activist work, on and off, all my life. I rarely see them synthesized so intentionally... I was very excited to get to engage in both at the same time. I haven’t done that very much. (Dan, personal communication, 2011)

Dan was also a very pragmatic, action-oriented person and so the opportunity to take part in something that could impact people appealed to him, “I was moved as always by the power of the music and the performances and I was thrilled to be able to help channel that to some larger end; some practical one; to connect the dots” (Dan, personal

communication, 2011). Dan sent the following email out to the volunteers on February 20, 2011, to confirm their attendance and welcome them to the show.

Dear Volunteer Activists, Hello! I'm looking forward to working with you on Friday night (2/25) as an audience activator for the FIRST PREVIEW of Prometheus Bound! I'll be your Prometheus Project representative for the evening... Please come wearing a black or yellow t-shirt. The doors open to the public at 7pm and then the show starts at 7:30pm. (Dan, personal communication, 2011)

In the email, Dan gave the volunteers a sense of their duties as well as some background information.

You will be a model audience member, watch the show, stay engaged, and have a great time. After the final number we will transform the space into a "Happening" of activism around the specific Amnesty case to which we are dedicating the show. You will be holding posters, handing out and collecting postcards, and helping to generate spontaneous discussions surrounding the case of Jafar Panahi. Please familiarize yourself with the case. Information can be accessed here:  
<http://www.americanrepertorytheater.org/amnesty> (Dan, personal communication, 2011)

Lastly, Dan stressed the importance of the obligation that the volunteers signed up for.

Your commitment to the Prometheus Project is taken very seriously. Please confirm that you received this email and will be arriving at 6:15 on Friday (Dan, personal communication, 2011).

Meghan sent her email confirmation back to Dan shortly after receiving his email.

The next 2 days leading up to opening night were filled with activity for everyone involved. Rehearsals were in full swing, the cast and crew used social media to reach out to their Facebook friends to promote the show. Janice posted the following messages on her Facebook wall on February 20, 2011.

Dress rehearsal tonight, first preview tomorrow! The show is really awesome... you should get tickets. (Posted on Janice's Facebook wall, 2011)

The next day, Janice placed this post on her Facebook wall.

Janice is brushing up on her Greek mythology to get in the right mindset for ProBo. (Posted on Janice's Facebook wall, 2011)

A production team member read Janice's Facebook post and emailed her Steven Sater's translation of the Greek play. Sater had taught himself Greek years earlier when he was recuperating from a serious injury and his translation of the original Greek play formed the basis for the final script. Janice explained her first exposure to the translation.

I remember I blew through Steven's translation because I wanted to get through the whole thing so I didn't want to put it down. And I really liked reading that because there was a lot more of a direct link to our script because I could see it. And there were certain lines that were in the translation that I was reading that were different that I kind of liked and I actually started keeping...my smart phone has a sticky note app and it's just like a little post...and I started writing down quotes I liked. (Janice, personal communication, 2011)

The show had begun to 'grow' on Janice. She typed a quote by Prometheus from Sater's translation onto her smart phone's sticky note app because it defined Prometheus and the words moved her. Before the show had even opened, it had made an impact on Janice.

She had begun to understand who Prometheus was and his words intrigued her:

That is who Prometheus is. Like he knew that he was doing something wrong, he's not going to deny it, he did it willingly, he's not going to regret it, he's not going to ask forgiveness for it. To me that first quote was like, that's really cool! (Janice, personal communication, 2011)

At the same time, Dan and the other Prometheus Project representatives were busy meeting with A.R.T.'s creative team and working out the details of the duties for the

volunteer activists. Dan provided insight into these pre-show discussions as the team members wrestled with the extent of audience interaction that would be appropriate.

There were always questions around how far could we push the audience's expectations. They've come in. They did not know they would be standing the whole time. They did not know the actors would be immersed with them and that's happening. And then, Oh there's a speech at the end and now they're being asked to sign postcards. There was sensitivity to the fact that at every step you had to kind of question - will this push people too far. (Dan, personal communication, 2011)

There was much discussion among the team about the specific language to be used by the volunteer activists as they engaged the audience.

There was a tension around the question of whether amidst all of that, there could be one other step of framing the action that the audience was taking that night as an important first step, but really a small step compared to what each of us could do in following up. And it was that kind of language that said - what more can you do, what might your next step be and even provide the opportunity to talk to volunteers and one another about that next step. (Dan, personal communication, 2011)

Not everyone on the team was in agreement with the nature and extent of communication that volunteers would have with the audience. Dan wanted to make the most of the opportunity and advocated having volunteers ask audience members pointed questions such as, "what more can you do, what might your next step be" (Dan, personal communication, 2011). Others wanted a less confrontational feel to the interaction, preferring to let the show itself create the reaction in the audience member. In the end, the team settled on less confrontational language. Dan was disappointed with this decision.

Finally all the preparations were done: the rehearsals, the sound checks, the costume adjustments, the lighting design, technical meetings, the blocking, the music, the

choreography, the orientations, the promotional events, the interviews, the postcards, the volunteer duties – everything involved with putting on a professional theatrical rock musical was in place. It was time for the show to begin.

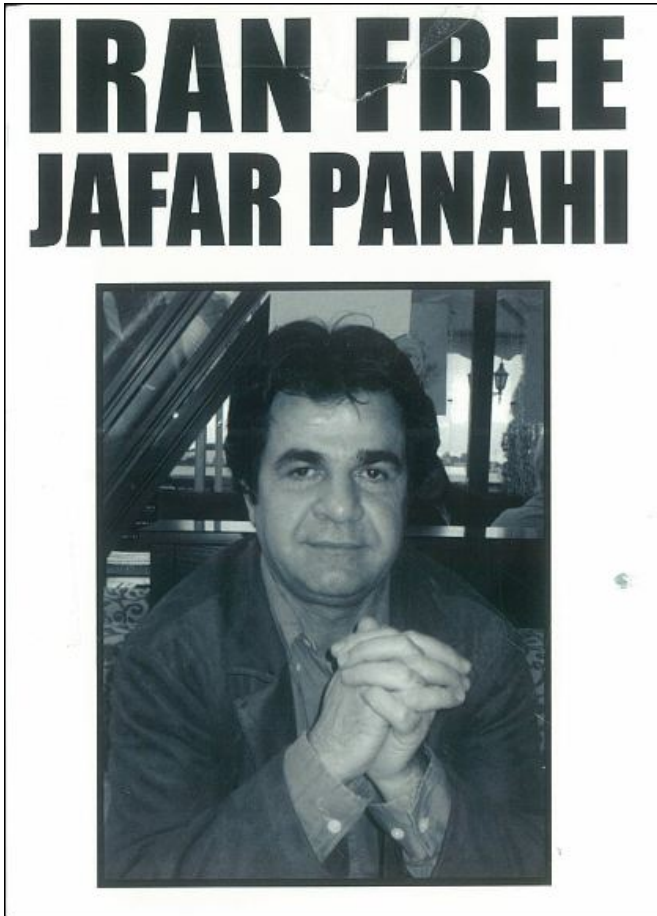
## **2. Opening Night**

*Reflection by P. Cormier*

On a rainy Friday evening, February 25, 2011 at 6:20PM, I opened the large door to the Oberon in Cambridge, Massachusetts and found myself in the midst of a group of excited people in the dark lobby. I was approached by a tall young man, who introduced himself, gave me a warm welcome, and we chatted for a bit. After a few moments, he turned to the rest of the group and announced, “Thanks for volunteering everybody, as you know my name is Dan, and this is my co-leader, Jane. Let’s go around the circle and introduce ourselves” (Dan, personal communication, 2011). So began my experience as a Prometheus project volunteer.

During the introductions I learned several volunteers were from a local chapter of Amnesty International. Others were students at area colleges while others were random people who had responded to the same email I did. Our hosts took turns explaining our duties for the performance that would be starting at 7:30PM. Then two representatives from Amnesty International told us about Jafar Panahi, an imprisoned Iranian filmmaker who the evening’s performance was dedicated to, see Figure 18. below.

Figure 18. Amnesty Appeal Postcard J. Panahi



We learned Panahi was sentenced to six years in prison for his filmmaking and banned from all artistic activities for 20 years, which prevents him from filmmaking, writing scripts, traveling abroad and speaking to the media (American Repertory Theater, 2011a). The realization that this man was imprisoned for merely practicing his art had a sobering effect on me.

Jane handed out red scarfs to the volunteers but there were not enough for everyone so I ended up with a light blue Amnesty International t-shirt. I was disappointed because the red scarfs looked cooler and more hip, but I silently told myself to 'deal with it'. We were led down a dark, narrow tunnel-like hallway to the

performance space. I could hear voices and errant strains of music as we approached the doorway which was covered by a thick, black curtain. At the doorway, Dan whispered conspiringly, “we only have 10 minutes in the space so we need to be quick” (Dan, personal communication, 2011).

With that, he pulled back the curtain and we entered the performance space. It was bristling with pre-show activity. Technicians with headsets were walking quickly through the space. I could hear someone barking commands over the sound system. A sound check was in process and microphones were being tested by the crew. I saw several band members on stage, heads down, looking at floor pedals, apparently tuning their instruments in preparation for the show. Several people walked by and smiled at us, which made me feel welcome. Others walked by with clipboards, urgent looks on their faces.

Dan and Jane asked the volunteers to form a tight circle and leaned in to talk to us. It was very loud in that space and it was hard to hear what they were saying. I found it difficult to focus on their instructions in the midst of all the activity and the palpable excitement in the air. We were given assigned positions; mine was on right side of the house, near a table. We were given more instructions: after the last song, we were to move to the rear of the space next to the bar, and obtain a basket of postcards, pens and a poster, and then move to our assigned spot. We were told that one of the actors would make a short speech from the stage after the curtain call and to listen for the name, Jafar Panahi. As soon as we heard his name spoken, we were to raise our posters high over our heads.

Members of the cast and crew continued to acknowledge our presence by nods and random greetings. We were now part of an important happening that was about to take place. The assistant director, Allegra, came over, introduced herself, and welcomed us to the production team. It was a generous gesture and it felt like our presence was an important part of the production. She looked each of us in the eye, shook our hands and conveyed the importance of our role.

As I stood in that hectic space with my fellow volunteers and listened to Allegra speak about our roles, I felt a connection with everyone around me. It was a privilege to be to be here at this moment in time, particularly since so many people had been working on this production for a long time. In less than an hour, I had become a member of the production team of *Prometheus Bound*. The actions of Dan, Jane, Allegra, the cast and crew, and my fellow volunteers, had succeeded in creating a community that I had become completely and utterly immersed in.

We returned to the lobby and were asked to connect with another volunteer and role-play our post-show conversations with audience members. I paired up with a serious-looking woman who worked for Amnesty International and we practiced talking about Jafar Panahi and how one could become involved in Amnesty International. I focused on her face, listening closely to her words, noticing her earnest demeanor as we conversed, mimicking conversations that would take place later on in the evening. She listened to my answers intently while looking me in the eye, honoring the work we were preparing for, honoring Jafar Panahi.



After the role plays we were done with the orientation and Jane told us to just hang out for a few moments. It was crowded in the lobby and I could hear my fellow volunteers talking excitedly as the back stage crew moved through our midst, speaking into their headsets. In the midst of this cacophony of sound and motion, I was calm. I was experiencing the moment.

At 7:10PM, we were allowed back into the performance space, now strangely devoid of the frantic activity that was previously happening. We were told we could relax and hang out until the show started. I purchased a bottle of Stella Artois beer at the bar and joined a few volunteers who were standing around in small groups. I could hear rock music being fed through the sound system at a low volume. Audience members began to enter and fill up the space and the various conversations gradually became indistinct and merged with the background music. I met several more volunteers and we expanded upon our earlier introductions making small talk while the space began to fill with more people.

I introduced myself to two college-aged young men, who were standing next to me, each holding a beer. “We’re here for Serj, man. System of a Down rocks,” the taller one explained (personal communication, 2011). Dan and Jane stopped by with last minute reminders and I moved to stand in front of the stage and checked out the band’s equipment. The bassist had an electric bass guitar and a bass fiddle, both on stands on his riser, with a few floor pedals. The guitarist had 3 guitars on stands on his riser with an elaborate pedal set up on the floor. Both had music stands. The drummer was at eye level, in the middle of the stage and the horn section was on the floor to the right of the stage; both were situated behind large, clear glass-type partitions, which were evidently

designed to provide a balanced sound experience for the audience. On the left side of the stage were several keyboards and another guitar on a stand. It was a cool set up and had all the required elements for a kicking rock band.

As the room began to fill I became aware of several energetic individuals moving into the audience from different directions; all wearing headsets. One young woman was dressed in a black leather top and sported an unusual hair style; bright pink on top and closely shaved on both sides of her head. A very tall young man, about 6' 2", his unbuttoned shirt swinging around him, was jumping on both feet in time with the music. Both wore big, black, lace-up boots. The headsets meant they were probably part of the production team. I learned later about this pre-show involvement of the performers from Miguel, one of the actors.

The beginning of the show is most awkward yet I get why we are doing it. We come and sort of mingle with the crowd and what is cool about that is that it gives us the opportunity to say to them: This is your show; this is your space; do what you want to do. You are a guest. Your experience is as much up to you as it is to us. Move around. Take the space. If there is something that you want to see, go see it. Don't be stuck in one place. (Miguel, personal communication, 2011)

Miguel's remarks confirmed the importance of the venue as an engagement practice. By moving into the space prior to the show and actually speaking to audience members, the actors signaled that this was a different type of show and that it was ok for the audience to interact with them. Audience members also witnessed the actors apparently being themselves, instead of being in character, which was an unusual phenomenon to observe because actors typically step into their roles to get into character immediately prior to a show. Not so with *Prometheus Bound*.

The tall man with the head set high-fived several audience members and the pink-haired woman said a few words to the person next to me then threw her head back and laughed at his response. I noticed a shirtless man and a dark-haired woman in a tank-top, both with headsets on. They chest-butted each other, their mouths open, their voices unable to be heard as the recorded background music increased in volume. The show was about to begin.

*February 25, 7:36PM.*

One minute the music was pounding, the crowd was surging and the air seemed to crackle with the energy of anticipation. The next instant, the music halted and we were plunged into darkness. It was quiet and still except for a few crowd noises during that time, which lasted for about 10 seconds.

Then, the spot lights blazed and 8 blindfolded actors stood silently on stage, shoulder-to-shoulder, each holding a white noose in an outstretched hand held to the right and head-high. See figure 19. below (American Repertory Theater, 2011b).

Figure 19. Prometheus Bound Scene 1



The drummer clicked his sticks 4 times and the performers launched into the first song, *Hounds of Law*, the opening number of *Prometheus Bound*. The show had begun.

See Figure 20. below (American Repertory Theater, 2011b).

Figure 20. Prometheus Bound Scene 2



Bow wow,  
Them's the hounds of law - -  
Them's the hounds of law - -  
Howl, howl...

They check you in, check you out - -  
Count your hair and teeth.  
Let you weep in your cell,  
While your neighbors scream.

Bow wow,  
Them's the hounds of law - -  
Them's the hounds of law - -  
Howl, howl...

They don't give you a trial - -  
Just beat you a while.  
Have a smoke and a smile,  
As they sell your child.

(Sater, 2011b, p. 1)

Standing in the audience close to the stage I was drenched in the action and sound. The music pounded, the spot lights blazed, the performers lurched and reached out to us as their amplified voices rose above the music. Through all this, the violent lyrics filled the air. The words were sung loud and clear by all eight actors and the effect was riveting; I didn't move. As they sang, I visualized the cell and the beating, the smoke and the smile.

After the song finished, the mood shifted as the character, Io, began to sing a hauntingly, beautiful ballad, foreshadowing the drama that was about to unfold. The crowd repositioned itself and relaxed. I moved closer to Io.

Once, a tyrant took Olympus,  
And named himself the god of gods,  
So cruel in his demands,  
He threw us to the dogs.

Was there room in Heaven?  
Was some brave fool to take our part –  
To reach for what was human,  
And teach us of the heart?

This is the story of the titan, Prometheus,  
And all he would wring from us,  
And bring from us...  
And sing from us...

(Sater, 2011b, p. 4)

The next scene happened on the balcony in the back of the house, which caused the audience to turn completely around to watch the action. Like everyone else, I turned and watched the scene unfold on the balcony with my back to the front of the house. After a few moments, I became aware of slight disturbance behind me followed by a hand on my back, gently but firmly pushing me toward my left.

I turned my head to see an actor in a fierce facemask, inches from my face, leading a line of actors, heading in my direction and carrying a bare-chested Prometheus high over their heads. I jumped out of the way and bumped into the person standing next to me. This sequence was repeated several times as others like me, were pushed gently but firmly out of the way, thus creating a hastily configured pathway for this strange parade. The effect of this physical encounter caused a heightened awareness in me that persisted for the entire 80 minute performance and caused me to glance behind occasionally to watch out for other surprise encounters. This constant mindfulness distracted me, but not enough to keep me from fully experiencing the show.

Once the ghastly procession had transported and deposited Prometheus high above us on the catwalk, the music stopped and the character named, Force delivered these bitingly cruel lines in a clear and loud voice.

Bind this reckless miscreant  
To these steep-cliffed rocks  
With chains unyielding and unbreakable  
He stole bright, all-devising fire - - your flower - -  
And gave it to those born-to-die.  
For this outrage, he must render just payment to the gods,  
That he may learn to honor the rule of Zeus.  
(Sater, 2011b, p. 5)

Prometheus's 'crime' was giving fire to those who were 'born-to-die'. Zeus was a powerful figure, who ruled and therefore must be honored. There was a power struggle that existed between this titan, who must have been some kind of special god-like figure

and the higher power, the god, who demanded a “just payment.” Prometheus explained the reason for his action in a loud, defiant voice.

No sooner had his Grand Theistic Eminence assumed that throne  
than he began to regulate his empire;  
but to that breed of human kind,  
those creatures-of-a-day, he gave no account intending to obliterate  
the entire race and beget a new one.  
None stood against him save me.  
I dared. I spared those born-to-die  
the journey to Hades in utter annihilation.  
(Sater, 2011b, p. 14)

Prometheus saved mankind from Zeus because he realized that Zeus was planning to annihilate the human race. It was the classic struggle between an individual and an oppressor. I recognized the injustice and bravery that was playing out in front of me.

A few moments later, another commotion behind me caused me to spin around quickly. This time, a large movable set piece was being pushed slowly through the crowd by three actors dressed in black, wearing black eye makeup. The ‘cliff’, they were pushing was in the shape of a large cylinder. The audience parted as the actors moved people out of the way and pushed the cliff to a spot below the catwalk where one of the daughter’s of Aether jumped onto it from a table on the Mezzanine, startling the people sitting at the table.



A short while later Oceanos was wheeled across the performance space by the actors in black as he perched on the top step of a ladder, which represented his seahorse. He leaped from the ladder onto the cliff now occupied by Prometheus. Once again audience members were displaced to make room for this large movable set piece. The physical interaction that occurred between groupies and the audience had a disconcerting effect on some audience members. Miguel, an actor, described the reaction of his friends who were in the audience at a later show.

Part of our jobs as actors in this show is to teach the audience how to have the experience and to educate them that it is ok to move, that they can move, and when they don't move they get pushed. I had friends see the show, who really liked the show but not knowing what to expect they were like – I hate being touched. That drove me nuts. (Miguel, personal communication, 2011)

After Oceanos leapt from the ladder onto the cliff occupied by Prometheus, he addressed Prometheus, implying that he is a sympathetic friend, see Figure 21. below (American Repertory Theater, 2011b).

I come, Prometheus, to the end of a long road,  
and now exchange my journey for you.

Know that, as I guided my swift-winged seahorse,  
all the while, I felt your pain as if it were my own.

(Sater, 2011b, p. 19)

Figure 21. Prometheus Bound Scene 3



However, Oceanos was not the friend he appeared to be.

I see, Prometheus, and I want to give you the best advice.

Know yourself. Adopt the new ways,

For there is a new ruler among the gods.

If you hurl harsh words, words as sharp as swords,

Zeus will hear you, even from his seat

on high; then the gall of your present

pain shall seem like child's play.

(Sater, 2011b, p. 20)

It became clear that Oceanos was sent to silence Prometheus. He urged Prometheus to succumb to Zeus, much like Jafar Panahi was been silenced by the Iranian government from expressing himself through his filmmaking. The threat by Oceanos was frighteningly real, “If you hurl harsh words....then the gall of your pain shall seem like child’s play” (Sater, 2011b, p 20).

Although there were more scenes to be staged, more set pieces to be moved, more lines to be said, and more songs to be sung, the story of Prometheus and the reality of filmmaker Jafar Panahi’s imprisonment had converged in my mind at that point. I had seen the chains, I had heard the threats of the tyrant and the defiant cries of the oppressed. I had felt the hands of the groupies. Through these sensations I had become a participant in the story happening in front of me and a connection had been made across centuries of time. At that moment in the show, I felt empathy for Prometheus and for Jafar Panahi. My senses had been stirred, my mind had been informed, and my emotions were close to the surface. After 30 minutes of the show, I had been impacted by *Prometheus Bound*.

As the play drew to its tragic conclusion, Prometheus, ever the stalwart defender, the unrepentant one, continued to persist in his defiance of Zeus.

There is no just crime against a god  
or against humanity.

(Sater, 2011b, p. 26)

Prometheus characterized his action of giving fire as a crime, since it was perpetrated “against a god” while he recognized that no crime is just. He also clearly chastised Zeus for his unjust crime “against humanity.” Even as Force strutted through the audience wielding a baseball bat and barking obscenities at anyone unlucky enough to be in her way, Prometheus remained steadfast. He stood upright on the main stage, his outstretched arms pulled apart by two large chains and continued to yell out in defiance, “It is no shame to suffer at the hands of an enemy” (Sater, 2011b, p. 48). See Figure 22. below (American Repertory Theater, 2011b).

Figure 22. Prometheus Bound Scene 4



The daughters of Ether came to his defense at this, the end of his story, despite the threat of retribution by Hermes, the winged messenger of Zeus.

You there, who share  
his pain, withdraw from this place  
and speedily,  
lest the harsh roar of thunder  
smite your mind also with madness.  
(Sater, 2011b, p. 50)

But Prometheus, like many other activists who will follow his lead, connected with others through his actions and words, and inspired the daughters to take their own stand against tyranny with him. They wailed their support of him to Hermes:

How dare you urge us to cowardice  
I am ready to endure with him whatever must be.  
I have learned to detest a traitor.  
There is no disease I abominate more than treachery.  
(Sater, 2011b, pp. 50-51)

Finally, Prometheus uttered these lines, the last lines of the play, which spoke for all of those who refused to be silenced in the face of tyranny.

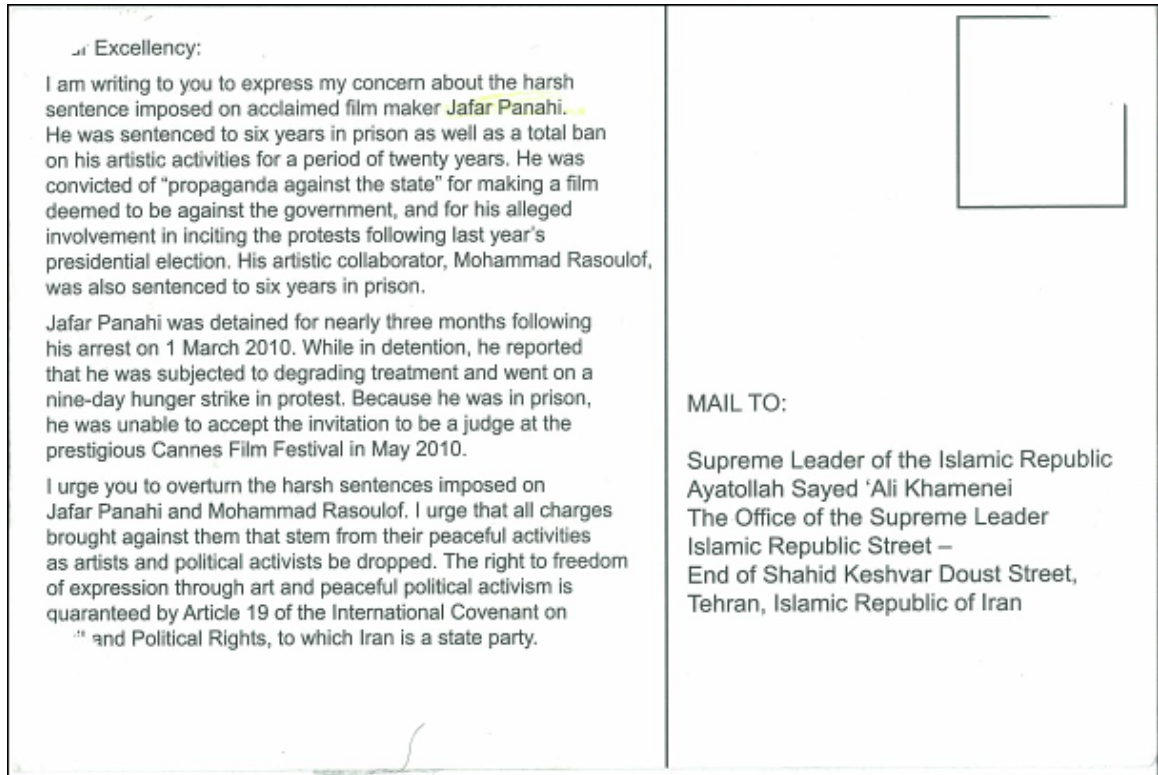
Let the tyrant shake the earth,  
nothing can silence my cry.  
(Sater, 2011b, p. 51)

*February 25, 2011. 9:02PM.*

As the final song played, I jostled my way to the back of the house, to the right side of the bar where Jane handed out a basket of postcards and pens and a large poster with Jafar Panahi's face on each side of it to the volunteer in front of me. In a moment, I had my own stuff and made my way close to my assigned place, which was occupied by a throng of audience members, who were still clapping. Moving into position, I looked to the stage and saw the shirtless actor who had just played Prometheus holding a paper. The applause quieted and he began to read in a loud voice. He announced that this evening's performance was dedicated to an imprisoned, Iranian film-maker named Jafar Panahi.

At the mention of Jafar Panahi, I raised the poster above my head in unison with the eleven other volunteer activists and we held them as high as we could during the remainder of the short announcement. The actor announced that postcards were available to be signed that would be mailed to the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei. I handed out postcards and pens to the audience members around me. See figure 23. below for the back of the postcard of Jafar Panahi.

Figure 23. Amnesty Appeal Back of Postcard



In a show of support, the actors remained in the performance space after the announcement. They jumped from the stage, each took a handful of postcards and walked purposefully into the audience: talking, listening and showing their support of the Amnesty Appeal through their interest and involvement. One of the movable stage pieces was used as a focal point where additional postcards were available and where signed postcards were placed in a large receptacle. There was a table set up near the entrance with more material on the Amnesty Appeals staffed by representatives from Amnesty.

Several hours later, on the last train out of North Station heading back to her home town, Janice used her smart phone to put this post on the wall of her Facebook page:

Okay, so yes, I just got out of work... but how many people can say they work with Tony Award winners and nominees, rock stars, and just the all-around chilliest people on a daily basis?... Not gonna lie... it's pretty cool. (Posted on Janices's Facebook wall, 2011)



## Chapter 5. Thematic Analysis

It is desperately important in this time of ten person audiences and tentative ticket sales to remind the world that core-shaking art is not only alive but waiting for our applause. It makes me proud as an artist and citizen of the world to have witnessed and 'taken part' in a production as fire-starting as this (Posted by a fan on the Prometheus Bound Facebook Wall, 2011).

My interpretation of the findings, which is presented in the form of themes that emerged from the research of *Prometheus Bound*, is presented in this Chapter. This interpretation was guided by two research questions.

How do performing arts-makers who have participated in the engagement practices of *Prometheus Bound* as a lived experience, perceive and describe the meaning of those practices?

What kinds of other-oriented behavior or learning experiences, if any, have been experienced by performing arts-makers as a result of their participation in the engagement practices of *Prometheus Bound*?

There were ten themes that emerged from the interviews and reflections of the six research participants, which included the five individuals previously named as well as myself as an active participant. As noted in Chapter 3. Methods, the themes resulted from a coding process, which identified logical groupings, segments, and chunks of data. Each theme was described in enough detail to distinguish it from another theme. I defined a theme as any idea or concept that was mentioned by two or more research participants. All but one theme involved some aspect of art or art-making. The theme that did not relate to art was Volunteerism.

Five themes were categorized as minor themes and five themes as major themes, see Figure 24. below.

Figure 24. Themes

<p><b>Minor Themes:</b> The Art-Making Process The Challenge of Art-Making The Power of Art-Making / Activism Empathy Through Art-Making Volunteerism</p> <p><b>Major Themes:</b> Art as Aesthetic Experience Art as a Search for Self Art as Community Engagement Art as a Mirror Art as a Hammer</p>
--

My distinction between minor and major themes was based on the degree to which the theme was elaborated by the subject: minor themes had less elaboration, major themes more. Also, minor themes were those that were referenced by two or three research participants. Major themes were those that were referenced by four or more research participants and that appeared to hold more meaning for most if not all participants, than the minor themes.

#### A. Minor Themes

##### *The Art-Making Process*

This theme represents the process through which art, in this case, *Prometheus Bound*, was created, designed, planned, and rehearsed. Ron, Miguel, and Janice were intrigued by the approach used by the creative team made up of artistic director Diane Paulus, writer Steven Sater, composer Serj Tankian, and lighting designer Kevin Adams.

It was pretty neat to see very stylistically different artists coming together and making something that really was exciting and embraced by audiences. The staging was unusual. There was an unorthodox blocking and lighting style which

was pretty cool looking. If they take it [Prometheus Bound] anywhere else they are going to have to have the right kind of space for it. (Ron, personal communication, 2011)

As an experienced musician, Ron had performed in many productions and settings, which gave weight to his remarks above and recognized the unique collaboration between members of the creative team.

Watching the process during rehearsals was fascinating. I could swear I was watching the ideas become more clear in her [Paulus's] head and she would say, 'You know what, it's not going to work up there in the balcony. It's too detached from what's going on with Prometheus and the middle. Bring it down to the table. Let's see if it works better there' or 'you know what, that doesn't work, let's put it back' or 'let's try a third thing.' (Ron, personal communication, 2011)

As noted above, trial and error was clearly one of the approaches used by the creative team which resulted in changes being made even after the show had begun, "I think after opening night someone said - You know what, come in at the very top with the bass. Let's punch the audience in the face from the get go" (Ron, personal communication, 2011). This last remark, 'Let's punch the audience in the face from the get go,' exemplified how the creative team carefully considered even minute aspects of the production, in order to achieve the maximum effect and produce a visceral response in the audience.

The composer, Tankian created a collaborative environment with the musicians and encouraged them to experiment, "He [Tankian] was open to suggestions, which was nice. There were times when he said 'can you come up with something that moves the song a little.' He was very polite, very nice" (Ron, personal communication, 2011).

Miguel also experienced this collaborative approach in his interactions with director Paulus.

One of the things that was unusual to me but also to Diane's credit is how open she was to collaboration. It was a very original experience because we all had a hand in how it unfolded and what we were doing. If there was something important to you that you wanted to fight for, she would have a conversation and not just say, 'No, I have to have it this way.' (Miguel, personal communication, 2011)

As Miguel noted, Paulus and the creative team allowed the actors the freedom to contribute to the creative process.

I kept expecting this where to stand business but Paulus and Steven Sater were very free and open, welcoming how we felt about what we were doing. For the three of us who were the sort of bad guys, a lot of what we did we just discovered in the space. (Miguel, personal communication, 2011)

It is interesting how the engagement practice of 'space' emerged from the words of both Ron and Miguel, which implied how the physical space contributed to the creative process.

According to Janice, the process of providing technical support for *Prometheus Bound* was unlike other shows she had worked on precisely because of the physical configuration of the space, which required a different lighting strategy. The action was not confined to one spot but instead happened throughout the space.

It [*Prometheus Bound*] was very different from the tech process of the show I had just come off of previously. First of all, they used spot in almost every single scene. Everybody worked really great together. Diane and Steven and Serj and Kevin all worked very closely and things did change. Things certainly changed. (Janice, personal communication, 2011)

The experiences of Ron, Miguel and Janice related above, describe how the art-making process of *Prometheus Bound* encouraged their collaboration and creativity. I suspect that this theme did not arise from Meghan, Dan, or I because none of us were actively involved in the creative process due to our roles as either volunteer activists (Meghan and I) or as the volunteer coordinator (Dan). However, despite the collaborative and creative aspects of the show, participation in *Prometheus Bound* was not without its challenges, the subject of the next theme.

### *The Challenge of Art-Making*

The challenge of being a performing arts-maker in *Prometheus Bound* was the second minor theme that emerged from the research. Ron and Janice described the challenges they faced as arts-makers in the show.

There are certain gigs that certainly require a lot of attention and there are other ones where you can kind of coast along like at a blues gig. This was nothing like that for a number of reasons: we are not in a pit, we were up on those pedestals and let's say they didn't always feel stable. You are loud enough that mistakes would be noticeable. It was a different way of getting cues from the music director, who was on a balcony to the side of us and she was giving us cues into our ear monitors. Let's just say that peripheral vision was put to the test. (Ron, personal communication, 2011)

*Prometheus Bound* represented a significant growth opportunity for Ron, "As far as pushing me as a player, I definitely learned that I was able to withstand a combination of challenges that I don't think I've ever experienced all at the same time" (Ron, personal communication, 2011). Unlike Ron, Janice was challenged by the close proximity of performers and audience members and the difficulty of framing only the performers in the spot light beam.

It was challenging because I am trying to pick up actors without blinding people standing behind them or all around them. I'm trying to get as close and tight on the actor as possible but still be able to see everything while trying to minimize the number of people who have my light shining right in their face. And it's not only for their benefit, but so that it is not distracting to everyone else watching, while this person is looking around or talking to their friends or something. (Janice, personal communication, 2011)

Janice provided a specific example of the difficult situations she faced.

I think one of the most challenging moments is when IO and the daughters are traveling up the staircase. I'm supposed to capture all three daughters without hitting any of the audience [with the spotlight]. There is a small, round table at the edge of the mezzanine and there is always somebody sitting right there and I have to try to shrink down as much as I can while including three actors but not including this person's face. (Janice, personal communication, 2011)

Ron and Janice were the only arts-makers that categorized their work as challenging, while this theme emerged in a different way from Miguel, who viewed his role as one who created challenges for the audience.

I think our jobs as actors in this show is to teach the audience how to have the experience and to educate them that it is OK to move, that they can move and when they don't move, they get pushed. And I think that it is a success because we are challenging people's notions of the performing arts. What is theatre? What is participation? What is the nature of the relationship between actor and audience? (Miguel, personal communication, 2011)

It is again understandable that this theme did not emerge from the 3 research participants who were involved as volunteers because their roles as volunteer activists did not require them to engage the audience during the actual production. They may have experienced challenges during their interaction with audience members after the show, but their words did not convey any such challenges. The next theme to emerge, the power of art-making, was also noted by only three research participants.

*The Power of Art-Making / Activism*

This theme emerged from the experiences of three participants in different ways.

First, Meghan used the word ‘powerful’ to describe the engagement practice that brought set pieces right into the audience.

I thought it was really powerful how they [groupies] moved it [cliff set piece] all around the theatre and sometimes you were pushed right out of the way. I think that was a very powerful to integrate the audience and grasp the story. It worked really well in the space. (M. Robbins, personal communication, 2011)

Meghan used similar words to describe her experience when standing on an audience table, located on the mezzanine, while holding a poster at the end of the night.

I was up on that table 13 out of the 17 shows that I went to. The people sitting at the table always gave me strange looks because they were like kind of thinking that somebody else is climbing on the table, what are they gonna do now? It is really powerful like. I mean I was standing on that table higher than almost anybody else except for the people on the ladders with that sign. It was really powerful. (M. Robbins, personal communication, 2011)

Meghan was moved by several aspects of that experience: her position high above the audience, her role as a volunteer activist which involved holding a poster of the prisoner high above her head and her role as part of the production team. Miguel described the process utilized by Amnesty International to get audience members to sign post cards as powerful.

What moved me was watching how they [Amnesty International] operate. They are so willing to do the brunt of the work for you. It’s amazing. We do our own spiel at the end of each show and we ask people to sign postcards and I think it’s very powerful. We are not asking for money. We are not asking for time or any sort of commitment, yet the power of that one signature can actually affect groups of change. (Miguel, personal communication, 2011)

Like Miguel, Meghan recognized the impact of Amnesty's work, "It was just really powerful to know that it can actually make a difference. All the Amnesty people working together; like working on cases that can actually, it does actually have an effect" (M. Robbins, personal communication, 2011). The notion that Amnesty does, "the brunt of the work," suggested by Miguel above, was also noted by Janice, "They [Amnesty] make it so easy to help, all you have to do is sign a postcard and the box is right there. You don't even have to mail it yourself. They'll do it for you" (Janice, personal communication, 2011).

Dan explained how the collaboration of A.R.T. and Amnesty International led to further collaboration and engagement between individuals interested in using the arts to make positive changes.

There is something in empowering in that like this started as two organizations saying let's have a partnership but really is going forward is something from the citizens. I see this as a community of people that are themselves, co-creators (Dan, personal communication, 2011).

Although the contexts listed above were different, the research participants described their experiences similarly, using words like powerful or empowering to do so. Their choice of words conveys the impact that the *Prometheus Bound* experience resulted in. This theme did not emerge from my experiences nor from those of Janice and Rob. As noted in the Opening Night reflections, I was moved by Prometheus Bound in a number of ways.

My senses had been stirred, my mind had been informed, and my emotions were close to the surface. After 30 minutes of the show, I had been impacted by *Prometheus Bound*. (P. Cormier, personal reflection, 2011)



However, the concept of power or of being empowered did not arise from this experience for me. In the next section, the concept of empathy is presented.

### *Empathy Through Art-Making*

Empathy through art-making was another minor theme that emerged from the research although not always explicitly. I return to the words of Suzanne Lacy (1995) to provide context, which appeared in an earlier section of this paper.

To make oneself a conduit for expression of a whole social group can be an act of profound empathy. When there is no quick fix for some of our most pressing social problems, there may be only our ability to feel and witness the reality taking place around us. This empathy is a service that artists offer the world. (p. 174).

By partnering with Amnesty International, A.R.T. made itself, “a conduit for expression” (p. 174) for the specific social group made up of prisoners of conscience as noted previously in this excerpt from the Prometheus Bound program brochure:

The Prometheus Project is a partnership between the American Repertory Theater and Amnesty International and local Boston activists to bring the theater arts to the service of human rights work. The A.R.T. is therefore dedicating its run of Prometheus Bound to eight Amnesty Appeals calling to free prisoners of conscience and aid individuals at risk all over the world. (American Repertory Theater, 2011a, p. 14)

Meghan did not mention empathy specifically however her words and actions conveyed empathy for the prisoners, whose cases she promoted through actions such as writing letters and making visual art.

I’ve done some paintings and some drawings of different Amnesty cases that I had known about and done some work with. One of them was a specific prisoner of conscience that I had been reading about and writing letters about at the time and the other painting was a Sri Lankan journalist and he was jailed because of

his form of expression. (M. Robbins, personal communication, 2011)

Miguel talked about the kind of empathy that may result when one is moved by a piece of art.

That is one of the great things about entertainment: live music, live theatre. It forces people out of their homes. I think that once people are out of their homes and communing with other people and moved by a piece, that engenders empathy. (Miguel, personal communication, 2011)

Miguel's statement above is fascinating because it implies a connection, in fact a causal relationship between the act of viewing art and empathy. He actually links empathy to the combination of several actions: people being out of their homes, people communing with other people, and people being moved by a piece of art. This is the first evidence I have encountered of a performing arts-maker making this connection.

Janice spoke about the positive feelings she experienced from working on a project with Amnesty that focused attention on the prisoners, "Dedicating this show to different individuals or groups each week ... is something that all of us are very proud to be working on and helping to further these causes" (Janice, personal communication, 2011). My reflections of the opening night experience presented in Chapter 4 and repeated below, demonstrated empathy for both Prometheus and the prisoners of conscience,

Although there were more scenes to be staged, more set pieces to be moved, more lines to be said, and more songs to be sung, the story of Prometheus and the reality of filmmaker Jafar Panahi's imprisonment had converged in my mind at that point. I had seen the chains. I had heard the threats of the tyrant and the defiant cries of the oppressed. I had felt the hands of the groupies. Through these sensations I had become a participant in the story happening in front of me and a connection had been made across centuries of time. At that moment in the show,

I felt empathy for Prometheus and for Jafar Panahi, whose postcard I had held during the pre-show and would be distributing shortly. (P. Cormier, personal reflection, 2011)

Empathy, as a concept, did not emerge implicitly nor explicitly from the interviews and reflections of Dan and Ron, although in my interviews with them it was apparent that both were empathetic individuals based on how they interacted with me and others and also based on their history of volunteerism, which was the last minor theme to emerge.

### *Volunteerism*

Volunteerism has been practiced by each research participant at some point in the past, however, I categorized it as a minor theme and not a major theme because the volunteerism experiences that emerged were unrelated to *Prometheus Bound*. I also intentionally excluded the volunteerism experiences that Meghan, Dan and I were involved in as volunteer activists in the production of *Prometheus Bound*.

Meghan started volunteering as a teen.

I got involved with Amnesty during high school. We had high school meetings about it. We would write letters and we had some events. We planned a big rally at high school. Some of the big things we did outside of school were the Get On the Bus Trip which goes to New York. (M. Robbins, personal communication, 2011)

When she got to college, Meghan continued to attend events organized by Amnesty and took a special interest in two of the prisoners she learned about by creating her own artwork to promote awareness of their plight. Meghan has also posted messages about Amnesty Appeals on her blog, which will be referenced in another theme.

Like Meghan, Janice started volunteering in high school although unlike Meghan, Janice's volunteerism was centered on her church, "I used to be a Sunday school teacher in high school and a little bit in college. Then I co-led the church youth group with my husband; we did outdoor camping and we played paintball and things like that" (Janice, personal communication, 2011). Ron volunteered in Florida, where he provided assistance to victims of a catastrophe involving severe flooding. Ron also provided financial support to several nonprofit groups, "There are certainly quite a number of organizations that I donate money to. I have donated to Amnesty International in the past, certain animal rights organizations, and human rights organizations too" (Ron, personal communication, 2011).

In 2003, at the age of 23, Dan volunteered as a campaign worker for the Howard Dean campaign and then in 2004 he managed an office for the Democratic National Committee. After those experiences, he left the U.S. and continued to volunteer, "I ended up going to Guatemala doing some service work because I'd always wanted to do that" (Dan, personal communication, 2011). Since the show ended, Dan has been active as a volunteer organizing brainstorming and networking sessions for a new project, "that is about the promotion of arts in action or arts as action; as intervention" (Dan, personal communication, 2011).

For the last several years, Miguel has performed with his Chicago-based band to raise money for several different causes.

In 18 months, using music as the platform, we managed to raise \$2 million dollars for the Chicago area. This is for organizations like the American Cancer Association, Broadway Cares/Equity Fights Aids and different treatment hospitals. Whether it is for arts funding for a community or saving a music

program at a local high school, which is something that is really personal for us. (Miguel, personal communication, 2011)

Miguel explained the personal motivation for his volunteer work

Our first drummer was lost to suicide and so suicide prevention is something we are very adamant about. Again, being a balls-out rock band, people don't necessarily want you to come out and play for their charity but there are organizations where it is the right kind of relationship. Amnesty seems to be one. I think that rock [music] is all about giving people a voice and Amnesty is certainly about protecting those who raise their voices. (Miguel, personal communication, 2011)

In the remarks above, Miguel used the notion of voice to make a connection between rock music and Amnesty's work, "rock [music] is all about giving people a voice and Amnesty is certainly about protecting those who raise their voices." This linkage indicates how the arts are uniquely positioned to support activism and socially conscious organizations like Amnesty. As noted in an earlier section, I have volunteered time and money to nonprofit organizations and social service agencies in my community for more than 10 years. In many cases, this involved working as a volunteer community arts practitioner developing programming to serve the youth and marginalized populations of central Massachusetts communities.

It has been interesting to learn of the different types of volunteerism engaged in as well as the extent of the volunteerism practiced by all of the research participants in this study. To review, the types of volunteerism engaged in included organizing artistic events and political campaigns, writing letters, creating artwork, leading youth groups, assisting victims of catastrophes, building community organizations and developing arts-based programs. In all but one case, the volunteerism practiced by research participants

Engagement Practices of Performing Arts-Makers: A Phenomenological Case Study of *Prometheus Bound* was sustained for periods of at least 3 years and two research participants volunteered for more than 15 years. This phenomenon is consistent with the findings reported in the previously referenced pilot study, “Volunteerism of Performing Artists” (Cormier, 2010), which indicated performing artists in that study volunteered at a higher rate (72%) than the general public (27%).

In this section I have focused on the volunteer work engaged in by research participants during the past, prior to *Prometheus Bound*. However, there has been recent volunteer work performed by Meghan, Dan and Miguel after *Prometheus Bound* closed that is noteworthy and will be elaborated within the context of a major theme, *Art as a Hammer*, which will be presented with the rest of the major themes in the next section.

## B. Major Themes

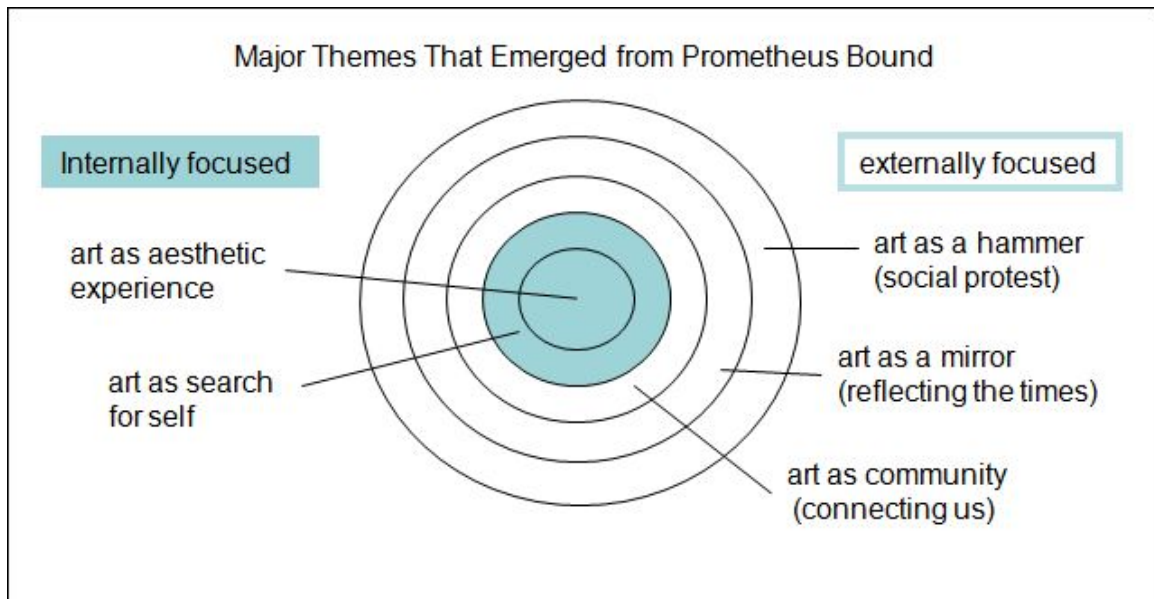
Gablik’s multiple descriptions of art, repeated here from page 13 of this document, have interested me since I first read the following passage in her book, *The Re-enchantment of Art* because her simple but elegant language captured the nuanced nature of art. Gablik’s quote from page 13 of this document is repeated here to inform my interpretation of the emerging themes.

Community is the starting point for new modes of relatedness, in which the paradigm of social conscience replaces that of the individual genius. In the past, we have made much of the idea of art as a mirror (reflecting the times); we have had art as a hammer (social protest); we have had art as furniture (something to hang on the walls); and we have art as a search for the self. There is another kind of art, which speaks to the power of connectedness and establishes bonds, art that calls us into relationships. (Gablik, 1992, p. 114)

As I began the coding process and distinguished between minor and major themes, I found that Gablik’s descriptions above aligned eerily with the themes appeared

to be major themes. This led to my conceptualization of both the major themes of this study and Gablik's descriptions of art as a series of gradually widening concentric rings with the innermost ring representing art as an aesthetic experience and the outermost ring representing art as a hammer, see Figure 25 below.

Figure 25. Major Themes That Emerged From Prometheus Bound



From the inside moving outward, the inner rings represent art as a search for self, art as community (connecting us all), and art as a mirror (reflecting the times). This diagram depicts the themes that emerged from the study in a manner that suggests a deepening and widening empathetic process. This diagram uses Gablik's descriptive labels and groups the five themes or levels of arts-making into internally and externally focused elements.

The first major theme to emerge was one of appreciation and enjoyment and represents the aesthetic experience of art. This is the most basic level of appreciation or empathy where one recognizes the way one feels as a result of the artistic experience.

This is consistent with one of Gablik's views of art, which she describes as, "...art as furniture (something to hang on the walls)" (1992, p. 114). This type of artistic experience is at the center of this model because aesthetics is the starting point for artistic appreciation. The next level of artistic appreciation involves a search for self that comes about from reflective thought. For example, one may use the artistic experience to reflect upon some aspect of one's experience or life, or ask deep, probing questions as a result of the artistic experience. Although the self-reflection may have been stimulated by the art, it can very likely expand into many different areas. Both of these levels are internally focused.

The next three major themes are more externally focused. The third theme that emerged used the art experience to engage others. Gablik refers to this as, "art that speaks to the power of connectedness and establishes bonds, art that calls us into relationships" (Gablik, 1992, p. 114). This level is defined as art as one of community engagement, where the primary goal is to form connections with others. The fourth theme that emerged was, "art as a mirror (reflecting the times)," also from the Gablik quote above. This theme emerged from *Prometheus Bound* because the story of Prometheus reflects the injustice and imprisonment launched against individuals by oppressive leaders in today's world. This theme is separate from but related to the last theme of "art as a hammer" from the Gablik passage, which involved specific actions taken in the service of others as a result of the artistic experience.

### **1: Art as Aesthetic Experience**

At its most basic level, art provides an aesthetic experience. Merriam-Webster (2011) defines aesthetic as, "a particular taste for or approach to what is pleasing to the



senses, dealing with the nature of beauty, art, and taste.” John Dewey (1934) used an older form of the word, “esthetic, as we have already noted, refers to experience as appreciative, perceiving and enjoying” (p. 49). In her dissertation entitled *Teaching for the Aesthetic Experience*, scholar Margaret Black defined aesthetic as, “construction of knowledge by a viewer who, when contemplating a work of art, seeks meaning by answering the question “What does it have to say?” (2000, p. 8).

*Prometheus Bound* offered a number of opportunities for such a sensory experience due to the compelling story line, the descriptive writing, the moving lyrics, the talented actors, the entertaining music, the creative set, the dramatic lighting and the innovative choreography. The theme of art as an aesthetic experience emerged from my initial experiences as I was pulled into the experience of the production. This theme also emerged from the reflections of cast, crew, and volunteers as well as from the posts placed on the *Prometheus Bound* Facebook page by audience members who had seen the show.

### *The Purple Day*

From her spot light perch on the catwalk high above the floor of the Oberon, Janice had a unique vantage point to watch and listen to the show.

I think that the first one [line] and one of the ones [lines] I have really enjoyed is – and it’s not just the quote either, it is also how the lighting at that part gets me – is during Prometheus’s first song. There is a part where he talks about how the purple day holds something of them and how the night knows something of their soul. (Janice, personal communication, 2011)

Janice’s words evoked the aesthetic experience of this moment in the show and described not only the line but the impact of the lighting, “the lighting at that part gets me.” See figure 26. below for the scene that Janice described (American Repertory Theater, 2011b).

And for some reason, I just think that it is a beautiful line and it was the first one that was memorable to me; the first one that stuck with me. Every night when I hear it, it hits me again. It’s just beautiful. (Janice, personal communication, 2011)

Figure 26. Prometheus Bound Scene 5



The words Janice used above, memorable and beautiful, describe the aesthetic experience that particular line produced in her.

And the lighting designer made it so that at the beginning of that section it starts to go purple and by the time he says, “the purple day,” the whole audience is bathed in purple. And it looks, from where I am, it just looks beautiful. That particular song is even better once we had an audience. For me it’s a more personal experience and even more beautiful when Prometheus is surrounded by people because that is what he is talking about and those are the people that he cares so much about. It’s so beautiful and I can see that it’s kind of magical for the people in the audience. (Janice, personal communication, 2011)

Janice tied several aspects of the production together in this passage. She described how the words that made up the line, the colors used in the lighting and the choreography which placed Prometheus in proximity to the audience, have all contributed to the experience. This is the essence of an aesthetic experience; an experience that impacts the viewer’s senses, which enables the viewer to experience an intense appreciation or empathy for the art.

#### *I Can’t Get the Songs Out of My Head*

The music of *Prometheus Bound* provided another aspect of the aesthetic experience. Janice noted, “The music was great; it was something you could get into” (Janice, personal communication, 2011). Three weeks after the show closed Meghan admitted, “I think I still have some of the songs stuck inside my head; just randomly they will pop in” (M. Robbins, personal communication, 2011). Meghan was not the only fan to have that experience. An audience member placed the following post on the *Prometheus Bound* Facebook wall, “incredible job Friday night! The show was a blast

and I can't get the songs out of my head” (Anonymous post on the Prometheus Bound facebook page, 2011).

Many other fans were also moved by the music as evidenced by the numerous postings on the *Prometheus Bound* Facebook page that referenced the music during the run of the show. The following table contains posts from this Facebook page referencing the music, see Figure 27. Prometheus Bound Facebook Posts (American Repertory Theater, 2011b).

Figure 27. Prometheus Bound Facebook Posts

<p>Is there a way to get all the music from Prometheus Bound??</p> <p>I had the time of my life and enjoyed the entire show!!! I loved the music and think that there should be a recording of all the amazing songs and music!</p> <p>Is there a show soundtrack available for purchase?!</p> <p>This is probably the best show I've ever seen! Please make a cast recording!</p> <p>Saw you guys on Wednesday night! Wicked awesome, I loved the music.</p> <p>I would honestly kill for a recording. Well, maybe not kill, but to say I'd be eager for one would be putting it mildly.</p>
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The observations above reflect the most basic level of artistic experience; impressions that are based primarily on sensory stimulation. This type of artistic appreciation occupies the first level of artistic experience which is represented by the smallest circle in the diagram listed above in Figure 24. This first level or stage of artistic appreciation is a necessary precursor to the other types of empathetic artistic experiences one may have. For some people, the aesthetic experience is the only one that matters and provides great enjoyment.

*How Much Fun Can Be Had?*

Miguel, the actor, used the word, ‘fun’ to characterize the artistic experience that *Prometheus Bound* created for him, “for me, what this show has provided...when you do change the rules of relationship between audience and regular actor, how much fun can be had. How much more of a tangible experience the audience can have” (Miguel, personal communication, 2011). Miguel recognized the unique relationship that *Prometheus Bound* created between audience and performer and credited this relationship with being the reason the show was so much fun.

I don’t think having fun and making some noise and blowing off steam is ever going to go out of style so if you can create experiences for people to both be introduced to something maybe that will get them engaged on a certain level and also give them the opportunity to have some fun; that is a great thing. (Miguel, personal communication, 2011)

Miguel’s use of the word ‘fun’ is consistent with Gablik’s view of art as furniture (something to hang on the walls). Both celebrate the pleasing nature of the artistic experience.

*Drenched in the Action and Sound*

Standing in the audience on opening night, 3 feet away from the stage, I was immersed in the full sensory experience of *Prometheus Bound*. As noted earlier in the opening night reflection, I was drenched in the action and sound of that first song, Hounds of Law. Thinking back on that experience, I can still feel the punch of the bass guitar synchronized with the thump of the kick drum in my gut. I can still hear the tightly harmonized vocals, belted out with confidence by the singers, who gestured with their

outstretched arms, while spittle flew from their lips as they delivered their lines with contempt, foreshadowing the torment to come.

It was an exhilarating moment for me as well as Dan and Meghan who were in the audience, near me, during that first scene. I recall that Meghan and I were standing quite still, trying to take it all in however Dan was moving energetically, nodding his head in time with the beat, moving around and actually dancing by himself. I saw him dance away from us and I recalled that Dan had mentioned that he had seen the show the night before. My reflection of the opening night experience, presented earlier, described my feelings during another part of the show.

At that moment in the show, I felt empathy for Prometheus and for Jafar Panahi. My senses had been stirred, my mind had been informed, and my emotions were close to the surface. After 30 minutes of the show, I had been impacted by *Prometheus Bound* (P. Cormier, personal reflection, 2011)

The aesthetic experience I had encountered resonated with me on three levels: sensory, intellectually and emotionally, which I learned later were the same three levels that Zakaras and Lowell (2008) referred to as a traditional aesthetic experience:

The communicated potential of the created artwork is realized only when individuals experience the work in a way that engages their emotions, stimulates their senses, and challenges their minds to a process of discovery – the kind of occurrence traditionally referred to as an aesthetic experience (pp. 9-10).

Meghan, Dan and I were all moved by the experience however, this theme did not emerge from Ron. His comments for the most part, were directed toward the production of *Prometheus Bound* and his role as a musician in the production. In retrospect, his reflections seemed to be more focused on the art-making process than the product itself.

## 2. Art as a Search for Self

The second theme that emerged from the research aligns with one of Suzi Gablik's notions of art contained in the previously quoted passage, "art as a search for the self" (1992, p. 114). In my view, the search for self is an introspective inquiry that probes the important questions one occasionally asks about one's purpose in life and may involve critical thinking. This theme of search for self emerged from the interviews as one arts-maker reflected upon her religious beliefs, while another arts-maker reflected upon the challenges he faced as a musician in the show and others pondered how the engagement practices utilized by *Prometheus Bound* had impacted their notions of arts-making.

*How dare I question God?*

It [*Prometheus Bound*] actually had a huge impact on me. It has actually made me question a lot of things. I grew up Christian. One of the things that happened that I didn't expect is that it sort of had me questioning choices that are made by God and who would stand up against that. (Janice, personal communication, 2011)

In *Prometheus Bound*, Zeus is referred to as a god several times and early on in the show Prometheus explained what Zeus had planned to do to the human race.

No sooner had his Grand Theistic Eminence assumed that throne  
than he began to regulate his empire;  
but to the breed of human kind,  
those creatures-of-a-day, he gave no account, intending to obliterate  
the entire race and beget a new one.

(Sater, 2011b, p. 14)

Zeus intended to annihilate the human race. However Prometheus stepped in and saved the entire race by giving them fire, the arts and other skills. Sitting through the performances night after night, hearing about the unjust tyranny of Zeus apparently made an impression on Janice.

I am questioning these things that I have never questioned before because of this show. So in this story, obviously, Zeus wants to wipe out the entire human race and for people who read the bible, that's happened and who is there? Who would stand up against that and make the right decision? I do believe in God, but what if God is making bad decisions and who is there that is going to do this and stuff like that? (Janice, personal communication, 2011)

The questions that Janice asked herself above were profound, "...what if God is making bad decisions...and who is there that is going to do this." Although this last question is somewhat ambiguous, one can reasonably assume from the context of her complete statement that she means, who is going to stand up against God and make the right decision. Janice continued this line of thought and shared a reflection about her thinking, "so it [*Prometheus Bound*] really, really affected me a lot. And it is just amazing to me that it really made me think about that" (Janice, personal communication, 2011). One can sense Janice's incredulity based on the realization that the show, "really, really affected me a lot" and this line of questioning led Janice to take specific actions.

And I actually went so far as to write a couple of lengthy emails to a friend of mine from college...she is in the military so I cannot necessarily get a hold of her as easily as I used to...she is the person that I think of when I want to have an intellectual conversation. (Janice, personal communication, 2011)

The first of these emails is excerpted below:



Hi Jones, the actual reason I'm writing has to do with the show I'm involved in and some questions I've never asked myself before. So, I found myself asking a question the other day that I've (rather surprisingly) NEVER asked before... and I thought you'd be the perfect person to discuss it with...What if God is wrong? What if His decisions are NOT the right decisions? (Janice, personal communication, 2011)

Janice has begun to think of her religion in new ways and has asked herself questions that she has not asked before, which challenged her beliefs. Her email continued:

As a life-long Christian, I'm sure you realize that these questions don't sit well with me. It goes against everything I've always believed...Jones, I feel like my head might explode. And I also feel a little like crying... because I think it would be easier to just not believe...Okay, this email is long and heavy. Let me know what you think. Wish you could see the show...you would like it. (Janice, personal communication, 2011)

Janice was in turmoil. She stated that, “my head might explode.” She also felt “...a little like crying...because I think it would be easier to just not believe.” Janice referred to herself as a believer but she had serious doubts about her beliefs.

Janice also acknowledged that there will probably be a time in the future when it will really matter what she believes in, “when the time comes to fight...which side is the right side.” This statement is ambiguous because the sides are unclear. But the dilemma Janice is wrestling with is no less real. *Prometheus Bound* has caused Janice to question her religious beliefs and this reflection has created discomfort, uncertainty and apparently, pain. In a second email to her friend, she exclaimed, “How dare I question God? How dare I” (Janice, personal communication, 2011)?

Maxine Greene (2000) explained how the arts can cause uneasiness and how that discomfort can lead one to ponder new realities of being, “the shocks of awareness to

which the arts give rise leave us (*should* leave us) less immersed in the everyday and more impelled to wonder and to question... it is not uncommon for the arts to leave us somehow ill at ease or to prod us beyond acquiescence” (p. 135). The show has prodded Janice to wrestle with her beliefs about her faith and her religion and has evoked apprehension of a potential future confrontation, “when the time comes to fight...which side is the right side.” This discomfort Janice felt has arisen from her presence in the liminal zone, that space that artists and audiences inhabit through the art-making process, where conditions for learning exist as described here by Sameshima and Irwin (2008).

The spaces of liminality speak to a place of agitation. The in between is unsettled...liminal spaces are dynamic spaces of possibility where individuals and cultures come in contact with one another creating interstitial conditions for new communities of learning (pgs. 6-7).

Garoian (1999) also acknowledged the importance of the agitation being experienced, “...contention is a desirable state. It is the principle means by which spectators/students become critical thinkers” (p. 43). Janice had begun to critically deconstruct her feelings about her faith as a result of her involvement in *Prometheus Bound*. Her reflections caused her to question her deeply held religious beliefs and as a result she engaged in a thoughtful discourse with an acquaintance which provided the opportunity for her to articulate her concerns and learn more about her convictions. A closing excerpt from her email discourse is presented below:

So then, it occurs to me that part of the reason these questions don't sit well with me is that I'm afraid to question God. BTW, this train of thought has given me inspiration to write a play, tentatively called, The Father, oh, the symbology! (Janice, personal communication, 2011)

*I'm Definitely in a Recovery Period*

Ron enjoyed being a member of a group of talented musicians, “I thought that the band was very nicely matched. Everybody was good. I didn’t feel there were any weak links. It wasn’t like any of us were dragging one player along. Nobody had to worry” (Rob, personal communication, 2011). However, Ron’s skill as a musician and performer was severely challenged in *Prometheus Bound*.

The truth is Prometheus is like no other gig I have done in the sense that there was such a tremendous amount of attention that had to be paid at all times. As far as pushing me as a player, I definitely learned that I was able to withstand a combination of challenges that I have never experienced all at the same time for that long of a run. (Ron, personal communication, 2011)

Ron’s comments above substantiated the learning he had experienced, “I definitely learned that I was able to withstand a combination of challenges that I have never experienced” (Ron, personal communication, 2011). Ron elaborated on the challenges he faced.

We weren’t in a pit. We were up there where people could see us. We were loud enough where if mistakes were made, it would ring out loud and clear...it was a different way of getting cues from the music director, she had a microphone so she was giving us cues that way into our ear monitors...there was one piece that I was playing on one instrument and at the end of the tune, I would finish the last note and I had literally seven seconds to grab another instrument and make sure it didn’t fall in the process, put it on, get the volume up, switch from the old signal to the new signal and start playing a tune that was very fast. (Ron, personal communication, 2011)

The challenges that Ron faced seem daunting and provide an interesting insight into what it meant to perform as a musician in Prometheus Bound. The rock band engagement practice, which included the placement of certain band members on pedestals where they could be seen by audiences, created significant challenges for Ron.

The other thing that made the show interesting and when I say interesting I mean challenging was the fact that for myself and the other guitarist, we were up on those pedestals and let's just say they didn't always feel stable. They were a little shaky and any time a cast member was on stage jumping, I feared for my upright instrument's life...and standing for an hour and a half like that took a lot of stamina, which I had to build up over the course of the run. (Ron, personal communication, 2011)

By the end of the show, the challenges Ron described had taken a toll on him, "In terms of facing challenges like that, it showed me that I could actually do it, even though I am definitely in a recovery period" (Ron, personal communication, 2011).

*Do You Want to Be a Part of It?*

Miguel reflected upon his experience as an actor in *Prometheus Bound*:

It [Prometheus Bound] has taught me that theater is so much more than – stand here and say this line. As a front man of a rock band, that is inherently valuable. The way in which I now relate to an audience will be affected by this experience. It's been exciting...because we are challenging people's notions. What is theater, what is participation? What is the nature of the relationship between actor and audience? (Miguel, personal communication, 2011)

In the passage above, Miguel pondered the unique relationship that exists between "actor and audience." He continued:

I think that anytime you do something that is put on display there is a tiny degree of responsibility. Well, I wouldn't even say responsibility, I would say there's an opportunity and as much as you can create an experience that people will go and have fun at, you can also create an experience where maybe they will just think about things in a slightly different way. And that is huge. (Miguel, personal communication, 2011)

His words above imply an awareness of the critical thinking that can result from an intense artistic experience, "you can also create an experience where maybe they will just think about things in a slightly different way."

People who see this show one time and they do not understand all the words and they might not get the whole plot, but they are having a visceral experience. And I think they respond to something that is cool and is fun and moves them on a level maybe they can't understand. But because we got their attention, we then have the opportunity to say – Look at the great things these people [Amnesty International] are doing. Could you sign a postcard to help us out? Do you want to be a part of it? (Miguel, personal communication, 2011)

Miguel recognized how an intense, visceral experience like *Prometheus Bound* could be used to encourage action. This realization, that art could inspire action, led him to organize a benefit concert to promote the work of Amnesty International, which will be covered in a later section in more detail. Meghan came to the same realization as Miguel, that art could inspire action.

I learned a lot about people and how they get inspired and how they get involved in the different cases. And even though I had worked with Amnesty before, it kind of got me more excited about working with Amnesty and it made me realize what I want to be working on with my own art. (M. Robbins, personal communication, 2011)

The reflections experienced by Janice, Ron, Miguel and Meghan that resulted in new ways of meaning-making, is described by Greene (2000) as a process, “to open clearings for communicating across the boundaries” (p. 134). This process helps one challenge old ways of thinking in order to pursue new ways of relatedness. Janice, Ron Miguel, and Meghan challenged their old way of thinking and as a result, embraced, “new ways of relatedness” through their involvement in and reflection upon their experiences in *Prometheus Bound*.

Greene (2000) explained how engagement in the arts can provide a way for people to challenge who and what they are and move into new spaces and relationships, “In part, I argue for aware engagements with the arts for everyone, so that individuals in

this democracy will be less likely to confine themselves to the “main text,” less likely to coincide forever with what they are” (p. 135).

My involvement in *Prometheus Bound* caused me to reflect upon the role of volunteer activist, which connected me to the Amnesty prisoners of conscience. I found myself wondering what it would be like to be restricted from practicing my art or speaking out against an oppressive government like the prisoners whose cases I was promoting. I shuddered at the horror of being imprisoned for my ideas and actions. My role as volunteer activist felt so safe and so carefully scripted that I felt like I had very little in common with the prisoners I was supporting. It seemed laughable that I was considered a ‘volunteer activist’ for handing out postcards in a theatre in Cambridge, Massachusetts when the ‘real’ activists were paying a horrible price for taking life-threatening risks. Although I felt somewhat like a poser, compared to an activist like Jafar Panahi, it was still gratifying to take this small step.

Dan’s role as volunteer coordinator required him to determine the nature and extent of interaction that would exist between arts-makers and audience members and then negotiate that interaction with the rest of the creative team, who did not necessarily agree with him.

But this dissatisfaction, I think, was all good in that it was crystallizing my beliefs and convictions about just how much more can be done. (Dan, personal communication, 2011)

This experience represented a challenge for Dan, but it also provided him with an opportunity for personal growth through introspection. This experience inspired Dan to become involved in a new project, which will be described in a later theme.

### **3: Art as Community Engagement**

The theme of art as community engagement is described by Gablik as, “art that speaks to the power of connectedness and establishes bonds, art that calls us into relationships” (1992, p. 114). As noted in the earlier section on engagement practices, community collaboration was a deliberate effort used by the artistic director on several levels. First a cohesive community of performing arts-makers was formed through a series of preliminary events and workshops that occurred several months before rehearsal started. Then this community of arts-makers was expanded to include activists from Amnesty International and other organizations.

#### *A Community of Artist Activists*

Miguel described his initial expectations of the show before rehearsals had started.

It was weird for me at first because I came into this thinking as a traditional theater performer, thinking they’re going to tell me where to stand, they’re going to tell me what to do, they’re going to tell me how to be, they’re going to tell me what to wear and in this case we would have deep conversations about the text (Miguel, personal communication, 2011).

But the rehearsal experience was not what he expected.

But we had more conversations with representatives with Physicians for Human Rights and different groups that are advocating for human rights and Amnesty and all that kind of stuff and really sort of getting first-hand experience about what torture means; spending time with the different images and hearing about different cases and what is sort of happening today and how that sort of relates to what we are doing. It makes it personal and it makes it relevant. (Miguel, personal communication, 2011)

The fact that the cast and crew apparently spent more time becoming familiar with human rights issues than they did receiving stage direction indicates one way that the director began to form a tightly connected community of informed, socially-conscious artists. It is clear from his comments above that Miguel made the connection between the production and current reality and related it to his own life, “hearing about different cases and what is happening today and how it relates to what we are doing. It makes it personal and it makes it relevant.”

By integrating social justice into the rehearsals for *Prometheus Bound*, Paulus began to create a community of activists from her assemblage of art-makers. This approach, of forming a community to become a launch pad for activism is consistent with approaches used by artist activists. As Gablik (1992) explains, “community is the starting point for new modes of relatedness, in which the paradigm of social conscience replaces that of individual genius” (p. 114). Gablik signals the evolution of art-making from one focused on an individual’s appreciation of the art product to one focused on the process of art-making and the valuing of community in that process. Janice described the feelings she and others had about the shows which clearly went beyond viewing the show as a product.

It seems that the message that we are sending and also with the involvement of Amnesty International and dedicating this show to different individuals or groups every week, from what I see, everybody has kind of pulled together on that as well. I think it is something that all of us are very proud to be working on and really enjoy working on and helping to further these causes and everything. So in that way, we all have common goals. It’s not just for entertainment. (Janice, personal communication, 2011)



Janice had spoken from the collective perspective of the community by her word choices, "...the message we are sending....everybody has kind of pulled together...all of us are very proud to be working on and." Clearly, a community of activists has been formed and Janice felt comfortable speaking for that community. Miguel echoed this feeling that came from being involved in *Prometheus Bound* with Amnesty, "you feel good about yourself at the end of the day" (Miguel, personal communication, 2011).

The theme of community engagement emerged from the *Prometheus Bound* experience in other ways as well. For example, A.R.T. engaged the community through the use of volunteer activists. The engagement practice of recruiting volunteers to support the Amnesty Appeals was a deliberate attempt by A.R.T. to bring community members into the production and onto the production team. Artistic director Paulus reached out to the broader community through the A.R.T. website, emails and word of mouth.

From my first-hand experience as a volunteer activist, I can confirm that the volunteers represented different races, ages and genders. Paulus included anyone who was interested in participating up to the limitation of 10 volunteers per show. A.R.T. also attracted volunteer activists to their shows by providing free tickets to the performance as described in the email notification referenced in an earlier section, "All volunteers will be able to see the show on the night that they volunteer" (personal communication, 2011). By doing so, A.R.T. removed the financial obstacle that may have prevented some people from attending the show.

Community engagement through the recruitment of volunteer activists was a brilliant way to engage the community because it provided an opportunity for active and meaningful participation. Meghan, one of the volunteer activists described the bonding that occurred between herself and cast members because of her involvement in *Prometheus Bound*, “they [cast and crew] started to know me, which was kind of cool; the people in the show. So I would just go up and talk to them; and me and my friends just took some pictures with them” (M. Robbins, personal communication, 2011).

I felt the same type of connection with cast and crew members as a result of my participation as a volunteer activist. Cast members acknowledged me and crew members high-fived me at random moments before and after the show. I was included in this team and had a standing in this group. I was even offered an opportunity to join an ensemble of “Death and the Powers,” a different A.R.T. production by Allegra, the assistant director, which I believe came about because of the connection I made with her through my involvement in *Prometheus Bound*.

In the following email sent to the cast and crew of *Prometheus Bound*, Allegra provided heartfelt feedback to the cast and crew as well as an update about the tangible impact of their collective efforts thus far.

Dear Prometheus Bound, BREAK A LEG TONIGHT!! I want to let you know how much I love this show and everyone who has put such beautiful and raw work into its creation. I am so thankful for the opportunity to be a part of this production. Below are the latest statistics from Amnesty and I'll be sure to keep you all updated as we get more news about the cases. I'll be rocking out at the opening of Death and the Powers in Chicago in honor of you all tonight. Allegra.  
(A. Libonati, personal communication, 2011)

The tone of the email above illustrates the depth of positive feelings and connections that were formed between members of the *Prometheus Bound* community and provides insight into how the assistant director valued that relationship. The words used by Allegra such as ‘love’ and ‘honor’ reflect the deep human connection that was formed. Allegra’s email continued with the results of the postcard campaign.

Below you will see the number of actions that were taken on behalf of each of the 8 cases that have been featured during Prometheus Bound. So far we have collected over 2,800 signatures and we still need to add in a few more numbers. We are thrilled with this! Thanks so much! (A. Libonati, personal communication, 2011)

Audience members were also invited into this community by sharing the space after the performance with cast, crew and volunteer activists. The informal mingling that took place after the shows removed the magic of the performance and made the performers accessible to the audience members. The distribution of postcards by cast members and volunteers at this time provided a specific context for their interaction with audience members, and gave both parties a reason to construct a dialogue with each other.

#### *Facebook: A Community Engagement Mechanism*

One way that A.R.T. nurtured this growing community was through the use of social media. Many organizations are using social media tools like Facebook to reach out to potential customers, clients and audience. A.R.T. created a *Prometheus Bound* Facebook page and used it to promote the show, see Figure 28. below (American Repertory Theater, 2011b).

Figure 28. Prometheus Bound Facebook Page



By having a Facebook page, A.R.T. not only promoted the show, they also provided a way for their audience to share feedback about the show. As noted in a previous section, some audience members posted comments about the music. Others reflected upon the show in general like the following post.

Phenomenal production/ the words/the language-fabulous & the visuals & engaging the audience; it so felt like NYC & yeah, the vibe is here & now. Kudos to cast, crew, designers, costumes, music- dble thnks; sound & scenery & message on point. Prometheus - still relevant! (Prometheus Bound Facebook wall, 2011)

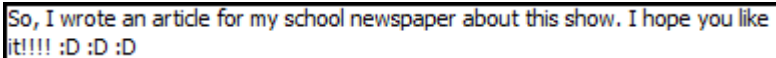
Posts like the one above and the one below provided positive encouraging feedback to

everyone involved in the production: actors, technical crew, volunteers, producers, and other audience members.

I have never been more inspired by or loved a show more. Truly a life changing experience. I have seen it two times, and am so excited to see it at LEAST 3 more. GO PROMETHEUS, GO!!!! (Prometheus Bound Facebook wall, 2011)

The *Prometheus Bound* Facebook page also became a way for audience members to share information with each other. For example, one student who saw the show posted a link to an article she wrote for her school newspaper, see Figure 29. below.

Figure 29. Prometheus Bound Facebook Post by Student



So, I wrote an article for my school newspaper about this show. I hope you like it!!!! :D :D :D

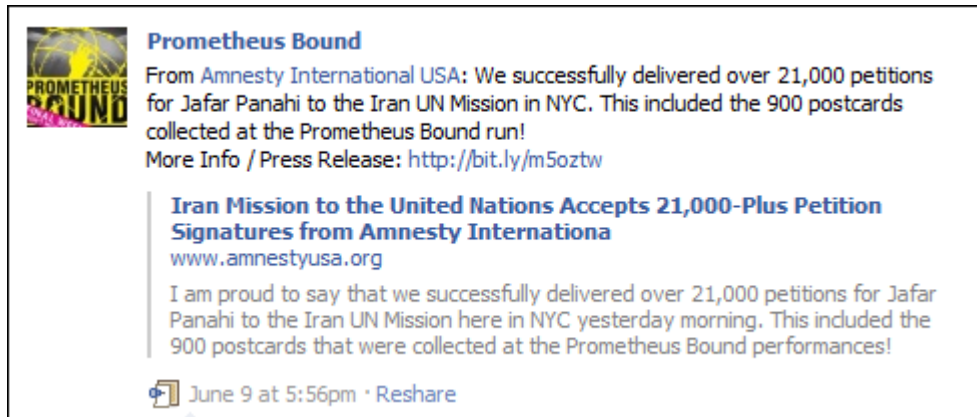
In the article, the student described the show's effect on her.

Many people have asked me why I have spent so much money to see this show multiple times. Honestly, it's the energy that the actors bring to the stage, this electric pulse that is felt by every pore in my body... The set is atypical, as "groupies" gently, but firmly push you out of the way of the moving platforms and ladders, constantly spinning to follow the action. There is never a dull moment: wherever you look, actors are completely immersed in the world of Prometheus Bound. (Anonymous, personal communication, 2011)

By posting on the *Prometheus Bound* Facebook, the author added her voice to the artist activist community.

More than two months after the show closed, posts still appeared on the *Prometheus Bound* Facebook wall. The following message was posted by a representative of Amnesty International on June 9, 2011 summarizing the results of one of the eight Amnesty Appeals that *Prometheus Bound* supported, see Figure 30. below.

Figure 30. Prometheus Bound Facebook Post By Amnesty International



The post above described how Amnesty, “successfully delivered over 21,000 petitions for Jafar Panahi to the Iran UN Mission in NYC. This included the 900 postcards collected at the Prometheus Bound run” (Prometheus Bound Facebook Wall, 2011).

I posted the following message on my Facebook page, “Saw Prometheus Bound at the Oberon in Cambridge last nite – it rocked,” on February, 26 at 12:09PM, which resulted in the following response posted by Dave, a musician friend, several hours later.

Pete, I was reading about that show in the Phoenix. They guy who wrote all the music is Serj Tankian, from System of a Down. Apparently he’s quite the Renaissance man. What was the music like? (Posted on P. Cormier Facebook Wall, 2011)

It is interesting that this Facebook post stimulated a dialogue between myself and Dave, who I had not communicated with in several years. I responded to Dave’s post with another post less than 24 hours later and articulated my impressions of the show.

Hi Dave, the music was quite powerful, ranging from haunting to forcefully raucous, a lot of strong guitar chords, I met Serj after the show and we spoke for a bit. He said he had some of the music in his head for a while and other songs he wrote specifically for the show. Most of the scenes took place in the open space dance floor where the audience was standing. Quite the experience to be completely engaged in the show. I recommend it. (Posted on P. Cormier

Facebook Wall, 2011)

I also posted a link to a youtube video of the song I found on the Prometheus Bound Facebook page, “With Your Fingers Pale and Numb” and then I changed my profile picture to a photo I took of the *Prometheus Bound* sticker I had received at the show. Facebook had connected me to the cast, crew, volunteers and audience members of *Prometheus Bound* and I found myself monitoring the *Prometheus Bound* Facebook page after the show closed to view photos and read comments that continued to be posted.

Ron experienced a connection with the other musicians that resulted in a kind of sub-community, within the community of performers, “I thought that the band was nicely matched. Everybody was good. It was really neat” (Ron, personal communication, 2011). Through a very inclusive approach Tankian created a cohesive musical team where ideas were encouraged.

He [Tankian] had come up with a basic line for a particular piece and so I tried something else and he said, ‘alright we are getting there.’ And then I tried something else or Charlie, as a fellow fretted-neck instrument player said, ‘How about this.’ And I tried that and that worked or it didn’t and we’d keep trying. (Ron, personal communication, 2011)

*Prometheus Bound* inspired Dan to organize a series of networking and brainstorming sessions after the show closed to organize the community of people who had volunteered and been affected by the show, “We want to figure out how the Prometheus project can in fact be a project that is about promotion of arts in action or arts as action; as intervention” (Dan, personal communication, 2011). This effort will be

elaborated on in another theme, *Art as a Hammer* because it is an extraordinary example of how one can use the arts to build.

#### **4. Art as a Mirror (reflecting the times)**

##### *Reflecting Current Events*

Gablik's characterization of art as a "mirror (reflecting the times)" (1992, p. 114) evoked another dimension of meaning-making for me and the research participants. Taken at face value, the story of *Prometheus Bound* reflected the oppression against individuals, especially artists, activists and journalists that exists in certain parts of the world today. *Prometheus Bound* succeeded as a mirror of the times by being a sober reminder that oppressive actions by government leaders have not disappeared from our world.

About a week before we opened is when things really went to shit in Egypt and then Libya and then Yemen and all of these sorts of events and uprisings were happening. Everything became more tangible; the things we were talking about; working with Amnesty and all that stuff. It became a little more like, this is really going on. (Miguel, personal communication, 2011)

As Miguel explained in the passage above, the current events that were happening at the same time as the rehearsals for the show made the story of *Prometheus Bound* very real for him. Meghan's blog postings to create awareness of Amnesty prisoners during and after *Prometheus Bound* and Janice's reflections below also demonstrated their mindfulness of the injustices happening in the world today.

It that seems the message we are sending and also the involvement of Amnesty International and dedicating this show to different individuals or groups each week, from what I can see, everybody has kind of pulled together on that as well. I think it is something that all of us are very proud to be working on and helping



to further these causes. (Janice, personal communication, 2011)

Neither Ron nor Dan verbalized any connection between *Prometheus Bound* and current events, however I experienced the same connection with current news stories noted above by Megan, Miguel and Janice. The lyrics from the opening number, *Hounds of Law* excerpted below, made me think of the violent demonstrations happening in the Middle East and the plight of those who were dragged away to dark cells and silenced.

They check you in, check you out - -  
Count your hair and teeth.  
Let you weep in your cell,  
While your neighbors scream.

Bow wow,  
Them's the hounds of law - -  
Them's the hounds of law - -  
Howl, howl...

They don't give you a trial - -  
Just beat you a while.  
Have a smoke and a smile,  
As they sell your child.

(Sater, 2011b, p. 1)

This song continued to resonate with me each time I saw the show.

This theme of art as a mirror also represents how art can be a useful way to promote anything: a cause, a need, a statement or an idea. The marketing campaign utilized by A.R.T. took advantage of traditional news outlets as well as websites, email distribution lists, social media, and word of mouth. These measures not only promoted the show as a commercial event, they also called attention to the plight of those unjustly imprisoned today. Therefore, *Prometheus Bound* was an extremely effective way to create awareness of and promote Amnesty International's mission.

*Cutting Edge Theater*

On an entirely different level, this theme also represents how *Prometheus Bound* offered audiences a contemporary, cutting-edge view of progressive theater, mirroring the latest in trends in musical theater. As the earlier section on engagement practices outlined, A.R.T. utilized physical space, choreography, physical contact, social justice, community collaboration and a rock band to connect with the audience. These engagement practices represented the latest trends in live theatrical productions designed to engage audiences and bring them into the production as active participants. This approach provided unique interaction opportunities for both audience members and performers, as Miguel explained:

One of the things that was appealing about this show was obviously the people that are involved and the organizations that are involved. It is unique, it is tremendously unique. Because of the way it is staged, because of the interaction with the crowd and the way the show moves through the audience and also the nature of the show as a rock piece, there's a lot of freedom to bring yourself – to bring your own personality to it; to approach how you deal with moving the audience and how you deal with your character and how you relate to the band. (Miguel, personal communication, 2011)

Janice shared this view that the engagement practices contributed to the audience's experience, "I think the way the audience is brought into the experience is important. I don't think that it would be the same experience if it were the typical sit-down-and-watch the show sort of thing" (Janice, personal communication, 2011). Megan arrived at a similar conclusion:

I think the way it was set up, that kind of interactive space, helped with our message at the end. Because I think that if it was a regular set up on a stage and everybody's just sitting down I think it would be harder to get people involved.

(M. Robbins, personal communication, 2011)

From his vantage point on the wobbly pedestal, Ron enjoyed viewing the audience in the space as they interacted with the performers.

It was nice to look out each night to see if there was a unique response from the audience and how they are going to act with being gently pushed. Like when Charlie is playing his solo, is anyone going to turn around and watch or are they going to just watch what is going on. (Ron, personal communications, 2011)

The statement by artistic director Paulus referenced earlier is excerpted below because it is consistent with the views stated above and describes her audience-centered mission:

It's not just the play we pick or the show that we program but the complete artistic arts experience that we provide for you, the audience. It is a very audience-driven mission and for me it connects directly to the A.R.T.'s core mission, which is to expand the boundaries of theater...that redefines what the experience of theater is and invites you the audience to be an active participant. (Paulus, 2009)

Dan recognized the impact of this visceral, participatory experience on the audience but he focused on how to take the experience to the next level, "I was very interested in prolonging the moment after the show for people. I am very interested in practical outcomes, even more practical than what we did with the postcard actions because that is primarily an awareness campaign" (Dan, personal communication, 2011). Dan's ideas for the next steps are included in the following theme, which represents *Art as a Hammer*, a metaphor for deliberate action.

## **5. Art as a Hammer**

The theme of art as a hammer was the last theme to emerge from the artifacts, interviews and observations based upon the Gablik quote referenced earlier, "we have

had art as a hammer (social protest)” (1992, p. 114). The social protest concept associated with this theme represents the transformative power of a single action undertaken by one person to help another, which was outlined in the following passage taken from the A.R.T. website presented earlier:

By singing the story of Prometheus, the God who defied the tyrant Zeus by giving the human race both fire and art, this production hopes to give a voice to those currently being silenced or endangered by modern-day oppressors. Through our hero’s struggles, we experience the power of the individual to take action in the service of another human being. (American Repertory Theater, 2011a, p. 14)

The *Prometheus Project* provided the opportunity for each audience member to take a single action, which consisted of signing a postcard to express his or her concern to a government official responsible for the imprisonment or mistreatment of one of the eight individual subjects of current Amnesty Appeals.

In this section, the actions of three arts-makers involved in the show are described in detail. In the first example, Meghan used a blog she created to promote public awareness of several oppressed artists. The second example involved the efforts by Dan to organize a group of activist artists to continue the arts and activism work that had begun with *Prometheus Bound*. The third example was a benefit concert organized by Miguel to continue the promotion of Amnesty Appeals, which was attended by all six research participants. Although Rob and Janice did not offer reflections that explicitly referenced this theme, their attendance at the benefit concert was a deliberate action that demonstrated their recognition of this theme.

*Blogging about Arts and Activism.*

Meghan volunteered as an activist in Prometheus Bound 17 times, more than any other volunteer. She explained why:

I really wanted to be involved with it as much as I could – the whole thing with the arts and activism and how powerful it was in getting out the message. As a theater piece, it was a really great show but the whole idea of taking the audience and just going to the next level; not just seeing the show and then leaving, but seeing the show and having all that energy and emotion built up, and then actually doing something with it and opening up a way for other people to get involved. (M. Robbins, personal communication, 2011)

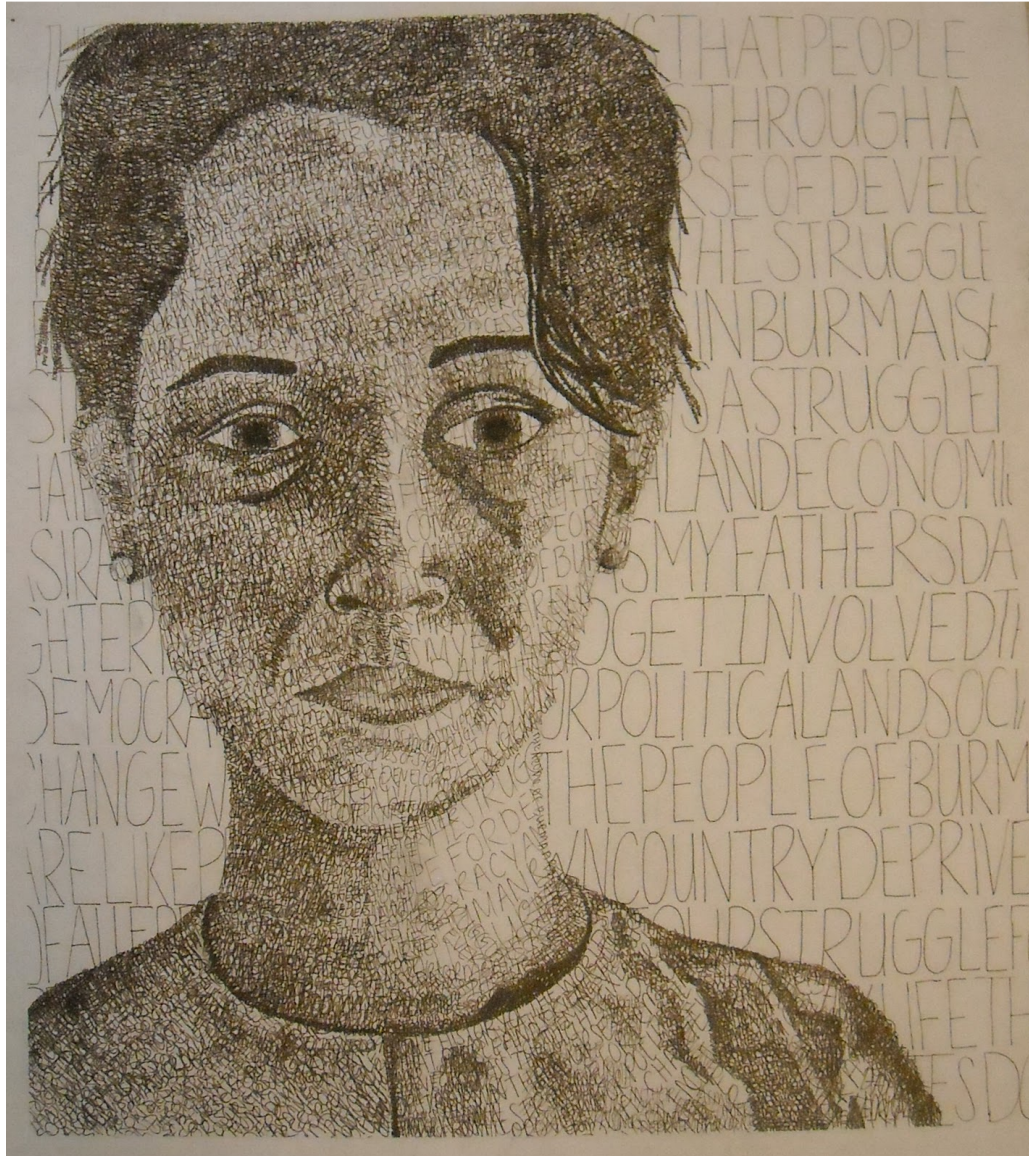
Meghan actually did something with the energy and emotion she experienced: she blogged about *Prometheus Bound* before, during and after the run of the show. Her first blog post about the show was on February 8, 2011 when she posted photos of an early workshop she attended. Meghan blogged about the show on March 5, 2011 and then again on April 1, 2011. Then on April 7, she posted her artwork of two prisoners of conscience: Aung San Suu Kyi and Jayaprakash Sittampalam Tissainayagam (Tissa) under the heading *The Intersection of Arts and Activism*, presented below:

The Prometheus Project focuses on the intersection of arts and human rights, in collaboration with the American Repertory Theater (A.R.T.)’s production of Prometheus Bound and Amnesty International. The Prometheus Project team really wanted to change the idea of the audience being unengaged and just leaving after the performance. The collaboration with Amnesty and the A.R.T is a beautiful way to shine a light on those suffering from injustice. The eight Amnesty cases represent a modern day Prometheus. The story of Prometheus reflects the injustice that is so relatable with an unfortunately large number of cases. (Robbins, 2011a)

The blog post above reflected Meghan’s meaning-making of Prometheus Bound, which is presented in a thoughtfully poetic manner, “a beautiful way to shine a light on those suffering from injustice.” She continued with her post introducing her artwork depicted in Figures 31. and 32. below.

This project (Prometheus Bound) indirectly relates to the portraits I am working on now. I am working on craft, so that I can draw more realistic portraits. I would like to transfer the craft of portrait drawings to depict a strong message. This relates more to work I have done in the past. Below are a few pieces that I have done relating to my work with Amnesty International. (Robbins, 2011a)

Figure 31. Aung San Suu Kyi (Robbins, 2010a)



Meghan's post below identified the person she portrayed in the portrait above.

Aung San Suu Kyi is an active member of the pro-democracy political party in Myanmar. Aung San Suu Kyi was detained for 15 of the last 21 years. This portrait of Suu Kyi was done for my Conceptual drawing class last year. The shading is done with quotes from Suu Kyi. Aung San Suu Kyi was released on November 13, 2010. (Robbins, 2011a)

The portrait above was presented in an art show in the Boston area shortly after *Prometheus Bound* closed and Meghan received positive feedback from an Amnesty representative who was at the show, “she said it had a really good response and people were talking about who she [Aung San Suu Kyi] was and why she was there and I thought that was really cool” (M. Robbins, personal communication, 2011).

In the following post, Meghan explained the individual and the story behind her second piece of artwork in Figure 32. below.

Tissa is a well known Sri Lankan Journalist. He was detained on March 7, 2008. The Sri Lankan government is very repressive regarding freedom of speech. These two paintings were for my Conceptual Drawing final, last year. The focus is on the difference of freedom of speech in Sri Lanka and the United States. He was released in June 2010. I met Tissa on November 13, 2010 at an Amnesty International conference at Boston University. (Robbins, 2011a)

Figure 32. Tissa (Robbins, 2010b)



The blog postings and artwork presented by Meghan demonstrate her attempt to merge her activism and her artwork. Meghan continued to blog after the show's run, creating awareness about other prisoners of conscience.

*The Prometheus Project Lives On*

The second example of a deliberate post-show action is described in the email below, which was sent by Dan, the Prometheus Project coordinator, to the 160 Prometheus Bound volunteer activists.

To: Undisclosed Recipients - Some of us here at Boston University who have been working on the Prometheus Project, closely with many of you, are very interested in exploring further how the Prometheus Project can live on. There is supportive interest from The A.R.T., Cultural Agents, The Carr Center, among others, and lots of interest amongst students (and community members) for keeping a network or artists/activist "hub" alive here in Boston. (Dan, personal communication, 2011)

In the email above, Dan described the multiple constituencies that were interested in, "keeping a network or artists/activist hub alive." The email continued:

We're trying to get a group of graduate and undergraduate students whom we've connected with around this possibility together to do some visioning and some clarifying of potential goals and steps moving forward toward a shared vision. Our hope is by the end of the semester we have a strong sense of where to direct the energies that the Prometheus Project catalyzed, and that some of you may feel inspired to join in the leadership of this moving forward into next year. (Dan, personal communication, 2011)

In the passage above Dan outlined specific actionable objectives and advocated the creation of a structure within this newly formed community involving "goals", "shared vision" and a "leadership" team, and did so in an entirely inclusive manner. He continued.



The *Prometheus Project* has been, metaphorically and quite literally, about art and fire - ART which breaks us out of the shells of our often painfully limited perspectives/empathy and FIRE which prompts us to ACT to respond to the injustice in the world, which art helps us to more fully open our eyes and hearts. (Dan, personal communication, 2011)

Dan's email acknowledged the role that art can play, "art helps us to more fully open our eyes and hearts." Dan provided further insight into his rationale in a follow-up interview, "I was very interested in prolonging the moment after the show for people to make the connections and think, Oh, these are real life things" (Dan, personal communication, 2011). He continued.

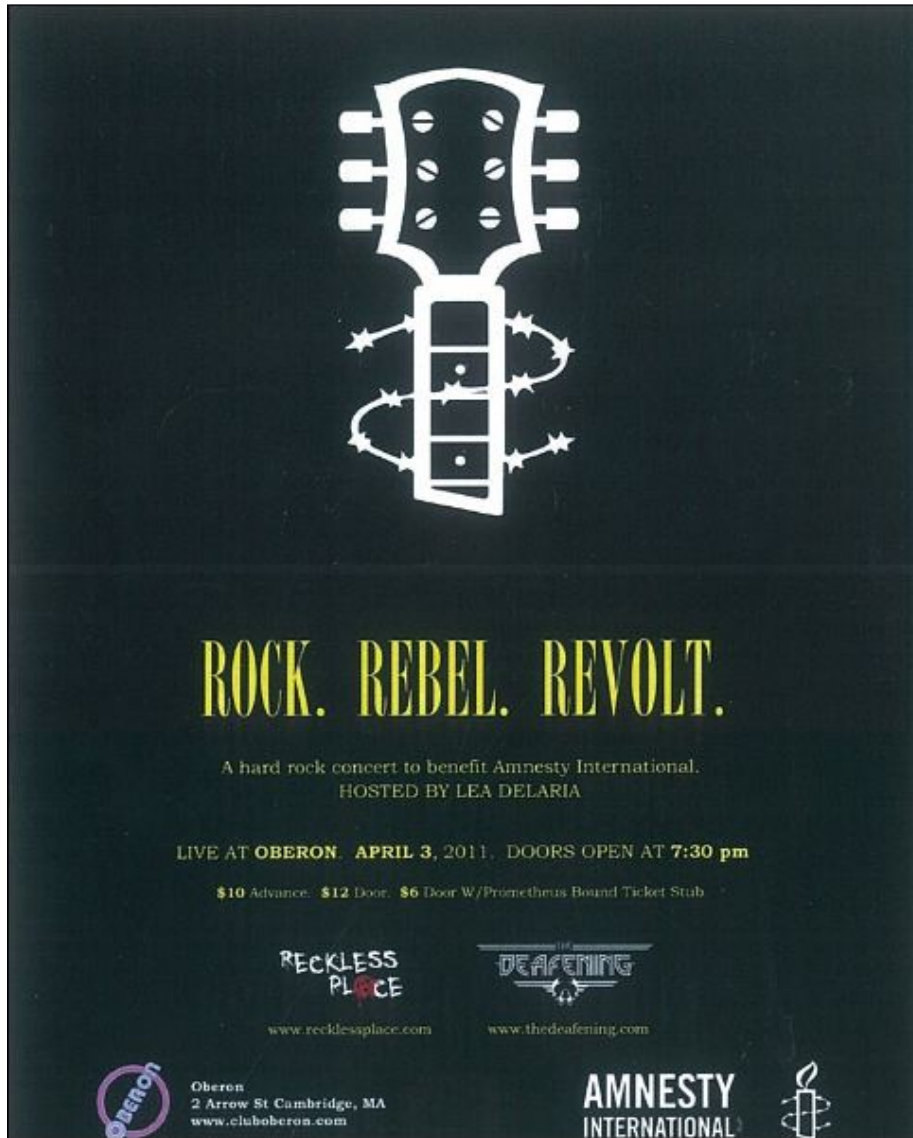
My sense was that the novelty of an activist organization working with a theater a production should not remain a novelty. A lot of the people involved were very, very pleased and patting themselves on the back, and again they should be. I certainly felt a sense of accomplishment, myself. But also some disappointment in not going as far as I'd originally hoped with the action component. But this dissatisfaction, I think, was all good in that it was crystallizing my beliefs and convictions about just how much more can and should be done. (Dan, personal communication, 2011)

Although Dan sounded critical of what little had been accomplished, he channeled this experience into a positive-looking outlook, "I am very interested in actual practical outcomes – even more practical than what we did with the postcard actions because that is primarily an awareness campaign" (Dan, personal communication, 2011). Dan is looking for more tangible results than signing postcards; he has moved into an activist role and is apparently motivated to build upon the *Prometheus Bound* experience and take it further.

*Rock. Rebel. Revolt.*

In another example of specific post-show actions that were taken, Miguel and two other cast members came together to put on *Rock. Rebel. Revolt.*, a rock concert held in the Oberon on April 3, 2011, the night after *Prometheus Bound* closed. Figure 33. below is the image of the postcard and poster that Miguel created for this event.

**Figure 33. Rock, Rebel, Revolt.**



Miguel explained his rationale for putting on the show.

I realized that this would be a great way to tie in experiences on our show to reach the same fan base that has supported Prometheus Bound and also to continue the message of the experience, continue to sort of send home for Amnesty and the relationship and partnership. We are going to donate 25% of anything that we make that night straight to Amnesty. (Miguel, personal communication, 2011)

Ron, Meghan, Jennifer, Dan and I were in the audience on April 3, 2011 at the Rock. Rebel. Revolt. event. Our presence at that event demonstrated our support of the prisoners promoted by the Amnesty Appeals. As I stood in the audience that evening, surrounded by many of the 160 volunteers who participated in *Prometheus Bound* and the rest of the audience, I was aware of being present at that event. I was there in support of the 8 prisoners of conscience and the survivors of sexual violence from the Democratic Republic of Congo. I did not ask my research participants why they were there, nor did I ask any of the other attendees their reason for being there. Everyone at that event, including the six participants of this research project, had taken a deliberate action to attend that event, which in my opinion, was more meaningful than any words they could have spoken. Miguel opened the show with these remarks:

When I discovered this organization [Amnesty International] and learned how simple it was get involved, how little that is asked of us to be involved, it was an incredible thing and we couldn't be more excited to be here doing this show for you guys tonight. (Miguel, personal communication, 2011)

The enthusiastic greetings and high-fives that took place lent a festival-type mood to the event. Like Meghan and Janice, I brought friends to Rock. Rebel. Revolt. to expose them to Amnesty's work and to the cool vibe that I expected would be there. It was a nostalgic experience for me to visit the space one last time and witness Miguel and another actor from *Prometheus Bound* perform with their rock bands in support of

Amnesty, while a third actor hosted the event as master of ceremonies. Meghan's reflections of the event conveyed what I felt that evening.

I thought it [Rock. Rebel. Revolt.] was fun. It was kind of exciting and almost sad but I think it was a nice way to kind of having something at the end because it was really an amazing project. It was fun to have one last thing at the end where everyone was just kind of hanging out. (M. Robbins, personal communication, 2011)

Meghan was one of several volunteers who were publicly acknowledged at the event because she had volunteered so many times. During a break between bands she was invited on stage to say a few words:

I came to the open house and thought it would be a really amazing project to show the intersection of art and human rights, and 17 times later it's a really great project and it shines a light on so many great cases in a beautiful way. (M. Robbins, personal communication, 2011)

At the end of the night, a representative from Amnesty took the stage and offered these hopeful closing remarks.

So, even as the Prometheus Project is ostensibly ending, it's not! Because we are still spectators and we are still observing the world and we are still acting and we can go out in the world and we can act. This has been really inspiring and I hope to keep working with you and continue all these connections and working towards a better future. (Amnesty International representative, personal communication, 2011)

In this chapter, the five major themes that emerged from the *Prometheus Bound* experience have been described and analyzed. In the next chapter, this analysis will be interpreted within the context of the research questions.

## Chapter 6. Discussion

When excitement about subject matter goes deep, it stirs up a store of attitudes and meanings derived from prior experience. As they are aroused into activity they become conscious thoughts and emotions, emotionalized images. To be set on fire by a thought or a scene is to be inspired. (Dewey, 1934, p. 68)

This study has attempted to answer the following research questions:

- What kinds of engagement practices were utilized in the production of *Prometheus Bound*, the rock musical and how were those practices implemented?
- How do performing arts-makers who participated in the engagement practices of *Prometheus Bound* as a lived experience, perceive and describe the meaning of those practices?
- What kinds of other-oriented behavior or learning experiences, if any, have been experienced by performing arts-makers as a result of their participation in the engagement practices of *Prometheus Bound*?

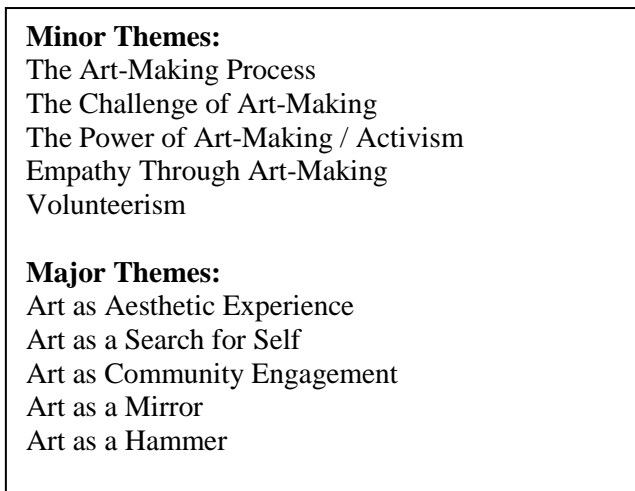
I will respectfully suggest that the answers to the first research question were provided in chapter 4 Data, section B, which contained detailed descriptions of six separate and distinct engagement practices and were identified as follows:

1. Physical Space as an Engagement Practice
2. Choreography as an Engagement Practice
3. Physical Contact as an Engagement Practice
4. Social Justice as an Engagement Practice
5. Community Collaboration as an Engagement Practice
6. Rock Band as an Engagement Practice.

The descriptions of the engagement practices listed above were based on the observations and reflections of the researcher, the interviews of the research participants and the artifacts obtained during the course of the study.

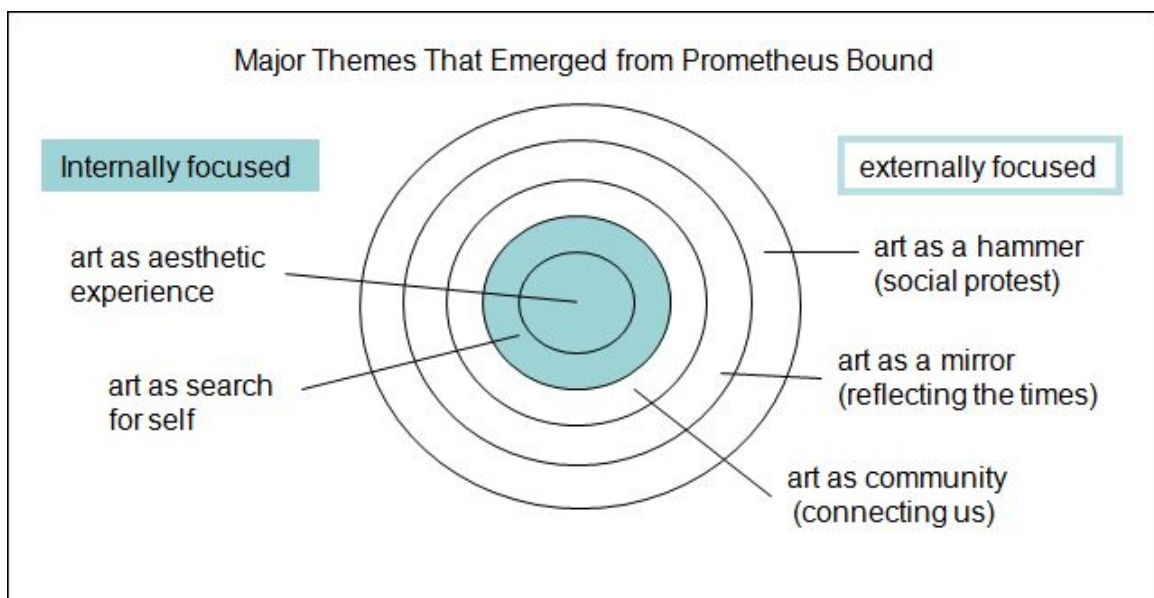
The answers to the second research question can be found in the themes that emerged from the interviews, observations, and artifacts that were presented and described in detail in chapter 5 and listed in Figure 34. below.

Figure 34. Prometheus Bound Themes



The major themes are also depicted in the diagram contained in Figure 35. below, in which they are contextualized as a series of gradually widening concentric rings.

Figure 35. Major Themes That Emerged From Prometheus Bound



The answers to the third research question may be found in the descriptions and reflections presented within the findings in chapter 4 and the discussion in chapter 5. Although I intend to refer to specific statements by certain research participants, which imply that other-oriented behavior or experiential learning may have occurred as a result of their participation in *Prometheus Bound*, I am reluctant to definitively characterize these experiences as such because of the brevity of the statements made and the subjectivity inherent in these areas. I will instead leave it up to the reader to make his or her own judgment regarding the nature and extent of any other-oriented behavior or experiential learning that may have occurred among research participants following the production of *Prometheus Bound* and whether any of those experiences could be considered a result of their involvement in the engagement practices of that production. Having said this, I want to point out that one research subject, Meghan, made an explicit connection between *Prometheus Bound* and her post-show actions, which is presented in the next section.

### **A. Other-Oriented Behavior**

As noted in the previous section, several research participants engaged in actions after the show that one could consider other-oriented behavior. Other-oriented behavior was defined earlier as empathetic actions performed for the well-being others. One may wish to consider the post-show actions of Meghan, Dan and Miguel as other-oriented behavior because their actions appeared to be focused on and performed for the well-being of others.

In the case of Meghan, her blogging about *Prometheus Bound* and Amnesty International called attention to the oppression against artists that exists today. By

posting messages and artwork on her blog, she joined the effort to create awareness of unjust actions of oppressive governments. Meghan's blogging was apparently motivated by her participation in the show evidenced by this statement, "The posts with Aung San Suu Kyi and Tissa were inspired by my experience with Prometheus Bound, especially the blog on Arts and Activism" (M. Robbins, personal communication, 2011). Meghan continued to blog after the show and subsequently posted information about Ai Weiwei, an imprisoned Chinese filmmaker on June 22, 2011 when she posted his photo and made this announcement of his release, "Ai Weiwei released - Wednesday, June 22. Ai Weiwei was released after three months in detention" (Robbins, 2011b).

A second example, that one might consider other-oriented behavior is Dan's actions: planning, organizing and promoting networking events and brainstorming sessions focused upon connecting people interested in arts and activism.

So what is going on here, those of us who are interested in this, we want to figure out how the Prometheus project can in fact be a project that is about promotion of the arts in action or arts as action; as intervention. Its arts and activism; its action for what you believe in. (Dan, personal communication, 2011)

Dan is interested in something larger than *Prometheus Bound*. In the following passage, he described several 'levels' of engagement that could develop from these networking events.

One level is a think tank level at a local university where we could provide an opportunity for dialogues to happen; the kind of momentum that could grow into a more curricular study. There is the level of connections. So many people that care about this that don't know where each other are or have an opportunity to talk to each other. There is the potential for action too. We already have a volunteer list of 160 people. (Dan, personal communication, 2011)



Dan further clarified his goals and approach:

I don't want this just to be a volunteer list, though, because I see it as a community of people that are themselves, co-creators. And that is why I wanted to have as many conversations as possible and hear what people are interested in and what they are willing to make it for themselves. (Dan, personal communication, 2011)

Another example that one could consider as other-oriented behavior was the benefit concert held at the Oberon on April 3, 2011, the day after the last show of *Prometheus Bound*. Miguel was the primary organizer and one of three performing arts-makers from *Prometheus Bound*, who participated in this event to raise funds for Amnesty International and to create awareness about the work that they do.

This is one of the great things about entertainment – live music, live theater. It forces people out of their homes. I think that once people are out of their homes and communing with other people and moved by a piece, that engenders empathy. (Miguel, personal communication, 2011)

Miguel's reflection above demonstrates the power of the performing arts in bringing people together and the empathy that can result from the experience.

For me, this is what the rock concert was all about. Our music is fun and loud and crazy and hopefully people will be entertained and engaged by the experience – so that we can get their attention to then say – by the way if you are interested in this [Amnesty International], here is an avenue. (Miguel, personal communication, 2011)

Finally, as a result of my involvement as a participant as a volunteer activist in *Prometheus Bound*, I engaged in actions that deserve mention here because one might consider them to be other-oriented behavior. These actions included making a donation to Amnesty International and renewing my membership in that organization, which had lapsed for five years. I attended one of the planning meetings organized by Dan,

mentioned above, to brainstorm next steps and identify action items required to support the arts and activism project he initiated. I also attended and donated money to the Rock, Rebel, Revolt benefit concert event organized by Miguel and brought several friends to the event, who learned about the Amnesty Appeals and made donations as well.

## **B. Experiential Learning**

To review, experiential learning is the process of learning through the transformation of experience (Kolb, 1984). In the following passage, Meghan speaks about her experience of meeting Tissa, the imprisoned journalist who she painted to create awareness of the injustice against him.

He [Tissa] was released and I actually met him at the conference where I found out about *Prometheus Bound*. I met him. I could shake his hand and talk to him...it was just really powerful to know that it can actually make a difference. All the Amnesty people working together; like working on cases that can actually – it does actually have an effect. (M. Robbins, personal communication, 2011)

Meghan's remarks convey her growing awareness that individuals working on Amnesty International cases can actually have an effect. She continued.

I learned a lot about people and how they get inspired and how they get involved in different cases. Even though I had worked with Amnesty before, it [Prometheus Bound] kind of got me more excited about working with Amnesty; it made me realize what I want to be working on with my own art, as well. (M. Robbins, personal communication, 2011)

Unlike Meghan who had been involved with Amnesty for some time, Miguel only became acquainted with the work of Amnesty International through his involvement in *Prometheus Bound* however he shared the same realization as Meghan, "what moved me was watching how they (Amnesty International) operate. The power of one signature can

actually affect groups of change for the better somewhere in the world” (Miguel, personal communication, 2011). In the following passage, Miguel describes other changes that *Prometheus Bound* caused in him.

People are so engaged by the type of experience [Prometheus Bound] they are having that it has taught me that theater is so much more than – stand here and say this line. The way in which I now relate to an audience will be affected by this experience. And even as a front man in a rock band that is inherently invaluable. It’s been exciting. (Miguel, personal communication, 2011).

In his role as volunteer coordinator, Dan learned how to work with audiences to promote a cause, “That was all really part of the learning process, of how you work within a show’s culture to get your maximum effect for the cause and for the activating of the audience” (Dan, personal communication, 2011). However, as noted earlier, although Dan was not completely satisfied with all of the decisions that were made regarding the extent of communication between volunteers and audience members, he recognized the value of this experience, “But this dissatisfaction, I think, was all good in that it was crystallizing my beliefs and convictions about just how much more can be done” (Dan, personal communication, 2011).

Despite being an experienced musician, Ron was challenged with the demands of the show.

The truth is Prometheus is like no other gig I have done in the sense that there was such a tremendous amount of attention that had to be paid at all times. As far as pushing me as a player, I definitely learned that I was able to withstand a combination of challenges that I have never experienced all at the same time for that long of a run. (Ron, personal communication, 2011)

Janice experienced critical thinking when she questioned her religious beliefs as a result of her participation in the show, “I am questioning these things that I have never

questioned before because of this show” (Janice, personal communication, 2011). Later, she became even more inspired,

So then, it occurs to me that part of the reason these questions don’t sit well with me is that I’m afraid to question God. BTW, this train of thought has given me inspiration to write a play, tentatively called, *The Father*, oh, the symbology! (Janice, personal communication, 2011)

Janice also used her *Prometheus Bound* experience to enhance her skill with the spot light.

For me, I feel like I can always get better at just doing the follow spot position, which doesn’t seem like maybe it would take a lot from the average perspective, but just things like the smoothness of following an actor. The way I look at it, the audience shouldn’t notice it. Like every movement an actor makes, the light should move with them in a way that is almost part of their body. (Janice, personal communication, 2011)

In the passage above, we get a sense for how seriously Janice looks at her role as spot light operator and how the way she moves her spotlight can impact the aesthetic experience, “...the light should move with them in a way that is almost part of their body.”

It’s important to me not to move it [spotlight] too quickly or not to be bumpy or jerky in any way. I am always trying to do better. Is the pool of light too big? Am I including things that are kind of extraneous and kind of visual noise? So there are things that I do think of and try to do and try to improve on. Maybe it is something the audience may or may not notice but hopefully it is helping the production. (Janice, personal communication, 2011)

From my experiences of being a volunteer activist and audience member for four performances of *Prometheus Bound*, I learned that the use of engagement practices, like the ones employed with *Prometheus Bound*, can transform volunteers into participants. I

experienced this transformation myself and can attest to the standing and agency I felt while a participant in the show. I learned that use of physical space, choreography and physical contact as engagement practices deepened the artistic experience for me and enabled me to embody the experience. The embodiment I experienced engaged my mind, body and all of my senses: I heard the music and voices, I saw the action unfold, I felt the hand of the groupies on my back, I smelled the sweat of audience members packed in close, and I tasted the beer as I entered and lived within the world of *Prometheus Bound* for 80 minutes.

I learned about the work of Amnesty International and about the stories of the specific artists and activists who were imprisoned by oppressive governments and for whom the *Prometheus Bound* performances were dedicated to. I learned that engagement practices used in a theatrical production like *Prometheus Bound* can create, enhance and sustain a socially-conscious mindset.

### **C. Recommendations**

Further studies on the engagement practices of performing arts-makers would do well to expand the focus of their inquiry to consider other types of performing arts-making besides musical theater and perhaps organizations other than professional repertory organizations, such as community theatre companies. Further studies may also want to also consider researching engagement practices utilized by directors associated with organizations and venues located in other geographic areas within the U.S or outside of the U.S.

Although this study was focused upon how the engagement practices utilized in a theatrical, musical production impacted the performing arts-makers involved in the production, one can see from the data how these practices impacted audience members as well. Therefore organizations which produce live theatrical or musical shows may wish to consider utilizing similar engagement practices in their productions to deepen the meaning of the experience on both audience members and arts-makers.

Organizations with socially conscious mission statements or entities that provide services to marginalized communities may wish to collaborate with organizations such as A.R.T. that produce theatrical or musical events for two reasons. First, such collaborations may provide effective ways to promote the mission and work of the collaborating organizations, like *Prometheus Bound* did for Amnesty International. Second, the collaboration may produce other-oriented behavior in the arts-makers, which could lead to actions in support of the collaborating organization including promoting, fund-raising, making donations and even volunteering in the service of the organization. Actually, any organization that depends on volunteerism to sustain its operations or support its products and services may want to consider exploring collaborative opportunities with performing arts-making organizations or even targeting performing arts-makers in its local community as a source of potential supporters and volunteers.

Performing arts-makers who seek experiences that may offer personal and professional growth may wish to align themselves with performing arts-organizations that utilize engagement practices like those employed by A.R.T. in *Prometheus Bound* because of the potential experiential learning that may take place. Likewise, organizations, whose missions involve the education or training of performing arts-

makers may want to consider integrating engagement practices, like those mentioned above, into their curriculum to accrue the potential benefits that may result from experiential learning.

In closing I present the words of the representative from a local Amnesty International chapter, whose words from the stage at the Rock. Rebel. Revolt. concert on April 3, 2011 provided a fitting closing to the event and are equally appropriate here.

So, even as the Prometheus Project is ostensibly ending, it's not! Because we are still spectators and we are still observing the world; and we are still acting and we can go out in the world and we can act. This has been really inspiring and I hope to keep working with you and continue all these connections and working towards a better future. (Amnesty International representative, personal communication, 2011)

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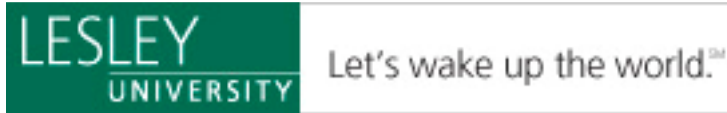
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## Appendix

### Institutional Review Board Approval



29 Everett Street  
Cambridge, MA 02138  
Tel 617 349 8426  
Fax 617 349 8599  
irb@lesley.edu

#### Institutional Review Board

Office of the Provost

November 25, 2011

To: **Peter Cormier**

From: Gene Diaz, Co-chair Lesley IRB

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Gene Diaz'.

RE: Application for Expedition of Review: The Engagement Practices of Performing Art-Makers

#### **IRB Number: 10-056**

This memo is written on behalf of the Lesley University IRB to inform you that your application for approval by the IRB through expedited review has been granted. Your project poses no more than minimal risk to participants.

If at any point you decide to amend your project, e.g., modification in design or in the selection of subjects, you will need to file an amendment with the IRB and suspend further data collection until approval is renewed.

If you experience any unexpected “adverse events” during your project you must inform the IRB as soon as possible, and suspend the project until the matter is resolved.

An expedited review procedure consists of a review of research involving human subjects by the IRB chairperson or by one or more experienced reviewers designated by the chairperson from among members of the IRB in accordance with the requirements set forth in 45 CFR 46.110. Source: 63 FR 60364-60367, November 9, 1998.

**Date of IRB Approval: April 13, 2011**

## **Informed Consent Form**

### **Engagement Practices of Performing Arts-Makers**

**Principal Investigator:** Pete Cormier, Principal Investigator, Lesley University

You are being asked to volunteer in this study to assist in research on the engagement practices of performing arts-makers.

The purpose of the study is to understand the impact of engagement practices on performing arts-makers who participate in the engagement practices.

You will be initially interviewed about personal, background information that may include training, rehearsals and performances that you have been involved in. During the interview session, you will be asked to describe the meaning and lived experience of your participation in engagement practices. The session will be 60 minutes in length, and will be audio/video taped.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, consent to participate in one interview session.

I understand that:

- I am volunteering for an interview of approximately 60 minutes in length.
- Session will be audio-taped
- My identity will be protected
- Session materials, including reports, drawings, video or audiotapes will be kept confidential and used anonymously only, for purposes of supervision, presentation and/or publication.
  
- The sessions will include verbal discussion about the engagement practices of performing arts-makers.
  
- This study will not necessarily provide any benefits to me. However, I may experience increased self-knowledge and other personal insights that I may be able to use in my daily life. The results of the study may also help to increase public and professional awareness of the needs and experiences of teachers of arts integration.
  
- The audio recordings, pictures, and transcripts will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the investigator's possession for possible future use. However, this information will not be used in any future study without my written consent.
  
- I may choose to withdraw from the study at any time with no negative consequences.



**Confidentiality, Privacy and Anonymity:**

*You have the right to remain anonymous. If you elect to remain anonymous, we will keep your records private and confidential **to the extent allowed by law**. We will use pseudonym identifiers rather than your name on study records. Your name and other facts that might identify you will not appear when we present this study or publish its results.*

*If for some reason you do not wish to remain anonymous, you may specifically authorize the use of material that would identify you as a subject in the experiment.*

*We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.*

**a) Investigator's Signature:**

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Date	Investigator's Signature	Print Name
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**b) Participant's Signature:**

*I am 18 years of age or older. The nature and purpose of this research have been satisfactorily explained to me and I agree to become a participant in the study as described above. I understand that I am free to discontinue participation at any time if I so choose, and that the investigator will gladly answer any questions that arise during the course of the research.*

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Date	Subject's Signature	Print Name
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*If you have any questions feel free to contact Julia Byers, Ed.D., at 29 Everett St. Cambridge, MA. 02138-2790, phone: 617-349-8121 or (800) 999-1959 x8121*

*There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should, be reported if they arise. Contact the Associate Provost or the Committee at Lesley University, 29 Everett Street, Cambridge Massachusetts, 02138, telephone: (617) 349-8517.*

## Engagement Practices of Performing Art-Makers

### Interview Guide / Protocol

Before we get started, I would like to define some of the terms we will be using.

Performance art-making or performing art-making means the process of creating and performing music, dance, theatre or storytelling, from rehearsals to final performance.

Engagement practices are actions jointly experienced by performing art-makers and audience members to deepen the aesthetic experience. These actions include but are not limited to the following:

- holding post-performance question and answer sessions
- staging performances in open-air, community spaces like town commons
- utilizing volunteers to interact with the audience before or after a performance
- staging the performance in such a way that the performers and audience members occupy the same physical space and/or interact with each other during the performance.

#### Interview Questions:

1. What kind of performance art-making have you been involved in?
2. What kinds of duties have you performed? For example: actor, musician, dancer, or backstage crew, set builder, usher, box office, director, stage hand etc.
3. What kinds of engagement practices have you been involved in?
4. If you have not experienced these engagement practices, what do you think of engagement practices?
5. What does it feel like when you are participating in an engagement practice?
6. What does it mean to be engaged with the audience?
7. What, if anything, have you learned through an engagement experience with the audience?
8. Do you think there is a place for Q&A type engagement practices with any performance or just certain performances?
9. How would you describe the engagement practices you have been involved in?
10. Do you volunteer? If so, please describe what you have done?
11. Where have you volunteered in the past?
12. What duties have you performed while volunteering?
13. Why do you volunteer?
14. How does it make you feel to volunteer?
15. What does it mean to volunteer?
16. How would you describe your volunteering experience?