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The Praxis of Teaching Artists in Theatre and Dance: International Perspectives on Preparation, Practice and Professional Identity

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Abstract

This international study investigated the experiences and attitudes of teaching artists whose work is rooted in theatre, dance, and closely-related disciplines. Based on survey data from teaching artists working in Australia, New Zealand, Southeast Asia, United Kingdom, and the United States (n=172), the paper illuminates participants' perspectives on preparation, practice and professional identity. Emergent themes include: (1) teaching artist training and preparation, (2) work contexts and populations served, and (3) work challenges and obstacles. Following discussion of key survey findings, three case studies based in higher

education settings in the USA, UK and Southeast Asia are presented. Hagman's (2005) framework for multiple fields of subjectivity at work in aesthetic experience is employed to illustrate the ways in which the intrasubjective, the intersubjective, and the metasubjective fields of subjectivity inform each teaching artist's practice and professional identity. The paper concludes with an analysis of themes in light of current discussions on reflective practice and implications for teaching artist "praxis".

Introduction

Over the past five decades the artist's role in schools and communities has evolved in dramatic ways. While educational reform and economic pressures over the last fifty years have often preempted steady and sustained arts education programming, today's teaching artist plays an important role in numerous educational and community contexts. Jane Remer (2010) reminds us,

> In a nutshell, these people were originally called *visiting artists* in schools, who started as occasional assembly hall performers and then became resources to teachers and students in their classrooms for a day, a week, or longer (*artists in residence*). In the mid-seventies, the label for these artists changed to an ambiguous term that remains in use today: *teaching artists.*[1] (p. 89)

As ambiguous as it may be, we believe the title "teaching artist" retains its attractiveness and utility among practitioners because of its ability to embrace a diversity of practices, contexts, and populations served. While many other terms and phrases exist to describe the work of artists who teach – for example, "master teacher," "guest artist," "actor-facilitator" – teaching artist seems to have gained favor among practitioners, perhaps because of the title's emphasis on function (teaching) which annotates the primary identifier (artist).

Evidence for the status of the title "teaching artist" can be found in the professional organizations and publications that have proliferated in the last 15 years: the Association of Teaching Artists (ATA)[2] was founded in 1998 to support, advocate, strengthen and serve the teaching artist profession; the *Teaching Artist Journal*, first published in 2003, provides applied and theoretical knowledge as well as important networking and community-building opportunities; the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) completed its five-year study, Teaching Artist Research

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[1] For an in-depth history and chronology of artists in education including teaching artists, see Remer 2003.
[2] See the Association for Teaching Artists at http://www.teachingartists.com/aboutus.htm

Project in 2011[3]; and the research survey, Teaching Artists and Their Work was conducted and published in 2010 by the Association of Teaching Artists.[4]

Eric Booth (2003) asserts, "A teaching artist is an artist, with the complementary skills and sensibilities of an educator, who engages people in learning experiences in, through, or about the arts" (p. 11). The Association of Teaching Artists (2009) identifies three basic capacities necessary for all teaching artists: understanding one's art form; understanding classroom environment, pedagogy and human development; and understanding the collaborative process of working in a school environment.[5] Many of these teaching artists work primarily in K12 schools or community and school collaborative settings. According to the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center (NORC, 2009),

> Remarkable advances have taken place over the past decade and a half in arts education, both in and out of schools, due largely to the creativity of teaching artists. Their best efforts are redefining the roles the arts play in public education; and their work is central to arts organizations' strategies for civic engagement and audience diversity. (np)

This research, focused on dance and theatre disciplines, emerges from this burgeoning area of inquiry.

The diversity and complexity of the teaching artist field means that developing relevant and meaningful research necessitates a closer investigation of the practitioners under consideration. As current and former teaching artists now responsible for preparing undergraduate and graduate students for careers in dance and theatre in the United States, the authors situate this inquiry in both their teaching and research interests, as well as in their larger, global concerns for increased social justice and positive urban transformation. The fields of dance and theatre, largely under-represented in arts education generally (Bonbright, 2002, 2011; Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011; Remer, 2003, 2010; Risner, 2010), depend heavily on the work of teaching artists for delivery of educational programs. As such, this investigation also looks at the lacunae-like position teaching artists in theatre and dance hold—one that fills a number of empty spaces, missing gaps—both in arts education and community-based outreach and renewal.

The present article, part of Mary Anderson and Doug Risner's ongoing international study (Anderson & Risner, 2012; Risner, 2012; Risner & Anderson, 2012), is based on survey data and in-depth questionnaire responses from teaching artists working in Australia, New Zealand, Southeast Asia, United Kingdom, and the United States (n=172). Emergent themes developed

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[3] Findings of the NORC Teaching Artist Research Project are available at
http://www.norc.org/PDFs/TARP%20Findings/Teaching_Artists_Research_Project_Final_Report_%209-14-11.pdf
[4] For information on the research survey, Teaching Artists and Their Work, see:
http://www.teachingartists.com/Association%20of%20Teaching%20Artists%20Survey%20 20Results.pdf
[5] These categories are derived from the Association for Teaching Artists.

through this research include: (1) teaching artist preparation and training, (2) work contexts and populations served, and (3) work challenges and obstacles. The paper concludes with analysis of three case studies, drawn from the questionnaire participant pool, which offer detailed insight into the experiences and perceptions of three teaching artists based in higher education settings in the USA, UK and Southeast Asia.

Research Design and Methods

This three-year, mixed-method study seeks to develop a cogent body of knowledge about arts education and outreach programming in dance and theatre as developed and delivered by teaching artists. The dearth of knowledge in this research area precipitated the need for basic quantitative data on a relatively large scale. While some researchers focus on the incompatibility of qualitative and quantitative research designs (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), the primary research problems in this project required a successful combination of designs (Patton, 1990), including an extensive on-line survey instrument. Therefore, to perform this research in a manner consistent with these research assumptions and problems, we employed a mixed-method qualitative design rooted in tenets of phenomenological and hermeneutic inquiry (Stinson, et al., 1990).

Procedures included: literature review of primary and secondary resources; online survey (n=172); and in-depth questionnaires (n=20). Surveys were statistically analyzed. Participants in the survey pool who indicated interest completed questionnaires. Questionnaire data were coded for emergent and divergent themes. Human subject approval was received from Wayne State University.

Primary research questions included: (1) what kinds of skill preparation, academic training, and philosophical imperatives characterize socially engaged teaching artists? (2) What contexts and populations are served by teaching artists? (3) How do teaching artists perceive themselves and their work? (4) What challenges and obstacles do teaching artists confront? (5) What beliefs and attitudes do teaching artists hold about the professionalization of the teaching artist profession?

Overview of Survey Findings

In the following section, we provide an overview of the study's survey findings as applicable to the current research questions under consideration. The survey was organized into five broad sections: (1) demographic information, (2) education, training, and experience, (3) teaching artist work, (4) attitudes and perspectives, and (5) open-ended questions. This synopsis provides important baseline data about dance and theatre teaching artists' lives, experiences and perspectives. These findings also serve to ground and contextualize the case study narratives heard later in this article.

Education, Preparation and Training

A number of survey questions were posed in order to ascertain comprehensive data about teaching artists' education, preparation and training. Therefore, question design was both broad and specific. In terms of academic preparation, participants completed a bachelor's degree (84%); master's degree (55%); doctorate (20%); certificate program (9%). Sixteen percent attended a professional school or training program in dance or theatre; three percent attended university but did not graduate.

When asked to describe their primary professional experience in dance or theatre, participants indicated the following: professional actor (17%); director (11%); choreographer (11%); professional dancer (8%); member of a professional dance company (11%); member of a professional theatre company (9%); member of a professional dance/theatre company (3%). No professional experience was reported by 5 percent of participants. Significantly, the category with the highest percentage of response (24%) was "primary professional experience not listed among the survey's selections." These respondents specified a number of diverse roles in professional and community-arts settings including:

- freelance playwright; director; lighting designer; dramaturg; stage manager;
- solo performer; improvisational performer; circus performer; multi-disciplinary artist;
- arts administrator;
- professor;
- studio owner;
- and others.

For the survey question, "Please describe your direct training and preparation for your career/work as a teaching artist – Select all that apply" participants' responses included:

- research on my own (49%)
- self-taught (48%)
- graduate degree program (47%)
- teaching assistant (33%)
- undergraduate degree program (27%)
- internship/apprenticeship (27%)
- one-five day training program (13%)
- one-three week training program (10%)
- training program (3 months or more) (9%)
- certificate program (9%).

Sixteen percent of respondents to this question contributed narrative comments that provide further insight into the complex nature of teaching artist training. One respondent writes "not

sure if there are these clear boundaries between practical and contextual training in my field: community arts is relatively recently available as classes..." This observation is supported by narrative statements from other respondents who list training experiences that include: running a professional dance company; designing and teaching professional development courses for teachers by a national arts education institute; mentoring with other professionals in the field; and others.

Beyond arts training, education and professional experience, participants were also asked to describe any additional educational study or coursework that prepared them for becoming a teaching artist. The majority of respondents reported a teaching methods course (55%). Additional responses included: pedagogy course (49%); learning styles study (44%); education theory course (42%); educational philosophy course (39%); assessment and evaluation study (39%); multicultural education study (30%); social and cultural foundations course (29%). Twenty-five percent of participants reported other educational study not listed on the survey, which included: degree programs in sociology and performance studies; teacher certification; psychotherapy training; TESOL; and international work experience.

Teaching Artist Work

Survey questions in this section sought to gather a wide swath of data including the nature of work, work contexts and populations served, and how participants perceive themselves (identity) and their work (impact, rewards, challenges and obstacles). For the purposes of this paper, we briefly highlight findings that provide a general baseline of teaching artists' work in dance and theatre.

The majority of participants' past teaching artist work has been completed in the following settings: K-12 schools (84%); afterschool programs (71%); university programs (60%); and recreation or community center (58%). Participants reported that, at the time of the survey, they were currently working with the following populations: K-12 (63%); university programs (45%); after school (35%); early childhood (23%); at-risk youth (22%); under-represented populations (21%); recreation or community center (19%); differently abled (18%); mentoring programs (16%); and audience development (13%); seniors/elderly (12%).[6] In terms of age groups, the majority of participants' current work was reported as happening with: young adults (26%); young children (25%); adolescents (23%); all ages (16%); and adults (9%).

The employment status of participants was reported as: self-employed as an individual teaching artist (42%); employed by a K-12 school or postsecondary institution (37%); employed or contracted by an agency or organization that provides teaching artist services (34%); employed

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[6] Additional settings and populations served included: hospitals/therapeutic (5%); GLBTQ (5%); domestic abuse/violence (3%); incarcerated populations and detention facilities (3%); and drug abuse/violence (2%).

or contracted by a dance or theatre company that provides teaching artist services (26%); and employed by an arts council: local, regional, national (5%). Participants' average length of time in the teaching artist profession was ten years. Fulltime teaching artist employment was reported by 24 percent of participants. The majority of respondents hold part-time employment as teaching artists, spending the following amounts of time doing teaching artist work in terms of their total workload: 75 percent time (29%); 50 percent time (25%); 25 percent time or less (25%). Twenty-two percent of respondents spend 100% of their total workload as teaching artists.

When asked to complete the survey statement, "I think of myself as..." by selecting the most appropriate answer, respondents indicated:

- a professional teaching artist (31%)
- an artist whose professional work includes teaching artist projects and responsibilities (25%)
- an arts educator working in school and community settings (17%)
- a part-time professional teaching artist (8%)
- an arts administrator responsible for school and community-based program (6%)
- an activist employing dance and/or theatre arts in community and educational settings (5%)
- an actor/theatre artist who supplements my income as a teaching artist (4%)
- a dancer/dance artist who supplements my income as a teaching artist (3%)

In regard to how participants view their work in socio-educational terms, the following survey statement, "As a teaching artist, I primarily see the work I do as..." was completed as follows:

- Developing participants' creativity (89%)
- Developing participants' appreciation of the arts (82%)
- Promoting collaborative thinking (78%)
- Developing participants' self-esteem (75%)
- Developing positive social change (72%)
- Enhancing cultural literacy (71%)
- An extension of my work as a artist (68%)

While respondents indicated that they frequently network with other teaching artists (64%) and regularly attend conferences to learn about best practices (62%), the overwhelming majority of participants develop their own curriculum, lessons and teaching materials (92%).

Work Challenges and Obstacles

Some basic challenges confronted by the general teaching artist population have been identified: low pay; inadequate facilities and physical resources; lack of support; and the inability to find work (Association of Teaching Artists, 2010). However, survey questions in this current study sought to provide both quantitative and qualitative data about teaching artists' challenges and obstacles in dance and theatre.

When asked to complete the survey statement, "The biggest challenges I confront as a teaching artist are...," the participants reported the following top six responses:

- Administrative bureaucracy and policies (47%)
- Low pay (40%)
- Finding enough work to support myself (35%)
- Difficult administrators and policy makers (30%)
- Scheduling and calendar issues (30%)
- Lack of continuity in my work (29%)

Qualitative survey data, which validate the quantitative data above, will be discussed later during analysis of the case study narratives.

The survey included a revised version of Deborah Williams's Social Support Scale (2003, p. 100) in which participants ranked the level of support they receive from significant people or groups of people in their lives who may provide guidance and support in their teaching artist endeavors and development. The final question, at the conclusion of Williams's scale, asked "Overall, how satisfied are you with the amount of support you receive for your work as a teaching artist?" Participants reported: very satisfied (7%); satisfied (37%); somewhat satisfied (44%); dissatisfied (12%).

In contrast, the survey asked the more general question, "Overall, how satisfied are you with your work as a teaching artist?" Responses were: very satisfied (37%); satisfied (43%); somewhat satisfied (19%); dissatisfied (2%).

Summary of Survey Findings

In summary, we find that the majority of respondents have received substantial training in their discipline both in formal degree programs as well as through professional experience in dance and theatre. This foundation in disciplinary knowledge has been extended through ongoing coursework and professional development activities in teaching methods and philosophies of practice. Survey respondents work in a range of settings, with the majority currently working with young adults, children and adolescents. Administrative bureaucracy, low pay, and

underemployment are challenges for many survey respondents, and yet the majority of participants continue to find a high level of satisfaction in their work.

Case Studies

From the survey findings, we turn to selected case studies in order to better understand the lives of teaching artists in dance and theatre across the globe. Case study research, as Robert Yin describes, "…is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context; when the border between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are utilized" (Yin, 1994, p. 6). Each case contributes to the whole but also remains a single case. Within the subject population of this research and based upon the survey findings, some cases will provide unique perspectives, while other cases will illuminate more typical trajectories of experience. Within the study's qualitative methodology, these intimate case studies seek to elaborate three principal tenets of the qualitative method: describing, understanding, and explaining the experiences of teaching artists in dance and theatre.

Teaching Artist Identity and Subjectivity

In reflecting on the data collected through the survey instrument, we were particularly interested in the wide range of educational and professional experiences reported by participants. How and why did individuals enter the field of practice? Which influential events and people do they feel led to their becoming teaching artists? What significant aspects of their own personalities and world views contributed to their identity formation as a teaching artist? Based on these interests, case study questionnaires asked participants to elaborate on their experiences of the arts in childhood and adolescence, as well as how their own identity as an artist and teacher evolved in relationship to their practical experiences. To this extent, participants' multiple subjective experiences and their multiple fields of subjectivity were significant in their responses. All case studies collected have accordingly been analyzed using George Hagman's (2005) framework for the multiple fields of subjectivity at work in aesthetic experience, as he explains that:

> [h]uman life involves multiple fields of subjectivity. These subjective realms are invariably both conscious and unconscious in nature … Most important, the aesthetics of human life at each level is motivated by the desire to establish, maintain, and nurture human connection, to idealize relationships, to seek beauty, to avoid (or transform) ugliness, and to cultivate the sublime … forming templates for our experience of and engagement with the world, with others, and with ourselves. (p. 145)

People navigate a range of aesthetic experiences over the course of their lifetime. These aesthetic experiences contribute to each person's sense of self, their understanding of the key relationships

in their lives, as well as their broader experiences of society and culture. For artists, in particular, aesthetic experiences are not only formative of their multiple subjectivities, but are instrumental to their sense of self, others, and the world.

In the case study analyses that follow, we explore Hagman's three levels of subjectivity as they appear most prominently in the narratives of three case study participants. In the first case study, we will examine the realm of the "intrasubjective," which is characterized by a focus on the individual response to environmental circumstances. In the second case study, we will examine the realm of the "intersubjective," with its attendant focus on cooperative, small group responses to environmental circumstances. In the third case study, we will examine the presence of the "metasubjective," which is characterized by a focus on large group or socio-cultural responses to environmental circumstances.

It is important to note that all three levels of subjectivity are present and at work at all times in any individual. All three levels of subjectivity interact with and inform each other. Accordingly, we would not want to suggest that the three case study subjects can be understood exclusively in terms of any one of the three levels of subjectivity. Rather, for the purposes of the analysis that follows, we have elected to address the level that presents itself most strongly in each case study *narrative*. These narratives are in fact "storied stories" which have been produced and developed in dialogue between the three authors of this article in conversation with each of the case study participants. Accordingly, the authors wish to recognize that our methods of data collection in the in-depth questionnaire process sought specifically to acquire "personal experience stories" from participants, which were then translated into "stories about those experiences" (McCormack, 2004 p. 220). Taking a narrative, biographical approach to our research on teaching artists is in keeping with Kelchtermans' argument that "the person of the teacher is an essential element in what constitutes professional teaching" (Kelchtermans, 2009, p. 257). For the purposes of the analysis that follows, however, we wish to place emphasis on the particular way that each of the three levels of subjectivity find expression in each of the case study narratives, rather than suggesting that each of the case study participants themselves are in any way emblematic of these levels of subjectivity.

The Intrasubjective: Jason, "The Professional Teaching Artist"

As teaching artists endeavor to develop their practice, processes of identity development occur simultaneously, intertwined with the opportunities and obstacles that individuals face and the choices that they make along the way. The narrative of Jason, a mid-career professional theatre artist who has been teaching in some capacity for over ten years in Northern Ireland, sheds particular light on the realm of the intrasubjective. Hagman (2005) defines this level of subjectivity as dealing with:

> the specific capability of the individual to make highly discriminating responses
> to conditions and events within the immediate social and physical environment,
> and to develop internal regulatory capacities to adjust psychological states and
> processes to ever-changing demands, needs, and opportunities. (p. 147)

Jason's narrative, which details his transition from a career as a professional theatre artist into his current occupation as a teaching artist working full time at university, illustrates the way in which he has worked individually or "intrasubjectively" to respond to the conditions and events that he has experienced in his new academic environment.

With a rich and varied career in theatre in Ireland, Jason has worked in arts management, as a director, and as a teacher. He has a very expansive view of his working life as a teaching artist, which encompasses all of his current work at the university level as well as other populations. Presently, in addition to teaching at university, he works with prison populations, as well as a variety of local community groups. All of his work informs his practice as a teaching artist, and he sees a natural reciprocity between the learning he experiences as a teacher of university-level students and the learning he experiences working in the community.

As a child Jason was very involved in theatre. He explains, "My mother was a drama teacher and got me involved very early in the 'Speech and Drama' tradition that is still well-established throughout Ireland." The contrast between the "Speech and Drama tradition" and the emerging "Heathcote inspired creative drama" movement of the 1970s becomes an important distinction throughout Jason's career as a Teaching Artist in theatre. This kind of short hand – freely making reference to various educational theatre movements in the UK – is fairly typical in Jason's narrative, as he is fully immersed in educational theatre as both a practitioner and writer/researcher.

Career and Teaching: Drawn to the Theatre

Although he took an undergraduate degree in law at Cambridge, Jason's experience with a group of dynamic performers and creative artists lead him towards theatre. Jason ultimately became an administrator and manager for a variety of theatre groups including touring and fringe theatre companies. He freelanced as a director and eventually grew tired of "the treadmill of subsidized theatre" turning to a work as a teaching fellow at a university. He believes his experiences working with youth and community groups got him the university job: "The fact that I had worked in youth theatre and community based arts alongside my 'mainstream' practice allowed me to do this." For Jason, his work at the university level is very much a part of his teaching artist identity. His work in academia has allowed him to continue in the theatre profession and relieves much of the frustration he had working at underfunded theatres. He spends part of his time doing research projects as well, and is a prolific writer of academic publications.

One of the biggest challenges that Jason experienced in moving into academia is also one of the most noteworthy examples of how he has developed his teaching artist identity in conversation with his intrasubjective experiences. Jason's challenge revolves around the difference between working with professionals in highly competitive environments in the professional theatre industry in the UK, and working with students whose motivations for pursuing a degree program vary widely. Jason writes, "A frequent complaint when I moved to university was that I treated students like actors. I have now learned to adjust my expectations and become more patient with less-motivated students. But I continue to see a marked distinction between the minority of students with a real sense of vocation and the majority who are mainly killing time." In response to this challenge, Jason has modulated the way that he engages university actors, as well as the nature of his expectations of their work in class. Although frustrated by the "alphabet soup" of regulations in the educational world, Jason has enjoyed the process of learning to become a more effective and reflective educator: "I was pleased to discover on attending internal and external courses that the new fashion in university teaching (active learning, experiential learning) mapped well on to my youth theatre practice." In this sense, Jason was able to integrate his background working in professional youth theatre into his emerging practice as a teaching artist in a university context.

Teaching Artist Identity: Adaptability
Jason sees a reflexive process between his professional and research projects carried out in myriad community contexts and the work he does with students at university. He explains "It is often possible to try out ideas with students [at university] that are then applied in outside practice [in community contexts] and vice versa. For instance, games and workshop exercises can be honed with [university] students before being applied in the community. Examples from my external practice often inform my teaching, and students sometimes observe." From his statement, we gather that Jason observes the effects of his practice in various contexts and then, using himself as a filter, makes modifications and adjustments as he transfers his work to various settings. At present, Jason states that his research practices are now focused on Applied Drama including "work with prisoner resettlement and dementia patients." Jason acknowledges the diversity of the settings in which he works and utilizes a combination of practice, teaching and research/writing to continue to refine his process.

Jason is satisfied with his career as a teaching artist. He explains, "I have been working with young people in the arts for thirty years. It is rewarding to see the legacy of this in successive generations. Former students include successful film actors, a Tony-Award winner, successful directors and writers. But I also rejoice in the success of those who enter other fields…" Jason also enjoys the freedom to work on "large-scale or more esoteric projects which I could not do in a fully professional context." The freedom that he enjoys as a teaching artist is thus linked not only to specific student outcomes, but also a particular type of mobility, moving easily between a range of projects and populations.

Despite his overall satisfaction as a practitioner, teacher and researcher, Jason sees a tension in academia between the research and publishing paradigm of the university and the practice-based research of artists who also work in the field. He notes that his "institution has lost six lecturers whose work was primarily practice-based in the last four years." He deplores the apparent disconnection between the stated support of colleagues for practical work, and the reality. He states, "The centrality of practice is constantly reiterated at departmental meetings, but there is clear discomfort at students opting more heavily for practical than other modules and moves to limit access to these for no coherent reason." He sums up by noting that "practical work is well-resourced, and we are free to get on with things. But the divide between theory and practice is frustrating, particularly when it is denied by non-practitioners." In these comments, one can sense the extent to which Jason continues to navigate his own set of values in relationship to his evolving identity as a teaching artist. Though he is very aware of the larger landscape of professional activity in the arts as well as research and creative activity in academia, he continues to filter these external factors through his own intrasubjective lens.

The Intersubjective: Ann, "The Conscious Teaching Artist"
The narrative of Ann, another mid-career professional theatre artist who has been teaching in some capacity for over 20 years throughout Australasia, and currently located in Southeast Asia, offers a particular focus on the effect that the "intersubjective" has had on her development as a teaching artist. Hagman defines the intersubjective level of experience as dealing with "cooperative responses, in which several people communicate, interact, and agree upon certain shared reactions to social and environmental demands" (Hagman 2005, p. 146-7). Ann's narrative, which explores the notion of consciousness as it pertains to her work, illustrates the emphasis that she places on her relationships with other people and the way that she has worked collaboratively to communicate and solve problems in relation to social and environmental challenges.

For Ann, teaching and practicing her art have always been intimately linked. Ann says that she did not have much exposure to the arts in childhood, although she did take piano and singing lessons. Her interest in theatre was sparked by a performance of a touring theatre company at her school when she was fourteen.

Her curiosity about both her art and teaching in the theatre led her to continue her training. Like 20 percent of the survey respondents, her training includes a doctoral degree. She says that her interest in continued training and teaching comes from the desire for "really exploring and examining the processes and meanings behind what we think and do artistically and how we communicate these things." She explains that she sees teaching as part of "the alchemy of art" and part of the "cycle of creating." The progression from working artist to teaching artist is natural for Ann and inseparable:

> Mapping this consciousness is what I think distinguishes the teaching artist from
> an artist who takes up a residency in a school or a school teacher. The teaching
> artist needs to be able to exist in the 'third space' between artistry and teaching –
> combine and separate the both when needed.

As Ann progressed in her training as an artist, tutoring and mentoring other less experienced artists figured prominently. However, she admits that most of her training involved learning on the job, something she sees as a flaw. She wonders why there is such an embedded assumption that those who have the experience are thought to be prepared to train others.
In regards to the current state of teaching artist training, Ann believes that much work needs to be done, but also points to opportunities that exist specifically at the intersubjective level – or, the level at which groups work together to address substantial challenges. Ann describes in detail a curriculum building process in which she was recently involved that managed to integrate pedagogy into the training of theatre artists at her current institution:

> In the past month I have been fortunate to work with my drama colleagues at the
> institute that I work. There are four of us – 3 women and 1 male who recently
> joined us. We spent four days working on developing a new curriculum from BA
> through to Honors through Masters to P h D. It was truly an amazing process and
> experience because we were able to work together in such a way to bring in
> contemporary ideas on arts education, theatre training and teacher training. The
> fact that each of us listened to the other building upon and creating ideas together,
> was a way of working within the institute in a new way where self-interest was
> not apparent or at least put to the service of the task at hand. ... Because of this,
> the new curriculum took on a life of its own and mirrored our student's needs to
> us because we listened to their needs.

In this narrative, a number of key themes emerge that point to the value Ann finds in the intersubjective realm. First, she describes the duration of the process: four days, demonstrating the commitment that she and her peers had to the development of this new curriculum. Secondly, Ann explains the importance of listening carefully and integrating the ideas of others in such a process, noting the absence of self-interest and the group orientation toward "the service of the task at hand." Third, Ann explains the openness of the process, wherein the faculty not only listened to each other, but also listened to the needs of the students. All of these aspects point to the positive change she experiences in relation to working with others. Although surprised at the ease of this process, she summarizes that she and her colleagues "were able to work together so that that the resultant curriculum includes our research on education philosophy, our input as artists in our own rights and as teachers." It is this balance between teacher and artist that facilitates success as a teaching artist. And, for Ann, this balance is achieved through group cooperation and collaboration.

Teaching Artist Identity: The Third Space Between Teaching and Art
Although Ann is comfortable in her role and both artist and teacher, she does recognize that there are unresolved issues of identity within the field of teaching artists. She believes successful teaching artistry comes from developing what she calls the "third space" between teaching and art:

> What is interesting is that it is becoming clearer to me that a certain teacher artist 'attitude' is necessary in order to introduce drama to teachers and students. This attitude is what I would call pedagogic because it requires that the teacher artist be conscious and informed on a number of different levels to include knowing their subject matter but also how to communicate it and finding ways to deliver it so that it can be taken up and worked with.

Woven throughout her interview responses is a conviction that self-understanding and reflective practice, what she calls "mapping this consciousness," are keys to developing an attitude towards teaching and one's artistic practice that honors both and acknowledges how they are not mutually exclusive practices.

Social Justice and Artistry
Perhaps some of what informs Ann's valuing of the intersubjective or relational realm of experience is Ann's belief that teaching artists have a vital contribution to make in rebalancing the materialism of society. She is careful to mention that an artist's own agenda can sometimes complicate his or her ability to work towards social justice using the arts. The materialism of society can result in teaching artists using their craft to address societal problems but leaving little time to develop the artistry. She writes: "I am observing in my own work that many of us are compromising our sense of artistry in order to be part of the working process to deliver social and healing programs, which means that creativity/artistry is becoming a servant to need." She emphasizes the need to replenish one's own artistic well of creativity through reflective practice or through connecting to those who work in social services.

> This young man in his early twenties (Malay) related to me that he loved language and had suddenly understood a 'spiritual' issue to do with his relationship to language that he had been grappling with for a while. He relayed that he had connected to the work we were doing not just in an outer way by performing sound through gesture but that he had experienced the 'being' of language inwardly. He said that he would never be the same again now that he knew that being present inwardly in such a way was possible.

Carrying on with the theme of the intersubjective in her narrative, Ann continues to express the way that she values the relational realm when she writes that working with students continues to

affirm her belief in the transforming power of the arts in their lives. The above example is one among many, wherein students connected to something personal or external that altered their perception of themselves and the world in which they live. Ann says that because she is "committed to a journey of knowing myself as a professional teaching artist" that she is able to authentically guide students. She is rewarded by the successful facilitation of this process.

The Metasubjective: Sean, Teaching Artist as "Global Citizen"
Sean is an early-career professional theatre artist who has been teaching in some capacity for 6-10 years, and is currently located in the Midwestern part of the United States. Originally from the UK and with experience working as a teaching artist in the UK, USA, Kenya and South Korea, Sean's narrative offers a particular focus on the "metasubjective" realm. Hagman (2005) explains that the metasubjective level of experience is defined by "group response, so that societies can provide the support, protection, and resources necessary for individuals to live in a particular environment" (p. 146). Sean's narrative, which emphasizes the role of the teaching artist as a "global citizen," illustrates the way that large organizations such as the Salvation Army and Bigfoot Arts in the UK operate on the metasubjective level to create social change. Sean writes:

> I think the relationship between citizenship and art is incredibly important and often overlooked….art can celebrate all that is good and wonderful about our world, and motivate us to be better. Art should challenge us, make us ask questions, and make us active, not passive. Being active is probably the first thing that comes to mind when I think of citizenship. Doing something, rather than simply complaining about it or waiting for someone else to do something about it.

Sean's academic degree programs from institutions in the USA and the UK have consistently led him to work in diverse communities with disenfranchised and marginalized populations. During his undergraduate years, faculty with expertise in Applied Theatre introduced Sean to the uses of theatre for social change. Subsequently, Sean sought out a Master's degree program that emphasized applied theatre and worked extensively with a major teaching artist service provider in the UK. In his narrative, Sean frequently expresses his commitment to creating theatre that connects people to the realities of their world and the realities of people who live in different circumstances.

Sean's parents were active members of the Salvation Army[7] and he credits that upbringing with both his early interest in the arts, and his commitment to social betterment. He states, "Several generations of my family have been members of the Salvation Army, which has a strong brass-band tradition so it is very rare to find a member of my family who doesn't play an instrument or

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[7] The Salvation Army is a faith-based Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) that provides myriad forms of assistance to disadvantaged populations worldwide.

at least used to." Furthermore, he explains, "If I hadn't pursued a career in the arts, I'm almost certain I would have become a social worker or found a career in the nonprofit sector. I think part of this stems from my growing up in the Salvation Army, which has always had a strong focus on 'faith in action.'" This grounding in the mission and success of a large, international service organization strongly informs Sean's narrative of faith in the realm of the metasubjective.

Training

Sean is very upbeat and complimentary of his training. He worked as a teaching assistant for an excellent teacher: "I was fortunate to work with a head teacher who was a big advocate of using the arts in education, so I had a great opportunity to put into practice a lot of what I was learning on my course into my role as a teaching assistant." During his MA training in the UK, Sean worked with various theatre companies that had strong professional development programs for their teaching artists.. Additionally, he worked with a variety of TIE (Theater in Education) companies, which also have a strong tradition of teacher training. Of one of these companies, Sean writes "I think the professional development I received with Bigfoot certainly made me take what I did more seriously and was probably one of the first points I began to see this as a potential career. It was also useful to meet other TAs and share experiences with one another. I definitely felt a part of a community." Here again, while Sean is quick to credit individuals who have contributed to his professional development, he consistently identifies large groups and organizations as being instrumental to his understanding of the work of the teaching artist.

Of this period in his life Sean writes, "I didn't make a great deal of money but I was fortunate to have a cheap place to live and was used to living on a budget. My work was fulfilling and I made enough to live on, so I was content with that."

Even though Sean writes that most of his training was on the job, in contrast to other findings in interviews with teaching artists, Sean's training involved lots of support from the various arts organizations with which he worked. His graduate work in London was directly and practically related to his work as a teaching artist, as he states:

> My graduate studies really had a direct relationship with my work as a TA. The transition from student to professional felt like a very natural and easy one. Although I probably went into the MA not really knowing exactly what I wanted to do career-wise, upon completion I felt much more confident that this was a valid career path.

Sean's experiences with institutions are consistently positive, which helps to support his continued valuing of the metasubjective realm of experience. In this sense, Sean's narrative indicates that he is both *attracted* to working in the metasubjective (group/social) realm, and he also finds ongoing *affirmation in* working in that realm.

Sean's generally positive experiences with his own training appear to influence his thoughts on the potentials of formal credentials for teaching artists. Sean sees this as an appropriate post-graduate kind of program, perhaps in applied theatre, for those artists ready to commit to working in this capacity.

Teaching Artist Identity: Social activism
Sean has a strong connection to the social value of his work in theatre and the arts. For example, "Working with the Salvation Army in Kenya using the arts in a community counseling program for people living with HIV/AIDS, I saw how people's lives could be fundamentally changed through the arts." Sean's drive to pursue arts-based forms of social change is reinforced by the positive interactions he has with individuals in these projects, and his narrative focuses specifically on the transformative power of theatrical interventions. He explains:

> This is something I've had the pleasure to witness in several different contexts. Perhaps it's most common in my work with young people, and realizing that even the smallest success (getting someone to speak on stage) can have a profound impact on a child's future. I've also seen this in much more immediate situations.

Sean sees a strong connection between his artistry, his teaching, and his social activism: "As most of my artistic work could be described as community-engaged work, I don't see a huge separation between my art and my teaching." He further clarifies:

> In addition to identifying as a TA, I'd also describe myself as an activist and a lot of my artistic work could also be described as activism. As a lot of my work has been with excluded populations or those separated from the mainstream, I like to think a lot of my work has been a part of creating change, whether on an individual level or in a larger context.

Sean responded that he is very satisfied with his working life as a teaching artist. He says even though he has been at this work for what seems to him a long time, "I still believe that even the smallest, individual actions can result in change, sometimes on a much larger level and even if we don't get to witness that it's still important that we work towards it." Through his work, he continues to thrive on bearing witness to the transformations that occur among participants as they encounter theatre arts and develop into "confident, passionate citizens of the world."

Conclusion

While the case studies and survey data provide insight into the breadth and depth of training and professional experience, results also demonstrate the extent to which individual teaching artists in theatre and dance must forge their own paths in career development. Significant professional networks exist – particularly in major metropolitan areas. However, 92 percent of survey

respondents develop their own curriculum, lesson plans and teaching materials. Taken as a whole, the field is characterized by practitioners who have to be both independent and responsive in order to sustain employment.

Preparedness and Subjectivity

In the midst of these results, patterns regarding the relationship between teaching artists' perceptions of preparedness and subjectivity stand out, particularly in the narrative comments from select respondents, who indicate that although they have completed formal degree and certificate programs in their arts discipline, they nevertheless did not feel prepared when beginning their work as teaching artists, as expressed in the following response:

> My Education DID NOT prepare me for becoming a TA. My education was primarily in academic arts. My technical training was in studios, I am entirely self-taught as an arts teacher although as an arts professional I have attended many professional development workshops.

This sentiment points to the respondent's perception of a gap between her academic arts training and the demands of professional teaching artist practice. Statements such as this one, when paired with the survey results, suggest that teaching artists piece together their own course of professional development once they begin their practice.

Placing other narrative comments from the survey into relationship with the three case studies illuminates the extent to which teaching artists' individualized paths of professional development are intertwined with their professional identity. In each of the case studies presented in this article, the subjects identified obstacles that they have faced in their practice, followed by steps taken to address those challenges. For instance, Jason, whose narrative provides insight into the function of the intrasubjective realm of experience, describes how he translates or "maps" work that he does with university students into work that he does with community groups, and vice versa. Jason's narrative highlights the way that Jason navigates these diverse environments through intrasubjective, or, largely individual and internal, processing. The following narrative statements from the survey reflect select respondents' reactions to feeling unprepared or underprepared when they began working as a teaching artist and how they took action individually (intrasubjectively) in order to improve the situation:

> It was all learning by doing, and ongoing development all the way.

> I wanted to rush into everything as far as teaching technique. I quickly learned how to pace myself for my students and most importantly, for me.

> With my personality, it was not hard to get going.

> I always felt like I was learning as I went, but that was incredibly invigorating …

> Confidence was zero, but my background enabled me to fake it until I became confident.

> I was lucky that my enthusiasm for working with children carried the day at times when perhaps my lesson plan did not.

Other survey respondents indicate that they felt better prepared or found ways to prepare in relation to a select group of peers, mentors, or the participants, themselves (intersubjectively). These survey responses mirrored the reflections expressed in Ann's narrative, where she highlights the way that she has worked with a select group of colleagues to address challenges collectively and collaboratively.

> My teaching mentor was really the one who prepared me. He gave me his entire curriculum and I saw him carry it out.

> Well supported by my college dance administrator in 1985.

> I had a great mentor who helped me develop my teaching style.

> Asking for guidance from those who I worked with.

> Immediately, I sought guidance from more experienced teaching artists I encountered.

> I worked with some wonderful teachers in grant planning so that through the school arts partnership structure, I understood what was needed from the school district side.

> Totally unprepared. Until i got to know the children…then they taught me how to share creative learning with them.

A third group of respondents explained that they received comprehensive training from a multi-faceted institutional program (metasubjective) designed to prepare them for the specific populations and settings for which they working, with mixed results. These survey responses connect closely with the views expressed in Sean's narrative, which highlights the role that institutions and large organizations have played in his development as a teaching artist.

> The new Tour Actor/Directors go through a two week "boot camp" where we learn the show we will teach in communities throughout the U.S. and Europe, learn the methods of how to teach that show, as well as our other responsibilities including finances, set

construction, and team management. At the end of those two weeks, I felt like I had been stuffed into a cannon ready to be fired unsure of anything I was about to do. but also knowing I had 60+ kids on the other side waiting for my partner and I to teach them a full scale musical in one week.

I apprenticed with a theater company with a teaching artist program that had a great scaffold. I shadowed, then assisted, team taught before teaching solo.

I began working as an apprentice in a program that has a strong support system, and I had a wonderful mentor, so I felt very supported and prepared in my work as an apprentice. When I started working on my own the following year, I thought I was prepared, but found that it still took YEARS of experience to get me as prepared as I wanted to be.

Eventually, I found a community in my Masters program that was full of wonderful resources.

I went through an extensive graduate program so I had a number of tools in my toolbelt. However, the realities of working with young people were things I couldn't be prepared for and things I'm finding very difficult.

Whole Selves and Reflective Practice

Given the broad range of potential settings for teaching artist employment, it is evident that the profession demands flexibility on the part of practitioners, who are called upon to continually assess their work and evaluate its effectiveness. When asked to describe the direct training and preparation for a career/work as a teaching artist, one survey participant wrote, "All of my experiences." This statement suggests that the respondent brings *all* of her life experience to her practice—not only arts-specialist knowledge or education-specific knowledge—encapsulates the demands of teaching artist practice, and the art of teaching. Simpson, Jackson and Aycock (2005) explain:

> People who genuinely understand teaching realize that it entails considerably more than having knowledge of subject matter and pedagogy and being gifted (whether from nature or experience or study or all three). It also includes a set of understandings, activities, interactions, relationships, ways of thinking, and grounded habits of intuiting based on a broad knowledge of many things, such as society, families, children, psychology, democracy, learning, ethics, community, pedagogy, and forms of inquiry and creativity. This is why the contributions of different kinds of researchers, scholars, and practitioners are needed to illuminate the work of teachers. Because the bodies of reflection and knowledge that inform teachers are growing, we must also. (p. 5)

The potential all-encompassing nature of the work of the teaching artist presents practitioners with a paradox: one is required to bring her "whole self" to the practice, along with "all of one's experiences," in conversation with the growing bodies of knowledge that exist in all of the disciplines. This seems, frankly, to be a daunting task at any stage of life, but particularly for those early in their careers.

Survey respondents, as well as those who completed in-depth questionnaires, have indicated that they respond to this challenge through, as one respondent wrote, "extensive self reflection and efforts at improvement."

Because of the nature of the teaching artist's work requires independence, confidence and initiative, as well as flexibility and responsiveness, reflection takes on increasing importance. As Deborah Mutnick (2006) explains:

> To achieve praxis, action must emanate from reflection, which in turn produces a new set of reflections, leading to the next action, and so on, in an ongoing dialectic. Unreflective action leads to adventurism and recklessness; passive reflection leaves the status quo intact. (p. 42)

By reflecting on experiences in the field, and subsequently acting in response to resources that exist at the intrasubjective (individual), intersubjective (small group), and metasubjective levels (large group or organizational/cultural), teaching artists develop their practice and, in the process, develop their teaching artist identity. It is our hope that this study illuminates the complex ways in which teaching artists undertake their professional development, and the ways in which these processes are intertwined with the development of their identity as teaching artists. Pamela Burnard (2006) articulates the particular function of reflection in the artist's process:

> Artists seek to reveal meaning. What we attach ourselves to, identify with, and become vitally interested in depends a great deal on the ways in which we reflectively construct personal meaning within a situation. The challenges for artists and artist educators come in terms of *what* they do in their studios, their classrooms and *how* they see their roles in the classroom. (p. 8)

Reconciling Hybrid Lives

Beyond the personal value of these processes, Alan Thornton (2005) suggests that the praxis of teaching artists and the attendant title of the "reflective practitioner" can be understood in terms of a "reconciliation" of identity among a population that has historically lived a hybrid or bifurcated life as an artist-teacher:

Quite clearly, the difficulties of practicing as both an artist and teacher are real… Conflicts of interest and lack of support regarding roles, identities and practices are not unique to artist teachers, but how does this particular group reconcile the numerous demands on them in situations that can change rapidly and where previous experience and knowledge can sometimes seem inadequate regarding the ability to simply cope, let alone teach, learn and make art effectively? It may be unwise to view reflective practice as a panacea, but some kinds of strategies for coping and achieving and helping others to do the same are essential, and reflective practice is worth considering as a strategy for developing an effective identity as an artist teacher. (p. 171-172)

Despite dwindling national support for the arts in many countries, teaching artists and their work are increasingly at the center of research on the arts in education and the arts in community settings. These studies provide insight into the complexity of teaching artist praxis and contribute to the further establishment of "teaching artist" as a viable professional identity that exists alongside of, rather than in-lieu of the professional identity of "artist."

Acknowledgement

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