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The Tale of Red Riding Hood and the Wolf as a Multi-literacy Tool for Reflection and Embodied Learning

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Abstract

This article concerns how teaching artists, associated with the Swedish Royal Opera, provided aesthetic opportunities to students during a three-year school project. One intervention is scrutinized in which the storybook of Red Riding Hood was used as a starting point for further aesthetic learning, culminating in a shadow theatre performance. With an ethnographic approach, the study identifies how a folk story can act as a multi-literacy tool for learning. The children's working processes and performance are interpreted under the inspiration of the Performance Cycle (Landay & Wootton, 2012) focusing on the reflective process.

Via a pragmatic discourse analysis, interview data from focus groups with children show that the interventions offer varied learning opportunities. Three themes emerge

from the analysis of the children's perspectives on the arts project, as learning opportunities linked to; (i) the material and the construction assignment; (ii) embodiment and emotionality; and (iii) social aspects and the importance of social interaction and friendship.

Introduction and Aims of the Study

The research presented in this article concerns aspects of a collaboration between the Swedish Royal Opera and a specific primary school, a collaboration aimed at assuring all students the opportunity to actively take part in culture and artistic life in a variety of ways. The research followed selected activities of the school project during a three-year period of time. The Swedish Royal Opera has three main artistic areas: opera, ballet and Young at the Opera. Since becoming an ordinary part of programming in 2005, Young at the Opera was tasked with special assignments to produce ballets and operas suited for children and youth and to conduct collaborations with schools during which teaching artists present workshops on music, drama, or ballet to a variety of classes. In the three-year school project, presented here, Young at the Opera offered many activities to all of the classes (K-9) in one particularly engaged school. As a researcher I followed the activities in the classes from pre-school to the 6th grade. Such co-operation between schools and professional artists can build on different grounds and can shift in intensity. Imms et al. (2011) distinguish two major categories: "*Artists-in-residence programs",* and "*Exposure-to-arts programs"* (p. 5). The first category refers to when individual artists work at a school with teachers and students in short-term or long-term partnerships. In the second category, Exposure-to-arts programs, schools arrange visits to galleries or other cultural institutions (art venues-based programs), or, bring the arts to the school (school-based programs).

In the three-year arts education project I followed as a researcher, both of Imms et al. (2011) major categories of collaboration were experienced. The students were invited to both visit the opera house and to attend opera performances, both of which qualified as Exposure-to-arts programs. But the project primarily concerned activities relating to *Artists in school.* One of the arts interventions, as I label the specific and demarcated activities within Young at the Opera's broader intention of arts education, described and analyzed here is a workshop series administered in a school and led by one or, occasionally, two professional artists associated with the Swedish Royal Opera. Children in the second grade worked with the tale of *Red Riding Hood and the Wolf*. As they read the book, they were invited to make figures for a shadow play by depicting the important characters and creating props for the story using paper, cardboard, and wooden sticks. The work concluded in a performance of the story in the classroom.

The aim of this article is to analyze connections between these arts interventions and *literacy*. Ethnographic data gathered from the field were analyzed according to Landay and Wooton's (2012) *performance cycle,* which describes reflection as the central aspect for enhancing literacy through arts interventions. The question asked of the material was:

- How is reflection, which is set at the center of the performance cycle for enhanced literacy, evoked through the workshop series?

Data from focus group interviews were then thematized in order to answer the question:

- What do children reveal about the learning opportunities provided by arts education conducted in school by professional artists?

Background and Theoretical Concepts: Arts in School – Different Meanings and Expectations

Many efforts have been made that show a variety of positive results emanating from arts education. Perhaps most famous is the formulation of a wow-factor (Bamford, 2006/2009), suggesting children's enhanced well-being due to arts education, if used professionally and with quality. Out from her meta-analysis of project reports on arts and culture in school from 170 countries, Bamford states that even if more research is needed for understanding the links between arts, cognition, education, and health, well-being is promoted because "art-rich programmes encourage more focused classroom interaction, greater concentration" (Bamford, 2006/ 2009, p.133). The enhancing of motivation through performative arts is stressed by Leung and Leung (2010), who conclude in regard to the learning outcomes from teacher-artist partnerships on Cantonese opera, that students in primary school do undergo a positive change in motivation towards learning about opera, while secondary school students do not. The authors therefore suggest an early introduction of indigenous music to children as a means of "cultivating students' cultural values and identities" (p. 23). Leung and Leung (2010) also present results from another study showing that partnerships between schools and professional artists (here orchestral groups) did enhance students' motivation in music, compared to students in schools not involved with that sort of cooperation. They summarize that such direct contact with musicians within the partnership increased students' interest in music (p. 4).

In an evaluation of cooperative work between schools and professional artists, Imms, et al. (2011) also consider positive learning outcomes in different domains, such as students' creative skills, social learning, and improved attention (pp. 6-9). The authors strongly emphasize students' improved problem-solving capacities, improved behavior, and an overall increased engagement while they diminished project constraints and difficulties. When the

projects were school-based, the main difficulties were scheduling, lack of time, and, lack of space (Imms et al., 2011, p. 45). To give balance to the expectations of what arts can contribute to in relation to children's academic achievement –such as problem solving– through arts, I refer to Winner and Cooper (2000) and their discussion about outcomes versus correspondence. They conclude that "we have as yet no evidence that studying the arts has a causal effect on academic achievement" (p. 65). Non the less, schools can report on better learning because students find the school more interesting and joyful, corresponding to a playful and often project based education, not as an outcome of the arts *per se*. A similar and modest attitude to relationships between arts education and expected outcomes in students' skills or well-being, is held by Gadsden (2008). Suggesting that the idea of transfer is problematic, she posits, "Any failure to find such a direct relationship puts the arts in the untenable position of being labeled soft, inexact, emotional, and inaccurate—in other words, unscientific" (p. 33). Even so, the arts for Gadsden (2008) can offer opportunities for taking new perspectives, in a creative reimagination of the world (pp. 54-55). So, arts can give so many other aspects to children's lives than higher grades or cultivated values. As will be showed below, children in contact with literature and dramatization are given opportunities for creativity and reflection. Such aspects have been well explored by the philosopher Maxine Greene and Edmund Burke Feldman, professor of art. Addressing their ideas of the concept of arts education and of aesthetic education shows both similarities and differences in their using of the concepts. Going more profoundly into their interpretations of these concepts calls also for a thought on what education may refer to.

Education*,* for Feldman (1970), relate to communication between teacher and child, and within such dialogue there might develop an option for the child to encounter a defined "problem," something that has to be confronted in a creative way (p. 192). Arts education is for Feldman (1970) an education that might differ from traditional education aiming at "training people to be good" (p. 82), in that it the arts, in non-instrumental ways, involve a kind of preparedness for the unforeseen:

> Human freedom presupposes the need to respond in an original fashion to new situations. […] *[M]ore* pursuit of knowledge and *more* training in the right behavior will not necessarily lead to the educational goals so ardently desired by the community. In order to achieve these goals, we have to change the way we go about developing free citizens who are both moderately wise and reasonably good. (p. 82)

Feldman (1970) views arts education as fostering children's open-minded and curious attitudes to new challenges.

Expressing a view closely linked to Feldman's (1970) and connecting art education to aesthetic education Greene (2001) defines *education* as a process that might change a person by evoking new perspectives or as a new way of experiencing the world (pp. 5-7). Within art education, for Greene (2001), students explore different materials and medias, through which they can start to experience aesthetic aspects, meaning reflecting on "what is there to be noticed" (p. 6), and start to see the world differently. The point of aesthetic education, for Greene (2007), is to transform the encounter with arts into a reflective process that uncovers to find out "what it signifies to create and engage with a created world" (p. 659).

Aesthetics for Feldman (1970) also refers to a general exploration of how humans perceive the world, and especially, react to arts (p. 289). Both Feldman (1970) and Greene (2001; 2007) stress meaning making and the importance of new perspectives, as well as the value of reflection and an openness for the unexpected. Hence the question of what *outcomes* the arts produce can be seen as wrongly formulated. Helander (2014) refers to the arts as "the necessity of the useless" (p. 196). This, in my interpretation, does not lead to a conclusion that the arts could not be linked to learning processes. Instead it points to the fact that learning through the arts can offer learning opportunities where there is room for the unforeseen, and where contradictions and playful and imaginative thinking are embraced. This is what Scott Shields, Guyotte, and Weedo (2016) refer to as artful pedagogy. The concept is based on the thinking of Maxine Greene (2001; 2007), among others, and refers to pedagogical work that stimulates engagement in imagination and playing, but also to an openness to disruption, ambiguity and embodied learning – learning seen as meaning making processes (Scott Shields, Guyotte, and Weedo, 2016, p. 45).

Following ideas of Feldman (1970), and Greene (2001; 2007), I prefer to see education as a matter of communication, in which meaning making takes place as a social practice. Within such a practice the child can learn "the social dimension of art" (Feldman, 1970, p 53), for example, contextual art conventions as "vehicles of meaning" (Feldman, 1970, p. 36). The child can become aware of what Feldman (1970) discusses in terms of the *language of art* (p. 247-297). This includes not only different ways of using the language of art, such as through using materials, styles or proportions, but also the importance of listening to others' art voices: how we see and react to arts is, as noted above, what is explained in the *aesthetics* (Feldman, 1970, p. 289). Feldman's notion of a language of art and children's acquisition of such language can be seen as an early attempt to describe how children become arts literate.

Literacy and the Arts

Greene (1982) discusses how arts and literacy can be understood as connected. As she stresses the importance of becoming in power of one's own learning process, she suggests that arts can challenge students to "see things as if they could be otherwise" (p. 327). Literacy, she says,

can make us overcome "wordlessness" (p. 326), becoming instead reflective. Eisner (1991), in a similar reasoning, suggests that how and what we experience with our senses, define how we understand the world. Therefore, education should aim to enhance literacies in the broadest sense: to construe and express meaning in different forms of languages. Following these lines of thought, literacy researchers today engage in more than merely individual's acquisition of reading and writing skills. The concept of literacy also embraces knowledge and understanding of different media, from pictures and signs to arts. Landay and Wootton (2012) state that researchers today work with the concept of literacy in such complex, multifaceted way that is always connected to the current social settings. According to Heath (1983), students who exhibit similar literacy practices at home as in school have advantages, seen in their familiarity and preunderstanding of the educational goals, for example being read to. Barton and Lee (2012) elaborate further on this and state that some children are socialized into the *dominating literacy practice* such as academic reading and writing, while others in contrast, are socialized into every-day, or *vernacular literacies*, that lack status in the overall society. According to Wedin (2004), children from homes with no experience in the dominate practices of educational institutions, need to learn those skills in school, in order to have equal access to education. In consequence, literacy can be seen as an important aspect of the democratic values in our school system in the quest for equity.

Examining the concept of and practices of *arts literacy*, Barton (2013) wants to fill the gap she has identified as limited research on literacy practice in the arts. She differentiates between three types of theorizing on literacy and the arts: (i) focusing on artistic inquiry and thinking about art; (ii) communication and meaning making in the arts; and finally (iii) the possibility of the arts improving literacy generally, an aspect she herself does not attend do. Instead, Barton (2013) stresses the importance of the first two types, the first corresponding to students' ability "to read and write about art from a critical perspective" and the second to the "creation of art itself" (p. 16). Barton (2013) suggests that it is "when the first informs the latter that students become more literate in the arts" (p. 16). Both types involve reflection on art, which, in an educational setting, requires an open-minded teacher with interest for the children's experiences and expressions. Such approach can facilitate what Bresler (2004) calls children's self-actualization, a process that "opens students up to awareness of the outside world, from shapes and movements to the inner worlds of energies and qualities of experience, combining ways of doing with ways of *being"* (p. 148).

The cooperation between artists and schools generates many questions about if and how the arts differ from other school subjects, already touched upon above. Without seeing arts education as a bridge for enhanced learning in other areas, the question can be asked: How and in what ways can the arts contribute to education? Davidson (2004) addresses this by suggesting "the arts, by their very nature, value embodied knowledge to a greater degree than

many of the traditional disciplines found in schools" (p. 197). What makes arts educational projects in schools challenging is that the school, traditionally, does not value embodied knowledge. The tensions between traditional school expectations and arts interventions' promotion of creativity and embodied knowledge are therefore not surprising. Not all educators would agree with Dunn and Wright's (2014) claim that "the arts do not simply engage learning, they are learning" (p. 232).

The study presented below is an illustration of embodied learning through the arts. The children explore their bodies, emotions, and the expressiveness of their voices in accordance with the different characters' actions in their creation and performance of a folk story. Visiting professional artists use a picture book as the starting point. As in children's play, communication and meaning making involves different modes. As Wright (2014) concludes, when analyzing children's drawings in relation to their talk and movements, the graphic, the narrative and the enactive modes are interrelated, each "enrich the other" (p. 529).

In the case of this article, literacy is used in its broadest sense as understandings and possible interpretations of the world, in a joint meaning making process. The reading and the picture book give a variety of possibilities and modes to explore the meanings of the book and story within a cooperative and reflective work, not least in the preparations of the shadow performance.

The Performance Cycle and Literature as Art

Literacy, as discussed above, is essential for children's active engagement in the world and their ability to interpret, construct, and create meaning. Greene (1982) states that literacy is linked to "critical reflectiveness, to wide-awakeness" (p. 329). Such reflection is set at the center of Landay and Wotton's (2012) *performance cycle* which was created to describe educational work for enhancing literacy through arts interventions. According to Landay and Wootton (2012) reflection denotes an "activity of human mind, [and] describes thinking back on a particular subject carefully and deeply in order to illuminate or understand more fully" (p. 191). This involves not only thinking about one's own thinking, but also relating it to the learning setting, as the interpretations and sharing of ideas always take place in a specific environment. The authors see the classroom's social climate as important for enabling a sharing of thoughts, wherein students can "comment appropriately and responsibly, giving useful and pertinent feedback to themselves and others" (Landay & Wootton, 2012, p. 200). Hence, Community Building is the starting point in the cycle, followed by a working process from Entering Text; Comprehending Text; Creating Text; Rehearsing /Revising Text; to the last activity of Performing Text. In every activity in the process, reflection is actualized. The cycle is presented as an educational design, where at the different stages the students explore the literature at hand, through reading, writing and performing, in meaningful and experiential

ways. In their book, Landay and Wootton illustrate the cycle by suggesting activities for every stage of the process: 1) The process starts in the creating of a space so that everyone can feel comfortable. The ideas of the work are explained, as well as the forms of collaboration and everyone's contributing roles; 2) The topics of the text/book are introduced, and the children are invited to explore –entering– topics, plots, and the language of the text, which can be done through different art forms; 3) The children start to interact with the text: examining words, roles, and style, by performing parts of the text, a stage that might result in new topics and questions, as well as new comprehensions; 4) In the stage of creating text, the children add their own themes and interpretations; 5) They are than given the opportunity to rehearse but also revise, out from feedback from teachers/artists and other children, the work before the last stage; 6) the performance of the text (Landay & Wootton, 2012, p. 10-12). For the performance to become a *meaningful play,* the authors highlight the importance of collaboration. The children have to be the owners of the play, with the teachers/artists ready to give advice and suggestions and to structure the process (Landay & Wootton, 2012, p. 169-176). As the students share experiences, based on their joint work, Landay & Wootton (2012) suggest that the opportunities to reflect help the children to "become more *mindful* of their own learning" (p. 192).

In the first analytical approach of the field material, I will use this process of the cycle to distinguish the different phases of the work and to see in what ways the arts education affords children's opportunities for reflection and engagement.

An important thing to note is that the activities within the performance cycle are not considered as a simple teaching method for enhancing learning. In educational social settings, we can never be sure of what the result might be. However, Landay and Wootton (2012), in accordance with Greene (2001; 2007), see possibilities in open-ended educational offerings that involve embodied learning. In this, dialogue and collaborative work replace traditional, instrumental and authoritarian educational norms. Through dialogic exploration of shared meanings, the arts, i.e. literature in the case presented by Landay and Wootton (2012), offer opportunities for reflection.

The reading of children's books, sometimes based on folk stories, is a common educational starting point for discussing, reflecting, and performing and incorporates many educational goals. Rhedin (2013), whose research interest concerns illustrated children's books, suggests that reading together with young children offers a joint room, a shared and imagined world, which changes each time the book is read. Reading aloud to young children can be done in different ways: either the reader adjusts the reading to the child, in a *dialogic reading*, or, by taking explanatory reading breaks, the reader discusses understandings with the child, as a *sharing of picture-books* (Rhedin, 2013). These methods are contrasted to a form of reading

where the reader trusts the author and the child experiences the book without any explanatory pedagogical adjustments. Rhedin (2013) suggests that such reading links closely to American literature researcher Louise Rosenblatt's (1938) notion of *aesthetic reading*. Rosenblatt (1938, as cited in Rhedin, 2013) described the reader's experience as the dancer's performance or the violinist's playing; it is the reader who is performing the art. Within the school project presented below different forms of reading will be used as a point of reference for the activities the children undergo as they grasp different views on the folk story's possible roles and functions.

Method and Ethical Aspects in Research

Ethnographers' Doings and Interpretative Analysis

The field study presented below is from the first year of my fieldwork, in which the teaching artists associated with the Royal Opera were a puppeteer and, on occasion, a professional actor. The research process started with field visits to several workshops conducted in the school setting by the teaching artists (February-March). These workshops were then discussed with the children in small focus groups at times determined by the class teacher (at the end of May). For this chosen workshop series, four interviews were conducted (they lasted about fifteen, twenty, and forty minutes, respectively, while the fourth was very short as time had run out). In total, five girls and eleven boys attended the focus groups, with three to five children at a time. Excerpts from two of the groups, labeled A and B, will be presented and used in the analysis.

Researchers rarely can spend, as Heath and Street (2008) notice, years in longitudinal fieldwork for "ethnographer learning", instead, they speak of "ethnographer doing" (p. 62), in which the researcher follows, as an example, teachers within the school, or as in this case teaching artists. The work of an ethnographer is not to try to answer to *why* people do things, but instead, according to Heath and Street (2008), the important question to ask is "*What is happening?"* (p. 35). Within an ethnographic approach, Heath and Street (2008) have written about literacy. Their main point for studying literacy is to grasp the culture of the studied group, or rather how the group is doing culture, as it is a constantly interpretative meaning making process (pp. 9-10). These doings, or interpretations, are not occurring in an empty space, but are affected by the social environment, hence they stress meaning making as a social practice.

Heath and Street (2008) address the matter that ethnography is interpretive and subjective, which points to the researcher's need to be explicit about what they call the researcher's decision rules (p. 45). These concern decisions about the central phenomenon in the study, the

time-frame and setting for the study, the researcher's earlier experience of the phenomenon, and the relation between people and places involved in the study (p. 46).

Heath and Street (2008) also emphasize the researcher's "tolerance for detail" (p. 57). This approach, I suggest, draws on the idea of writing thick descriptions, developed further from the philosopher Gilbert Ryle by Clifford Geertz (1973). Such descriptions are, according to Geertz (1973), detailed not only regarding observations and interviews but also in reporting the interpretation of social meaning, "the meaning particular social actions have for the actors" (p. 321).

The next section goes further into the ethical aspects in research with children, but already here it is important to turn to the question of what the researcher can reveal about the persons and places in the presentation of research and how informants are to be anonymized (Heath and Street, 2008, p. 46). Field note excerpts presented below do not name individual group members or specify individual children's actions or utterances. This is not to ignore the children's different and personal contributions to the setting, instead the fieldwork highlights the adults' interventions and how children relate on a group level. On the other hand, citations from the focus group interviews indicate individual children and their personal experiences, as well as their turn taking during the interviews, which was possible due to the recording of our talks.

The result of the analysis of the interview data is based on a pragmatic discourse analysis in which the researcher's own perspective and ability to imagine are crucial to bringing forward possible meanings of the data (Quennerstedt, 2008). Vaismoradi et al. (2016) stress researchers' creativity in thematic analytical work. Hoping to resolve the lack of precision in the definition of what constitutes a theme, as well as sub-themes and categories, they suggest a *category* refers to the text itself, the utterances written down from an interview at a descriptive level. A *theme*, on the other hand, emerges from the interpretation of that text "to elicit the essence of the participant's experiences" (p. 102). Vaismoradi et al. (2016) propose four phases of theme development, each including several stages (here in brief): (i) the reading, coding, and highlighting of the material at hand; (ii) the work of classifying, comparing, and labelling the material in order to construct clusters of codes; (iii) the work of re-reading in order to distance oneself from the first tentative interpretations, and to stabilize the themes and sub-themes; and (iv) the final development of a storyline for the presentation of the work (pp. 103-107). In the study presented below themes are derived from the focus group data categories to shed light on the different experiences the children express.

Ethical Aspects and Decisions

One of the important aspects to reflect upon out from research ethics mentioned by Heath and Street (2008) is what to tell about the setting and the people involved in the research (p. 46). Here, I will comment quite thoroughly on the anonymization of the participant children and on what they attended and consented to. Field notes were gathered from two groups, each with about 15 fifteen students from the same second grade class. Each group attended four separate workshops (I did not have the opportunity to attend the fourth workshop in group B). In the fifth and last session, the whole class met for the final common performance. The workshops were completed in the same way for both groups, but differ in some respects, which will be commented upon, as it is important to reveal differences in educational methods within a single class. Some of the children's actions are not analyzed because not all of the parents submitted an informed consent for the children to participate in the study. According to the ethical advisory board of my university department, I did not need to ask for informed consent of the adults from the Opera. As the reader will notice, there was no need to disguise the school setting, as this research concerns an official project, described on the Royal Opera's website as a special opportunity for a school to cooperate with professional artists. Even so, I choose not to expose the name of the school because the special features of the setting can be described without such naming and the focus of the article is general educational matters.

In the beginning of the workshop series and the interview sessions with the children, I introduced myself and explained that I was not working for the Opera, but for a university. Also, I explained that part of my job is to conduct research, which means to investigate something in order to learn more about it, something these children sometimes do in school. I told them my interest concerned how they think about the activities within the arts education project. Because I could help the kids with cutting or instructions, I sometimes became more of a teacher/professional than I intended. On the other hand, this could also be helping to come closer to the children's reasoning about the different Young at the Opera activities. During circle-times, I participated with the children in name-games or listened to the story read aloud. When they worked with paper figures or rehearsed the lines for the performance I walked around the workstations talking with the children whose parents gave formal consent.

My position as neither a responsible schoolteacher, nor a professional teaching artist from the Opera, but as a university researcher could be a strange one. Despite my efforts, teachers or classroom assistants sometimes thought I was connected with the Opera and that I could conduct the activities with the artists. Yet, as my assignment was not to take the lead but rather to silently wait and see what happened in the classroom, the position of being an outsider was more often beneficial.

Both the adults' and children's view of my role as researcher had to be taken into consideration. Freeman and Mathison (2009) describe how researcher's relations with children are shaped by the researcher's beliefs about children, and the children's beliefs about adults. Of course, children may view relationships with researchers conducting research within a school similarly to existing adult–child relations within that setting (Aspán, 2015). This means that children in institutionalized settings, such as school, are aware of adult expectations of a singular, predetermined correct answer, and so they are often eager to supply also a researcher such answers.

It is important to note that different children do not have the same thoughts about adults or about a visiting researcher. For some, I seem to have been almost a teacher, as someone who is asked what is allowed. For others, my role and position as more of an outsider meant we were able to discuss different matters such as the social climate in the class or the school rules. A few small group meetings in the overall research project, were used by some children as a space for challenging play that tested the limits and rules of our sessions.

Findings from the Field

The focus of this article is on how children respond to and experience a series of workshops based on a folk tale and presented by professional artists. Here a picture book, a richly illustrated version of the folk story *Red Riding Hood*, is used as a starting point. From the reading of the book the children learned about the different characters, props, milieus, and the storyline, which they would later re-enact in a shadow play by using self-made cardboard figures. Here, literature acts as the professional artists' point of departure and makes visible the many possibilities this kind of arts education has for creativity, and for (arts) literacy.

In the first sections, I describe art interventions that took place over one spring term, with a class in their second school year, and during five workshop sessions at the school. Excerpts from the workshop field-notes will be given, in order to, at a first level of analysis, read the data in relation to Landay and Wootton's (2012) *performance cycle*, described above. In the subsequent sections, the interview data from the focus groups will be presented to supplement the initial findings with the children's perspectives on the arts interventions.

Art-work and the Performance Cycle with Modifications

In this section, I describe fieldwork connected to story-telling, handicraft-making, and the performance the children produced in workshops. The workshops were led by the professional puppeteer Annika, supported by the school's art-teacher and, on some occasions, the actor from Young at the Opera, Sara (with their permission, I use their real names in this text).

The school class, with children age eight, was divided in two and every intervention was conducted in two groups with about twelve to fifteen students in each. In order to paint a picture of the interventions I will provide some extensive excerpts of the sessions, for some activities I give excerpts from both groups. Each session lasted about two lessons (usually about 9-11 a.m.) and began with introductory games meant to help us, the adults, to learn the children's names, but also to create a joint room. Here, I could learn who the children were whose parents had not given informed consent and, therefore, could not to be included in the analysis. All the sessions started with children listening to the sounds of little bells fading away. The bells were also used during the workshops when the group needed to concentrate and gather for further instruction during their work. It is worth mentioning that Annika and Sara had met some of the children earlier during a previous short-term school project.

The Introductory Session

The storybook Annika has brought with her is Red Riding Hood and the Wolf and during this first session, with all the children sitting on the floor in a circle, she will read the book aloud. In response to the question, "Does anyone know this folk tale?" several of the children raise their hands and say, "Yes." Annika tells the children to notice what characters and places are important in the story, and they are also asked, "What do these places look like?"

Group 1

When the story comes to the part where the wolf answers the question, "Why is his mouth so big?" some children make slurping sounds and some crawl closer to the picture book. Annika does not turn the book towards the group to show all of the pictures. She says she wants them to make pictures in their heads, in their own imagination. But she does show the picture in which the wolf swallows the little girl and she makes clear that this is only one way in which it can be illustrated.

In both groups

After the reading, the children can easily mention the important characters; the hunter, the wolf, the mother, and the girl. Annika asks them to write a list of these figures that needs to be made for the coming shadow play.

Group 2

The children are told to think of how one could construct the house for the play. They are asked "What rooms or places are important?" They answer: "The stomach inside the wolf", and "the cottage", and one suggests "the forest". While quite a few children are talking right out, at the same time, one boy calls out, "And the well too!!" Annika guides them to identify more objects and asks which were more

> important. Three boys discuss the importance of the weapons; one starting; "rifles and knife". The next agrees; "Yes, I would say the knife," while the third fills in, "and stones" that were to disarm the wolf completely. One also adds, "the hat –or hood– of Red Riding Hood."

In the presented sequence I do not attribute the different utterings to specific children in the group. Instead, I focus on how they are following each other's ideas. Not only did the children offer their own suggestions but they also agreed and supported the different propositions of others.

Even though some of the children were already acquainted with the story, listening to the reading together provided a starting point for all the children and their shadow theater play. The creation of such a joint room can be seen, with the performance cycle in mind, as an intention to build a community, to get together around a common activity.

This introduction also contains the second stage in the performance cycle: "*entering the text*" (Landay & Wootton, 2012, p. 21). In this the sequences of the story and the settings are presented, and the children are all getting acquainted to the story line. These activities, the presenting of the characters and the plot and the salient props, can be seen as an initial interpretation of the story. In this, the children agreed on the important roles and props in the scenes, as well as the turns of the plot, from the little girls' joy and distress, to the threat from the wolf, to the concluding relief.

The third stage of the performance cycle, *comprehending text*, began in session one, as they discuss, and examine, the important characters, traits, and places in the story. This third stage is continued during the second session when the children decode and "seize, grasp, lay hold of, or catch" (Landy & Wootton, 2012, p. 89) the text. Here the children in each group of four were making the most salient four characters, which can be seen as a way of getting more and more acquainted to the story, to see how the different parts are linked to each other within the plot. As will be shown below, there were also some difficulties to keep the focus and to motivate all of the children to this stage.

> The Second Session
> This time Annika begins by showing her figures behind a sheet taped up in the doorway of the material storage room and with a simple flashlight the old paper dolls come alive. She explains that the shapes and stronger colors are seen through the cloth. The figure she is moving behind the sheet is a witch with sharp fingernails and some of the children cry out loud, as it really is creepy. Also, the wolf's jaw is movable and that is a bit scary.

> The children then, sitting in groups of four at their desks, start to construct the shadow figures. Annika has made paper cards beforehand and now each child is picking up one of the four characters, noted on the cards, for their own construction work. They start by sketching, and when they have decided the proportions and shape of the character, they shall transmit it over to the harder cardboard.
>
> Group 1
> Some children draw elegantly, some do not draw at all, but they all are sitting at their desks. Annika uses her two little bells to get their attention when she wants to show them again how to construct a movable arm or make the wolf's jaw open. Many draw faces on the grandmother or Red Riding Hood as if they do not care about or have not yet gotten the point of the silhouette – that only contours and holes for eyes will be visible and few nuances might be perceived through the use of contrasting colored papers.
>
> Group 2
> This time, it is difficult for some children to concentrate. One girl does not want to work at all. Two boys who missed the first workshop now constitute a group on their own. Another suggests a change of group, in order to be in the same group as a friend. But Annika replies that it does not matter who they are working with this time, so they continue in the same groups. One boy is very content at having picked out the wolf-card. He quickly makes a wolf with a large rough tail and also quickly completes a movable lower jaw. One boy in the two-member group will make the grandmother, with weapons, so that she can shoot the wolf later, as nobody picked the hunter-card. The girl who chooses not to work is sitting on the floor without any paper. The leisure-time pedagogue is not doing anything to change her mind, neither am I. Annika has a conversation with another girl, who is about to quit working. Annika does not force the idle children to participate. She explains that the children do not have to do anything, that this work is voluntary, and she concludes, "What will happen is that there will be no shadow play". Later, the two unwilling girls are sitting and drawing. Concurrently, one boy has already transferred the sketch of the wolf from paper to cardboard and is almost ready to cut it out.

Regarding this out from the stages of the performance cycle, the struggle to keep motivation up and holding the joint focus in examining the story and characters, can be seen as a lost joint room. Some of the small groups of four children, do not manage to see the importance of their co-work and the adults are concentrating primarily on the techniques and handicraft for to

accomplish the figures. The unwillingness and the suggestion for a change of working-partners among some of the children can be interpreted as a searching for what was set up in the first stage, the community building.

In both the second and the third workshop sessions (no excerpt is given from the third) the focus is on finishing the construction of the figures and adding some decorations, such as lace or colored paper. Creating figures can be seen as corresponding to the creating of text, part of the performance cycle (Landay & Wotton, 2012, p. 26-28). Landay & Wotton (2012) describes this stage as a writing process in which the students "rewrite, recreate, remix and recycle their work" (p. 127). In the workshops here, the adults distributed what character each child was to construct. This provided the children with a starting point and they were than able to use their own personal preferences and imagination to construct the characters. The process of transferring the sketch to another material, gave opportunities to change and improve the initial idea and also to explore the differences between the materials.

A goal of the workshop was that children would use their imagination. Children who gave the old Grandmother a weapon to defend herself when there was no hunter to save her met this goal by using their imaginations to solve a problem. Others were not keen on performing the suggested tasks. Even so, the girls who initially resisted the assignment later joined in by drawing together. This can be understood as testing the authority of an adult who was not their ordinary teacher. Annika was also very clear about the voluntariness of the assignment, which might have empowered the girls to appreciate the opportunity to create freely.

So far, the storyline has not been investigated profoundly with regard to possible interpretations, reinterpretations, or imaginable changes. As will be shown in the next section, it is when the children start to acting, and try out the lines and voices that the story becomes their own, and the story line become a the joint explorative and reflecting work linked to the performance cycle. When the voices and the different characters' lines are settled and tried out, the possible ways of staging the storyline becomes salient. So, the fourth session involves Landay and Wootton's (2012) notion of "creating the story" through the children's "own interpretations and personal responses" (p. 11).

> The Fourth Session
> Group 1
> During this session the children work with characters' voices and lines. Here, Sara from Young at the Opera accompanies Annika. By using playful voice games and her knowledge of acting, Sara instructs the students on how to speak loud and clear without screaming. First, the children use their voices to mimic a bee that they send away to the next child in the circle. To receive the bee, it is important to be

> observant. When everyone in the circle has finished practicing controlling their voices, the group begins rehearsing the Red Riding Hood story.
>
> The twelve children are standing in a circle, and Sara asks, "How does a wolf sound?" Several roar, but Sara wants to listen to them one by one. One boy is asked to mimic the line Sara gives: "Why are you in the forest picking flowers all alone?" All of the children then imitate the same line one at a time to try out their voices, and to listen to each other. While some children ask the question, one girl says, "Well, I will go to grandmother with flowers", in a girly voice. The circle is getting lost now, but everyone answers, "Well, I'll go"… mimicking the girl's answer.
>
> The children take their turns, delivering their lines in order, except for one boy who has left the group and instead rests on the floor. After a while, they turn to the next part of the story. Using a little girl's voice, each child asks, "Is anybody home?" Then playing Grandma, each one answers in a creaky old lady's voice, "Just come in!"
>
> During the rest of the lesson, the children continue to work in their groups creating figures for the shadow play. Fifteen minutes before the end of the class, Annika places one of the girl's Red Riding Hood-figures behind the sheet, illuminated from behind. She demonstrates how the shadow looks bigger if the figure is pulled further away from the sheet. The children are given the opportunity to try out their figures. Annika helps four boys by showing them how to move the figures to make them grow or shrink. While standing behind the sheet some try the lines, "Because I'll see you better, hear you better, eat you up!!!!!" The children show interest in what the others are doing by listening carefully. The narrator says, "Now the wolf has woken up, it's thirsty. Drinking Water - Where's the Well? How does it sound when he falls?" The children make a splashing sound. The narrator concludes, "Now the wolf fell into the well and died. Then grandmother lived happily together with Red Riding Hood ever after."

The narrator's role was to keep the storyline on track, while the other characters added selected lines in appropriate voices. By exploring the character's contrasting voices and personalities (the courage of the girl and wolf's evil) the children grew closer to exploring the story. At this time several of the children were able to use their own figures to practice projecting shadows on the sheet like they would in the final performance. The stage of rehearsing /revising text (Landay & Wootton, 2012) is important for the preparations for a performance in performative arts, or as for writers, for to finish a text for new readers. For seeing the relevance of this stage, Landay and Wootton stress the importance of that the work

matters for the students (p. 145). Here it offered the children the opportunity to orally perform the emotions that are needed to give an imagined audience an exciting experience. As time was short, the children had few opportunities to rehearse with the artists, but they were asked to continue on their own. This rehearsing /revising text comes along with a kind of community building, which was not very clear in the beginning of the workshop series. The children were here in the fourth session, challenged to explore different emotional states including curiosity, joy fear, and relief. Each child tried all of the different voices, even if they portrayed only one character in the final performance. During this exploration, very little, if any of the earlier resistance to the activities, was seen. Even if it took two adults to clarify all the options and turn-taking, the group members were eager to perform and use their voices in acting. The workshop turned out to be a playful stage, engaging the children through the creation of imaginative scenes. In the next session, as it was the final one, this playfulness was somewhat mixed with a sense of seriousness. As will be shown some effort is given the fact that the whole class here came together. Why this became the adults' choice can be seen both as a way of effective scheduling, and that it is thrilling to have a big audience watching the play.

The Final Session

In the last and final session, both groups come together to take part in each other's scenery. Thirty children along with Annika, Sara, and the school's art-teacher are all there, as well as a couple of school a leisure-time pedagogues who were only present for the beginning of the lesson. Putting the spotlights in the ceiling lamps, tacking the sheets up, and pushing the desks to the back of the room takes a while. Meanwhile, most of the children help to distribute the paper figures to each other. Some of the figures need a bit of fixing and repairing.

The adults choose one of the groups to perform first, while the other group is given what the adults call the 'important assignment' of being the audience. However, getting fifteen children to start at the same time is not easy, so, some participants in the first group have to also act as audience. Some choose to stand in line quietly waiting for their turn behind the sheet. After each child contributes a part of the story, the next little group takes over. The children know the lines by now, but there are a couple of short interruptions to tape figures together.

Behind the sheet it is quite noisy. One child exclaims, 'Ouch, Ouch, AH!' when the wolf is attacking Grandma. But luckily, the hunter arrives. The children take turns as instructed by Sara. The two groups perform their theatre pieces and each one is thanked with applause from the audience.

> During the last minutes, the adults gather the children in a wide circle to reflect on the activities done during the workshop series. Annika states, "In the beginning, it was a bit messy, but the groups worked well, and it turned out to become a folk tale, a shadow theatre piece!" Some of the children are given the opportunity to say how they think this project has been. One says, "fun and good, but hard." Another says, "fun, but easy." One girl gives her opinion that, "it was boring, chaotic." "I think funny," replies another one, and one reminds us, "Someone from the audience booed at one group. That did not feel good." A girl comments that sometimes it was messy and that being on stage was difficult. Another girl stressed that the audience had not listen well and another says that the project's finale would have been great if all the 'building blocks' were in place, referring to the lines in the story. "Do we have to stop now?" one boy asks. The adults' answer is yes. This part of the project has now come to its end.

In this last part of the workshop-series, corresponding to the stage of performing text, the children had the opportunity to cooperate in the work of performing art. This possibility links to what Landay and Wootton (2012) see refer to as a magic aesthetic event, or a "meaningful, artful play" (p. 173). Even though each child made a very brief contribution, role-playing gave the children the option of being challenged by, and challenging, each other. There were always also adults who could support the performance and instruct the groups, both the acting ones and the audience. According to Landay and Wootton (2012) teachers are needed to "offer advice, suggest possibilities, and help structure the overall work" (p. 175). In the presented final performance, the task of the narrator, who was helped by the teaching actor, performed this important role: the story progressed in spite of all the children's changes in actors and roles behind the sheet.

The events of the story, from the girl's happy walk to her grandmother's home with flowers and bread from her mother, through the horror of the wolf attack, to the disarming of the wolf, follow a classical dramaturgical pattern and were actualized in children's scene set. Corsaro (2002) states that socio-dramatic play and also pretend play "address important socio-emotional needs in early childhood" (p. 91). The performance of Little Red Riding Hood described above can be seen as closely connected to such play. Therefore, it is not surprising that the children seemed more and more eager to take part and be active in the workshop sessions when the performance became the primary topic.

Not only was the children's interest in dramatization salient in the workshops, but it was also noticeable in the subsequent focus group interviews. The children used the story line from the arts project to continue their play, stressing vocal aspects essential to performing the shadow play. This pairing can be explained by Wright's (2014) interconnection between children's

talk or narration and their embodied learning. The next section will present the themes from the focus group interviews, thus aiming at elucidate the children's own views on the above presented workshops.

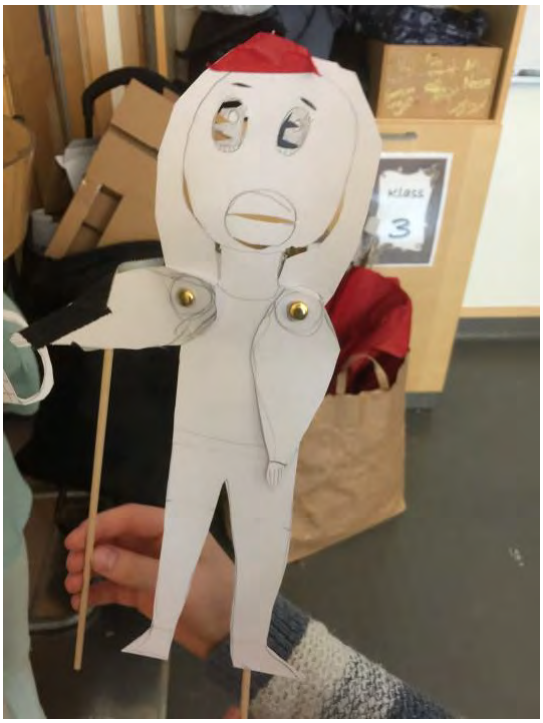

Figure 1. Red Riding Hood, cardboard figure.

Figure 2. Red Riding Hood as shadow theatre.

Interpretation of Focus Group-data

These sections will be structured around quotes from the focus group interviews conducted after the workshop series ended. The interviews were conducted to elicit the participant's experiences. The children's discussions about the workshops provide the possibility of interpreting their perspectives on the interventions and of describing what aspects they consider inspiring, boring, or difficult. Of course, there were differences among the children's points of views on this project. Although the children shared a common experience, individual children can and did understand and relate to the same experience differently. From coding and clustering the codes, major themes emerged (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen, & Snelgrove, 2016). The three themes are: the children's perspectives on

1. what the material and the construction assignment offer in terms of learning opportunities,
2. what the learning opportunities offer in terms of embodiment and emotionality,
3. the social aspects of arts education, as enhancing both friendship and troublesome relationships.

Excerpts will be given from two of the focus group interviews: Group A consists of three girls and two boys (G1, G2, G3, and B1, B2); Group B consists of two girls and two boys (Ga, Gb, and Ba, Bb).

Learning Opportunities from the Material and the Construction Assignment

When the children discussed in the focus group interviews what they appreciated in the workshops, they mentioned both the reading of the book and the inspiring work with their performance afterwards. In group A one girl answered the question of what they liked most, "I think the funniest was to do the play [performance], and also to listen when they read the fairy tale and it was quite a long time since I heard a saga…" (G2). Two other children in the group agreed with this and one (G1) suggested, "I want to hear it again!". The third confirmed "Me too!" (G3). Both groups emphasized an interest in the playfulness and creativity allowed. One boy (Ba) in Group B, explained the process of using bits of paper: "Yes, you made a hole, here, and then a hole there, to be able to put them together, so you stuck it there, then you could put a stick here, and then pull". The children in Group A explained the difficulty they had with and how they creatively solved the challenge of creating the figures' moving parts, "I had only one stick at the [wolf's] stomach, I couldn't make –how do you say– the jaw, that we… Instead, I opened up the mouth, I cut out more. It looked like the mouth was open" (G2).

The children also reported challenges in making the figures and they were content to have managed to shape the figures. One girl explained how she solved the problem of making the

wolf, by using thin sticks as wolf claws (G2). Some preferred to emphasize the performance at the end as the best activity or as a *grand finale* for all the work they had put in to rehearsing the lines and constructing the paper figures.

The illustrated book of *Red Riding Hood* seems to have acted as inspiration for the children's figures. In the introductory session, Annika did not invite the children to look at all the pictures, as she wanted them to visualize the settings and figures in their minds. In that way the book was not fully used as a semiotic resource but children were able to imagine and create their own imagery and representations. Rather the book was used to generate discussions about creative possibility of images, which was done, for example, through a conversation on the ways that illustrators portray characters. Nevertheless, the children seemed to have grasped the salient traits of the different characters and they explained in the interviews very thoroughly how they made those details.

Several of the children appreciated the reading session and the book was used as a space to establish shared meaning (Rhedin, 2013). Also, during the interviews some children enacted dialogues from the story and they performed scenes with actors' voices. In the next section there are some examples of this, which I refer to as emotional and embodied learning.

Learning Opportunities through Embodiment and Emotionality

With its rather scary and morbid events of the release of the little girl from the evil wolf, and the eating of an elderly woman, the story possessed many variations of the emotion fright. For the children fright was actualized when Annika showed them the very striking effects of her wolf's movable, chewing jaw. But the scariness is not necessarily something undesired. An experience can be scary and magnetically enchanting at the same time (Helander, 2016).

Children performing different characters during interviews inspired others to perform. At first one of the girls in group A did not grasp which exercise I was referring to in the interview on the workshop series. Therefore, another girl first explained the exercise to her. Below I give an extensive excerpt (time 11.10-12.44, not all simultaneous comments are inscribed), to illustrate how the children inspired each other and how they playfully enacted the story together.

> G2: "If [name] and I stood face-to-face and he is the wolf and I am Red Riding Hood, he says in the voice of the wolf 'What are you doing here?' and then I answer him but in Red Riding Hood's voice! "[...]
> I: "Can you show us that voice?"
> G2: "Can all of us do it!?"
> *Several of the children say at the same time:*

"I want to be the wolf" and "I am the wolf!" [...]
G1: "I want to be Red Riding Hood." *The girl tries to find out what to say*: "Wait, one could say… I have a suggestion: 'I will go out picking flowers'."
G2 wants to be the wolf and tries out:
G2: "What are you doing here in the wood?" [...]
B1: "Somebody has to ask now, 'Why do you have such big ears!'"
G2 suggests that G1 can ask that question and encourages her by repeatedly saying her name. G1 takes the offer:
G1: "Why are you having such big ears?" *she says in a shy, light voice.*
B1: "Because I shall hear you well!' [...]
The children ask each other:
ALL: "Who might be the hunter?"
G2 wants to and another girl suggests:
G1: "She can be the one who comes with an axe."
B1 corrects her:
B1: "No, the hunter had a gun" [...]
G3 asks the interviewer if she can take the hunter's role, and so the hunter wonders:
G3: "Why is Grandma snoring so much?" *This is uttered in a completely new intonation.*
For a while afterward, the children continue taking turns being different characters and using their voices in different ways corresponding to the roles.
Before we change subject, B1 ends the dialogue by saying the hunter's lines:
B1: "I am happy I arrived, if not, Grandma would be dead."

The children in the focus group suggested different roles to play and they acted out almost the whole play, taking turns and inventing lines, all based on the original story. Thus, this group exhibited pleasure in continuing with the performance, even though we did not have the shadow figures at hand.

The hand, the body, the mind, and emotions are all important aspects in education and in arts education. The staging of the characters in their different voices does not, in the type of performance they staged in the workshop, correspond to any visual body language, as we dealt with silhouettes. Even so, I suggest that embodied learning was actualized through the children's playful orchestration of their bodies with the puppets' movement, their voices, and the enactment of the play. Wright (2014) suggests that children's dramatic performance and play is multimodal and embodied. During the interviews as they continued their role playing, their interaction can be seen as narrative expressed through one of multiple possible ways. Through different avenues, children "have opportunities to generate hypotheses and represent their understanding about themselves and their world" (Dunn & Wright, 2014, p. 228) which

is finding one's place. So, the playful role playing in the interviews shows that the folk story and their experience of performative play, support further interaction long after they were on stage.

The Learning Opportunities' Social Aspects: Fuss and Friendship

Adults involved in the shadow play project stressed the importance of cooperative work and of facilitating shared experiences among the students. Group work and getting to know other classmates by not only working with one's best friends were implicit aspects of the workshop series. There are many statements from children in the focus groups interviews that exposed the challenges and joys of social interactions within this school arts program. Some of the children in the interviews often answered open-ended questions regarding what they liked about the project by referring to some social aspects. Regarding the question of what she was content to have achieved within this project, one girl answered, "that I had good friends in my group" (Ga). A boy in that group responded similarly, that "My friends" were the best part of the workshops (Ba). Another boy explained that he liked to work with his friends, "It was a bit fun that I could be with my friends, I was in the same group as some of my friends…" (B2). On the other hand, one boy (B1) mentioned that you do not make friends just by working together, a statement that started a reflective conversation where the children also reenacted their earlier interactions:

B1: "You didn't get friends when you were supposed to write together [the important characters and props for the play] as everybody nagged about who would start writing."
G1: "I will start writing, nobody else might" one plays up in a squeaky voice.
G2: "No, I shall do it, I shall do it", one continues the mimic.
I: "So, there was some fuss? "
ALL: "Yes". [...] *they all agree.*
One girl also points out a positive experience:
G2: "We were supposed to write together [names of the two mentioned and one more girl] and I thought, 'No, it will never work' but it did, as we were taking turns."

Later in the dialogue the children in this group once again elaborated on what they liked most in the project: "[It] was to be together [...] our friendship got better" (B1).

One girl mentioned that "to perform and work together" were the best parts of the project, but she also admitted some difficulties, "but the hard thing was that [boy's name] destroyed…" (G3). Another girl mentioned that people did not work well together, stating:

> "I think that everything was good, except for the quarrel in the art-classroom, except for just some people there [she points out as if we were in the classroom how at almost each work-station there were kids fussing]. But it was almost only our desk and that of [name] who were quiet, but the others, they brawled." (G2)

The idea of children working and learning together was built into the project's objectives. The project was designed so that during the entire project the children worked in groups of four to accomplish the different parts of the project. Together they constructed the figures, set the story, and used different voices to create characters and dialogue.

Some children preferred to do teamwork with their good friends. Some made statements about which of the children were doing a good job or were fussy. These statements correspond to this class's tendency to evaluate their own work efforts as well as the efforts of others. As mentioned above, the importance of the work for community building is clear, and here it is also set at the scene in the children's own talk.

Consolidating the Analysis. The Workshops as Education for Arts Literacy – Concluding Remarks

The aim of this study was to scrutinize how the specific arts project, conducted by Young at the Opera, can be seen as a learning process, stimulating children's art literacy, and reflection. This study asks how reflection, which is the center of the *performance cycle* (Landay & Wootton, 2012), is produced through a performance of a folk story, and also how children's perspectives on the art workshops can be interpreted. Even if the performance cycle primarily refers to students' reflection on text and their own writing, I suggest that Landay and Wootton's literacy concept is useful also in this case, as they stress the multiplicity of channels for communication, and the various modes of meaning-making (Landay & Wootton, 2012, p. 4-5). In this art project the children were entering the material; comprehending it, creating their own version of it, and rehearsing for the final performance. Acting behind simple sheets and using flashlights to make the silhouettes appear, the children used oral narration to give their cardboard shadow figures life. After receiving instructions on how to use their voices, the children were able to create different characters with distinct personalities and contributions to the story line.

Although different understandings of the story were not overtly explored during the workshops, as suggested in the performance cycle's different stages (Landay & Wootton, 2012), I would say that throughout the working sessions, but especially in the ending performance, the children were concerned about the meaning of the story and the characters and the tension between them became visible and enchanting for the children to perform. The characters' opinions, emotions,

resistances, liberation, and (for the evil one) death were incentives for the continuing work. A reflection process, as formulated by Landay and Wootton (2012), was generated by the children's role playing. What made the tale suitable for these activities was the characters' different kinds of voices and the simplicity of developing a picture of the landscape including its places, settings, and appropriate props. The activities were strictly directed and there was no obvious space for the children to invent new roles, new plots, or variations of the scenery. But even if their innovative creativity was limited to the design of the figures and their expressive voices, their interest for the storyline –also shown in the interviews– indicate that the activities had stimulated their reflection and curiosity around the events within the story. I suggest that the children did experience a shared meaning making process through the literature and the arts. The children's playful discussions and dramatization in the focus groups can be interpreted as exploring "what is there to be noticed" (Greene, 2001, p. 6), and as an engagement with the "created world" (Greene, 2007, p. 659).

The artist's act of withholding the imagery in the picture book from the children was, from my point of view, unnecessary and the aesthetic aspects of the book could have been used to more clearly develop interest, inspire, and create meaning. The assumption that children get too attached to presented illustration and, therefore, lose their own imaginative skills, is contradicted by how Corsaro (2002) describe children 's *interpretive reproduction*. This stresses how children together in their peer-culture use but always "refine and expand" the adult culture (Corsaro, 2002, p. 126). So, an aesthetic reading is not a more unsafe or vague reading than more explanatory or oral readings (Rhedin, 2013) with children: either way they engage in what is meaningful for them at that specific time.

The project's use of dramatic voices clearly inspired the children to continue the dramatization more than a month later during the focus groups talks. Through the focus group interviews, light was shed on what children perceived and thought of the Royal Opera's arts intervention. The children viewed the construction of the shadow figures as both engaging and boring. Even so, role playing and performance enhanced several children's willingness to participate. Of course, we always have to ask what kind of answers we get in interviews – not only with children, but overall. But the format of focus groups seems to have facilitated the children's further play, shown through their eagerness to follow up the dramatization. So, not only the workshops but also the interviews were settings that encouraged playfulness, where the children used bodies –hands and voices– to experience in Greene's words "what is there to be noticed" (Greene, 2001, p. 6). Referring to the concepts elaborated on above, through the of *artful pedagogy* (Scott Shields, Guyotte & Weedo 2016), the children got closer to some notions in the *language of arts* (Feldman, (1970, p. 247-297).

Arts and School Cooperation

In this section I examine project constraints that complicate cooperative interventions in the schools and I address how cooperation between schools and professional artists contributed to the children's learning opportunities.

First, I will comment on some features of the school project's setting that can be seen as constraining the arts intervention. Of course, the aspects of time, space, and group size, together constitute certain learning conditions. The time frame for each workshop session limited opportunities for reflection on cooperative work. Teachers in general, in the example above, also teaching artists must address the question of how best to allocate instructional time for meaningful activities. As showed by Imms et al. (2011), the scarcity of time in school makes a difference in children's performance, as does also complex scheduling. The importance of flexible timetabling in partnership between schools and artists is mentioned as one major concern for school leaders for promoting an effective partnership (p. 42).

The artists and the teachers, who initiated the shadow play workshops, did not plan from the beginning to perform the *grand finale* with all the children together but compared to not performing the play at all, this was considered the best solution. The children were patient while waiting for their brief part in the play. The adults stressed to the children waiting for their turn the importance of an alert and interested audience. In the final minutes of the project, the professional artists explicitly asked the children for their views on the project. Several of the children gave comments, mostly in a positive way, but there was no time for further discussion. Again, the group size and time frame were limitations. The children were very young, but most were able to reflect and comment on the process and outcomes in class and during the interviews. To more explicitly involve the children as participants in decisions on what further steps to take during the project, and defining of what is meaningful and important, could have further enhanced the children's work.

Finally, what can be said about the learning process and the contribution the professional artist could bring to school? Similar to Gadsden's (2008) as well as Winner and Cooper's (2000) cautious position about skills transference mentioned above, Upitis (2006), refuses to draw conclusions about what students would learn more efficiently through arts education than in other subjects. But she does state that teachers, working in collaboration with artists, identify advantages in arts education regarding students' "attitudes, physical and emotional knowledge, and the social cohesiveness of communities" (Upitis, 2006, p. 60). While I cannot definitively conclude that the children did developed in that sense, what is shown is that the co-work with artists afforded a structured but also open-ended learning process, which engaged the children in the exploration of the story's characters' actions and feelings, staged through the using of the cardboard figures and their own expressive voices. Their work

elaborated more on meaning making and communication in the arts, than thinking about arts, regarding Barton's (2013) types of literacy theorizing. So, the reflection process took place primarily around what the group of children jointly perform, not around each child's enhanced art literacy. Barton (2013) emphasizes the importance of arts literacy as not only a means of artistic work, but as meaningful for the students' present lives. This study has shown how the children stressed the importance of social interaction –important in their present lives– in the interviews as well as during the workshops.

As showed, one boy asked in the end of the last workshop session: "Do we have to stop now?". I see in this a desire to continue the process. This class was lucky, as this shadow theater was only one part of the bigger picture, with different kinds of arts interventions, both in the classroom and at the Royal Opera house. But this part had come to its end.

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Margareta Aspán is a researcher and senior lecturer at the Department of Child and Youth Studies, Stockholm University, Sweden. Previous research has been based on childhood studies, and has mainly focused on children's rights in school, both as formal and informal participation. Students' opportunities for participation in relation to adults' perceptions of children and childhood have been a main interest. During the period of 2017 to 2019 a research project was conducted in which Margareta studied the Swedish Royal Opera's pedagogical arts program in a specific primary school.

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