Barbican Centre and
Guildhall School of Music & Drama
Research and Development Project

Working Together

An enquiry into creative collaborative learning
across the Barbican-Guildhall Campus

Peter Renshaw  September 2011
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In the long history of mankind... those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed...
(Charles Darwin)

We are delighted to introduce this important study of collaborative creative practice by one of the pioneers in the field. Peter Renshaw's work with the Guildhall School of Music & Drama over many years has stimulated new thinking and new achievements in this area, and he has now surveyed our current partnership activities in detail, leading to many important reflections on the art of collaboration.

The Guildhall School, the Barbican Centre and the London Symphony Orchestra have come together to form the strategic 'alliance for creative excellence', a world-class conservatoire, world-class arts venue and world-class symphony orchestra, working together in ways that respect our institutional and strategic differences, but look for creative areas in which we can interact. With the support of HEFCE, the Higher Education Funding Council of England, we have been able to move towards creating a common platform for key areas of our work, and to make the most of the fact that these three organisations are all based in, and receive funding in different ways from, the City of London. The development of the area around the Barbican Centre, with the catalyst of the Guildhall School's major new building which will open in 2013, enables this collaboration to have a visible outcome in the creation of a new cultural quarter in the City devoted to arts and education for the widest possible range of audiences, students and participants.

Peter Renshaw's comprehensive survey of the areas in which we have already interacted shows the huge potential of this collaborative work for the future, and also stresses the need for reflection and assessment on every stage of the journey. This report has been commissioned through the Barbican and Guildhall School with valuable input from the LSO and we recommend it to all those who in today's increasingly challenged economic climate are experimenting with partnerships and collaborations as a positive way forward. The challenges are many, but the prize is great.

Sir Nicholas Kenyon CBE
Managing Director, Barbican Centre

Professor Barry Ife CBE FKC HonRAM
Principal, Guildhall School of Music & Drama
Introduction

1. The context

The Alliance for Creative Excellence

The passion and challenge of ‘working together’ underpins the vision of the Barbican Centre, Guildhall School of Music & Drama and the London Symphony Orchestra (LSO). These three partners have now formed an ‘Alliance for Creative Excellence’ with a mission that comprises:

- An active and radical alliance for artistic innovation in performance, presentation, learning and research
- A pioneer for cultural leadership and partnerships
- The heartbeat of a thinking cultural quarter, locally embedded and globally connected
- Striving for excellence in all areas of our activity, producing models of next and best practice.

(Barbican Campus/Alliance, 2011a, p.1)

Recognising that collaboration is a major catalyst for generating creativity and innovation, this enquiry – commissioned by the Barbican Centre and Guildhall School of Music & Drama – seeks to examine the place of ‘creative collaborative learning’ across the Barbican–Guildhall Campus. Increasingly it is acknowledged that collaboration is integral to the success of those organisations committed to extending learning and innovation, to designing and developing new products, and to creating and exchanging new knowledge. As Charles Leadbeater (1999) points out, “an ethic of collaboration is central to knowledge-creating societies” (p.13). It is the motor that enables individuals and organisations to respond creatively to challenge and change.

This view is reinforced in the guide Fuelling ‘The Necessary Revolution’, published by Mission Models Money (MMM), which emphasises the importance of collaborative ways of working if creative practitioners and cultural organisations are going to “fulfil their potential of becoming one of the driving forces of our future post-industrial, ecologically literate age” (2010, p.7). It makes the telling point that:

If innovations are created from new connections in our minds, then a great number of successful collaborations in the arts will help fertilise those new connections and enable alternative ways of seeing and being, leading to the co-creation of a different kind of growth that will increase the cultural and creative vitality of our communities. (MMM, 2010, p.7)

The Alliance for Creative Excellence is now firmly embedded in the developmental thrust of the Barbican Campus, and the practical implications are in the process of being explored and formulated. The early stage of this development is captured in the Second Annual Report of (what was then called) the LINK Alliance to the HEFCE Strategic Development Fund (Barbican Campus/Alliance, 2010).
Collaboration is critical to the future development of Milton Court, which will be completed in 2013, with its two new theatres, 600-seat concert hall and rehearsal space. This is expected to contribute to a new and vibrant cultural quarter of arts and education buildings in the City, including LSO St. Luke’s. In the Creative Learning Strategy for the Barbican-Guildhall Campus, Sean Gregory, Director of Creative Learning, points out that current developments “are directed both at enhancing individual strengths but also in considering how the potential of joint approaches could create a new centre that is the very model of tomorrow’s international arts, learning and audience development” (Gregory, 2010, p.3).

Collaboration is also central to organisational development and every effort has been made to develop a common platform across the Barbican and Guildhall School with the aim of ensuring “maximum effectiveness from joint working, in artistic, educational and resource management terms” (Barbican Campus/LINK Alliance, 2010, p.4).

The common platform approach has produced more far-reaching changes than could originally have been envisaged. Extensive restructuring within the Guildhall School in 2007 and 2008 has been followed by a similar management review within the Barbican Centre. This has resulted in a more radical approach to shared services than has yet been attempted within the HE sector: all generic services at the School and the Centre are now conjoined under a joint Chief Operating and Finance Officer reporting to the Principal and the Managing and Artistic Director. 

The common platform workstream builds on this foundation and takes it much further, to embrace programming and venue use across the campus. 

The Barbican, Guildhall and (to some extent) the LSO are facing a step change in the way they use their venues and staff to meet their strategic objectives, engage with their stakeholders and build their service offer.

The benefits of this approach include improved efficiency and significant financial savings, but shared services are also providing a catalyst for a more radical and fundamental shift in the way each organisation works to fulfil its mission – by using and developing a greater critical mass of expertise. As we reported last year, we have created our first conjoined ‘front of house’ activity, the Creative Learning division, which is now fully embedded within the artistic infrastructure of the Guildhall School/Barbican partnership.

In its second year Centre for Orchestra has continued to pioneer young artist development, with its growing menu of professional support. Together with LSO Discovery and Creative Learning, education and arts departments across the Guildhall, LSO and the Barbican are delivering interrelated forms of training, development and artistic provision across the age and ability spectrum. (Barbican Campus/LINK Alliance, 2010, p.7)

A growing emphasis on ‘creative learning’ and ‘collaborative practice’ lies at the heart of the Alliance, which is aiming both to build upon and integrate culture based on strengthening the dialogue and interconnections between the Barbican Centre and Guildhall School. Sir Nicholas Kenyon, Managing Director of the Barbican, sees this as “an alliance for creative excellence” (in press, p.22), whilst Sean Gregory (2011) describes this vision as “an active and radical alliance for artistic innovation, learning and research” (pp.4).

The development of the Alliance as the hub of a cultural quarter has the continuing support of the Corporation of London and has been enthusiastically received by the Chamberlain and the Town Clerk.

The idea of a ‘creative collaborative community’, in which people share values, attitudes and practices, is rapidly becoming a reality, but embedding this philosophy in the three main organisations with their different purposes, histories and cultures inevitably presents a challenge. Their differences, as well as their commonalities, have to be acknowledged when exploring the parameters of the Alliance. In his interview Barry Lie, Principal of the Guildhall School, considers that each organisation acts on things together when it is considered appropriate – “in practice it is more like a network of bilateral relationships”.

At management level great strides have been taken by the Barbican and the School to dissolve barriers and arrive at a more holistic, interconnected way of working. As indicated in the LINK Alliance Report to HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England):

• This change is mirrored by management-initiated strategies to dissolve silo-working and encourage staff to consider themselves and their work outside of their single ‘department’. Barriers are being broken down across organisations and departments with the formation of specialist ‘work groups’ to brainstorm big ideas; from activity programming to retail and enterprises. (Barbican Campus/LINK Alliance, 2010, p.4)

But despite the goodwill and intention to build a model of collaboration, no one would dispute the complexity of the challenge, especially regarding issues arising from the future development of Milton Court. These are addressed by the Campus Management group and through a common platform of shared services across the Campus comprising six workstreams:

• Buildings and operations
• Space planning
• Technology and systems
• Commercial income
• Artistic and educational activity modelling
• Taking forward the common platform

The complexity is well illustrated in the introduction to an ‘All Workstreams Update’ for the Alliance held in June 2011.

It is a complex process to build a robust and fair business model that incorporates Milton Court, managing the different priorities of the venue stakeholders, delivering a financially strong model (for all stakeholders) in a challenging economic climate, and protecting and enhancing the identity and brand of the individual organisations and the Alliance as a whole.

These issues are addressed within the scope of the Campus Management group, comprising the directorates from the Alliance partners. The practical business modelling is continuing to take place across workstreams: Activity Modelling, Commercial, Buildings & Operations, and IT & Systems. (Barbican Campus/Alliance, 2010, p.3)
The workstream most relevant to this enquiry is that concerning the relationship between artistic and educational activity. This becomes critical in enabling collaboration to take place in practice. The LINK Alliance report points out that:

Activity modelling is advancing, and is being driven by our collective vision for artistic and educational excellence. This specialised workstream provides opportunity for all three organisations to plan and deliver truly embedded programmes which complement each other, make best use of performance space and create an educational and artistic ‘narrative’ across the Campus. […] The process is being led by the senior managers of each area of activity, setting the educational and artistic agenda for each of the venues included in the process: Barbican Hall, Guildhall School Music Hall, Milton Court Hall, LSO St Luke’s, Barbican Theatre, Pit Theatre, Silk Street Theatre, Milton Court Theatre and Studio Theatre. (Barbican Campus/ LINK Alliance, 2010, p.8)

The most recent update of the Activity Modelling group also demonstrates the complexity of the issues that have to be discussed.

The Activity Modelling group is researching the feasibility for a range of activity which represents the best use not only of Milton Court but of venue use across the quarter. Practical activity plotting for Milton Court has moved into a wider campus programming discussion. The timetable will aim to include a mix of core School syllabus and public programmes, including:

- Teaching, rehearsals and School performances
- Innovative artistic performances and programmes, including Associate and Resident Ensembles, artistic rentals and Barbican own promotions
- Creative Learning lab, projects and performance
- Cultural leadership: through initiatives such as short courses, talks and debates, and cultural industry conferences. (Barbican Campus/Alliance, 2011b, p.4)

As can be seen throughout this section, successful collaboration is partly dependent on creating a trusting, unthreatening environment in which honest conversation and open communication can take place. One good example of this was the Open Spaces Conference held in November 2010 for a significant number of senior staff from across the Campus. It was facilitated by Ann Jackman, a Leadership Development Consultant, and took the form of a review workshop with the theme:

Revisiting our vision for the LINK Alliance; exploring our successes to date; identifying any barriers to our continued success; and identifying how we want to express the Alliance.

One of the findings from the workshop relevant to this enquiry is the identification and sharing of how people have experienced success in the LINK Alliance. They were asked to identify the core ingredients of success, many of which occur in different contexts throughout this enquiry. Basically, these elements are fundamental in any successful collaboration.

For example:

- It has to evolve naturally rather than being contrived
- It involves sharing
- It acknowledges and uses mutual strengths, expertise and knowledge

In many ways these perceptive observations, arising from a wealth of individual and collective experience, could serve as an embryonic frame for the main thrust of this enquiry. Time and time again we will be touching on the issues raised, many of which get to the heart of what is very clear, and not exactly surprising, is that many staff working across the Campus are well aware of what matters if collaboration is to work. Both the will and understanding are there and it is encouraging to see that conditions are being created which will enable people to work together with the aim of achieving the goals of the Alliance.
Research across the Campus

One area within the Campus that is building up its connection and coherence in an organic way is the growing collaboration between the Creative Learning Lab and Guildhall Research and Knowledge Exchange, led by Helena Gaunt, Assistant Principal (Research and Academic Development). As mentioned previously, it is this partnership that is responsible for initiating this enquiry. The Lab aims at broadening professional knowledge and sharing information through Personal and Professional Training and Development Programmes, an Artistic Laboratory, the Leadership Programme and Research and Development. Creative collaborative learning is central to the work of the Lab and its profile reflects the questions being raised in the Guildhall School’s Research Strategy:

- How can one strengthen opportunities for collaborative and cross-disciplinary research?
- How may improvisation or cross-disciplinary work release creativity, deepen/katalyse engagement, and nurture the development of an individual and contemporary artistic voice?
- What role may cross-arts collaboration play and how may it enrich contemporary performance practices?
- How may context inform professional practice, and how may practitioners engage effectively in different contexts?
- How do performers perceive and develop the relationship between themselves, audience and repertoire?
- What action can be taken to draw out the potential for collaborative research and reciprocal knowledge exchange in its key partnerships? (Guildhall School of Music & Drama, 2009)

One of the central aims of research in the School is to create a laboratory for experiment and innovation in the performing arts and professional education. This is enriched and realised partly through its network of partnerships. For example, in the Campus research is being conducted with the Centre for Orchestra, exploring key questions connected to being a multi-arts and professional education. This is enriched and realised partly through its network of partnerships. For example, in the Campus research is being conducted with the Centre for Orchestra, exploring key questions connected to being a multi-arts and professional education. This is enriched and realised partly through its network of partnerships. For example, in the Campus research is being conducted with the Centre for Orchestra, exploring key questions connected to being a.

Another key initiative is the Understanding Audiences research programme led from the Guildhall School by Professor John Rink of Cambridge University as part of the AHRC Research Centre for Musical Performance as Creative Practice (CMPCP). It is exploring the means by which creativity and originality in musical performance can be fostered in the teaching studio, practice rooms and academic classroom. Focusing on advanced students at the Guildhall School and Royal College of Music, the research will interrogate conceptual constructions of originality in relation to performance, noting that while all performance may be creative, it may not be ‘original’. (Ibid.)

The research profile of the Guildhall School is further strengthened by partnerships that have been established with the Institute of Education University of London, the Institute of Musical Research and the Cultural Capital Exchange. Internationally the School has created strong research links with various partners through the Polifonia project and the InnovativeConservatoire, which is an international group of conservatores focusing on collaborative research and teacher development (ibid.).

Within a relatively short time the Barbican–Guildhall Campus has generated a wide range of artistic and educational collaborations, many of which are underpinned by research. One of the things that stand out in this enquiry is the strength of commitment of the people interviewed, all of whom see collaboration as critical to the development of the Campus. There is an energy and enthusiasm to work together and create new possibilities for audiences, professional artists, students and young people. This opens up avenues for an exciting future driven by individual and collective voices across the Campus.

### Outline of the enquiry

The purpose of this enquiry is to examine the nature of creative collaborative learning in different contexts across the Campus and to explore what may be learned by sharing and cross-fertilising practices. It is hoped that the project, funded jointly by the Guildhall Research Incubator and Barbican–Guildhall Creative Learning, will deepen understanding and raise the quality of creative collaborative learning across Campus activity: artistic, educational and curatorial. The project aims to support the Alliance in realising the distinctive, radical and innovative potential of the Campus.

#### Aims of the enquiry

- To document examples of creative collaborative learning across the Barbican–Guildhall Campus and make connections between them
- To build understanding of the conditions necessary for creative collaborative learning and the nature of its processes
- To identify the impacts of creative collaborative learning at personal, professional and artistic levels
- To generate a conceptual framework of creative collaborative learning which emerges from artistic practice.

#### Structure of the enquiry

**Stage 1: October – December 2010**

The main focus of stage 1 was on conducting, recording and analysing interviews with key staff across the Campus: Christian Burgess: Director of Drama, Guildhall School
Helena Gaunt: Assistant Principal (Research and Academic Development), Guildhall School
Sean Gregory: Director of Creative Learning, Barbican Centre and Guildhall School
Eleanor Gussman: Head of LSO Discovery
Professor Barry Ife: Principal, Guildhall School
Louise Jeffreys: Director of Programming, Barbican Centre
Sir Nicholas Kenyon: Managing Director, Barbican Centre
Kathryn McDowell: Managing Director, London Symphony Orchestra
Julian Philips: Head of Composition, Guildhall School
Jonathan Vaughan: Director of Music, Guildhall School

The starting point for these semi-structured interviews was to invite each person to reflect and comment on a devised frame of reference aimed at capturing the main elements of creative collaborative learning:

In the context of the arts, creative collaborative learning involves processes in which artists are motivated to work together, drawing on their creative imagination, their different skills and perspectives to formulate new ideas, to explore new possibilities, to extend their ways of perceiving and thinking, their making and performing, in order to produce outcomes of originality and value in relation to the purpose and context of the activity.

The conversations in the interviews comprised a response to the following questions:

• To what extent do you consider the proposed frame of reference draws out the main features of the process of ‘creative collaborative learning’?
• Could you describe the best example of creative collaborative learning that you have encountered either in the Campus or elsewhere?
• What is your view of the role and significance of creative collaborative learning across the Campus?
• What do you consider to be the ideal conditions and environment for fostering creative collaborative learning across the Campus?
• In your view what examples of creative collaborative learning within the Campus could serve as effective case studies for the R&D project?
• What do you think are the possible impacts of creative collaborative learning on the artistic, personal and professional development of artists?
• What might be the most effective ways of disseminating the findings and outcomes of the project?

In addition to the evidence arising from the interviews, further insight into the nature of creative collaborative learning was gained from a targeted literature review which helped to strengthen understanding of certain key issues.

Stage 2: January – July 2011

Initially it was proposed to examine several contrasting case studies that exemplify quality creative collaborative learning across the Campus. But having reflected on the wide range of issues gathered through the first round of interviews, it was decided to focus on deepening and extending understanding of the processes and exchanges going on within particular collaborations through conducting joint interviews with pairs of artists who have worked closely together within recent projects:

Julian Philips: Head of Composition, Guildhall School
Kate Tearle: Head of Education, Glyndebourne
Kate Bond & Morgan Lloyd: You Me Bum Bum Train
Jill Shelley: Executive Producer, Creative Learning, Barbican Centre and Guildhall School
Dinah Stabb: Drama Department, Guildhall School
Armin Zanner: Deputy Head of Vocal Studies, Guildhall School
Rebecca Toft: Music student, Guildhall School

The conversations with these artists focused on the following questions:

• What motivated you to work together in the first instance?
• What have you learnt most from engaging in collaborative work together?
• How has the process of working together helped to generate new ideas and stimulate your creative imagination?
• How far has your experience of working collaboratively made you ask questions and reflect?
• What kind of personal and artistic challenges have arisen when working together?
• How far have you addressed these issues collaboratively?
• In a collaborative context how have you managed to balance listening and responding to people in the group with nurturing your own creative identity and artistic voice?
• In what ways has working collaboratively affected your views of leadership and responsibility?
• How far has the process of collaborative practice transformed your approach to performing, teaching, learning and engaging with audiences?
• In a teaching or workshop context, what are the benefits of collaborative forms of learning for students and young people?

In addition to the evidence arising from the interviews, further insight into the nature of creative collaborative learning was gained from a targeted literature review which helped to strengthen understanding of certain key issues.
What has been striking throughout the enquiry is the openness, honesty and sense of curiosity of all the participants, management and artists alike. Their desire to work together, to strengthen and extend existing partnerships, and to continue exploring new possibilities creates a strong dynamic across the Campus. Of course, not everyone working on the Campus is equally enthusiastic about seeking out collaborations and creative exchanges. There is an understandable concern from some individuals that the thrust towards creative collaborative learning might dilute the distinctive excellence and core purpose of each institution. Nevertheless, a significant shift has already taken place since the idea of an integrated campus became a reality. The excitement for collaboration and creative learning is palpable for very many people working across the Campus.

It is hoped that this enquiry manages to capture examples of creative collaborative practice that have helped to distinguish some of the cutting-edge developmental work that can be found across the Campus. Chapter 2 sketches some of the reflections about creative collaborative learning that are the result of recent research. Chapter 3 examines the way in which the Campus is becoming much more receptive towards developing a creative collaborative culture. This is supported by chapter 4 which outlines examples illustrating the range and scope of creative collaboration across the Campus. Chapter 5 aims at deepening an understanding of what is entailed in ‘creative collaborative learning’, drawing on the interviews, profiles and testimonies. Finally, chapter 6 looks ahead to possible future collaborative initiatives across the Campus. Despite the fears and concerns arising from the current economic climate, the future for the Campus looks bright and buoyant. Many factors contribute to this, one of which must be the growing commitment to the idea of working together in a creative collaborative community.

Towards an understanding of creative collaborative learning

2 Frame of reference

As indicated in chapter 1, the frame of reference underpinning this enquiry aims to delineate the main elements involved in the process of creative collaborative learning.

In the context of the arts, creative collaborative learning involves processes in which artists are motivated to work together, drawing on their creative imagination, their different skills and perspectives to formulate new ideas, to explore new possibilities, to extend their ways of perceiving and thinking, their making and performing, in order to produce outcomes of originality and value in relation to the purpose and context of the activity.

The genesis of this framework can be found in discussions about ‘creativity’ stimulated by the work of Ken Robinson. The National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (1999), which he chaired, put forward a definition that serves as a useful starting point. Creativity is perceived as “imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are original and of value” (p.29). This implies that for learning processes to be seen as ‘creative’, they need to be imaginative and purposeful, with outcomes that are original and of value in relation to the objective.

In his book Out of Our Minds: Learning to be Creative, Ken Robinson (2001) examines further the ways in which creativity can be cultivated, many of which are relevant to this enquiry. For example:

- **Creativity is not a purely personal process.** Many creative processes draw from the ideas and stimulation of other people. Creativity flourishes in an atmosphere where original thinking and innovation are encouraged and stimulated. It fades in atmospheres where dialogue and interaction are stifled.

- **Creativity is a dynamic process and can involve many different areas of expertise.** […] New ideas often come from the dialogue between different disciplines, through which specialists in different fields make their ideas available to each other and create the opportunity for new interpretations and applications. A culture of creativity will promote openness between specialists, and departments will have real opportunities for creative encounters.

- **Cultural change is not linear and smooth.** […] New ways of thinking do not simply replace the old at clear points in history. They often overlap and coexist with established ways of thinking for long periods of time. This complex and convoluted process of change can create many tensions and unresolved problems along the way. Cultural change is like the process of personal creativity. It occurs as a series of successive approximations. (pp.181-182)
A central point arising from these observations is recognizing the power of collaboration for fostering creativity and innovation. A culture that respects dialogue and shared critical reflection is likely to encourage the process of making interconnections, of cross-fertilization of ideas and practices, of exploring collaborative ways of learning in order to create something new and valuable. This is not achieved in isolation, in a silo of convention and predictability, but by people choosing to work together, celebrating how their different talents, perspectives and insights can create something that transforms their practice and their ways of seeing the world. As Ken Robinson (2009) points out in his most recent book, The Element, “creativity draws not just from our own personal resources but also from the wider world of other people’s ideas and values” (p.80). Collaboration at its best can very much enrich the creative process.

2.2

The potential of creative collaborative learning

Increasingly, creativity is seen as a dynamo for enabling individuals, groups and organisations in all sectors to respond imaginatively and responsively to change and renewal. Creativity is not just the preserve of the arts and creative industries, as is sometimes assumed. In a NESTA (National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) provocation paper the authors, Anthony Sargent and Katherine Zeserson (2007), claim unreservedly that creativity is:

[...]

They see creativity – creative ingenuity, creative imagination, creative insight, creative learning, creative energy – as “our most precious resource” (ibid., p.7). Whether it is in the area of government policy, business or the creative industries, the many acute problems confronting a world in crisis have to be addressed through creative collaborations.

Creative thinking, characterised by imagination, open-mindedness and an eager willingness to explore unexpected routes, offers us tools to address (current) problems where other approaches have not succeeded. Creativity has a strong claim to be the mental characteristic that can add unique value and potency both to policy development and to commercial and business success. (ibid., p.7)

The urgency of this point of view is reflected in the first NESTA provocation paper in which Charles Leadbeater (2006) emphasises the importance of interaction and dialogue – of collaboration – if creativity and innovation are to thrive in our diverse society. He urges people from different disciplines, from different cultures and backgrounds to work together, to explore their differences and commonalities together, with the aim of trying to solve pressing problems and to make sense of the complexities of the world. Seeking to make connections through different forms of conversation is critical to this process. Leadbeater (2006) claims that:

Innovation frequently comes from combining two existing ideas to create a new mix. That means that creativity is often the result of collaboration and so innovative societies need to be populated with spaces, real and virtual, where people mix, publish, talk and debate. Innovation often comes from looking sideways, to seek ideas in adjacent fields or disciplines which when abducted into your own domain might yield a new insight or combination. (pp.9-10)

But Leadbeater also makes the crucial point that creativity and innovation in many cases are stifled by the move towards a mechanistic utilitarian culture that sacrifices the rich tapestry of learning for targets, testing, accreditation and league tables.

Towards an understanding of creative collaborative learning

Learning should develop every child’s capacity for independent critical thinking and collaborative problem solving. Learning is more successful the more participative it is, allowing us to shape what we learn, communicate and explore. Learning has a lasting impact when it excites us to be curious: to go beyond answering the questions set for us and seek out questions that intrigue us. Where children are excited, motivated and inspired they are more likely to acquire new knowledge, skills and understanding. (ibid., p.11)

Today we can only survive in an economy that values and nurtures creative learning and innovation, and this can best be achieved in a culture of collaboration. As Leadbeater states, “mass creativity will thrive in societies with education systems that are curiosity-led, create high levels of self-motivation and promote collaboration between learners” (ibid., p.10).

The connection between collaboration and creative learning has been examined in depth by Keith Sawyer, a psychologist who has spent many years studying the ways in which jazz bands and improvisational theatre companies use different collaborative approaches to harness the collective creative energy of the group (see Sawyer, 1999, 2005 and 2007).

For Sawyer, the interconnectedness, the shared vision, that lies at the heart of a collaborative conversation (as in any musical or verbal improvisation), generates unpredictable outcomes that stimulate the participants to see themselves, their colleagues and the world differently. The power of collaboration, the complementarity embedded in the collaborative process, becomes the driver for creativity and innovation.

When a group is improvising together, the unpredictability of each participant’s performance also implies that the performance will be collaborative. Since each performer cannot know what the other performers will do, each has to listen and respond to the others, resulting in a collaborative, and inter-subjectively generated, performance. In these group improvisations – including small-group jazz, ‘improv theatre’, and everyday conversation – no one acts as the director or leader, determining where the performance will go; instead, the performance emerges out of the actions of everyone working together. This is why many jazz musicians refer to musical improvisation as a conversation. (Sawyer, 1999, p.194)

The dynamics of the group, the flow of energy emerging within the group, the interaction between members of the group, the active listening within the group, the shared trust within the group – all are essential elements in effective collaborative learning. In a later article Sawyer (2005) observes the importance of communication and interaction within any group activity.

In group performance, the creativity of the performance depends on an intangible chemistry between the members of the group. In jazz, for example, no single musician can determine the flow of the performance. It emerges out of the musical conversation, a give-and-take as performers propose new ideas, respond to others’ ideas, and elaborate or modify those ideas as the performance moves forward. (p.47)

It is through this interaction, with its unique chemistry, that creative ideas and leaps of imagination begin to fly. Creative challenges emerge from the group responding to the unexpected. Nothing will ever seem quite the same again.
Vera John-Steiner (2006) in her comprehensive work, Creative Collaboration, reiterates this point by emphasising the importance of the psychological dynamics of collaboration in which human possibilities and ideas are stretched and extended when people engage in creative processes together. She considers that this kind of ‘integrative collaboration’ has the potential of transforming ways of seeing and modes of thought to create a completely new vision (p.203). New knowledge is ‘co-constructed’ through dialogue, risk-taking and the shared exploration of ideas and meaning within the group. This is the nub of creative collaborative learning, with ‘conversation’ being the engine driving the creative collaborative process.

Drawing together her final thoughts on the power of collaboration Vera John-Steiner makes a shrewd observation:

In collaborative endeavours we learn from each other. By teaching what we know, we engage in mutual appropriation. In partnerships we see ourselves through the eyes of others, and through their support we dare to explore new parts of ourselves. We can live better with temporary failures as we rely on our partners’ strength. By joining with others we accept their gift of confidence, and through interdependence, we achieve competence and connection. Together we create our futures. (Author’s emphasis; ibid., p.204)

One important feature of this interconnectedness is that integrative collaboration transforms both the field of activity and the participants who are working together. By challenging habitual patterns of learning and working, by extending what they know, by drawing on different perspectives, collaboration can enable the group to construct a creative synthesis leading to a new paradigm in art or science (ibid., pp.65, 70 and 96). This is the ultimate in creative learning.

2.3 Group flow in creative collaborative learning

But is it possible to get a clearer understanding of what happens – of the ‘magical chemistry’ – when a group is suddenly transformed by something seemingly intangible during a creative collaborative process? Not all collaborations produce something special, so what are the conditions that enable a process to ‘work’ effectively?

Keith Sawyer, with his passion for jazz, began to explore the nature of this ‘magical chemistry’ when he was working at the University of Chicago with Mikhail Csikszentmihalyi (1990 and 2003), who coined the term ‘flow’ to describe a particular state of heightened consciousness. (Csikszentmihalyi) discovered that extremely creative people are at their peak when they experience ‘a unified flow from one moment to the next, in which we feel in control of our actions, and in which there is little distinction between self and environment; between stimulus and response; or between past, present, and future’. (Sawyer, 2007, p.42)

With his interest in the connection between improvised conversation, flow and creativity, Sawyer was curious to know how flow functions in group processes. “Does the group itself enter a flow state? Might there be something like ‘group flow’? And what happens when everything comes together to help a group be in flow?” (ibid., p.42). Through his research into jazz ensembles he found that improving groups, when performing at the height of their ability, attain a collective state of mind, a peak experience, that he called ‘group flow’. Sawyer considers that ten conditions are necessary for enabling group flow to flourish. These can be considered as important elements in the process of creative collaborative learning, but they also need to be seen in perspective, especially acknowledging the different contexts and processes of jazz and improvised theatre. Furthermore, the transferability of these elements across the performing arts needs to be recognised.

For example, each element is integral to the way in which actors work within an ensemble. The group’s goal Both jazz and improvised theatre are relatively unstructured activities where the goal is intrinsic to the performance itself. Sawyer (2007) describes this as “problem-finding creativity” (p.45).

Close listening Active or deep listening, together with being open and receptive to the subtle nuances embedded in a shared learning process, are integral to the flow of energy and ideas within a group. These qualities help to provide the focus and quality of engagement fundamental to any collaboration that is felt to work.

Complete concentration Flow is most likely to occur when attention is fully centred on the task itself. Challenges lie within and emerge from the activity, providing the focus for awareness and concentration.

Being in control Sawyer points to a paradox that has to be managed by any group working together. People work best, get into flow, when they have the autonomy to be in control of their actions. But in group flow “control results in a paradox because participants must feel in control, yet at the same time they must remain flexible, listen closely, and always be willing to defer to the emergent flow of the group. The most innovative teams are the ones that can manage that paradox” (ibid., p.49).

Blending egos In musical improvisation, especially in jazz, individual egos need to be balanced in relation to what is happening within the whole group. Without a shared sense of engagement and deep listening, group flow is likely to be impaired. “Group flow is the magical moment when it all comes together, when the group is in sync and the performers seem to be thinking with one mind” (ibid., p.50).

Equal participation For Sawyer “group flow is more likely to occur when all participants play an equal role in the collective creation of the final performance” (ibid., p.50). As indicated above, this shared engagement brings with it an integrity of purpose based on fostering trust, mutual respect and listening to the voice of others. The synergy arising from equal participation not only contributes to group flow but is further strengthened by all participants evolving shared ethos, shared values, shared vision, shared goals leading to a shared sense of ownership (Renshaw, 2010, p.53).

Familiarity When members of a group or ensemble know each person’s ways of working and style of performance well, there is a greater chance of group flow happening. At best, their shared language and shared understandings are built on a foundation of tacit knowledge. This echoes the view of Michael Polanyi (1966) who considers that the creative energy or spirit embedded in tacit knowledge is caught through the act of doing and remains unspoken (p.4-5). He observes that “we incorporate it in our body – or extend our body to include it – so that we come to dwell in it”. A sense of ‘place’ is created which holds people in the moment and helps them to feel safe in themselves and within the group. This enriched feeling of tacit knowledge can strengthen a person’s sense of connection to their creative source and to the creative flow of the group.
Towards an understanding of creative collaborative learning

Communication
Sawyer recognises that group flow is nurtured through constant communication (2007, p.53) – through all participants making meaningful connections, understanding and responding to each other through engaging in open conversations. The kind of communication that is central to a dynamic conversation is a transformative force in generating shared meaning and understanding because if it is to work, it has to respect differences, see commonalities and cross boundaries. In the words of Theodore Zeldin:

Conversation is a meeting of minds with different memories and habits. When minds meet, they don’t just exchange facts: they transform them, draw different implications from them, engage in new trains of thought. Conversation doesn’t just reshuffle the cards: it creates new cards. (Creative Partnerships London North, 2007, p.6)

Again, it is the transformational potential of an enriched conversation that can contribute to the creative flow of any group.

Moving it forward
Innovation flourishess in contexts where the members of the group have the imagination and ingenuity to keep shifting the goal posts and to keep moving the conversation forward (Sawyer, 2007, p.54). Nothing stands still as the status quo is challenged and participants are encouraged to extend their ways of seeing and understanding.

The potential for failure
Sawyer’s final point about the enabling conditions for nurturing group flow is that “there is no creativity without failure, and there’s no group flow without the risk of failure” (ibid., p.55). The flow arising from group experience is a necessary condition of any significant innovation, but there is always the chance of failure occurring at some point in the collaborative process. Feelings of edginess, rawness and unpredictability are inevitable features of the magical chemistry that energises people to ‘fly’ and take risks. But partly due to the intensity and flow of collective energy in the group, there will be times when participants might feel they have failed. The climate must allow this to happen without fear and judgement.

Sawyer concludes by exploring the relationship between group flow and the paradox of freedom in the improvisatory process.

Group flow happens when many tensions are in perfect balance: the tension between convention and novelty; between structure and improvisation; between the critical, analytic mind and the freewheeling, outside-the-box mind; between listening to the rest of the group and speaking out in individual voices. The paradox of improvisation is that it can happen only when there are rules and the players share tacit understandings, but with too many rules or too much cohesion, the potential for innovation is lost. The key question-facing groups that have to innovate is finding just the right amount of structure to support improvisation, but not so much that it smothers creativity (ibid., p.56).

A supportive climate for creative collaborative learning

The personal and group challenges arising from the flow of creative collaborative learning might be energising and inspiring, but they can also be quite daunting. Living ‘on the edge’, constantly taking risks, responding to the unpredictable, drawing on one’s creative resources yet always listening to the voice of others – these finely tuned skills and states of being lie at the heart of any creative conversational process. But if they are to be allowed to flow and to flower, this can only take place in an emotionally supportive and understanding environment. The climate has to be right and this remains a challenge to many institutions and organisations.

The necessity to create spaces that are responsive to conversational learning is discussed by Baker, Jensen and Kolb (2002). They stress that “mutual engagement, empathy and empowerment take place when the relational context provides both safety and encouragement to take the risks of tensions and conflicts” (p.22). The emotional connection at the basis of a collaborative process has to be understood and nurtured. Certain conditions help to make this happen:

• Creating and sustaining a safe, receptive conversational space that is non-judgemental, trusting, empathetic and accepting
• Listening reflectively to the voice of others
• Remaining engaged with and learning from different perspectives
• Understanding differences and conflict as resources for learning
• Recognising and valuing the cognitive and emotional dimensions of learning.

One of the most important points here is to acknowledge the complex emotional dynamics of collaboration. If creative conversation is to flow, this process necessarily has to draw on both cognitive and affective support from within the group. The emotional connectedness that can help bind a group together can be characterised by a sense of shared motivation, shared purpose, solidarity based on shared values and a reassurance knowing that feelings of fear, vulnerability, self-doubt and marginality can also be shared (John-Steiner, 2006, p.124). Mutual support is further strengthened when temperaments complement each other in a group. This inevitably affects the chemistry of a group and the ways in which people work together.

With her interest in what is entailed in nurturing individual identity within a collaborative process, Vera John-Steiner observes that “building a resilient sense of identity is aided by a self that is stretched and strengthened in partnership” (ibid., p.127), supported at all times by an emotional scaffolding that gives each person in the group the confidence to deal with feelings of fear and failure (ibid., p.128). Quoting personal correspondence with her colleague, Michele Minnis (26 February 1998), John-Steiner illustrates how collaborative success is dependent on the appropriate form of emotional support.

Becoming emotionally fit for the rigours of collaboration requires increasing one’s capacity for and abilities to offer empathy, support, trust, and hard-headed, constructive criticism. It also means strengthening one’s endurance when faced with self-doubt, rejection, and feelings of vulnerability. (John-Steiner, 2006, p.190)
Within the context of conservatoire training, with special reference to lifelong learning for musicians, Rineke Smilde (2009) has focused on the need to create a supportive learning environment for teachers and students that is responsive to different forms of creative collaboration. She states that:

Teaching and learning in the conservatoire should encompass creating space for musicians’ own self-identity in a learning culture which distinguishes itself by an atmosphere of trust, and where students experience the excitement and challenge. Therefore transitions are required in which conservatoires become “veritable ‘holistic learning laboratories’ which are supported by a learning culture in a lifelong and life-wide context, and where transformative learning can arise from involvement of all participants in coherent communities of practice. In such laboratories experiential and cognitive learning can take place through, for instance, action learning and research.” (p.252)

Increasingly, professional groups working together, especially from different sectors, are finding strength, support and mutual understanding from being part of a ‘community of practice’. Collaborative ways of working in different contexts can develop new forms of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes, but they can also generate a shared sense of belonging and knowing. In such situations meaning is socially constructed with learning arising from engagement in a community of practice (see Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

An imaginative example of building up an international community of practice can be seen from the work of the Polifonia Research Working Group on the Innovative Conservatoire: Creating a Model of Continuing Professional Development for Conservatoire Teachers. This programme of personal and professional development was initiated by the Association of European Conservatoires (AEC, 2010). Its working group was chaired by Helena Gaunt (Guildhall School of Music & Drama), with seminars devised and led by Helena Gaunt and Bart van Roozelaar (Royal Conservatoire, The Hague) and the evaluation conducted by Rineke Smilde (Prince Claus Conservatoire, Groningen). The first phase of the programme was supported by Polifonia, but its success has generated so much interest from different conservatoires that a second phase of seminars is now taking place from support from individual institutions.

One of the strengths of the programme was that it used creative forms of collaborative learning, including improvisatory processes, to build up an informed and supportive community of practice. The emphasis was on facilitating creative conversations, critical reflection and research-led teaching, on deepening understanding of one-to-one teaching and generating dialogue and collaboration within and between institutions (Association of European Conservatoires, 2010, p.87).

In the evaluation, Helena Gaunt is quoted as to what she saw as the fundamental aim of the programme: “to create a dynamic international community of conservatoire teachers in order to liberate their potential to contribute to modernising and professionalising Higher Education music teaching and learning”, by:

- catalysing the participants’ own professional development as teachers;
- enabling participants to take a leadership role and further professional development for other teachers in their institutions as part of institutional innovation and change;
- stimulating reflective practice and a research attitude, and engagement with existing research practice. (ibid., p.95)

One emerging theme from the Polifonia programme was that although organisational change is acknowledged as an enormous challenge, it is critical for individual teachers to be sufficiently empowered to create a collaborative learning environment in their institutions in which they can feel a sense of engagement and personal responsibility. The evaluation stresses that:

It is important that teachers define their priorities and identify possible constraints that might stand in the way of their personal and professional engagement. The question of how you position yourself in the wider perspective of your job in the conservatoire is a key question for critical reflection as a start of teachers’ reflective practice and co-mentoring processes. (ibid., p.98)

As institutions build up a collective sense of responsibility based on shared learning and practices, certain key issues will always remain central to their continuing development, as indicated in the Polifonia seminars:

- the potential of continuing professional development of this kind, which sharpens reflective processes, and so helps to shift the culture in institutions;
- the strategic place of co-mentoring development and the nature of a community of practice in institutional change;
- the relationships between reflective learning and practice-based research, and how to negotiate these most fruitfully. (ibid., p.98)

For Rineke Smilde (2009) the shared reflective process embedded in co-mentoring should be seen as an integral part of lifelong learning, with its commitment to exploring questions of identity, values, perspectives, goals and meaning. The reflective dialogue that is rooted in a particular context has the potential to become a powerful form of learning and development that marries the personal, the professional and the artistic (pp.252-253).

Increasingly, co-mentoring within a community of learners is seen as a supportive form of collaborative learning in which both partners (possibly in a cross-arts or cross-sector context) engage in an equal exchange of knowledge, skills and experience in relation to a clearly defined shared focus. It constitutes a form of peer-learning (Renshaw, 2010, p.101).

Extensive work in co-mentoring can be found in REFLECT, the Creative Partnerships National Co-mentoring Programme for creative practitioners and teachers, led by The Sage Gateshead. The main aim of REFLECT was “to provide one-to-one structured co-mentoring support for emerging leaders from schools and creative and cultural organisations and businesses to develop more innovative partnership practice and enhance creativity at the heart of their organisations” (The Sage Gateshead, 2007, p.33; also Renshaw, 2008, pp.23-24). The objectives of the programme were:

- To strengthen and develop innovative and sustainable partnerships between schools and the creative and cultural sector
- To build the capacity of the education sector to work effectively with the creative and cultural sector through inter-organisational learning and reflective practice
- To give emerging leaders the opportunity to develop innovative partnership practice through the process of one-to-one co-mentoring
- To offer opportunities for collaborative professional development for the co-mentors

Within this programme, emerging leaders are expected to develop a reflective practice and a research attitude, and to engage in existing research practice. (ibid., p.95)
Towards an understanding of creative collaborative learning

The REFLECT programme not only helped to strengthen understanding about co-mentoring but it also demonstrated the potential of this kind of collaborative support and raised crucial questions about the creation and sustainability of partnerships between organisations in different sectors.

The legacy of REFLECT is that it has developed an interactive model of reflective learning between practitioners who wish to extend their horizons not only through playing, talking, watching and listening, but also through working creatively together. (ibid., p.79)

From her research Green has found that: “peer-directed learning involves the explicit teaching of one or more persons by a peer; group learning occurs as a result of peer interaction but in the absence of any teaching” (p.76). The informal learning practices. For Lucy Green (2002), “peer-directed learning is rewarding and formally recognised rather than being penalised as a form of cheating. (p.211)

In fact, in the context of popular music, peer-directed learning and group learning are the backbone of students' collective creative conversation to transform personal and professional practice. (Renshaw, 2008, p.78)

In the master-less studio, students' abilities are developed through interaction within the community of practitioners, who have been selected on the basis of their strengths in a range of popular music-making activities. This has provided a peer-learning environment in which the rich resource of student abilities and expertise is readily accessed; collaboration is in-and-already-taken for granted and formally recognised rather than being penalised as a form of cheating. (p.211)

In the context of popular music, peer-directed learning and group learning are the backbone of students' collective informal learning practices. For Lucy Green (2002), “peer-directed learning involves the explicit teaching of one or more persons by a peer; group learning occurs as a result of peer interaction but in the absence of any teaching” (p.76). The group is fundamental not only for support but it also serves as the main vehicle for acquiring performance, compositional, improvisational and creative skills. From her research Green has found that:

In band rehearsals, skills and knowledge are acquired, developed and exchanged via peer direction and group learning from very early stages, not only through playing, talking, watching and listening, but also through working creatively together. (ibid., p.79)

The group provides the support but it also serves as a laboratory for experiment and creative learning.

2.5 Creative collaborative learning in an organisation

Creative collaborative learning, then, best flows and thrives in an environment that is emotionally supportive and understands what makes collaborative processes work. The synergy and connectedness arising from a supportive context, one which is sensitive to the place of physical and psychological space, can help unlock the creative capacities of an organisation.

This is relevant not only to shared processes of learning at a micro level but most importantly, the philosophy and spirit of the whole organisation must also be responsive to fostering a culture of creativity and collaboration. Achieving such coherence across a whole institution is a challenging because it is likely to raise questions about the values, priorities and procedures of the organisation. The forum in which this debate takes place is in itself a collaborative process of learning that depends on choreographing and sustaining a collective 'conversation' or reflective dialogue aimed at facilitating cultural change. The psychological climate in which these conversations take place is fundamental to sowing the seeds for future development and transformation (Renshaw, 2010, pp.117-118).

The key to ensuring that honest conversation takes place throughout any organisation is in adopting a style of leadership that is genuinely open and facilitatory. Through the process of collaborative reflective dialogue an organisation can begin to reappraise its priorities and consider its values and vision for the future. Opportunities can be opened up for developing a process of shared leadership and responsibility, in which all members of the organisation (e.g. staff and students; artists and management) can begin to have a voice in shaping their own future (Renshaw, 2005, pp.114-115).

An interesting example of a major arts organisation embarking on a collaborative journey of change and renewal is that of the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), which in 2007 commissioned the think tank Demos to follow the process of development throughout the whole company (see Hewson, Holden & Jones, 2010). What is especially pertinent to this study of the Barbican–Guildhall Campus is that the RSC decided to apply an artistic process – the principles of ensemble – to the leadership and management of the whole organisation. Its intentions are spelt out in the RSC’s current statement of its ‘Purpose and Values’:

“To create our work through the ensemble principles of collaboration, trust, mutual respect, and a belief that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts’. This purpose should not only govern work on the stage and in the rehearsal room, but extend throughout the operations of the RSC, so: ‘to inspire artists and staff to learn and make theatre at the same time’.” (ibid., p.45)

Drawing on the dual meaning of ‘ensemble’, the Demos report points out that it can either mean ‘together’ or ‘viewed as a whole’. In its simplest theatrical context, ensemble means no more than a group of actors working together […] (…), but when it comes to applying the term more broadly to organisational development, ensemble should be thought of not only as a way of doing or as a management tool, but as a way of being, based on a set of moral principles that guide leadership decisions and administrative actions. (ibid., p.46)

The group is fundamental not only for support but it also serves as the main vehicle for acquiring performance, compositional, improvisational and creative skills. From her research Green has found that:
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Michael Boyd, Artistic Director of the RSC, argues that collaboration, interconnectedness, lies at the core of creative theatre making and that the moral values implicit in ensemble should underpin the life of the whole organisation. For example: cooperation, altruism, trust, empathetic curiosity, imagination, compassion, tolerance and forgiveness, humility, magnanimity, love, rapport, patience and diversity. These are seen as an ideal to guide each person’s individual contribution to the direction taken by the whole company (ibid., pp.47-48). It could be said that they are also central to any organisation committed to a philosophy and practice of creative collaborative engagement.

Observations of the RSC at work show the delicate balance that has to be maintained between valuing the shared responsibility working together as an ensemble for equal respect for listening to the individual voice of members of the company or of the organisation. The Demos report demonstrates how this collaborative process is exemplified through the practice of ensemble. It states that:

Ensemble addresses exactly these questions of instilling behavioural norms through strong values, while reconciling the individual’s needs for creative expression, reward, and liberty, with the need to be part of a social system that is efficient, responsive and liberating rather than conformist, restricting and inefficient. (ibid., p.18)

As indicated earlier in this section, the approach adopted by the RSC has implications for adopting a shared form of leadership that is embedded across the organisation – that is, ‘distributed leadership’. The values articulated by the Artistic Director have to be lived throughout the organisation, by artists and management alike. The Demos report makes the valid point that “when the values expressed are disconnected from the norms of behaviour within an organisation it leads to cynicism, and poor morale and performance”. It adds that “sustainable organisational change can only come about if the rhetoric of the way the organisation operates is matched by the quality of relationships it produces” (ibid., p.119).

This emphasis on the quality of relationships is critical to the effectiveness of how collaborations work in any organisation. From observing the RSC in action, the Demos report stresses the advantages of creating and sustaining networks within organisations. They range from fostering innovation to promoting efficiency, building up resilience and providing support and a feeling of connection to the whole organisation. This sense of connection has been strengthened through opportunities for self-reflection and learning in groups, which has further enhanced the quality of communication, trust and mutual understanding between individuals and departments, leading to an increase in collective responsibility (ibid., pp.121-124). In summing up the RSC’s ‘ecological sensibility’, the Demos report states that “it shows an understanding that every part is needed to make a whole, and that every element is as vital as every other in creating a complete system” (ibid., p.125).

Finally, although the RSC does not talk specifically about ‘creative collaborative learning’, much of its recent development and approach to cultural change is about learning from each other, of working creatively together, of experimenting together to produce something new, of creating a trusting environment that empowers people to collaborate and feel that they belong to both their team and to the wider organisation. The Demos report illustrates the ways in which creative forms of collaborative learning have contributed to the success of the RSC.

As a leading cultural organisation, the RSC lives and breathes artistic creativity. But every organisation has to adapt, innovate and be creative to some degree. The RSC’s experience shows that creativity can only be realised through collective and collaborative endeavour, and the more that is facilitated – through good communication, a strong common culture, the creation of the right set of attitudes, and so on – the more likely it is that the organisation will be able to experiment, and hence to innovate well, across its whole range of activities. (ibid., p.128)

2.6 Competences, qualities and attributes required for collaborative work

Building on the previous discussion of how creative collaborative processes can help to transform the culture and practices of an organisation, this section focuses on the competences, qualities and attributes (CQAs) required for collaborative ways of working to be effective. It draws especially on the research conducted by Mission Models Money (MMM, 2010), which outlines ten necessary CQAs for successful collaboration. There are clear synergies between the analysis of MMM and that of Keith Sawyer in section 2.3 of this enquiry. It helps to reinforce the connections between the CQAs of artistic collaboration and organisational collaboration.

Seeing systems

MMM comments that too many organisations limit their vision to the now, to immediate circumstances, rather than project into the future with a long-term sense of direction and priorities. Short-term expediency can limit the wider sense of perspective that is so important for the healthy development of an organisation. In its guide, MMM suggests that “creative practitioners and organisations that collaborate successfully have learned how to view the larger systems in which they live and work. They look beyond events and superficial fixes to see deeper structures and forces at play. They don’t allow boundaries (either organisationally or culturally imposed) to limit their thinking” (MMM, 2010, p.25).

Wanting to learn

As highlighted in the previous section (2.5), collaboration works best in a culture that actively supports learning, reflection and the transfer of knowledge. The vibrancy of this kind of environment not only helps to foster creativity and innovation but also generates new ideas and practices. But MMM observes that learning and reflection are not central to the culture of many larger arts organisations, with their hierarchical structures, discrete departments and internal competition for resources. MMM emphasises that “discovering how to tap people’s commitment and capacity to learn at all levels is key” (ibid., p.26).

Building shared vision

The commitment of ‘learning together’ throughout the whole organisation is critical to developing a shared vision which is felt to be inclusive and empowering. If a vision is genuinely ‘shared’, this can only be achieved through collaboration and on-going creative conversations. As MMM indicates:

A sense of connection and community with respect to the vision is needed to provide the focus and energy for learning. It is the commitment to support each other in realising the shared vision that gives the vision power and supplies the guiding force that enables organisations to navigate difficult times and to keep the learning process on course. (ibid., pp.26-27)
Towards an understanding of creative collaborative learning

Building a critical mass for change within an organisation

Although the leadership might recognise that cultural change is dependent partly on building up a sense of shared responsibility and ownership, in practice this often falls due to a gap between the rhetoric and the action. Ways have to be found for people through joint visions, organisation to be engaged in the process of change, knowing that their ideas, knowing that the view will be listened to as part of the collective conversation. MMM’s research confirms that change will fail if it operates in isolation within an organisation. “With a critical mass of support behind the change effort, implementation occurs naturally, with greater speed and ease. Until a critical mass is achieved the change is very frail and can be easily destroyed” (ibid., p.28).

Developing mutual trust and respect

Collaboration will never succeed if the interconnected relationships within an organisation are not rooted in trust and mutual respect, as intimated in section 2.3 on group flow. MMM’s findings echo one of the main threads of chapter 2 in its discussion of the most appropriate climate for supporting collaborative work.

The behavioural patterns that generate trust are generally considered to be reliability and consistency, reciprocity and integrity, openness and honesty, communication, and openness and empathy and loyalty. (ibid., p.30)

But ensuring that these qualities underpin the working practices of any organisation represents an enormous challenge. As corporate anthropologist Karen Stephenson (2005) says, “relationships are the true medium of knowledge exchange, and trust is the glue that holds them altogether” (quoted in MMM, 2010, p.30).

Managing across boundaries

The de facto power of an organisation rests in part on the structure and effectiveness of its network – on the quality of its interconnections that are able to work together and bridge boundaries – not on its formal command and control structure. From its research MMM considers that collaboration is dependent on managing successfully across boundaries. This entails ensuring that the formal structural relationships work efficiently, but perhaps most importantly, the more informal “soft relationship bonds” are respected and listened to. These softer bonds have been proven to have the most impact on managing across boundaries, and championing the practices and processes that support co-operative relationships is crucial to bridging boundaries and sharing knowledge. […] Tacit knowledge – the critical information that makes organisations functional – is in fact not through established channels within the formal hierarchy but instead through informal relationships. (ibid., p.31)

Managing the issues that frequently emerge from the complex relationships arising from collaborative work is partly a question of trust (as we have seen throughout this chapter), but it is also seriously connected to organisational culture and differences in organisational size and management styles (ibid., p.43).

Communicating effectively and appropriately

Effective communication is often held up as a challenge for those organisations aiming to strengthen collaborative ways of working. How is knowledge and information best exchanged and transferred within organisations? MMM suggests that “successful collaborations tend to display two communication characteristics: communication is open and trusted among the partners to the collaboration, and both informal and formal communication links are established” (ibid., p.32). Opportunities should be created for groups to work together on shared tasks – for example, on exploring a shared vision, among the partners to the collaboration, and both informal and formal communication links are established” (ibid., p.32). Opportunities should be created for groups to work together on shared tasks – for example, on exploring a shared vision, among the partners to the collaboration, and both informal and formal communication links are established” (ibid., p.32). Opportunities should be created for groups to work together on shared tasks – for example, on exploring a shared vision, among the partners to the collaboration, and both informal and formal communication links are established” (ibid., p.32).

In weighing up the possibility of risk and failure in collaborative work, MMM considers that this challenge has to be acknowledged and tolerated by organisations who aim to be at the cutting edge of developments which can only happen through collaboration. Risks can be assessed and minimised but are unlikely to be eliminated in an organisation committed to facilitating the collective energy and flow of creative collaboration and innovation.

Adapting to changing circumstances

If organisations are to survive and flourish in the twenty-first century, they need the resilience and ingenuity to adapt and respond to changing circumstances. That is, their adaptive capacity has to be finely tuned to what is happening in the world outside their organisational boundaries. They cannot remain trapped within their silos. MMM maintains that “adaptive capacity” is “no less important in enabling successful collaboration, which, as with any change process, requires participants to abandon the familiar and the routine” (ibid., p.35). The adaptability and flexibility of any successful collaboration depends partly on having an informed external focus, having the ability to see connections and build up networks, having a sense of curiosity and a commitment for creativity and innovation. These qualities enable collaborative groups to adapt to change (see Sussman, 2004, quoted in MMM, 2010, p.35).

Valuing risk-taking, tolerating failure

MMM recognises that “the interdependence and complexity that lies at the heart of collaborative working inevitably increases exposure to risk” (ibid., p.36). Drawing on the work of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, MMM outlines the main risks arising from collaborations:

- outcomes not justifying the time and resources invested; loss of flexibility in working practices; complexity in decision-making and loss of autonomy; diverting energy and resources away from core aims – mission drift; damage to or dilution of brand and reputation; damage to organisation and waste of resources if collaboration is unsuccessful; lack of awareness of legal obligations and stakeholder confusion. (ibid., p.36)

Confronting issues and managing conflict

It is difficult to imagine even the most successful collaboration not experiencing conflict – or at least a measure of disagreement or creative tension – at some stage of its time working together. In fact, conflict that is managed effectively and sensitively can be a powerful source of creativity and innovation. Creative tension asks for a resolution that can only be achieved by listening to and trying to understand other points of view. Mutually respectful dialogue is the only constructive way forward. Making the distinction between emotional conflict and task conflict, the MMM research draws these conclusions:

- Collaborative leaders must be able to facilitate debate (conflict) over task issues and promote the expression of different perspectives on how problems are defined and approached. If emotional conflict and personal issues surface within the team, leaders need to be able to redirect concerns away from the personal to the task, but when emotional conflict is experienced within a collaborative context, it needs to be discussed, not avoided. […] Rather than thinking of alternatives that lock into either/or situations, a collaborative approach develops a synthesis of perspectives to invent a third alternative. This synthesis of perspectives is the desired outcome of collaboration. (ibid., p.34)
The changing landscape across the Campus

3.1 A growing shift in perspective across the Campus

In an organism as multifaceted as that of the Barbican–Guildhall Campus it can hardly be expected that everyone will embrace the idea of ‘creative collaborative learning’ as soon as it is mooted. Each art form, each organisation within the Campus has its own history, its own practices, against which each person defines who they are, both collectively and individually. Their sense of self, their identity is rooted in how they engage, and have engaged over many years, with their art form and professional colleagues in what is referred to as a ‘community of practice’ (see section 2.4). That is, we perceive ourselves in relation to a form of life and network of relationships that give us a sense of purpose, meaning, values and a framework with which to judge the quality of our engagement. What stands out across the Campus is the enormous amount of personal, emotional and artistic investment in the quality of work produced through each organisation. Inevitably, each person and group of individuals are deeply committed to their own particular form of life, and this has to be understood and acknowledged as circumstances change and cultures begin to shift.

One of the significant developments within the Campus over recent years has been its growing commitment to collaboration and shared creative processes. This is encouraging practitioners, producers, management, students and teachers to redefine who they are and what they do in terms of a different paradigm – one which is characterised by developing shared forms of learning and shared approaches to fostering creativity that necessitate a sharing of trust, vulnerability, responsibility and leadership. The collective creative energy at the heart of this collaborative practice is opening up new connections and new possibilities. It is generating new ideas, extending ways of perceiving and understanding that are leading to new forms of thinking and performing art. It is challenging teachers to explore new modes of teaching and learning, and is deepening understanding of the relationship between artists and their audiences. The creative thrust at the heart of this new paradigm is the basis of the thinking underlying this R&D project.

In his interview Jonathan Vaughan, Director of Music at the Guildhall School, commented that this change in attitude, the increasing commitment to seeking new connections across the Campus, could not have been seriously entertained in the 1980s and ‘90s. He is enthusiastic that ideas are now being generated corporately by senior managers in different fields to develop collaborative conversations to take place at a management level. For example, this has occurred through Campus workstream groups (see section 1.1) and the recently established Barbican–Guildhall ‘collaborative committee’ set up to look at student-led creative proposals.

For Nicholas Kenyon, Managing Director of the Barbican Centre, the fundamental questions are “How is the Campus going to build a new model of what a collaborative approach to arts and learning could be?” and “How is coherence going to be achieved between the many different approaches being developed across the Campus?”. He very much values the richness accruing from the differences but he also stresses the rich potential of different creative processes interacting successfully in different contexts: for instance, cross-arts collaborations between music, theatre, dance, visual arts, cinema and literature.

The transformational potential of collaboration

The transformational potential of collaboration is increasingly recognised across the Campus. Louise Jeffreys, Director of Programming at the Barbican Centre, argues strongly for developing the Campus into a ‘creative collaborative community’ in which the ‘stitches’ between the different elements ‘dissolve’, and creative learning becomes absolutely integral to main artistic practice. Sean Gregory feels the current climate is very receptive to this idea:

Within such a context, how practitioners of all kinds collaborate, how they are motivated to work together, how they share their different skills and perspectives, is absolutely critical. This is equally true in a theatre ensemble, a dance group, a jazz band, a string quartet, a leader duo or one-to-one instrumental teaching. In any successful collaboration it is a question of not compromising and of working towards an end product that amounts to more than the sum of its parts. At its best it can be a transformational process that can liberate and energise participants and audiences alike.

This potential would be further strengthened by building up links between the proposed Centre for Creative Learning and a Barbican Arts and Media Centre with a complementary digital vision. Sean Gregory envisages that the Centre for Creative Learning would serve as a laboratory, a hub and a catalyst for new ideas and new practices, where artists, students and young people can experiment and work together. These collaborations would be enriched by the creative involvement of a state-of-the-art media centre operating at the cutting edge of digital technology. This partnership would also benefit from being linked to the growing clusters of internet pioneers who are rapidly building up a hub of creative technology and design around Old Street roundabout in Shoreditch – an area now called Silicon Roundabout. These creative partnerships could serve as a catalyst for research and development across the Campus and beyond.

In his interview Nicholas Kenyon emphasised that creative learning should be seen as underpinning all artistic activity across the Campus. But he also added that everyone involved in the arts should be encouraged to be more reflective about the artistic processes and performances they are engaged in, as long as the reflection does not militate against the primary goal – that of quality performance. He feels that many artists and audiences are stymied by a nineteenth-century philological hangover which leads people to believe that ‘music is about scores’ and ‘theatre is about text’. For Nicholas Kenyon, both these elements – scores and text – are actually about ‘performance’.

Central to current thinking is the consideration as to how the ‘stitches’ holding the artistic programme and creative learning together might eventually ‘dissolve’ so as to think, plan and implement ‘as one’. Critical to this is the melding of the artistic programme with the creation of exciting and original work that may come from new collaborations. (Gregory, 2011, p.10)
The changing landscape across the Campus

Louise Jeffreys envisions a future where projects are co-created aiming at coherence between creative learning and the artistic programme. This would increase impact and broaden the reach by having “arts clusters of professionals and non-professionals, like young people and audiences, really making the most of opportunities offered by the Barbican”. If we are to embrace the changed landscape of a residency of the Merck Foundation, it is not simply a case of returning to the profile created under the Britten Sinfonia, the London Sinfonietta and the Ensemble Modern. Jonathan Vaughan adds that: “the important point that “artistic matters should be seen as more important than logistical considerations”. From his perspective, the change is always appropriate to have the full orchestra dominating a whole programme, especially when the School embraces so much more adventurous and imaginative about programming and presentation as they try to engage with a very different audience. Jonathan Vaughan considers that “old formulae for concerts, based on Victorian models of performance, are now being questioned as audiences become more challenging in what they are seeking in a performance”. He feels that performers should be questioned as audiences become more challenging in what they are seeking in a performance”.

The silo mentality that bedevilled development in the past has now been pricked and challenged by a growing excitement for new initiatives that are responding to the changing cultural world. As Barry Levine quipped, “there may still be a few Fagnani Caprice players around, but I doubt very much that anyone would want to listen to them!” Students must now engage with new aspirations and expectations of audiences.

Fundamental to this shift in attitude and values is the growing commitment across the Campus to a shared creative collaborative culture. Many artists, producers, management, teachers and students are finding this dynamic thrust exhilarating and very relevant to the multifaceted opportunities in their professional lives. But for others, it is raising uncomfortable identity questions as they begin to move into an arena where boundaries are no longer fixed. Life within a cultural bubble can feel comparatively safe and certain as the parameters are known and predictable. Once this is challenged by a paradigm that thrives on risk and uncertainty arising from innovation, creativity and collaboration, appropriate conditions have to be created that will enable people to move on and become more adaptable to change. Embedding this change across the whole of the Campus remains a challenge both to individuals and to the leadership of the respective organisations.

3.3 Conditions for fostering creative collaborative learning across the Campus

This challenge to leadership is widely acknowledged, especially when placed in the current fragile economic climate. There is an understandable urgency prompting people to explore new ways of ensuring the survival and development of the organisations within the Campus and the Cultural Quarter. Engaging in different forms of creative collaborative learning is seen by some as a vital way forwards as it would unlock a creative energy that would strengthen the artistic and educational life of the Campus. It would provide a breadth of perspective and skills for artists, producers, management, teachers and students to be proactive and to engage with the world as it is, rather than as it was. Despite the inevitable resistance to change, the Campus is already moving forwards and providing a nurturing environment conducive to creative learning and collaborative practice.

Sean Gregory is very clear about the nature of this enabling environment:

In the first instance it has to involve the right people who want to do it [i.e. engage in creative collaborative learning], who are interested and willing to leave preconceptions and more established ways of doing things behind in order to take the collaborative process further. The people involved have to be willing to learn and not be afraid to make mistakes and to be committed to push boundaries. These people need to know that they have the full investment and support of the organisations involved. There should be no underlying agenda, like strengthening the identity of one particular organisation. Barriers need to be overcome and people need to be willing to give space to each other. The right context and space need to be provided so that whatever happens in the Campus itself or outside. Within that environment you have to have the full trust of everyone involved.

Commenting on student perceptions, both Barry Levine and Jonathan Vaughan consider that many more students are now beginning to redefine how they see themselves as artists and human beings. They think that students are increasingly valuing opportunities that are distinctive to the Guildhall School. Some students now claim that “I could only do what I want to do here.” They are attracted to the profile created under the Guildhall School. This is partly why John Sloboda’s research on Understanding Audiences, as instanced in section 1.1, is so important. This research has significantly changed. This is partly why John Sloboda’s research on Understanding Audiences, as instanced in section 1.1, is so important.

The focus on future audiences was clearly evident in the interviews. Fundamental questions about the impact of performances on audiences are now being raised. For example, Barry Levine asks, how far are performances connecting in a meaningful way to the outside world? What is happening to live audiences – to the segmentation (size and shape) of audiences; to the demographic (age, cultural and social background) of audiences? He poses a key question: “How can we enable audiences to understand and get better value from their artistic experience?” He sees the Alliance between the School, the Barbican and the LSO as ‘porous’, with each organisation and their different partnerships co-existing within a clearly defined framework. He feels now there is a shared political will, most of the difficulties are pragmatic – for example, the utilisation of time and space. This philosophy of artistic collaboration is shared equally by the key leaders of the Guildhall School interviewed in this enquiry. For example, Jonathan Vaughan considers different forms of creative collaboration as central to developments across the Campus and he stresses that it is one of the Guildhall School’s "highest priorities" as it seeks to realise the full benefits of many of the new initiatives. For him, collaboration is the motor for innovation and he wants to ensure that students and staff make the most of this creative potential. He sees the Alliance between the School, the Barbican and the LSO as ‘porous’, with each organisation and their different partnerships co-existing within a clearly defined framework. He feels now there is a shared political will, most of the difficulties are pragmatic – for example, the utilisation of time and space.

The changing landscape across the Campus

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It is also important for the Campus that as it plans ahead, it has workflows in place that allow it to work collaboratively – sharing resources, sharing the use of the main concert halls, performance venues and galleries […] providing space for new collaborations to take place in order to formulate new ideas […] There should also be an outward-facing side to the Campus in terms of how it should be offering opportunities for the wider community – for example, audiences in East London. It could become a platform for these people to bring their ideas into an environment that is creative and collaborative. (Interview)

But creating this kind of environment presupposes that each of the three major organisations – the Barbican Centre, the Guildhall School and the LSO – works towards establishing a measure of coherence and sense of connection within the Campus and the Cultural Quarter. Such conditions would enable creative collaborative learning to take root. Sean Gregory, expresses it this way:

“We now talk about a Campus and a Cultural Quarter that is a common platform for all of us – that has a shared ownership, where the world of Higher Education, the students we are training for the profession and the profession itself, sit comfortably together. But I think whilst there is an aspiration to achieve that, the reality is that there are still a lot of hurdles to overcome.

In order for there to be a real cultural shift, we all have to be prepared to do things differently. It doesn’t mean that one has to throw everything out but we can’t continue to do everything based on our own assumptions, and that is at every level – from the way we teach and set up a curriculum to the way we programme and the particular artists we draw in, to the way we communicate, from marketing to websites. We have to look at the different cultures within the Campus – the student culture at the Guildhall, the player-led culture of the LSO, and the audience-led and arts-led culture of the Barbican. (Interview)

Despite Sean Gregory’s enthusiasm for facilitating collaboration, connection and creativity, he is well aware of the hurdles that have to be overcome in some parts of the Campus. For Elie Gussman, Head of LSO Discovery, the elements required for setting up appropriate conditions are very human – basic qualities that are sometimes lost in the maelstrom of everyday working life. She stresses the importance of “making personal connections, of giving people the opportunity to get to know one another, of building up trust, of sharing ideas, of making people feel they are being listened to, of encouraging them to think about what they would like to do in the future and what might enable them to reach new ways of working”.

Such qualities are fundamental because at the bottom line, successful collaboration and development is about people, not just about ideas or as in some cases, ideologically driven agendas.

Julian Philips also made a very personal observation that must apply to all artists when trying to balance their own just about ideas or as in some cases, ideologically driven agendas.

I have to have time and space for my own creative work, allowing that to feed into the creative culture of the institution – that I am contributing to a kind of artistic debate or a reflective process about what music might be or what music as theatre might be. (Interview)

Christian Burgess echoes the importance of providing time and space for collaborative practice to take root in the learning environment. By building in opportunities for Music and Drama students to work together on various projects, dialogue between staff and students from both disciplines can gradually grow organically.

3.4 Shift – an innovative programme of creative learning, artistic enquiry and collaboration

From April 2011 to March 2014 the Barbican and the Guildhall School are developing a new radical programme of creative learning and artistic enquiry as part of a Special Initiative, ‘ArtWorks: Developing Practice in Participatory Settings’, set up by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. Further funding and support comes from the Arts and Humanities Research Council; Creativity, Culture and Education (supported by Arts Council England); and the Cultural Leadership Programme (Paul Hamlyn Foundation, 2011).

The objectives of the national programme are:

- To develop, pilot and embed training and continuous professional development methods for artists working in participatory settings at all stages in their careers
- To develop a better understanding of what constitutes quality in participatory work through sharing good practice across art forms and demonstrating positive outcomes
- To gather, document and disseminate compelling evidence of positive impact (Paul Hamlyn Foundation, 2011)

At the heart of this initiative is the development and support of ‘pathfinder partnerships’. ArtWorks will support ‘pathfinder partnerships’ – cross-artform collaborations between organisations based in different regions of the UK. Through action-based research each seeks to raise the standard of its practice by improving the quality and understanding of what is required from artists in participatory projects, sharing good practice and demonstrating positive outcomes.

The pathfinder partnerships comprise artists, arts organisations and training providers and will work together to develop innovative proposals addressing the training and continuous professional development needs of artists working in participatory settings. (ibid.)
The lead partners of ArtWorks London are the Barbican and the Guildhall, and this pathfinder aims:

To join up the best of existing provision and actively encourage new practice in the training and development of artists working in participatory settings. The programme includes undergraduate and postgraduate provision, as well as the establishment of a community of practitioners. Each training programme is tailored across portfolio roles, artistic skills and reflective practice. (ibid.)

This initiative – Shift – is a powerful example of creative collaborative learning across the Campus, the main thrust of which is captured in the opening comments of the Shift proposal (Gregory, 2011):

The Shift Programme proposes the creation of an innovative community of arts practitioners capable of working across artistic disciplines and social contexts. The community will be skilled as leaders, collaborators, performers and teachers. Their participatory practice will influence the way in which art is made. They will inspire and influence other practitioners and pass on their knowledge to the wider world so multiplying the impact of their work.

The proposal comes at a time of economic contraction, arts spending cuts, well-documented gaps in arts provision for many communities and widespread concern over how to keep the arts embedded in our education system. At the same time, art forms are morphing and combining, and boundaries are becoming porous – between disciplines, styles, genres and between learning and practice. […]

The Barbican and Guildhall School are uniquely placed to seize this moment and drive forward an audacious agenda of creative learning and artistic enquiry. The two institutions are in a significant geographical location, East London, where a new artistic energy sits alongside a pressing need for wider arts provision.

Starting with the Barbican and Guildhall School working in an active and radical alliance for artistic innovation, learning and research, Shift will create collaborative artist-leaders who ‘make waves’. This core community will soon broaden with a wide range of adventurous new partners and collaborators drawn from organisations and individuals in the education, professional arts and community sectors. […]

It is a given that the art itself needs to be of high quality. Through Shift more attention will now be paid to the context of the work; the quality of engagement, communication and the expectations of new audiences and communities, as well as the needs of those involved in making the work. A deep understanding of the context within which work is made is as important to ensuring quality as the artistic drive underpinning the work itself. (p.4)

One of the distinctive features of Shift is that it aspires to create a new paradigm that aims to generate forms of practice which are inclusive, flexible and collaborative in all respects.

It encourages practitioners to go beyond partnership to genuine participative collaboration. It encourages a cross-arts rather than a multi-arts approach […] It deliberately blurs the boundaries between the teacher and the performer, the student and the professional and the conservatoire and the professional venue. (ibid., p.4)
Examples of creative collaborative learning across the Campus

Having charted the terrain that makes the Campus such fertile territory for innovation, creativity and collaboration, this chapter examines a number of examples that illustrate the range and scope of creative collaboration in the Barbican Centre, Guildhall School and the London Symphony Orchestra.

4.1 Improvisation in Music, Drama and Nursing: An exploratory study of inter-professional learning

This collaborative project comprised a series of ‘live-labs’ that explored improvisation in a multi-professional group of musicians, actors and healthcare professionals. The project was led by the Guildhall School of Music & Drama (GSMD) and the Florence Nightingale School of Nursing & Midwifery (FNSNM) at King’s College London. It was funded by the London Centre for Arts and Cultural Exchange (LCACE). A description of the project can be found in a report written by Helena Gaunt, Ian Noonan and Biranda Ford (2009).

The ‘live-lab’ workshops were facilitated by Dr Helena Gaunt (GSMD) and Ian Noonan (KCL) over three days in September 2008 and included the presentation of a literature review commissioned as part of the project by Biranda Ford. They explored the themes of engagement, listening and touch by bringing together actors, musicians, music therapists, doctors, nurses and midwives to work collaboratively in a number of structured exercises and free improvisations. Exercises included musical responses to narratives about experiences of receiving healthcare, expressive dance movements based on the touch and movement used in neurological assessment, and collaborative creation of poetry about the process of engagement.

Each day included a series of structured improvisatory exercises and a free improvisation exploring the identified theme. There were 20 participants from the UK, The Netherlands, Finland and Greece, who all wanted to find new creative ways of working together and then reflecting on this work in relation to their own disciplines.

The first two days took place in the Clinical Skills Centre at Guy’s Hospital. Part of King’s College London, this ‘mock ward’ is used for teaching and has six beds laid out in a Nightingale Ward style with curtains separating each bed and a large amount of medical and clinical equipment. The final day took place in the Old Anatomy Lecture Theatre on the Strand Campus of King’s College. Both venues had a profound impact on the experience and nature of the intervention.

On each day the project was evaluated in a number of ways with a focus on recording what learning took place, how this might inform participants’ own practice and how participants wanted to take the project forward. Evaluation techniques included reflective discussion, free text written evaluation and written evaluation in response to three categories – Engagement and Beginnings, Listening, Touch. (p.4)

4.2 You Me Bum Bum Train

You Me Bum Bum Train (YMBBT) brings a different and valuable perspective to the role that artists can play in participatory settings and it challenges existing notions of the relationship between performer and audience. In 2010 a collaboration took place between the company, comprising two visual artists – Kate Bond and Morgan Lloyd – and the Barbican. YMBBT had the original concept and with the help of Jill Shelley, Executive Producer of Creative Learning, the idea was transformed into a performance. As described by Jill Shelley in the Shift proposal:

YMBBT is an exhilarating participatory adventure for one audience member at a time. Audience members become passengers who journey through a maze of live scenes featuring over 200 performers each night. The audience member has no idea what they are about to encounter, but soon work out that they are the focus of each scene and can determine the outcome from the way they react. Some examples are: finding yourself interpreting at an international press conference for a Somali ambassador, taking part in a burglary, being saved from a car wreck after failing your driving test, and becoming a winning contestant on a game show.

Audience members find themselves at the centre of situations they would never ordinarily experience and transcend their everyday lives. The themes explored are diverse: celebratory, moral, surreal, mundane, thrilling, challenging or uplifting, in order to create a rollercoaster of emotions. Audience members are transported not only physically but psychologically. The 2010 production received wide critical acclaim and the company was awarded the Evening Standard prize for Best Newcomer.

The production is unique in that the entire company of several hundred people, which include set builders, set dressers, performers, stage managers, are volunteers. The plan is to produce a large scale version of You Me Bum Bum Train in summer 2012. It will develop the volunteering aspect of the production to provide a comprehensive menu of accreditation and training options to encourage and develop the skills of both young people from the East London community where the production will take place, and emerging artists looking to develop particular skills. (Gregory, 2011, p.14)
4.3 United in Swing: Jazz at Lincoln Centre Faculty and Barbican–Guildhall Creative Learning Division

The first Barbican International Residency, involving Jazz at Lincoln Centre (JALC) with Wynton Marsalis, and the Blue Pepper Group led by Paul Griffiths, was held from 14 to 20 June 2010. This was a model of excellent international collaboration, involving students, teachers and young people largely from East London. It is a good example of a successful collaboration in which the residency included the following initiatives:

- The formation of the East London Creative Jazz Orchestra set up as part of SoundEast, consisting of 13-19 year olds from ten East London boroughs. This jazz ensemble continues to develop through its ongoing partnership with Blue Pepper.
- Establishing the Hackney Creative Jazz Ensemble which involved a group of 10-17 year olds from Hackney Music Service.
- Jazz Schools Concerts – Does it Swing? These concerts reached up to 900 primary school children coming mainly from East London boroughs.
- Leadership Day, based largely on JALC’s own Band Director’s Academy. It was a day-long training on band and section leadership, which was attended by 53 band leaders, teachers, students and others with an interest in teaching jazz.
- Essentially Ellington UK, in which three UK big bands worked on classic Ellington repertoire coached by JALC Faculty musicians, culminating in a combined workshop at the Barbican Theatre.
- As part of their World in Motion visit to New York in 2009 (see below), Morpeth School’s Urban Playground, a jazz ensemble of 13-16 year olds, worked with JALC Faculty musicians. During the Barbican Residency further opportunities were created for the JALC musicians to build on this working relationship.
- Guildhall School master classes, led by JALC Faculty musicians, focusing specifically on the Guildhall Big Band, Small Bands and ad hoc student combos.
- Concerts by the Jazz at Lincoln Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis: Swinging Beginnings (Barbican Hall); Bebop and Beyond (Barbican Hall); Modern Jazz Masters (Hackney Empire); and Open-Air concert (Victoria Gardens, during Paradise Gardens Festival).
- Jam sessions at the Vortex Jazz Club, with guests from JALC.
- A Midsummer Night’s Swing – two Swing Dance events in Stoke Newington Town Hall.

In her evaluation of this Barbican Residency with Jazz at Lincoln Centre Faculty, Hilke Bressers (2010) stresses some of the key factors that contributed to the success of the partnership:

- It was felt by both teams that there was a level of really fundamental understanding between the two organisations. Starting off on a senior management level months beforehand, and gradually expanding to both artistic teams during the residency, it was felt that the ethos and core values of both organisations were very similar. The key factor that contributed to the success of the partnership:

- Establishing a sense of ‘sharing’, much more than on a truly artistic collaboration. By sharing skills, knowledge and drinks, people were able to exchange their respective ways of working, and to get to know each other both artistically and as people. It was felt that throughout the week a sense of trust and deeply felt empathy was developed.

4.4 World in Motion Drumming

World in Motion Drumming grew out the work of AfroReggae, a Brazilian cultural group from the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, and has been developed by the Barbican in East London schools. It is led by Jo Wills and Ross McDouall in collaboration with dancers from Boy Blue Entertainment, which is a hip hop dance company based in Newham led by choreographer Kenrick Sandy and music producer Michael Asante. Boy Blue Entertainment has become an Associate Company of the Barbican, producing and performing original work with 30 professional dancers and a community company of 70. Together, the musicians and the dancers are exploring a shared artistic language, mixing styles of dance, drumming and instrumental work that resonate with young people. They are now working towards a major community event for performance at the Barbican in the summer of 2012.

In 2009 a visit to New York took place involving 18 musicians from either Morpeth School's Urban Playground jazz ensemble or Pulse, the World in Motion drumming performance group. Most participants were members of both groups. The visit included working with Jazz at Lincoln Centre, as indicated above, and it has been well documented by Sophie Leighton-Kelly (2010). Describing the beginning of the collaboration, she writes:

The trip involved a workshop at Jazz at Lincoln Centre, [. . .] attendance at performances there and on Broadway, and participation in workshops and performances in two high schools: 47, an American Sign Language and English School on the lower east side of Manhattan, and Sunset Park High School, a brand new Brooklyn school with a performing arts specialism. [. . .]

At the centre of the trip were the schools sessions: each of the two schools was visited for a day of workshops. These largely followed the same format at the introductory sessions run at the London schools. Their style of collaborative composition and performance within what are termed ‘creative ensembles’ encourages the participants, including the workshop leaders, to share their own musical interests within an environment that is socially and musically inclusive. In this informal, creative setting of ensembles, comprising a mix of ages and technical abilities, leaders have observed a musical identity that is felt by the young musicians to be authentic and owned by them (pp. 7-8).
Examples of creative collaborative learning across the Campus

As part of the work of Creative Learning, future MAP/Making projects have the potential to respond to the opportunities that arise from being part of the Barbican’s artistic programme: for example, the use of venues across the Campus, collaborations with internationally-renowned artists programmed by the Barbican and collaborations across all art forms and within a broader range of contexts.

Through Shift, the vision for MAP/Making is for it to move to being an annual project for postgraduate Guildhall and RCA students and to establish a community of practitioners extending from emerging professionals and project leaders to young professionals who have taken part in past projects and to new students and learners of all ages. MAP/Making will therefore extend beyond the worlds of the academic institutions, becoming a widely-recognised incubator for cutting-edge collaborative practice. (Gregory, 2011, p.13)

In his interview, Sean Gregory commented that for over ten years the MAP/Making collaboration has manifested itself in many different ways, but especially in how people perform and communicate ideas: whether through established repertoire or through newly created work; through staged performance or an installation; or through a theme or topic that is non-arts related, aiming at a balance between the concept and how the idea is explored and developed. It is not surprising that MAP/Making is viewed as an important voice within the Campus.

Centre for Orchestra

A major Campus initiative is that of the Centre for Orchestra which is a unique collaboration between the LSO, the Guildhall School and the Barbican. Its aim is to provide an extended training in orchestral development, designed to ensure that young professional musicians can take on the different roles and responsibilities required in a twenty-first century orchestra. The programme includes instructional coaching led by members of the LSO, together with professional development, early career support and innovative approaches to audio-visual work.

The Centre is keen to develop flexible and creative ways of working, with opportunities to engage in cross-arts work. This will be strengthened through links with the proposed Barbican Centre for Creative Learning, which will serve as a recognised incubator for cutting-edge collaborative practice. (Gregory, 2011, p.13)

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Kathryn McDowell, Managing Director of the LSO, has a clear vision for the future of the Centre for Orchestra.

We are now thinking that from 2012/13 this will be a defined postgraduate opportunity at the highest level – an extended training in orchestral development. We would recruit a full orchestra over a two-year period for that. Now within this we have already made it clear that there would be a creative strand. How we do that is up for discussion, but I anticipate that it is not going to be far off that sort of physical theatre interaction – and I would be rather disappointed if it didn’t push the students into quite a different area, but within the confines and the safety of their course of study. So if they want to pursue that further, they can but it is not obligatory. (Interview)
Kathryn McDowell makes some interesting observations on the changing face of orchestral players, especially those within the LSO.

I think we have already moved a long way with this because if I look back 20 years, the orchestral training was very formal. People came into the profession thinking that the only route was being able to play the repertoire to the highest level. That is still the primary objective and I think it should be. We still do not audition people on the basis of their aptitude for Discovery work. But what is very interesting is that out of the recent batch of intakes over the last three years (about 20 new members), without exception they have turned out to be people who are good at Discovery work and able in that work because they are the ones that actually fit into the LSO and within the culture of the LSO and have these characteristics.

Now if you move to the next generation, when we have the next major turnover of wind players, say, in another 20 years, it wouldn’t surprise me at all if we saw that this has moved forwards into what I think you are calling ‘creative collaborative practice’ being much more a feature of their skill-set and their aptitude. But they are still going to need to be able to play their Mahler symphony to the highest possible level. (Interview)

4.7

LSO Collaboration between Sir Colin Davis, Nikolaj Znaider (violin) and Gordan Nikolitch (leader)

After her interview Kathryn McDowell raised an interesting example of a collaboration that was transformative and attained the highest quality of artistic excellence. Her email correspondence captures the spirit of this shared engagement, the integrity and intensity of which was caught by the audience.

In the last 10 days we’ve been working with Sir Colin Davis and violinist Nikolaj Znaider on two programmes that included the violin concertos of Elgar and Brahms. This is a partnership that has been evolving over the last 10 years, but especially in the last three.

Nikolaj has also been taking a serious interest in conducting in order to more fully understand the musical aspect of every concerto he plays (i.e. Beethoven only wrote one violin concerto, so if he’s to understand Beethoven he needs to know the symphonies from the inside as well as the chamber music). To this end he has become a disciple of Colin – spending many hours discussing scores!

As the series of rehearsals and performances got underway last week, we realised something very special was going on. Gordan Nikolitch was leading and the chemistry between all three of them was palpable. As we reached the third and fourth performances the orchestra was equally galvanised in an extraordinary musical endeavour – it was as if 90 people were making chamber music – the ultimate collaborative work – and the effect on the audience was achingly moving. I doubt I’ve heard such quiet audiences ever as in the four concerto performances. Colin rang me a few days later to say the concerts were ‘the best ever’.

What made the collaboration work was building up the trust, having a personal relationship where Jason knew that he could tell me honestly how it was going and that there was a support network for him once he came to a workshop. He got to know the LSO musicians and built mutual respect. His relationships blossomed with other members of Discovery. (Interview)

Jason Yarde’s next project was with Hugh Masekela in which he arranged some of Masekela’s songs for the LSO Community programme in which one of her roles was to nurture and support all participants.

From all accounts this collaboration continues to grow from strength to strength.
4.9 Collaboration between Tim Garland and the LSO

Five years ago a UBS commission gave Tim Garland, a saxophonist and composer, the opportunity to write a piece for the LSO. This was a collaborative process involving workshops and discussions with the players over a 12-month period and is another example of what can be achieved through shared forms of informal learning. After this shared creative process he created his first piece for full orchestra which was performed on the Barbican stage.

The success of this project led to further support from UBS that enabled Tim Garland to work closely with Neil Percy (Principal Percussion), producing a 20-minute piece featuring percussion. The work was performed by a six-piece LSO ensemble in St Luke’s in November 2010 and is now in the process of being fleshed out for the full orchestra for a world premiere in 2011 on the Barbican stage.

4.10 LSO On Track – Next Generation Scheme

Next Generation is a scheme for up to 45 young instrumentalists with exceptional musical potential. It forms part of LSO On Track which was launched in 2008 with the aim of providing opportunities for instrumental learning for young people in East London. The LSO further strengthened its link with schools by forming a partnership with local authority music services in the boroughs of Bexley, Barking and Dagenham, Greenwich, Hackney, Havering, Lewisham, Newham, Redbridge, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest. In a 20th Anniversary Concert programme celebrating the work of LSO Discovery (2010), it points out that “as a partnership, LSO On Track now has a year-round series of activities that achieve more for young musicians than any partner authority could do on their own” (p.15).

The Next Generation Scheme comprises a diverse group of young musicians who are encouraged to develop their own creativity through workshops with Howard Moody, the scheme's Creative Director, and LSO musicians who are especially committed to this project. As the 20th Anniversary Concert programme indicated:

> these workshops bring a new dimension to their music-making and provide stimulating and challenging projects which significantly develop their instrumental, ensemble, performance, analytical, creative and leadership skills. (ibid., p.15)

4.11 Barbican Young Orchestra

Now in its fourth successful year, the Barbican Young Orchestra (BYO) provides the widest range of young musicians with the opportunity to develop their orchestral skills and work under world-famous conductors. The idea was conceived by Sir Colin Davis who wished to create an orchestra of 8-16 year olds who are of Grade 6 Associated Board standard or above. He wanted to demonstrate what could be achieved with a generation younger than the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain.

This initiative developed into a collaboration between the Barbican, the Guildhall School and the LSO, and it has enabled many young players to perform on the Barbican stage. The young musicians not only have the chance to play in a classical orchestra, but they are also given the opportunity to work in a smaller Creative Ensemble, joining forces with young musicians from Guildhall Connect and the LSO Fusion Orchestra led by Paul Griffiths. These multifaceted experiences can only help to encourage the next generation of musicians to be more flexible and creative in their approach to music-making.

4.12 Professional Creative Ensemble

It is the intention of Jonathan Vaughan to set up a Professional Creative Ensemble at the Guildhall School, comprising staff and students from Music and Drama. This would serve as a laboratory for flexible, creative musicians and actors to work together with the aim of transforming performance practice. Jonathan Vaughan feels that the freedom of expression acquired from engaging in creative work has a liberating effect on more conventional performance. He considers that the Professional Creative Ensemble could become a flagship when Milton Court opens in 2013 and it could work collaboratively with the proposed Centre for Creative Learning in the Barbican.

4.13 ‘Tales from Ovid’ Production

Tales from Ovid, led by Christian Burgess in 2006, was a theatrical response to Ted Hughes’ treatment of ten of the Metamorphoses of Ovid. It brought actors, musicians and a composition student together to devise the performance collaboratively. In their search for a new theatrical language “the traditional roles of the different disciplines became blurred, to the extent that by the time of the performance the company had merged into a single homogeneous unit” (Guildhall School of Music & Drama, 2010b, p.4).

This multi-disciplinary approach provided an opportunity for Christian Burgess to share his passion for creative collaborative learning, which he feels “has the possibility of radically changing the imaginative process of a young artist, who thus far has been trained in a very traditional manner”.

> I like the idea that artists are motivated to work together. I don’t think that this can necessarily be counted on yet. It is the experience of doing it which is persuasive because if one is working in a non-traditional way, it is hard for people to conceive of what it might be like. (Interview)

Commenting on the challenges arising from the collaborative process involved in Tales from Ovid, Christian Burgess said that:

> it was like pushing a skip up a hill. [The actors and musicians] were not convinced that we had anything of any value. They were really scared of it; scared of their lack of visibility as individuals because we were working on this concept of ‘chonas’, a lot and because I really admitted that I didn’t know the answers – that threatened them. They wanted to be presented with a director who was going to reassure them – ‘don’t worry, I know exactly what to do: you move over there and you move over there’. And I suppose what I’ve learnt, and as my confidence has increased, it is critically important to acknowledge that you don’t know. Whilst that might foster insecurity in the short term, gradually the company understands that their contribution is significant. That it’s not just my ideas. (Interview)

The Last Five Years, a one-act musical by Jason Robert Brown, formed the basis of a collaborative project between Guildhall drama and music students from December 2009 through to April 2010. The project, comprising two actor-singers and six musicians, was directed by Christian Burgess and produced by Fernando Pinho (a postgraduate student in Stage Management and Technical Theatre). Public performances took place in both the Guildhall School and the Barbican.

The project was researched by John Sloboda (2011), Research Professor at the Guildhall School, and written up as a paper titled ‘What do musicians and actors learn by working together? The Last Five Years’: A case study. What is groundbreaking about this research is that only a few years ago there would have been nothing of substance to research. It is only comparatively recently that a small, but committed group of teachers has been motivated to create opportunities for drama and music students to work together on devised projects that are genuinely collaborative. As John Sloboda points out at the beginning of his paper:

The distinctive element in most of these projects is that musicians and actors are integrated within the performing space under a unified artistic vision. Musicians share the performing space with the actors, rather than occupying a pit or cordoned-off area, and major aspects of their stage presence (be it movement, gesture or facial expression, positioning, clothing etc.) are explicitly designed to have dramatic, in addition to musical, effect on an audience. (p.2)

In many ways this development reflects the growing trend in the cultural field for arts practitioners to engage in cross-arts collaborations – as can be seen in the main thrust of this enquiry. Nevertheless, it is salutary for John Sloboda’s research to articulate than that between musicians and their audiences. Actors are acutely aware of their audience and seek ever more intense engagement with them. Musicians are often insulated from their audiences and more focused on their instruments and the music than on their audience. Are these claims accurate, and can collaborative work contribute to productive shifts in awareness and understanding? (p.3)

Secondly, that collaborative work can strengthen the quality of communication between the performer and audience:

Does actor-musician collaboration have potential to enhance the richness of the communication between performers and audience, and can involvement in this type of work heighten performer awareness of and understanding of their audiences? It is often claimed that the relationship between actors and their audiences is more direct and well-articulated than that between musicians and their audiences. Actors are acutely aware of their audience and seek ever more intense engagement with them. Musicians are often insulated from their audiences and more focused on their instruments and the music than on their audience. Are these claims accurate, and can collaborative work contribute to productive shifts in awareness and understanding? (p.3)

Examples of creative collaborative learning across the Campus

4.15 ‘Badenheim 1939’: Play adapted by Arnold Wesker from the novel by Aharon Appelfeld

Arnold Wesker’s play, Badenheim 1939, was performed at the Guildhall School at the end of November 2010. This was a collaborative production, involving a cast of drama students and nine musicians, directed by Christian Burgess with music composed by Julian Philips. With their strong shared interest in collaboration across the disciplines, they both see the collective devising process as a ‘creative adventure’. In his interview, Christian Burgess said “when you open Wesker’s script of Badenheim, it’s pretty spare. There’s not much there. What there is, is hidden away in the stage directions. It’s a really interesting challenge. It doesn’t give us the answer – it poses the question”.

The devising process was new for the musicians but they had the skills and attitudes to respond creatively to each particular moment in rehearsal. The level of their interaction and collective engagement in the process made it natural for them to put the music together by ear. This enabled them to internalise the musical material and readily modify it in response to the changing theatrical situation. What was clear to Julian Philips was that “the musicians wanted a stake in the music, so they learnt it very carefully and then gained an ownership of the material. This enabled them to shape the orchestration on the spot”. He felt that the success of the musical process:

depended on having nine committed, intelligent, responsive, generous musicians, who were also very skilled technically. One of my bugbears is that too often I am in a theatrical context and there is an element of music in the mix, but in a qualitative sense, it is ‘wallpaper’. (Interview)

In this production of Badenheim 1939 there is no way one could see the musical element as ‘wallpaper’. The musical voice was integral to the integrity of the performance, thus echoing John Sloboda’s (2011) observation that “musicians and actors are integrated within the performing space under a unified artistic vision” (p.2). For Julian Philips:

there were many moments where I watched them [the musicians] interacting and I was thinking, how impressive this is, to have a group of young musicians who can work so responsibly and so quickly, and pick up a process and work in it with such openness. (Interview)

He considered that the collaborative process opened up a wealth of learning opportunities for the musicians. For example:

• Musicians learning how to interact with actors
• Musicians learning how to interact with each other in a mixed ensemble
• Musicians learning how to act
• Musicians collaborating with the composer inside a compositional process
• Musicians being challenged instrumentally in order to maintain a high standard of performance in the context of theatrical practice
• Musicians being able to apply the knowledge they had learnt in a practical context. (Interview)
Lads in their Hundreds, devised and directed by Iain Burnside, comprised a concert production of songs and poems with the backdrop of war, different cycles of conflict and women left at home. It was a collaboration involving song, text, movement, theatre, lighting and design, with the aim of bringing singers into a dramatic context.

The relevance of the text and music to the present day (e.g. Abu Ghraib) was very clear and according to Jonathan Vaughan, Director of Music, this resonance sparked off a powerful response from both the audience and performers. For the students especially, it heightened their sense of engagement and communication with the audience. In his interview Jonathan Vaughan claimed that “if it had been a conventional song cycle it wouldn’t have had any of that special quality”.

Barry Ife considers that Iain Burnside is doing some very important developmental work which has had a major effect on his own practice and development, as well as being transformative for the students – for example, working together as a group on challenging repertoire, thinking how to dramatise songs and projecting and focusing on the audience. By performing Lads in their Hundreds twice in successive years with different casts, the whole process was looked at again through a different perspective. Barry Ife sees this as “an excellent example of personal and artistic development, and reflective practice”. The research potential of this project was not missed by Helena Gaunt, who commissioned a film to be made of the process, from auditions to performances (Guildhall School of Music & Drama, 2010c).

In an interview with Barry Ife (Guildhall School of Music & Drama, 2010d), Iain Burnside responded to a question about how he feels the students perceive what they have learnt from the process.

What do I think they’ve got out of it? That’s a really good question! Well, a lot of it is just the teamwork. Because a lot of them have done shows of one sort or another before they come here, whether it’s The Sound of Music or whatever, but since they’ve been here, of necessity their work has been very individual. They’ve done a bit of this and a bit of that, but they’ve never done something on this scale, where let’s not forget, they’re on stage the whole time. They never leave, so even when they’re in the dark they’re still a bit visible, or often they’re reacting even if they’re just playing cards in the trenches. And the fact that they have to interact and have to you know, put their socks on and everything, it’s just... they’re multi-tasking where they haven’t done, and they have to be collaborative with one another, with Victoria [Newlyn; responsible for Movement], in a way that they don’t really do in any other thing.

(I interview between Barry Ife and Iain Burnside)

In the film made of the production of Lads in their Hundreds (Guildhall School of Music & Drama, 2010c), Iain Burnside makes clear that in addition to putting on a show and an hour’s entertainment, the broader educational aim is “to expand the vision of both singers and pianists about what a song is”. The students who are interviewed all recognise the challenge of having to be accepting and open to the ideas of the director. They need the confidence to share their vulnerability and they have to be flexible as things are always changing.

Examples of creative collaborative learning across the Campus

Victoria Nevin, who was responsible for choreographing the movement, points out that in such a multifaceted creative process there is always room for change and development:

[The students] must accept that things need to change if they don’t work. It is difficult to accept and to let go of something... I’m always encouraging them to be constantly engaged. The whole process of making the production is organic – constantly growing and changing. (Interview in Guildhall School of Music & Drama, 2010c)

One of the pianists, who were on stage for the whole performance, stressed the importance of each individual’s contribution and engagement in the process.

The thing is that even if he [Iain Burnside] comes with very firm ideas and he wants to achieve something, you have to go for it. (But) another part is that you have to do things yourself. So there was a big aspect that was a bit like improvisation – you have to walk along and a lot of things happened in rehearsals from our other ideas. (Interview in Guildhall School of Music & Drama, 2010c)

The students found working on the music, words and movement together in the same process most creative and rewarding. Music, mind and body were married together in a holistic process. At all times the students were expected to remain focused on all aspects of the production so that they could perform with conviction and meaning.

‘Unknown Doors’: The Life of Ivor Gurney

After the success of Lads in their Hundreds it was decided that the next project to be devised and directed by Iain Burnside should focus on the life of Ivor Gurney – an English composer and a First World War poet, born in Gloucester in 1890, who died of tuberculosis while a patient at the City of London Mental Hospital, Dartford, in 1937. Unknown Doors, as it was titled, was piloted in March 2011.

In his interview Barry Ife pointed out that for the next production the vocal students expressed a strong interest to work with drama students. This was very much supported by Christian Burgess who found that Lads in their Hundreds “stimulated my imagination a lot. It was the imagination of the content as much as the quality of the performance that struck me”.

Because I understood from my own experience what Iain is broadly trying to do, it became important to me... I’m making himself available to the idea that an actor might add something to the next project. It became important to me to find him a good actor that would really take his heart...

(I interview in Guildhall School of Music & Drama, 2010c)

This is another example of staff and students seeing the potential for learning from each other in a collaborative process.
4.18 A drama/music co-teaching project

This ongoing collaboration in co-teaching and co-learning is led by Armin Zanner (Deputy Head of Vocal Studies at the Guildhall School) and Dinah Stabb (actor and theatre director, Guildhall Drama department). Having met at the international Polifonia Innovative Conservatoire Seminars, Dinah Stabb was invited to join the weekly Year 1 German Recitative class taught by Armin Zanner. Their collaboration has led to a reappraisal of how to teach German recitative at the Guildhall School and it has resulted in a number of changes, as instanced by both tutors:

The classroom dynamic changed to one in which sharing was creative, experimenting was learning and dry rules of style and diction were taught in the most collegiate of contexts. (see Appendix 7.1 C)

They point out that there has been:

• a shift away from a conventional ‘masterclass’ format
• a consistent active involvement of the whole group
• an emphasis on shared learning through ‘doing’ rather than observing
• a new teacher–learner dynamic with the two tutors

The results of this style of group teaching for the students’ work in German Recitative have been immediate, bringing a far stronger sense of embodying – and therefore communicating – the text. But more broadly the project has offered the students a direct experience of how they can and should integrate different strands of their course (e.g. drama, movement, German language and German repertoire). (ibid.)

This project has demonstrated how beneficial creative collaboration can be not only for the students but also for the personal and professional development of the teachers involved, and for strengthening connections between departments. Both Armin Zanner and Dinah Stabb claim that:

Through involvement in the project, [they] have encountered new models for their own one-to-one and group teaching. As a result this has been an opportunity for their professional development. And on a larger scale, this pilot programme intends to build on the existing intergenerational music and poetry project, Dialogue, in which professional musicians and poets work together with Guildhall students, primary and secondary school children, and older people from Gateway Housing in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and the University of the Third Age.

Future Band (Detta Danford and Natasha Zielazinski) and Pit Theatre. As Sean Gregory points out, “through Shift, the Dialogue project will enable a more sustainable model of intergenerational learning to be established, drawing on artistic and leadership expertise within the wider partnership” (ibid., p.14).

4.19 Future Band

Future Band is a flexible Creative Learning ensemble, comprising over 30 young musicians aged 8-14 from across London. It is led by Detta Danford and Natasha Zielazinski. The musical identity of the group reflects the personality and creative voice of each band member, as well as taking inspiration from artists around the globe, including Danilo Perez (Panamanian jazz pianist) and West African musicians Kav Secca and Outhouse Kuhabi.

In his interview Sean Gregory commented on their collaborative sensitivity in the way they work together and interact with different groups (e.g. young children of mixed ability, teenagers and students). They are good at drawing ideas out of each other and from the young people, ensuring that the group develops its own sense of ownership and identity through a process of shared learning. In addition, they are always able to communicate the collective ideas of the group effectively when it comes to the performance. Sean Gregory considers that “there is an integrity and a clarity to what one sees and hears; it feels totally connected to what the group, the project and the process has been about” (Interview).

Towards the end of 2010 Future Band worked on a fashion project inspired by a Japanese fashion exhibition at the Barbican Art Gallery called Future Beauty. This comprised a 30 year retrospective of Japanese fashion and included a combination of tradition and innovation – “East meets West”. This innovative Creative Learning project, called Disruption, brought the creative talents of fashion industry professionals to a diverse group of young participants drawn from schools in the London Borough of Hackney.

Various collaborative workshops were set up for the teenagers. The London College of Fashion led workshops on garment construction for performance, styling, film and photography, headwear and accessories. The project was choreographed by the hip hop dancers of Boy Blue Entertainment. The music for the performance was led by musicians from Future Band and Jethari (Detta Danford, Natasha Zielazinski and Jo Wills, also of World in Motion Drumming). Disruption was performed in the Barbican foyer on 29 January 2011, with production support from Guildhall Technical Theatre students. One of the outcomes of the project is to develop a cohort of young designers for the future – a Connect model for designers. The Barbican now aims to offer selected participants post-event opportunities for further mentoring and support through relevant young enterprise schemes.

4.20 Dialogue

Finally, the Shift Programme intends to build on the existing intergenerational musical and poetry project, Dialogue, in which professional musicians and poets work together with Guildhall students, primary and secondary school children, and older people from Gateway Housing in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and the University of the Third Age. The artistic processes are developed over a period of weeks and performed in a festival of activities in the Barbican Foyer and Pit theatre. As Sean Gregory points out, “through Shift, the Dialogue project will enable a more sustainable model of intergenerational learning to be established, drawing on artistic and leadership expertise within the wider partnership” (ibid., p.14).

Summary

This chapter has tried to capture the richness and breadth of creative collaborations that have been evolving over recent years. In no way is it exhaustive, but it demonstrates the creativity in planning, programming, directing, curating, producing, performing, teaching, learning and researching that lies at the heart of the work of the Barbican, the Guildhall School and the LSO. Moreover, it shows that the notion of creative collaborative learning has taken root and is blossoming since the formation of the Barbican-Guildhall Campus in 2009. In many ways this has legitimised the idea of collaboration across the arts and it is possible to see a future whereby projects are co-created, thus bringing coherence between creative learning and the artistic programme. This has enormous implications for the future life and work of the Campus.
5 Findings and emergent issues

5.1 Response to the frame of reference

The rich tapestry of collaborations, characterised partly by a strong commitment to creative learning, lies at the heart of much of the development taking place across the Barbican–Guildhall Campus. The main point of this chapter is to try to delve deep beneath the surface of what is entailed in ‘creative collaborative learning’ as perceived by the participants in this enquiry. The narrative draws heavily on the conversations that form the backbone of the research. Both the individual and collective voices demonstrate the potential of what can be learnt from engaging in collaborative work that necessarily brings together different perspectives, different historical roots and different world views. This can only constitute a rich seedbed for creative forms of learning, as well as raising issues that have to be addressed by both individuals and institutions.

Firstly, it is illuminating to examine the responses of some of the interviewees to the frame of reference underpinning the whole research and development project. To reiterate:

- In the context of the arts, creative collaborative learning involves processes in which artists are motivated to work together, drawing on their creative imagination, their different skills and perspectives to formulate new ideas, to explore new possibilities, to extend their ways of perceiving and thinking, their making and performing, in order to produce outcomes of originality and value in relation to the purpose and context of the activity.

Conversation with Julian Philips

Julian Philips is a composer whose commitment to collaboration is well illustrated in this enquiry through his work with Christian Burgess at the Guildhall School and with Katie Tearle at Glyndebourne. At the beginning of his interview Julian immediately raised the valid problem of trying to translate the ‘essence’ of a creative process into words. He felt the frame of reference was very full and comprehensive but that:

- It was trying to distil the elements of a process which is rich and multifaceted and feeds into intuition. Very often when you are working, you are not conscious of what you have written. Because if you are conscious you could kill it. What you want to be able to do is to work in a situation where you can work collaboratively and creatively in an instinctive way. Anything where you are trying to encapsulate in language a process which is about intuition is almost impossible to express in language.

Julian picks up on several of the key elements in the frame of reference, starting with the important point that if a collaborative project is to be successful, the participants must want to work together. He sees this as a very developmental process in which many composers are not interested because they function creatively much more within themselves. The business of being motivated to work together is about how much your creative imagination responds to the outside. So it is a prerequisite for creative collaboration that you are starting with artists who are motivated to work together. I would almost go so far to say that any supposedly collaborative process in which one element is not motivated to work together is doomed. In order to work in a collaborative context you have to have an incredible sense of collective motivation to build something.

Julian has a wide range of experience working in opera, dance, theatre and educational contexts. This has alerted him to the danger of losing his own voice as a composer when engaged in a creative collaboration. He stresses that the composer’s artistic identity, his own authentic voice, has to be heard within the collaborative – he is not merely a facilitator or enabler of others in the group.

Perhaps the thing that you might call your greatest strength as a creative practitioner is often also your greatest risk or danger. Because the thing about collaboration and especially about working together with other artists, which is the most treacherous, is when you start out in collaborative contexts you think your role is to listen to everybody else and engage with everyone else and respond. But the problem with that is you disappear – your own voice is eradicated because if all you do is respond, then collaboration can be destructive and dangerous. What I have learnt is you have to develop an ability to nurture your own creative identity and your own artistic needs in a collaborative context.

Within any collaborative process Julian observes that the artist has to maintain a balance between adopting a reflective and reflexive approach.

I think my journey has been to learn how to nurture my own voice within a collaborative context. It is not about control; it’s not about a wrong force of character. It is about being reflective and reflexive. So you have to be reflexive because you have to think about yourself – you have to keep going back to your own creative space – what you might make in it and then bring it out back into the process. But it is also reflective because you need to have an objectivity to think and observe the process.

As a composer working in a collaborative context, Julian sees his role partly as helping to shape the musical response to the material that is gradually unfolding through the collective creative process. In a sense he sees himself as “the voice of the musical material”. I asked him whether he felt people understand the subtlety of this process:

- It depends on the collaborative context. What I look for is a collaborative partner who doesn’t necessarily have any detailed musical knowledge, but they need to have an instinctive, intuitive, responsive response to music and an ability to imagine it when it doesn’t exist, so that you can talk about the potential of the project or an idea or where it’s going in the future, and know that you are talking to somebody who knows, who can understand your language. Problems always set in when you are working collaboratively with somebody who can’t do that. There should be a shared understanding of words like ‘emotional curve’, ‘sound world’, ‘structure’ or ‘shape’.

Julian understands that in any collaborative process a composer has to be prepared to let go and enter a conversation with others about the nature of the musical material. He sees this as a highly sophisticated process involving feedback and shared decision-making.

Some composers avoid collaboration because someone might challenge them and say ‘I’m not sure that works’. ‘That’s too long’. ‘Why is that there?’ ‘That doesn’t make sense’. ‘Julian, I know you say it’s XYZ, but I hear this as…’ ‘You have to be interested in give-and-take if you want to work in a collaborative context. You have to be able to articulate what you need or what your material needs to do, and you also have to be able to respond to critical engagement with what you are making […] Only in collaborative processes do you get the opportunity for your material to be explored by other sympathetic spirits who will engage and respond.'
For Julian a creative collaboration has the potential to be transformative in so far as it can extend the participants’ ways of perceiving and thinking. He feels that “out of a good collaborative process you should come out sort of different – that is about perceiving. You have to take something away from a collaborative process”.

Finally, Julian stressed the importance of music theatre in its response to context:

“Opera is all about context. In its best sense opera is a popular form and about a direct engagement with the audience. In a contemporary context there are so many different examples, positive models of how in the case of opera, one can make new work in a really wonderful responsive way to context. That might be the context of your performers, your audience, your subject matter – what are the issues, the concerns.

Drawing on his wide experience Julian’s reflections are not only perceptive but also extremely useful in unpacking some of the issues arising from collaborative practice. He helps to clarify what the process might look like from a composer’s perspective.

Conversation with Christian Burgess

Christian Burgess is totally committed to collaborative ways of working and when interviewed he had just completed the production of Badenheim 1939, in which the music was composed by Julian Philips. Like Julian, he finds it difficult to capture in words what is entailed in creative collaborative learning. Yet he acknowledges that:

“In an educational context it is important that we can express it in words. But of course, it is not the way it exists in my mind or my imagination or my practice. But these words [those in the frame of reference], in this order, seem to express it very well.

In our discussion Christian quickly picked up on the complexities of collaborative ways of working, recognising the demands arising from shared forms of leadership and responsibility. He pointed out that the whole chemistry shifts once a directing mode changes into one fostering a more collective sense of responsibility. He helps to clarify what the process might look like from a composer’s perspective.

It has taken me quite a long time to get to a point where I am confident to say to a group of young artists that ‘I don’t know’, ‘I can’t save you’, ‘I’m finding out with you how to do this’. Now, that’s not to say that I’m not actually quite happy to set the agenda – the artistic agenda – and I’ll veto things. But what I’m trying to foster is ‘shared taste’. I do believe that you can get to a point quite quickly when you can share the taste of some sort of vision. At that point all the participants will start to really make useful contributions. I think the initial responsibility for setting that agenda is mine.

Central to Christian’s way of working is engaging in a dialogue with colleagues and students in any production. This approach is challenging to all participants, including the director, and I questioned whether the students see the point of this different kind of choreographed journey.

I think they do. What I have had to learn is not to try and push at it too hard and not to be dismissive of other people’s perspectives or points of view. (This is difficult when you are on a mission.) When you are obsessed it is easy to assume that you have almost a religious right – the moral high ground. But I’ve got no more right than anyone else and have to respect the position of other teachers.

It seems that Christian is taking the students in a direction that resonates with where contemporary culture is at. The cultural landscape is in constant flux and I commented that his commitment to collaborative processes, his attitude towards sharing responsibility and his view of collective engagement are very much in tune with where things are moving at the moment. Christian responded:

“For me, it’s not just about wanting to work in a particular way. It’s about the gradual evolution for myself in my own life – I find it’s a way I can explore the human condition, [especially] because words and music are so similar in their aspiration to express something of the human condition. I’m very interested in what it is that we in a company can find as a way to move forward. What are those conditions?

I think it is something about innocence, energy, spirit, not being satisfied with predetermined outcomes, not knowing what might come out of it, not knowing what we are going to learn – uncertainty yet with inner strength.

This very honest response gives some insight into the stage Christian is at within his own journey at the moment. I then asked whether he feels he has to keep a gap between his journey and that of the students, presuming it doesn’t become too wide.

I don’t feel it is wide at all – I really don’t. I’m trying to help them to learn how to manage their fear and I am also managing my own. Many days end for me in an absolute cloud of gloom because I think this is the time we get found out.

The non-judgemental, reciprocal relationship based on trust and mutual respect that underlies Christian’s approach to collaborative work illustrates how such processes provide an opportunity for all participants to share the kind of fear and vulnerability he is talking about. Christian made the important observation that one needs a lot of inner confidence in order to share one’s vulnerability.

I can only go into that area of vulnerability as I am actually very confident through the accumulation of experience. And I always say to them [the students], ‘I don’t know any more than you. I have perhaps more experience. That’s all’.

This breadth and depth of experience, of course, has opened doors and helped to shape Christian’s attitudes and perceptions. They are fundamental to who he is and to the quality of engagement that he is aiming to foster in the students. I suggested that they actually ‘catch’ this from him rather than being taught it – that he is living an embodied philosophy which is picked up by the students. Christian commented:

‘Well maybe! When I say that I set the agenda, that’s what I mean – the importance of trying to liberate someone bound by fear. [P.R.: You understand from the inside what this is.] Yes, I have had many years of experience of being scared of walking on the stage [. . .] I have found that I am much more fullfilled by this work than by acting. As an actor I enjoyed the process but never the performance. But that is the wrong way round. All I wanted to do was be in a rehearsal room and as soon as we started the performance it wasn’t exciting for me. Where as a director all my energy goes into the process and then I hand it over and that is very gratifying.\n
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Findings and emergent issues

Helena raised questions arising from artists collaborating within their own discipline and those working across disciplines. For example, she asked “how far do we experience creative collaborative learning when artists are all more of a kind?” (e.g. the violin section of an orchestra). She has no doubts that it could happen with a good section leader coaching in a more creative, collaborative way, but maybe “it is easier for creative collaborative learning to take place when there are stronger differences between people and their different perspectives”. It is difficult for artists to engage with the flow of creative energy if they are trapped within their own silo.

It can become set in its own frame of reference, its own rules. One of the key things in a creative collaborative process is that everyone is extended beyond their comfort zones or beyond their existing frames of reference. This is really important and challenging because it means getting involved with something that is unknown and unfamiliar.

Conversation with Sean Gregory

For Sean Gregory this research and development project is important because it is interrogating the paradigm of ‘creative collaborative learning’. He thinks the frame of reference captures the main elements of the process but that each needs to be examined in some detail (e.g. the term ‘creative collaboration’ can be overused and used too loosely).

Firstly, Sean makes the point that the desire to work together must be there if any creative collaboration is to be successful.

The motivation of the artists working together needs to be clear and felt. There needs to be a communal sense of purpose. The artists might be coming at it from a different point of view. They may not agree but that can provide a healthy dynamic in the collaborative relationship. The motivation needs to be there in the first place and it needs to be felt from within and come from those people involved.

Sean recognises only too well that in the world we are in, sometimes the initial catalyst for a collaboration can be financial.

People might get paid a lot to work together for marketing reasons, but he makes the apt comment that “if this happens it can lose the meaning behind it”.

From his wide experience Sean knows that at its best, collaboration can generate creative imagination – a creative dynamic leading to new ideas, new skills and new perspectives.

One would hope that from the creative collaborative process it’s going to spark new ideas for individuals. Your creative imagination is taken to a new level and a new direction to which you wouldn’t necessarily go if you were going through a process on your own or in a more established collaboration that you are used to working in. It takes you out of the box, out of your comfort zone into a new area. That stimulates your imagination and it allows you to use your skills in different ways. It allows you to redeploy your skills and to connect them to the context you are in, to the energy you have going with the other people, and to realise the ideas that come through your imagination. It can help you to discover new skills or skills that have lain dormant for a while that come back to the surface – but without leading you to do things that you are not trained to do. This leads to doing things badly. But at best it enables you to recontextualise your skills. This obviously impacts on your perspective at every level – your own individual perspective to why you do what you do, why you are involved with this particular collaboration, how this collaboration can inform your own practice, your own work as a practitioner, a creator, a performer, your own perspective on life, your perspective on people. The human aspect of collaboration is extremely important.
The complexity and subtlety of a creative collaborative process is acknowledged by Sean. Partly because of this he stresses the importance of giving participants space and time to pause and reflect on what is happening during the interaction within the creative process.

Whether it is explicit or implicit, a lot of these things [see above] are going on and often all at the same time. They may not necessarily reveal themselves at the same time, but on reflection – that is why the reflective aspects are so important, especially reflection-in-action rather than just reflecting at the end. You are capturing these things or you are giving yourself and the individuals in the group time to acknowledge things that have happened on the way, to think back. The reflecting back is critical, and then how that reflection informs what you do next. That leads to the formulation of new ideas.

The rich dynamic of the creative process and the energy that flows from a successful collaboration provide the seedbed for generating new ideas and exploring new possibilities. Sean describes what this might look like from the perspective of a creative artist.

Some new ideas come in the moment – you are improvising, you are playing, you are bouncing off each other, you come up with an idea, someone else comes up with an idea, or you might find an idea by chance. That can happen and obviously it is about capturing these ideas in the moment. But other ideas take longer to surface – that comes back to the moment where you pause and think about them and identify them.

Exploring possibilities is also a critical part of the process [although] I think ‘new’ can be an overused word. What’s new is only new in this context is that there are possibilities that would not manifest themselves if you were doing them in your more usual way, either as an individual or in a group. Or there might be possibilities that you have imagined – what if we could do this or explore that, but there never seems to be time for it because you’re up against a deadline or a particular rehearsal trajectory which doesn’t allow you to explore those possibilities.

Sean makes clear that for a collaborative process to work it is necessary to have an enabling framework that provides opportunities for creative ideas to flourish and for creative learning to take place.

What you should be doing through a creative collaborative learning experience is to have a framework that enables these things to happen. This is why the process is so important. It extends one’s ways of perceiving and thinking – one’s perception of oneself, of the people you are connecting and collaborating with. It can extend your perceptions of audience – who is this for, the people you reach, be they passive audience members, or people who are participating through workshop activities.

By doing that you are extending your way of thinking – you are taking your thought processes further than you normally would or are given time and space for. This informs what you do, it informs the process you are involved in there and the longer term it could inform your art and your cross-arts activity. It contributes to your making process, your creative process, your rehearsal process, your ordering and organising process – the process of making sense of what is happening, making sense of where you set things, fix things so that they become literally scripted and notated, and where they are left open – play, improvisation and experimentation are a really important part of the process.

But there are points, particularly where one is working towards an outcome, be it a performance or something you want to present to another group who you want to draw in, where you need to capture those moments that become more set or those that remain open for further improvisation or allowing that moment of danger where anything can happen. Or equally important, leaving those spaces for other people to come into the process later on, so that they can develop a connection and a sense of ownership. The performance is a further manifestation of what I have just described. You are thinking more about the communication of your process and how that outcome will resonate with the people at the receiving end of the performance.

Sean finally comments on the meaning of ‘originality’ in relation to the outcomes arising from the creative process:

In terms of the actual outcomes and their originality, I think ‘originality’ is an interesting word that is just coming back into our language […] In terms of this framework originality has to come out of creative collaborative processes. The nature of the originality can be informed by the context you are in and by the mode of delivery as much as by the idea itself. Not so much is ‘new’ now – it is more about the development of ideas. The core of the idea might easily have been done before but through the creative process one is shifting the paradigm.

Language and reflection

The previous section gives some insight into what creative collaborative learning means to four of the artists interviewed. For them there was a resonance between the frame of reference and their experience of engaging in creative collaborative processes. Each person, in their different ways, placed reflection at the centre of their creative engagement. In contrast, some of the people interviewed raised questions about the nature of the language being used. They felt that the term ‘creative collaborative learning’ is too technical, whilst the emphasis on ‘reflection’ runs the risk of alienating many practitioners. These are serious observations that have implications for how one might describe, analyse, monitor and evaluate artistic practice, collaborative processes, creative learning and research and development. It is important to use a form of language which makes sense to people – especially to practitioners.

What arises from the research is that the attitude towards language and reflection is finely nuanced across the Campus. For Barry Ife fostering a climate of reflective practice is central to the developing culture of the Guildhall School. Both students and staff are actively encouraged to stand back and reflect on the nature, substance and quality of their learning and performances. Jonathan Vaughan, Director of Music at the Guildhall School, sees one of his main tasks as challenging students to reflect and reconsider what they are trying to achieve in a musical performance. His aim is for them to:

To develop the ability to see beyond the notes and the technical restrictions – to reach a level of expression, communication and possibility of understanding beyond the levels of normal conventions and have the ability to articulate that in a genuinely interesting and different way that makes us reconsider the piece.

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He is constantly challenging the students to reflect on the fact that they are not a ‘note-factory’ – getting ‘the right notes, in the right order, as fast as possible’!

Culturally we have to find new ways of getting their creative juices going … Fantastical performances engage an audience – one is lifted to another plane of listening and emotional response through the quality of engagement, spirit, authenticity, through a genuine attempt to bring a new perspective and a way of seeing old ideas in a new way.

Interestingly Louise Jeffreys, who has had the vision and imagination to create and develop the cutting edge programme for over many years, feels that reflection ‘is not something that professional arts practitioners have much time to do: it is just not a part of my practice’. She commented that when conducting staff appraisals in the Barbican, ‘all say they have no time to think’. It is difficult to accept that with her creative track record and depth of engagement Louise Jeffreys does not reflect on her artistic programming. Unlike academics, whose job it is to ask questions, to reflect, analyse, explain and interpret data, she has a strong reflective stance but does not spend much time talking about it. This is probably true of many artists practitioners.

Reflection lies at the heart of learning processes such as monitoring, evaluation, mentoring, teaching and action research, but it is also central to processes connected to formulating the bigger picture within organisations – for example, long-term mission, vision, priorities and future strategy. Inevitably, the process of critical reflection comes with its own language, which in some instances can seem threatening and alienating to those people whose normal mode of language is more descriptive and less analytical. Many musicians, for example, see themselves as pragmatic people who can feel alienated by too much reflection focusing on ‘why’ questions. Their identity, their self-esteem and sense of self-worth are rooted in practical music-making, not on reflection that might raise unsettling personal and professional issues.

The question of language was a particular issue for Kathryn McDowell who commented in her interview on the response of some of the LSO players to the current research initiated by the Centre for Orchestra on professional orchestral musicians (see chapter 4). As this seems to be a very fruitful collaboration, I questioned Kathryn McDowell (KM) about the language that might be used when describing this important initiative.

Kathryn McDowell then instanced the creative work that the saxophonist and composer, Jason Yarde, has been doing with the LSO (see chapter 4). As a result of my experience I have always been quite clear that the musicians start from a more technical place operational base. I think they actually meet at the pinnacle of the mountain but they start from rather different places in the sense that one is more focused on the participant – about meeting that person, whoever they are, in a way that takes their music-

According to Kathryn McDowell, some of the LSO players found the language used in the research ‘difficult and foreign […] they were baffled by it and quite alienated by it’.

Musicians even at world class level are practical people. Their ambition is to play their instrument to the highest standard and to be able to respond to the demands of any piece of music and to be flexible. They live in the studio as much as in the concert hall and they can respond to a very wide range of contemporary requests. They are not stuck in Beethoven and Mahler, and when they are working with young people, many of them are happy to work in a creative way, composing and inventing new music or to be working alongside a group of film makers or new media. But they would find some of this language around ‘collaborative learning’ a little bit from another place.

It is clear that the language of reflective practice should not become a barrier for the participants in a research project. The comprehensibility of language certainly raises the challenge of how to move from a more conceptual, reflective style of language to the language of ‘everyday life’, which might be seen as less nuanced and lacking subtlety of meaning. Kathryn McDowell adds acknowledge the challenge of using a language that ensures clarity within a pragmatic context that is complex and multi-layered.

The LSO musicians think in terms of musical exchange, rather than creative collaborative learning. They view ‘education’ in quite a formal sense, where learning needs to take place and has measurable outcomes. They want to feel that their work is valued in those terms. If they are working in a broader community context they are more comfortable with the idea that they need to be working in an improving forum, that they need to be sharing in just the same way as they would in an educational context, but the sharing might be across music genres, it may be across some of the less formal areas of music-making … They see it very much as a voyage of discovery for the people they are working with and for themselves. It takes them into another world that does not have the rigidity of the symphonic platform and it actually has huge benefits for them in this respect.

This illustrates the versatility required by the modern orchestral player. On the one hand, working on the concert platform has its own form of life that uses a more practical kind of language with which to articulate what the players are doing. But when they move into the more developmental learning context of LSO Discovery, they may encounter a different form of language – one that is more analytical and reflective.

Kathryn McDowell makes an interesting comparison between the worlds of theatre and music, showing how different approaches influence the ways in which they use language.

From my experience of twenty years ago working in music theatre, I always found the language of the thespians was a much more colourful and conceptual language from that of the muses. But they weren’t necessarily mutually exclusive. It is just that one begins everything from a conceptual base and the other starts from a very technical and operational base. I think they actually meet at the pinnacle of the mountain but they start from rather different places … As a result of my experience I have always been quite clear that the musicians start from a more technical base but our work has evolved in quite a conceptual and creative way into a more conceptual, compositional and creative place.

In our conversation Kathryn McDowell explored further the nature of the language used to describe the work of LSO Discovery.

Looking back at where we are, I would say that the focus of LSO Discovery is very much on music education and community exchange as opposed to being an exploration of collaborative practice. Because we would see our work very much in terms of the people we are engaging within the wider community of all ages – from tiny tots to the elderly. The nature of their activities varies widely and involves a lot of compositional, creative, fluid work. It is by no means concentrating on Beethoven and violin technique. I wouldn’t want it to be seen in too rigid a format. It is very much focused on the participant – about meeting that person, whatever they are, in a way that takes their music-making to a different kind of level.

Kathryn McDowell then instanced the creative work that the saxophonist and composer, Jason Yarde, has been doing with the LSO (see chapter 4). As this seems to be a very fruitful collaboration, I questioned Kathryn McDowell (KM) about the language that might be used when describing this important initiative.
Working Together

As an example, Elie Gussman discusses the players’ commitment to creative work in LSO Discovery.

Further points about language and reflection were made by Elie Gussman, Head of LSO Discovery, in her interview. She is well aware that this type of language can put off the musicians in the LSO, many of whom may feel uncomfortable just been doing or are about to do, and often state what they have done rather than explain why they were interested in it. I think it is an interesting point because this language expects an element of explicit reflection which is not the only way that this type of learning is communicated. As an example, Elie Gussman discusses the players’ commitment to creative work in LSO Discovery.

I think many musicians in the orchestra relish the opportunity to be creative, to be thinking about how they work with other people. I know the musicians who regularly take part in LSO Discovery work really enjoy the feeling they get when they are doing that. But I don’t know whether they would describe it as drawing on their creative imagination, because perhaps this actually touches a bit of a nerve for them. One of the elements many of the musicians say that they love about doing education and community work is the fact that they are being taken as individuals with their own creativity and that’s what we are really building on.

Finding emergent issues

Exploring this apparent gap between the use of a reflective mode of language and that of everyday life, I asked “why do you think there is an internal resistance to using a language which enables them to reflect on why they are doing what they’re doing? It’s a shift from descriptive narrative, and pragmatic action and doing to reflecting on the ‘doing’ in a slightly different language register. Why do you think that is?”

I think it is something about ‘letting go’ and for the players and for many of us, to feel comfortable to begin talking about this in a language that allows us to reflect fully on what we have been doing. I think it fits uncomfortably with the world musicians are used to, where it is very high pressure and in a way you can’t let your guard down. I wonder whether people feel that in order to take one step into this way of thinking, they might then somehow expose themselves or make themselves slightly vulnerable. I think they are probably not sure where that might take them and therefore they don’t really want to go there.

I personally think that it would be wonderful to be able to set up a supportive environment for people to begin to do that. I know that for this to work, the people involved would need to feel from the very beginning that there is a purpose for doing this, with support all the way through and that there is an outcome. I think this is really important for the orchestral world and ultimately it does feed back into the work we are all doing. But it seems to come with the territory of being in an orchestra at this level. Techniques and coping mechanisms have been developed over many years. It’s always been focused on consistently achieving extremely high levels of excellence in performance. For us to stop and start unpicking that can be frightening.

These feelings of vulnerability were raised by Christian Burgess earlier in section 5.1. Once anyone becomes engaged in a collaborative process involving creativity, innovation, breaking new ground and taking risks, questions connected to shared vulnerability are likely to be raised. These elements are inevitable in the work of any creative practitioners but maybe they do not fit comfortably into the mindset of an orchestral player. Orchestral life, with its high standards and expectations, is extremely pressurised, and it would seem that many players are cautious about entering a journey of reflection. Perhaps the feeling of alienation, supposedly arising from the use of a more reflective type of language, has comparatively little to do with the language itself. Maybe people are hiding behind the veneer of language because of their fear of unlocking deeper emotional feelings connected to their identity. Moving into unknown territory can easily feel threatening.

In her response to this observation, Elie Gussman commented: “It’s interesting because in my job working with orchestral musicians I am often thinking ‘what is it that lies behind what they are saying?’ I try to put myself in their position and think, ‘OK, they’ve said they don’t really want to do this particular workshop, or have this particular conversation – but why have they said that? Is there another way I can approach this or is there something that is holding them back from this?’ I sense that the musicians I work with are often keen to say something on one level but then back away and respond, ‘Oh well, I don’t really like the way this is being put’. But actually it is much deeper than that.

None of this is really surprising. Many busy, high achieving people would respond this way as they strive to be efficient and deliver a high quality product. Pausing and reflecting do not come naturally in any frenetic business environment, including that of an orchestra.
Perspectives on working together

Vision and motivation

From the pairs of artists interviewed it was clear that their vision and motivation are closely linked to collaborating with practitioners who share similar values and principles.

For example, Kate Bond and Morgan Lloyd created You Me Bum Bum Train (YMBBT) out of a pragmatic idealism – a desire to do something that feels really worthwhile. In their testimony Kate and Morgan explain it this way:

The You Me Bum Bum Train concept was born out of trying to find meaning and fulfilment in life. We felt frustrated in our work and saw a creative outlet that truly inspired us, and were in desperate search for something that would. Having felt frustrated with the banality of life, we wanted to find something that felt magical, that would inspire people to interact more freely. The idea arose to create other realities where anything was possible. (7.2 A; for details of the concept of YMBBT see Profile 7.1 A.)

The focus of YMBBT is on the ‘audience’ – that is on the ‘passengers’ who have committed themselves to being engaged in a creative experience that is inspirational and likely to transform their ways of looking at themselves and the world. As human beings, our experiences are limited due to the constraints we experience as an individual. We all want to live life to the full but how do you begin to achieve this when there’s an infinite amount of options available? Which route is the right route? As YMBBT is essentially a series of unrelated moments without there being a before or after, passengers have no choice but to engage with the reality that’s thrust in front of them. The YMBBT experience allows people to transcend themselves and experience other worlds from other perspectives. As we are each moulded by our perception of ourselves and how we imagine others to perceive us, by creating a reality where ‘you’ are no longer you, as a passenger, you are not only gaining new experiences but you are liberated to experience yourself in a new way. Success and failure are not an option. For this one period in time you are no longer your ‘self’. By putting a person in the moment there are no longer your ‘self’. By giving people the opportunity to experience life in a different way, they are freed from their limitations and are able to explore new possibilities.

One of the distinguishing features of the YMBBT experience is that its success depends on building up a ‘creative community’ that connects actors, set builders, prop-sourcers and passengers. Its overriding principle is that of equality and inclusiveness. As Kate and Morgan point out:

The merging of people and the shared excitement brings the sense of belonging and community. It’s like a pocket-sized model of an ideal society that focuses purely on inspiring the imagination, without the drudge of everyday life. The fact that our shows are temporary, works to its advantage with its community of volunteers. The show manages to retain their enthusiasm and interest as it is only for a limited amount of time and it is over before it becomes an uninteresting everyday job. (7.2 A)

Another important dimension to this collaboration lies in the role taken by the Barbican. Why should this major international arts centre take such a lively interest in the challenging vision offered by YMBBT? In the joint interview with Kate Bond and Morgan Lloyd, Jill Shelley (Executive Producer, Creative Learning, for the Barbican and Guildhall School), who produced the YMBBT event in 2010, explained why the Barbican wished to be involved.

This show was the winner of the Beckett Prize last year, which is a prize run by the Samuel Beckett Theatre Trust, in which the Barbican is a partner [...] This was the first year that it was a site-specific prize. The values of the Beckett Prize are quite similar to the values of BITE in which we’re looking for innovative practice and theatre that really pushes boundaries between art forms and that challenges audiences as well. And this, I would say, was far and away the winner (because) it was just so innovative. We were quite cautious about it because obviously it had been successful in an underground way, and as soon as you put it in the Barbican brochure and sell it through the Barbican website, it becomes something slightly different and very open to criticism – especially with the use of so many volunteers.

What is clear is that the Barbican was prepared to take the risk of supporting and promoting You Me Bum Bum Train. In the interview Jill Shelley was asked to identify the values that underpinned the synergy, the resonance between YMBBT and the Barbican.

I think it’s mainly this idea of coming to something as part of the BITE programme, and as an audience member you expect to be surprised and challenged by it [...] There’s also an enormous hunger from our audience just to be pushed and to not quite know what to expect. We have a huge audience for that, so I think that sort of value, really challenging the audiences, is one key thing. And I think the other thing is about ‘playing around’ with art forms and what they actually mean, because we do a lot of work that’s sort of theatre, sort of music, sort of dance, sort of all three [...] We like work that isn’t just standard theatre.

For Jill herself she saw her role as producer in a creative and collaborative way. She felt she understood what Kate and Morgan wanted to achieve and she was really inspired by the project. In her testimony Jill observed that:

My role was to work closely with Kate and Morgan on the planning stages. I’m very aware that the Barbican can be a daunting organisation to work with, especially for artists not used to large venues. Kate and Morgan don’t come from a traditional theatre background, so a lot of terminology (particularly around job titles) was unfamiliar to them.

I feel that one of the key aspects of being a producer is to really understand artistically what the artists are producing, and to be as open and facilitative as possible. When Kate and Morgan told me their ideas I would never have thought of asking them if there were obvious challenges re licenses, managing audience expectations (without giving anything away), I tried to approach the process as collaboratively as possible to retain the artistic vision they were looking to achieve.
Findings and emergent issues

Not surprisingly, people are drawn to collaboration for many different reasons. The roots of Dinah Stabb’s and Armin Zanner’s shared commitment go back to their participation in the international Polifonia Innovative Conservatoire Seminars held between April 2009 and April 2010 (Association of European Conservatoires, 2010, p.86). These focused on the professional development of conservatoire teachers and Dinah Stabb, actor and theatre director at the Guildhall School, led a workshop on ‘Presence in Performance’. Her holistic approach, which made connections between mind and body in both performing and teaching, was seen by many participants as compelling and refreshing. So much so that Armin Zanner (Deputy Head of Vocal Studies at the Guildhall School) invited Dinah to share the teaching in his weekly Year 1 German Recitative class.

This approach to co-teaching and co-learning resulted in a number of practical changes, including:

- a shift away from a conventional ‘masterclass’ format
- consistent active involvement of whole group
- emphasis on shared learning through ‘doing’ rather than observing
- new teacher–learner dynamic with two tutors

The results for the students’ work in German Recitative have been immediate, bringing a stronger sense of embodying – and therefore communicating – the text. But more broadly the project has offered the students a direct experience of how they can and should integrate different strands of their course (for example drama, movement, German language and German repertoire). (Association of European Conservatoires, 2010, p.93; also see Appendix 7.1C)

This was a significant moment in Armin’s approach to teaching as he could now see the transformative potential of collaboration and the active involvement of a whole group in collective forms of learning. In their joint interview Armin felt that Dinah’s approach:

- is just the opposite of what we tend to do in music education. We have our one-to-one lessons and we have our group lessons, which tend to be one person up at the front with the teacher being observed. And Dinah’s take on observation is, it seems to me, active observation. Everybody has some kind of role, whatever the focus is.

Dinah’s commitment to collaborative forms of learning is rooted in the notion of ‘ensemble’ which lies at the heart of drama training.

It’s the idea that everybody learns everything together. You might be learning it in a different way from each other, but everybody is part of the learning process. Armin asked me to share the classroom with him and I just began treating the singers as first year drama students, only what we were doing was German recit. I encouraged the idea of a shared situation where everybody was very active. There was no sense of judgement. Fear of failure was banished from the room. We talked about that a lot. So it’s about making a safe place, where everybody can move forward, explore and challenge each other eventually – making a safe, shared place where everyone, including Armin and I were learning.

For Armin, working together with Dinah gave him a totally different perspective on the possibilities of ensemble training. He began to articulate the differences between the ways in which actors and singers are taught.

My personal perspective is that artists should feel as free as possible to develop ideas. What is lovely about Kate and Morgan is that they are very open to understanding the boundaries that we needed to put around the show, and they were happy to work with me to find the most creative ways to do that. (7.2 B)

It is interesting that the motivation of Kate Bond and Morgan Lloyd to work together grew out of their developing working relationship at university. Similarly, the collaboration between Detta Danford and Natasha Zielazinski originated on the MMus Leadership course at the Guildhall School. They have built up a symbiotic relationship characterised by shared values and a vision premised on a commitment to people and to collective forms of music-making. Their successful partnership, as evidenced in their ensemble, Future Band, is grounded in a mutual respect and trust that enables them to take risks, to give each other space and emotional support, to engage in respectful musical conversation, to listen actively to each other, to anticipate each other’s working ideas and thoughts, and to make joint decisions – all necessary conditions for a collaboration to work.

When asked to reflect on those elements that are central to their emerging philosophy of collaboration, Detta and Natasha highlighted the following features:

- A mutual understanding of what collaboration involves
- A dedication and commitment to shared priorities; ‘working towards the same goal’
- An ease of friendship and communication
- An openness to and excitement about working with others
- A willingness to push and stretch ourselves as individuals, within our own relationship and collaboration, and within the context of a wider community. (7.2 C)

In their testimony Detta and Natasha further elaborated on what they considered as vital components of any successful collaboration:

- Coming together and sharing – the coming together of people, the sharing of ideas
- The creation of something new, that is a combination of all those ideas, involving some kind of exchange, interchange and conversation along the way
- The finding of meeting points or links, based on sharing and a mutual understanding
- Working from this common ground, a sense of stretching, pushing and extending of processes, ideas and spaces which encourages growth and expansion in a new direction
- Being comfortable without knowing, cherishing a sense of exploration
- Openness and working very much in the moment and in a way that is defined by the context of a particular collaboration
- A sense of letting go of any individual agenda, aim or expectation in order to find an understanding of what these might be as a group
- A buzz or feeling that results from having found a ‘new space’ together. (7.2 C)

Arthur Zanner (Deputy Head of Vocal Studies at the Guildhall School) invited Dinah to share the teaching in his weekly Year 1 German Recitative class.

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For Armin, working together with Dinah gave him a totally different perspective on the possibilities of ensemble training. He began to articulate the differences between the ways in which actors and singers are taught.
Everything that happens in the space is a product of a shared energy. Anyone who isn’t moving towards that, or focusing towards that, is pulling away from it, therefore making it less. So that if somebody is sitting out and observing, they’re not part of it. If somebody is only thinking about what they’re going to do, something less happens, both in performance, in rehearsal, in attitude. So you can listen and stop someone learning because you’re not listening properly. So everything is about the other person, the other people. You have time to reflect and work on yourself and your own craft, outside the room, but when you’re in the room it’s about focusing your energy with the other people, on them, on the text, on what you can make together, which would be more than you can ever dream of by yourself.

Making a new opera in itself involves collaborating with lots of people – a writer, a director, a conductor, singers, etcetera and that is ensemble work. But I think, where my eyes have been opened by working with Dinah and seeing how the Drama department works, is this creation of an ensemble – of trying to create a group of people who are going through their training very much together […] [The singers] might go into ensembles and have ensemble style rehearsals, but they don’t necessarily see themselves as a class that is a unity working together, and that I think is probably because of the way that the majority of lessons are taught.

In their joint interview Dinah went on to crystallise what is entailed in the notion of ensemble from her perspective.

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The collaboration between Katie Tarle and Julian Philips was again very different, especially as it grew out of Julian being appointed Composer in Residence at Glyndebourne in 2006. The residency, which was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, also became a laboratory for Julian doing a collaborative doctorate at the University of Sussex. It became a seedbed for experimentation, innovation and different forms of collaboration.
Findings and emergent issues

I think that by putting the German recit into a human context makes sure that the focus stays on communication as the goal of the work. When we demand that they know who they are speaking to, what is the situation, emotional and geographical, we are continually putting the singer centre stage, not their expertise either in language or sung notes but as a whole human being with something to convey. If all the essential detailed work comes from this premise, a whole performer can continue to develop.

This perspective on the work surprised me, but made me feel very validated. (7.2 D)

In a subsequent conversation their reflections on the nature of co-learning raised some fundamental questions about the process of learning and teaching. Armin began with this challenge:

In our co-teaching and co-learning work with students we are aiming, I suppose, for them to let go and ultimately to find voices of their own. Yet that – as I discovered myself – is such an individual thing: it can take a very long time to happen, and everyone we work with will be at a different point on the trajectory towards finding that voice. Is there not a danger in co-learning situations that we eliminate that individuality and inadvertently hold some people back at the same time as others are helped forward?

Dinah’s response is not only illuminating but it helps to characterise some of the most important elements that need to be fostered in a learning environment.

You asked was there a danger in a co-learning situation that individuality might be compromised and because everyone develops at different rates some singers might be held back.

I think there are two questions there. Namely, does the ensemble dilute the imaginative development of the individual? And does unevenness of ability and progress in the group hamper the more able?

I am sure that the answer to the first question is no. There is a journey of discovery to be made with your fellow singers, actors or musicians which feeds and sustains you in your development as a creative being. It also feeds the individual work done with a one-to-one teacher. It connects the student to the life of their fellow learners and establishes from the start a community of music makers. To isolate a musician during the learning process seems to me to limit empathy, awareness, respect for the other and the ability to communicate, all essential skills to the development of an imaginative and whole performer. It is also a shared experience and hopefully fun. It is a personal growth set in the context of a group.

As to some being held back, that is a more difficult question to be sure about. In the Drama department the difference in experience not talent is very noticeable in the first year. It has as much to do with age as anything else. As to some being held back, that is a more difficult question to be sure about. In the Drama department the difference in experience not talent is very noticeable in the first year. It has as much to do with age as anything else.

However, what is learnt and how the individuals respond and influence each other depends on the development of a newly learnt sound, a ‘voice’ that is crafted and produced, it is essential to stay connected to the inner voice so that it can grow alongside and stay at the centre of the new self. That is what I meant by a bridge between themselves and their developing voices.

Music-making is a collaborative endeavour. A known and trusted ensemble should be an ideal crucible for that development. A sharing of work, and in the struggle to improve, students are able to reflect on their own work and gain perspective on their development.
Individual lessons, coaching, small group lessons and private practice should be valued and given appropriate time and the fruits brought back and shared in this ensemble of learning. If successfully guided, I can’t see how it would hold a talented student back, only validate and reward their efforts.

Although Glyndebourne is very different from the three previous contexts discussed, both Kate Tearle and Julian Philips found his residency a catalyst for deepening existing knowledge and for exploring critical questions. As mentioned earlier, Kate had a practical, supportive and mentoring role during the residency, but she also enjoyed the opportunity to stimulate reflection. In her joint interview she commented that:

I found the conversations that Julian and I had, around all the topics that Julian has outlined, did have a learning dimension for me as well. I suppose what was good was that it wasn’t learning from a standing start. It was learning from experience, and thinking, yes, well we’ve been here before. How might we tackle this? Quite a lot of the issues that Julian talked about were quite difficult at times, so I think we had to trust each other enormously in order to be able to have those conversations where we could find solutions. I mean, Julian was probably my main concern […]

So in everything he was most important – I was always concerned for the way that he worked, how he worked, who he worked with, all those things.

From the interview it was clear that the synergy between Katie and Julian made the residency very productive and it opened up many new avenues, including the obvious benefits of having time for reflection.

When Julian started, I realised that actually I wanted a bit of the time he was having to reflect myself, and started thinking about maybe having some time off to do some further study. Unfortunately it didn’t work personally to be able to have that time, but I have managed one day a week at the University of Sussex this last term [spring 2011], as a Visiting Research Fellow to do some investigation and reflection on New Opera and Participation, and have found that a fantastically rewarding experience. I would like to be able to manage something similar, possibly every two years as an important battery recharge.

Collaboration and creative imagination

It is hardly surprising that the conversations with the pairs of artists demonstrated that creative imagination is nourished and ignited by a successful collaboration. The synergy, the combined energy of two people working in sync, has the potential for generating new ideas and opening up new creative possibilities. For example, Kate Bond and Morgan Lloyd claim that YMBBT would never have developed in the way it has without the shared vision and imagination of both of them working closely together. Collaboration at many different levels is integral to the concept. Kate says that people feel claim that YMBBT would never have developed in the way it has without the shared vision and imagination of both of them working closely together. Collaboration at many different levels is integral to the concept. Kate says that people feel...
Findings and emergent issues

Throughout the interview what stood out was the shared values and shared perspective that underpinned the residency. Their collaboration worked not just at a musical and practical level, but also at a human and psychological level. Julian and Katie's work not only rests on an integrity, depth of commitment and quality of engagement, but also on their strong sense of caring and empathy for the people they work with. This can only contribute to the success of their collaboration.

Collaboration and shared vulnerability

In section 2.4, drawing on the insights of Vera John-Steiner (2006, p.124), it was stressed that for any collaboration to be effective it is essential for the partners to build up an ‘emotional connectedness’ that is characterised by a sense of shared motivation, shared purpose, solidarity based on shared values and reassurance knowing that feelings of fear, vulnerability, self-doubt and marginality can also be shared.

This feeling of shared vulnerability certainly arose in all the joint interviews. Kate Bond and Morgan Lloyd were asked how far the environment they have created in YMBBT enables them to share their vulnerability with each other and with others in the group. Their response was unequivocal in relation to themselves but not to other members of the group.

(K.B.) I'd say with each other, but maybe not so much with the others.
(M.L.) Definitely yes, between each other at all times. I personally feel less vulnerable when it's bill time and it's show time. That's when you've got a job to do, and that's when the ambitious element of the project, all that excitement takes over, and you just get cracking. But I guess it's just times when we're trying to make stuff happen, and things go quiet and we're struggling, that's probably the hardest time, when we feel vulnerable.

What stands out with Kate and Morgan is that they have the confidence and trust in each other to share their vulnerability. Kate adds that:

Sometimes I get really sensitive and a bit raw, with overtiredness and stress. And Morgan is the backbone I'll go to. You’re the first person I’ll confide in because you’re most likely to be empathetic with what I’m going through, whereas there is a divide between us and anyone else that comes on board because they’ve got a completely different perspective on what’s going on.

Nevertheless, they both carry this empathy, mutual respect and care for others into the whole network of relationships within the YMBBT project. They take their responsibility, their sensitivity towards others very seriously. This was also apparent in their relationship with Jill Shelley (Executive Producer), who was responsible for making the event happen from the Barbican’s point of view. The cutting-edge nature of YMBBT certainly made Jill feel vulnerable because she knew it was a risk.

Although [YMBBT] is something, particularly in BITE, that we want to do, it still does feel risky. You’re not quite sure how it’s all going to work out. When we were talking about some ideas that came up, I was having moments of waking up at three o’clock in the morning thinking about people coming off this ride into the bar, and onto a bouncy castle, heads smashed open. Oh, my God, I need to talk to them tomorrow. You do feel vulnerable because I was very aware that I was pushed in the Barbican very hard to take as much restriction away from you because I knew how much we were putting around you. So I was trying desperately hard not to remove anything that didn’t have to be there. But had it gone wrong...
In such challenging circumstances it is important for the producer to be able to share the responsibility with someone who understands the dynamics of the particular context. In this case Jill could go to Louise Jeffrey, who at that time was Head of Theatre in the Barbican.

I would say that I shared it with Louise who like me, loved the concept [of YMBBT], loved the research and development, and was absolutely behind the show. It would have been more difficult if I hadn’t had her there. It would have felt a bit like I was fighting on my own.

There is no doubt that Jill felt a sense of personal responsibility for the project, especially in relation to health and safety. She commented that "it’s the health and safety bit. Had there been injuries or something, I would have felt a personal responsibility for that because I felt that was my role, making sure it was safe". But it is reassuring that within the structure of the Barbican she could share her concerns with the then Head of Theatre. Teamwork and collective responsibility are essential in such circumstances.

In a similar way to YMBBT, Detta Danford and Natasha Zielazinski over several years of working together have established a sense of mutual understanding and trust within which they can readily share their doubts and fears. Therefore, if either of them feels vulnerable in any particular situation, this can be raised and shared in a positive spirit. In their joint interview they were asked, "if you feel vulnerable, do you show it? Do you articulate it? Do you share it? Or do you bottle it up and sit on it?"

(D.D.) It depends on the circumstances, I guess. Particularly in our relationship, I think these kinds of things happen at many different levels, and sometimes it’s really subtle. Sometimes we’ll be doing something together like a project, and I’ll just look over at Natasha and think she is having a moment or something. You can just see it or hear it, and you feel just...

(Interviewer) ...really tuned in.

(D.D.) It’s really, really subtle. Yes, and at other times, especially in Future Band, I’ll get a moment… and just look round and think we’re really sense where we’re at emotionally with each other. Quite often I’ll be like, oh God, I am just getting into tricky territory and I’ll turn around and [Natasha] will say, ‘can we just try this one thing?’ It’s amazing really.

They then raised a challenging situation during a prison project where they felt very vulnerable, yet the whole experience much strengthened their working relationship.

(D.D.) One thing we shared, where we really felt vulnerable was the prison project. For both of us, in actual fact going through such a difficult process together was really strengthening for our relationship. Personally, it was really difficult and I am sure it was for you as well. I remember feeling really alone and doubtful on a massive scale. After so many great positive experiences through the [Leadership] course, and then having this thing that I couldn’t work out what was going on.

(Interviewer) But you could share it?

(D.D.) Exactly.

In Katie’s position at Glyndebourne working with many different kinds of artists, she is well aware of people’s possible vulnerabilities when they are engaged in creative processes. Her antennae are tuned in to issues that might arise and in this context she performs a very empathetic, supportive role. But in her interview she makes a very pertinent point about her role and the need for reciprocal support.

(K.T.) Yes, it’s a nurturing role and a caring role. But in order to do that, I have to feel nurtured and cared for as well […] You have to have your strength and I have to make sure that I take care of myself. That’s what they say for mothering as well. You have to take care of yourself in order to be a good mother. You’re the most important person. You can’t just give out the whole time. You’ve got to make sure that you have enough food, drink, sleep, whatever. (Interviewer) Yes, but in terms of your other food, drink and sleep, what nurtures you and enables you to do what you do? Are there things you do in your life which in fact enrich what you’re doing, or does it come actually through your professional work?

(K.T.) Yes, it does come from professional work because it feeds you the whole time. I like to go out and see things – go to conferences, go and see other work, meet with other people who do the type of work I do. (Interviewer) Yes, and do you find increasingly there are more people on your kind of wavelength than before or are you still rather unique in this area?
Findings and emergent issues

Working Together

from the Barbican, explored this issue.

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One important issue that arises in any collaboration is how far the collective process militates against the development of the practitioner’s creative identity and artistic voice. Is the artist seen as a facilitator of others or can a balance be

maintained between the creative role of the artist and the creative voice of the participants? Most importantly, can the collaborative process be seen as a seedbed for fostering the creative ideas and energy of both the participants and the artists involved?

This is a particular dilemma for Kate Bond and Morgan Lloyd, both of whom are continuing to search for ways of reconciling all the roles and responsibilities that arise for them in such an unpredictable process as YMBBT. Kate puts it very succinctly: “To be honest, we’re like dogs that have been thrown a ball. The Bum Bum Train is the ball, and then whatever processes are needed to go and fetch the ball, we incorporate”. In their joint interview, Kate, Morgan and Jill Shelley, their producer from the Barbican, explored this issue.

(K.B.) The draining part for Morgan and I is after each show there’s nothing. The Bum Bum Train doesn’t exist. It’s like an apocalypse has gone off, because we change the venue, we change the scenes, we have no money. That’s when it’s draining. But as soon as we’ve found a venue and people come on board, the nurturing side is actually the pleasurable side. We get to meet hundreds of new people and then it becomes an unpredictable creative process.

In their joint interview Detta Danford and Natasha Zielazinski were asked how they reconciled their facilitation role with their own artistic role in Future Band. Within this ensemble they both have a strong sense of shared responsibility, but the way in which they choreograph the creative process results in developing a shared ownership that is respectful of the voices of the young people. How do they see this collective empowerment in relation to their own creative identity?

(J.P.) Well, I think we’re just talking about different ways of being and I think we have to be careful not to overlay it, like it’s some…

(K.E.T.) Alchemy.

(J.P.) Alchemy. Because there will always be composers who want to write in their ivory towers and there will always be commissioners who don’t see their role as nurturing at all. They just see their role as one step removed and wouldn’t engage with half the stuff Kate does. So it’s to do with individual personality and integrity.

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Findings and emergent issues

What is encouraging here is that Armim’s creative engagement in co-teaching as co-learning has helped to feed and nurture his artistic voice. He now finds his teaching a very rewarding learning process but he remains concerned about how things will develop in the future – the fear of losing his artistic identity as it becomes swamped by management and leadership responsibilities.

(A.Z.) It’s something I worry about in a sense. At the moment I am not particularly concerned because I still think I have a journey to go on, but I worry that the further away I get from having been a performer, the more I’ll feel that I’ve lost something.

(Interviewer) My guess is, that because you are so open and aware, other things will take their place in your journey, and you’ll receive them and you’ll find them just as nurturing as performing.

In section 5.1 Julian Philips touched on this question of retaining the artist’s creative identity in a collaborative context – achieving a balance between who you are as an artist, yet at the same time responding to the creative needs of one’s colleagues and those of the participants. In his interview with Katie Tearle, Julian pointed out that:

With collaborative experience you learn how to balance the need to listen and respond to what other people bring, while at the same time having a clear sense of what your creative concerns are in making a piece. I feel it’s important to have an ability to perhaps sometimes say quite difficult and uncomfortable things in a constructive and free way.

Because in any collaborative relationship, part of the process is to run with ideas, and then realise that they’re not right. You have to reject things. It can’t just be a ‘love in’, because you won’t make anything interesting. There’s got to be a vision.

Then, Julian drew on his experience with Katie Tearle during his Glyndebourne residency.

(K.T.) In this residency context I, as the composer, had the opportunity to work with very different people, whether directors or writers, etcetera. With each one of these you have to slightly reconstitute yourself. With hindsight, with the writer of X, I could say anything. It was an entirely open relationship because he is a thoroughly secure and open-minded writer.

(K.T.) Experienced writer.

(J.P.) Very, very experienced. Whereas with the other writer on Y, you needed to be more firm. Actually, sometimes I wasn’t firm enough. When it comes to opera, essentially you have to write the piece in the end and I sometimes isn’t going to work, it’s not going to work. That might be an instinctive feeling, like I wouldn’t want to write a scene about this. It isn’t interesting. And if am not interested, then the audience are not going to be interested.

(K.T.) And it is those instincts.

(Interviewer) What’s your view, Katie?

(K.T.) Totally, exactly the same. It is your instincts and […] about being true to yourself.

What emerges from these conversations is that although collaboration can serve as a crucible for creativity and innovation, it is imperative that the individual creative voice of the artist is not submerged under the collective voice of the participants. The integrity and authenticity of the artist’s voice has to be heard and respected alongside that of the participants. A collaborative relationship must achieve a balance between who you are as an artist, yet at the same time responding to the creative needs of one’s colleagues and those of the participants. In his interview with Katie Tearle, Julian pointed out that:

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Collaboration and leadership

There is no doubt that collaborative ways of working raise issues regarding leadership and responsibility. How do artists and participants view leadership, roles and responsibilities when working together in different contexts?

Both Katie Tearle and Morgan Lloyd were very interesting on this matter because although they see YMIBT as a very democratic venture, they also recognise the need for artistic direction during the creative collaborative process.

(K.B.) I love this utopia we’ve created where everyone is equal. There isn’t a director. There isn’t a runner. We’re all just chipping in, and no-one’s above cleaning the toilets or making the sandwiches. But people, as a group, do need a leader. If you don’t have some kind of hierarchy or direction, then you just get chaos – which is what we did have in the old days.

(Interviewer) But do you need a hierarchy, or is there such a concept as shared leadership, shared responsibility?

(M.L.) I think you definitely need, creatively, for the directors to be people with integrity, as they’ve got to have the final say. Because like you say, there is a moral responsibility there.

(K.B.) There has to be a vision that everybody understands. Otherwise there can be conflict. We have had that where there’s been a scene and there’s been conflict amongst actors as to how it should be carried out, because they didn’t attend the same rehearsal. So then there’s conflict. There needs to be a vision that everyone is seeing.

(M.L.) I guess I think it’s quite simple isn’t it? There are people who do have responsibility – so if you have a manager, a cast manager, they have that responsibility and all their cast would have to listen to them. But nobody is above sweeping up or cooking or changing the bins – and that’s the same for Kate and I.

(Interviewer) That’s more to do with shared responsibility. Have you got views on this leadership question Jill [Jill Shelley]?

(J.S.) I think the two of you do have very strong leadership skills and I think that comes across during the build period and during shows. I think it is absolutely shared jointly, which is something I find really interesting […] I know I could ring either of you and I am quite indiscriminate really. If I am emailing, I tend to email both of you, but if I phone, I just pick one at random because I know you’ll be able to give me an answer, and it won’t be, ‘oh, I’ll have to check’. I know that you’ll both be able to answer and you’ll be saying the same thing. You’ve absolutely developed that joint sense of owning it.

(K.B.) Yes. A lot of people have actually said that recently. They never knew who decided what. They assumed that it was a very democratic process, but actually it’s totally owned.

(J.S.) Yes. And during the show, it’s absolutely the two of you that are in control of everything […] It’s part of your perfectionism and it’s part of what you instil in the team […] There’s no detail, there’s no stone left untumbled.

Both Otta Danford and Natasha Zielinski also see that the democratic ways of working in Future Band raise crucial questions about leadership and responsibility. Although they always maintain a clear sense of direction for the band, they also seek out opportunities to devolve leadership responsibility to the young musicians in the group if it is considered appropriate.

(N.Z.) Future Band has been really good for us – to have a long-term project that has enabled us to experiment with the group. We’ve been through so much together as an ensemble, and been able to work with these different people. It means us changing the way we’re working all the time, and our approach to leading and responding to the strong personalities in the group. And more than any other group, I think, the project is personal to me. It is driven not just by my personal vision, but by how I’m leading. Do I really need to do this? How much can I step away from this role? We would both like to try and step away. I know we’re both up front a lot of the time where there’s a big band. But I think we’re looking all the time.

(Interviewer) But there are different ways of leading. You don’t have to be up front. What are your views of leadership?

(D.D.) Yes, I think exactly that. There are so many little things that happen in Future Band that aren’t to do with us as well – that are to do with just the small relationships in the band between the kids, between the assistants and some of the Guildhall students. Where there’s so many people leading each other in lots of different ways. And that’s been a huge learning for both of us as well, I think.

(Interviewer) Is that shared leadership?

(D.D.) Yes. I think there are a lot of things going on. We quite often feel we leave quite a lot of things to the people in the band. Yes, there is an element of us being up front but I am super aware for example, when we are up front, and I am sitting playing the flute, that I am still leading. And I think so is everybody in the band to some extent. We are all taking responsibility for our part but also for our section. Rowan (12 years old), for example, is really good at leading the clarinets, and there’s Guildhall students – Jones at the back has got his own thing going on. Often he’s quite autonomous, but he is always checking that somebody’s with him, or he’s got somebody smaller with him. He’s making sure they’re playing with him. And there’s lots of little leadership things going on.

(Interviewer) It seems to be very shared and yet you are the key choreographers, because that is your ultimate responsibility – but it is a shared responsibility.

(N.Z.) Yes, and in so many different ways too. Sometimes those are really obvious ways. For example, the two smallest violinists, and they’re leading a gesture or something, and sometimes it is similar but in a bigger way. Like one time when Sam Jones was leading a section, but leading basically from the back. Nobody could see him, but we all listened – and it was a freely improvised crazy section. Other times have involved different people coming up front and conducting people from the front. In the gamelan project everybody was responsible for their own parts weaving in and out within each section, leading a section or holding their part within a larger part that’s played by their whole section. There are a lot of different levels that this is happening on.

At the end of the conversation between Katie Tearle and Julian Philips about respecting the integrity and authenticity of the artist’s voice in any collaboration, Katie stressed the importance of never losing sight of the principle of ‘being true to oneself’. She sees this as fundamental to the exercise of leadership and responsibility. She was asked to expand on this:

[Being true to oneself] is about not going home and thinking, God I really feel uncomfortable about that decision […] You know, it’s about caring, and about thinking about things beyond the room that you’re discussing them in at that time. If you do have reservations, it is important to voice them.

Both Katie and Julian were then asked for their views on leadership in a collaborative context.
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The potential of this concept for contributing to the training of students is not lost on Jill Shelley, especially in relation to the theatrical experience. As Kate pointed out:

"Kate Bond and Morgan Lloyd are fearful of becoming institutionalised and they do not wish to be identified as an "exclusive major implications for the learning and development of professional artists, teachers, students, audiences and young people."

Collaboration and learning and development

The examples explored in the joint interviews are very different but each collaboration raises so many issues that could have major implications for the learning and development of professional artists, teachers, students, audiences and young people.

You Me Bum Bum Train is now regarded as an imaginative model of a participatory process leading to a challenging interactive performance in which the ‘audience’, that is the passengers, are integral to the performance. But quite understandably, both Kate Bond and Morgan Lloyd are fearful of becoming institutionalised and they do not wish to be identified as an "exclusive theatrical experience". As Kate pointed out:

"We don’t want to become this exclusive theatrical experience, not only for those people who want to be set design or performance, but also for the passengers. I hate the thought of it just being theatre for theatre goers."

Before you make an absolute quick decision, you’ve got to think if I make this decision, what’s the effect on all these different people? Then make the decision, not just think, oh if I don’t think about that, it will go away. Because it probably won’t.

(J.P) It’s difficult, this word ‘leadership’ in this context. I am not sure with any of the projects we did as part of the residency, it would be quite right to talk about leadership, apart from Knight Crew, where Kate absolutely led the project. Because it was a project of bewildering complexity, in terms of how it had come together, over such a long timescale, that it needed somebody of vision, who could just see this whole process go through and that was where Kate absolutely led the project. There were clear decisions that had to be made at certain points. Sometimes those were creative decisions, sometimes logistic, educational, financial, economic, you know, all sorts. That of (in the there was the whole television aspect to it as well), so that all had to be managed. I think it was right to use the word ‘leadership’ in that context, but I didn’t see my role in that project in any sense as being a question of leadership […] I didn’t see my role so leading anything really. I had a role to make things, and to be open and responsive, and to work with Kate … but also with the conductor and director. But I wasn’t…"

Interviewer: But you don’t think that is exercising some form of leadership?

(J.P) No, I don’t. I think with that project, at every stage, Kate was looked to as … at the top of this complex food chain. I think (with Kate) there was leadership the whole way […] When you talk about the number of young people involved, the number of people who were engaged through workshops and auditions, the orchestra, the youth orchestra players, the rehearsal period, the television, you know.

The potential of this concept for contributing to the training of students is not lost on Jill Shelley, especially in relation to the Guildhall School.

For 2012 we’re looking at how we might introduce a training element to it. I know from the Guildhall School that Ben Summer, who runs the Technical Theatre course, is quite keen on some of the students being involved (in the 2012 YMBBT production). But, given that we want to do it in East London, I think it’s really important that we bring in young people from East London communities as part of it. That’s where it might be appropriate for technical theatre students to be involved in some elements of it. We also want to make it a valuable experience for exactly the people that you’re talking about – people who don’t know anything about art and just think, ‘oh that might be fun’. How can we make this experience meaningful for them – whether there’s some sort of accreditation, meaning they would get some sort of arts award certificate, or it’s part of a BTEC module. I don’t know the answer yet but I think it is something we should explore.

Kate and Morgan are also excited at the possibility of opening up young people to the YMBBT experience, both as members of the audience and as part of the production team. Morgan instanced the Roundhouse as an example of what might be developed by YMBBT as training opportunities for young people.

(M.L.) The Roundhouse have been in touch and they’ve got these fantastic interns from the age of 18-25. They have an interview process and screen them, and have the best come and assist on certain projects. For us that would be brilliant. I would definitely go for those people because they’ve left university, they’re bright, they’re going to be going places themselves, and they’re appreciative of new experiences. And if they’re looking for something other than a positively beneficial thing. You’ve got really competent help, and at the same time it’s a pleasure equipping them with new skills. Having skilled volunteer help is really appreciated, but when it comes to people sampling what we do, we just want…"

(K.B.) The participants.

(M.L.) We want to cast a wide net, don’t we? We want everyone from all walks of life to be doing it, who haven’t heard of it.

(K.B.) We went through all the testimonials that passengers gave after their experience (last year) and most people spoke about it, comparing it to other theatrical experiences. And that made us think, because it’s been labelled ‘theatre’, which is irrelevant. Not that it’s got negative connotations, but it is going to become just solely for theatre goers, whereas we want, you know, the carpet fitters, who came to fit the carpets.

We don’t want to become this exclusive theatrical experience, not only for those people who want to be in set design or performance, but also for the passengers. I hate the thought of it just being theatre for theatre goers. At the same time, how do you create a production where you access other members of the community who aren’t exposed to art, or wouldn’t hear about art events, without being condescending?

I feel it’s so bound up with the music; the actual musical stuff that’s being learnt; about who you are as a person, how you relate to people, how you can communicate in different ways, and how you can share ideas and make things into something together. It’s such a difficult process, but such a rewarding process. I think that so much of what they do in Future Band (maybe it’s just like our collaboration), there’s a lot going on in terms of social interaction. I probably even put that above the music.

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(M.L.) Tower Hamlets people.

(K.B.) They don’t go to art exhibitions or theatre, and they will get as much, if not more, out of it because it isn’t an exclusive experience.

It is clear that Kate, Morgan and Jill can see the rich potential for engaging a wide range of people in the collaborative processes that form the bedrock of YMBBT. The possibility of opening up a learning and development dimension to their work is fully recognised. It is now a question of finding a way of making it happen.

Towards the end of their joint interview, Detta Danford and Natasha Zielinski stressed the learning potential of the young people in Future Band. It would be quite difficult for the students and young musicians involved to act as a kind of catalyst, musically and personally through the collaborative processes adopted by the ensemble. Detta highlighted some of the learning possibilities experienced by the members of the Band.

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"I feel it’s so bound up with the music, the actual musical stuff that’s being learnt; about who you are as a person, how you relate to people, how you can communicate in different ways, and how you can share ideas and make things into something together. It’s such a difficult process, but such a rewarding process. I think that so much of what they do in Future Band (maybe it’s just like our collaboration), there’s a lot going on in terms of social interaction. I probably even put that above the music."
I think they learn a lot about music and they get the chance to work with so many different musicians – young musicians, students and composers. It’s really opening their ears and helping them develop a musical voice at quite a young age, which I think is invaluable and is certainly something that I didn’t experience as a young person. So that’s amazing, but more than that, I think they are learning about themselves and having to react to the same situations as we’re responding to. They are having to make decisions, and let ideas go, and then think of ideas and match the ideas to the people and personalities of the people around them. And all of that complex stuff, that one is more or less aware of, but it’s happening and they struggle with it as well, just like we do. And I feel great friendships are also being formed.

Building on Detta’s observations, Natasha commented that:

I think for all the participants, it gives them the space to experiment, to find their place as an individual within a group. That’s such an important thing to have, like the space to play and try things out, to take chances yet to feel safe and comfortable – but also to be pushed and stretched sometimes, but never too far. Having the space for that to happen is important because so much of their learning (e.g. at school) is not like that. [Future Band] is a kind of halfway point, because there is this social thing where they’re with lots of friends and peers, but it’s not just about having fun and being together as a group. It’s about the integrity of the ideas we’re all exploring together. But it’s not really like learning something that’s taught, it’s rather like finding your own way of learning.

There is no doubt that in Future Band Detta and Natasha have given the young musicians the psychological, social and musical space to be themselves and to develop a strong sense of ownership for their work. They are empowered to put their own stamp, their own voice on their music-making. Collaboration lies at the heart of the vibrancy of Future Band. It’s amazing, but more than that, I think they are learning about themselves and having to react to the same situations as you are responding to. They are having to make decisions, and let ideas go, and then think of ideas and match the ideas to the people and personalities of the people around them. And all of that complex stuff, that one is more or less aware of, but it’s happening and they struggle with it as well, just like we do. And I feel great friendships are also being formed.

Similarly, Dinah Stubb and Armin Zanner, through their collaboration, have also created a safe space resulting in a shift towards a more student-oriented form of learning. This has had a significant effect on the curriculum and on modes of teaching.

(A.Z.) It has transformed not just the process of teaching, but also the view of the curriculum. So we have made changes to the curriculum, adding things on the back of this sort of work. And in terms of my own attitude towards the students, it is asking them the questions, letting them set agendas regarding things they’re resistant to. (Interviewer) Has it become more student, not led, but student-oriented?

(A.Z.) That would be my vision of it, yes. Because I think I’ve become more open to allowing that. I suppose I’ve always taught that things have been like the German language, where you know, you’re going to learn the language and we’re going to learn to do this. Yet with something as free as when we are working together, it doesn’t need to be, ‘this is what we’re going to do’, ‘this is what we’re going to do’. That’s the ensemble thing again. It’s getting back to learning altogether, and the teacher is part of that, or the facilitator or whatever you want to call them. They become part of this big question mark, where it’s an exploration rather than an instruction. (Interviewer) In a sense this is so powerful and that is the premise for being really open on this learning journey. And of course, it is a bit scary, but hasn’t it got incredibly rich potential really?

(A.Z.) Enormous potential. That’s the ensemble thing again. It’s getting back to learning altogether, and the teacher is part of that, or the facilitator or whatever you want to call them. They become part of this big question mark, where it’s an exploration rather than an instruction. (Interviewer) I agree, and I would have thought that ensemble has been the trigger for this journey. But isn’t it possible for one-to-one teaching actually to be premised on the same set of principles?

(D.S.) Yes. (Interviewer) I would have thought so. I mean, if you see teaching as a ‘conversation’, and you said it, you will be learning as much probably from the students as they will be learning from you. That is part of the transaction that is going on. So over the last year or two, you have developed a very different model of how you approach learning.

(D.S.) Also, something else I hope has changed is how the students themselves talk about their own learning. I suppose if somebody stands up to do something – something that I’m trying to get rid of is applauding in the room, because then it seems like a performance as opposed to shared work. The drama students very rarely do it, but the music students, by showing their appreciation of someone’s work, they clap them. It’s a performance then that takes it into good or bad. I think the more that you share the investigation of work with each other, both as a teacher and a learner and amongst yourselves, then your way of talking about what somebody’s work has enabled as well, because you’re not criticising them. You’re sharing their discovery.
For Dinah and Armin one of the most significant insights that they have experienced in their collaborative journey is the importance of students and young people taking on responsibility for their own learning. They can see the power that this can have when the students’ voice is heard through developing their sense of engagement and ownership. In their interview they were asked how they saw the benefits of collaborative forms of learning for the students or young people.

(D.S.) Owning their own learning.

(A.Z.) Yes, they become responsible.

(Interviewer) Yes, responsible for their own learning. Now, have you had any resistance to that?

(A.Z.) Well, I suppose resistance in the sense that it’s new for them, so it takes a while for that to become part of what they do. The key thing in my experience now of resistance, has been the second year [students], who are no longer getting the co-teaching. I feel they’ve suddenly become much more closed off again, and that’s what worries me. We need to think of a different way of linking what we’re doing with the first years into the second year, so that they’re not...

(D.S.) They’re not abandoned.

This model of co-teaching that has been developed by Dinah and Armin has sown the seeds of a potentially transformative way of facilitating and strengthening students’ learning. It is early days, but their initiative has opened doors towards new ways of approaching vocal and instrumental teaching in conservatoires and beyond. Through generating a ‘creative conversation’ between students and themselves, Dinah and Armin have stimulated students to learn from each other in a supportive, non-judgemental environment. They are now seeking ways of sustaining this approach in the future so that this can have when the students’ voice is heard through developing their sense of engagement and ownership. In their interview they were asked how they saw the benefits of collaborative forms of learning for the students or young people.

(J.P.) I think one sees it at every level. It’s incredibly formative, to work in some kind of collaborative way. You can see it at school level, you can see it at university or conservatoire level, and then you can see it at a professional level. The vast majority of creative artists grow through engaging with someone else’s way of seeing things. So that could be a composer and a choreographer. Sometimes it’s engaging with someone whose practice is not yours, such as in cross-arts. Someone else’s framework for discussing your own practice, which might have different vocabulary and be posited on different ways of thinking, is far more developmental than just listening to another composer going on – because that’s too close. They’re going to get hung up on why you chose that chord or why you scored it for those instruments. Whereas a choreographer might talk about texture, or the relationship of one bit of material to another, or more intuitive and adjectival ways of engaging with things. At the Guildhall a lot of our [composition] students, particularly on the Master’s course, do projects where they are engaging with the challenges of collaboration with writers and choreographers. It’s something I’ve witnessed time and time again at the Guildhall, that for a significant number of the composers that come onto the Master’s course, those collaborative projects change their way of viewing composition. You watch and you can see the light bulbs go on.

Student response to collaboration

A student perspective on collaboration draws on the response of two students who worked on Badenwein 1939, the production in November 2010 directed by Christian Burgess, with music composed by Julian Phillips. A joint interview was conducted with Laurent de Montalembert, a third year actor, and Rebecca Toft, an undergraduate trumpet player. As was discussed in chapter 4, both Christian and Julian approached this as a shared devising process, in which “musicians and actors are integrated within the performance space under a unified artistic vision” (Hildesd, 2011, p.2). Working in an ensemble in this way provided a rich new experience for the nine musicians, whilst the actors welcomed the chance to work with musicians.

Motivation

From our conversation it was clear that for Laurent and Rebecca the whole experience helped to make the Guildhall School of Music & Drama a reality in which supposed barriers between musicians and actors could be broken down. They also saw it as a possible opportunity for opening new doors for their future careers. The students explained it this way:

(L.M.) We rejoiced in the idea of collaborating with musicians. I think we all thought it to be a great experience for the future, for our careers really, and an opportunity to try a new kind of work and to learn about working with other disciplines.

(R.T.) It was a chance to do something different and to meet the actors. It was a good opportunity to get involved with everybody. But I think the main reason why everyone was so keen to do it, is because it was something that hadn’t been done before and something where no-one really knew what was going to happen. But it was a very interesting way of working everyone liked.

Learning from collaboration

One of the interesting aspects of the two disciplines working together was that, despite the obvious differences, the students increasingly saw similarities between both worlds. This is beautifully put by Laurent:

(L.M.) We are called actors and they are called musicians, but on the night of the performance these two worlds came together. The musicians had lines to speak and we had tunes to sing. So in the end there weren’t two disciplines. There were two art forms serving a story. In a way I learnt that we do all speak the language and it’s just the shapes that change. I remember speaking about rhythms, dynamics and qualities, so I never felt we were talking a different language. One thing that stayed with me after the project is that I can speak with a musician in a way where we understand each other and therefore we can create things together.
What was striking in the production was that there seemed to be a meeting of minds in which the actors and musicians worked effectively together. Rebecca looked back on the process:

‘playing’. Laurent, as an actor, made an interesting commentary regarding their respective crafts and disciplines.

What was striking in the production was that there seemed to be a meeting of minds in which the actors and musicians worked effectively together. Rebecca looked back on the process:

And then we played loads of games at the beginning which I think got many of the musicians more comfortable with who they were around and where they were. Because as a musician you don’t normally do that – you sit down on a chair and you’re behind some music. You’re not having to express yourself in yourself.

Interviewer: Can you see advantages for all musicians to engage in those kinds of preliminary workshops, warm-up workshops, which are to do with voice, body and awareness?

Interviewer: (To Rebecca) Does that speak to you?

(L.M.) Taught to.

(R.T.) It just capturing an audience and getting them to portray music. You want the audience to feel what you feel when you play the music, or what you think, or what the moods are. You want the audience to have the same feelings as (encoded) in the music. We have classes which are just performance classes, so you come along and give a performance and do a sit to be more confident with people that say that you need to be more confident to speak, and you need to be more confident the way you stand. But doing this project (Badenheim) has just helped me a lot, and helped me to say to ensembles that I’m in, ‘how are we going to do that?’ – so just being more confident really.

The drama students are exposed to many processes connected to building up their performance presence and their engagement with text, with the people in the ensemble, with themselves as individuals and with the audience. Laurent was asked how he sees what it is to be confident in the process of performance. What are some of the key elements that you would feel are important whether you’re a musician or an actor?

(L.M.) As you say, it’s so important for us. It’s a quest to understand and master this. For someone to say, be more confident is really unhelpful, because it actually makes you feel even less confident […] Really, I think it’s all down to fear – a fear of failure and a fear of not being liked. Therefore, it’s all down to a lack of recognition and a need for recognition; and the fear of breaking a rule or making mistakes and therefore being punished for it. This is something you are not aware of.

It took me six years to just begin to grasp and to feel this within me, and therefore whenever I am in an audition, rehearsal or performance situation, and tensions rise up in my body because I was told to be aware of these things, I have like a protocol – it’s okay, I ask myself a few questions such as, ‘what rule am I trespassing if I fail?’, ‘what punishment am I going to receive if I fail?’ and ‘who is going to punish me?’

To all these questions there is a big void. ‘There I’m no-one. No-one is going to punish me. I am not going to trespass any rule. No-one is going to dislike me because I failed. And therefore the pressure goes down and I stop caring in a way. I feel more confident. I feel free and all my creativity starts to rise. Then I start to play, take pleasure. And when I take pleasure, then everything is possible.

Interviewer: (To Rebecca) That does that speak to you?

(R.T.) Yes it does. I suppose a lot of people in the music industry do have a fear of failing and not getting anywhere, or people not liking what they do or criticising what they do. Because everyone criticises everyone in the music industry, so that makes perfect sense.

Interviewer: So when you go into a performance space, ready to perform, what is on your mind, which I’m sure you might have learnt partly from Badenheim? When you see a performance room, a platform, do you see it as a space to be filled with you and your presence? Do you look at it that way? Isn’t that how actors look at it?

(L.M.) Taught to.

Interviewer: Taught to, well that’s different. There’s a difference in being taught it. So, are you sceptical about that bit of teaching?

(L.M.) No, I am not actually. I think people go into acting, some have the ability to go into the room and literally, as we say, take the space, or some rather steal the space.
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that's something i think should be changed in education, you know, we're told to take the space and sometimes it becomes a competition. it's like there's that amount of cake, take it as quick as you can because it's yours. but the cake belongs to everyone. so everyone fights for it, whereas if we share it, then everyone has a bit of the cake, enjoys it and doesn't feel guilty about taking too much.

interviewer (to rebecca) does that resonate in some ways?

r.t. yes. i never used to see it this way. but i now see that people are more likely than not going to enjoy what you do, and they're going to take up too much time and space.

Interviewer: So you've really found this process of collaboration helpful, but is it continuing to be helpful now you are in second year? What are the reasons? What am i trying to do in the world? What am i trying to get from that job? Towards the end of the second year i grew out of acting because i realised i did it for the wrong reasons. After that i made a conscious choice of being an actor rather than having an impulsive, desire, to become an actor. i became aware of all these impulses and desires, and they were not good enough for me. and so i asked, why do i want to be an actor?

these kinds of projects make you ask yourself, why do you want to tell a story? why would you spend time researching in other people's lives, what's the aim of it? what can you offer? what can you give of yourself? and why should you do that? is it going to change anything? you know, no-one ever changed the world. maybe a few people changed it a bit, like socrates. because you have a desire to change the world through stories and you ask yourself, how can i do that?

Interviewer: (to rebecca) did you find yourself asking different questions that were a little bit new to you? what kinds of questions were thrown up?

r.t. a lot of questions, but not quite of the same order as those of laurent. they were largely about technique. as a musician you learn a very specific technique. but in badenheim we had to be very versatile. if my teacher had come and heard us play what we were playing, they would have told us off. they would have had a big go at us because a lot of the technique we were using just wasn't right for the situation — and all the different styles that we had.

a lot of the musicians questioned, why aren't we allowed to play like this? why aren't we allowed to explore the different styles and different ways that people all around the world play and that people in different eras played? we have to stick to a style that is specific to now. i mean, a lot of questions were asked about why we were doing it, and why we couldn't have more to do with the acting department.

Interviewer: Why do you have to stick to one specific style?

r.t. generally (instrumental students) are all training in the basics to become an orchestral, classical orchestral player. i suppose it's different for piano players as they're all training to be soloists, and so are many of the string players as well. but overall people are taught to be orchestral players. particularly in the music that would be true, but if you look at the whole cultural industries, the classical world, the orchestral world is a very small component within it.

r.t. and you're very lucky if you get into that.

challenges arising from collaboration

irrevocably, the process of working on badenheim 1939 threw up personal and artistic challenges for the students but any issues arising were generally addressed collaboratively in the supportive climate that had been created by the whole ensemble. this is especially true for the musicians who were not accustomed to working in this way.

Interviewer: (to rebecca) when working together on badenheim, did things come up that made you feel uncomfortable? did you feel vulnerable in that context?

r.t. it was quite hard at the beginning because we were in a room of a whole new group of people. even the musicians didn't know each other very well. i always find it quite hard in a big group of people to be yourself straight away. i find i have trouble and have to spend a bit of time before i am comfortable with my surroundings. but after one or two rehearsals, i mean it didn't take long, we all felt — especially the musicians — we all felt comfortable with each other, and then with the actors it was fine. no-one held back really.

Interviewer: Were there times when you felt a little vulnerable?
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Rebecca felt that the musicians gained a lot of artistic satisfaction from the whole experience, both from the way the music was created with Julian Philips and the freedom they were given on stage. “In the acting sense, we were free to do our own thing. It wasn’t set, like you stand there and you do that. It was free very, and everyone could do their own thing, so I think that helps to people to have as much or as little involvement in standing out as they wanted. I thrived in that. It was great.”

In his response, Laurent added another perspective to his artistic engagement in the production:

(L.M.) I forgot myself in Badenheim. Maybe it was easier for me because I had both a solo performance as well as an ensemble performance. I think when the story is bigger than your character, then you don’t try to make the character the story, and therefore you have no egotistical issues [...]. We all came together because this story touches even the actors. My granddad was there, so I felt a responsibility and an honour to tell the story. It wasn’t about my performance really and it is what I think I made it a success and achievable. It is an ensemble piece about a story. It’s about these people who died there, and let’s serve that story.

(Interviewer) Because of your family history, do you feel there was a moral drive behind your commitment to the narrative of Badenheim? There was a story there that had to be told and there was a kind of moral imperative driving you?

(L.M.) Not moral, but more of a testimony, embodying witnesses. The director took away all parallels with the Nazi regime and we changed the flags, the uniforms, I thought we should have embraced it, but that’s personal. But it wasn’t really moral. It was more to do with this happened and let’s not forget. Basically, because the character lived, we had a voice and this was really gratifying as an actor, to feel that you were useful. Badenheim, that kind of universal story, met all our romantic ideas about why we want to be actors.

(Interviewer) That’s interesting. Maybe the word moral is wrong, but there was a deep-seated awareness of the human condition, and human frailty and human cruelty, and what men can do to men. For me, if one ever raises questions to do with the Holocaust, there are moral questions being addressed in the play. But that never caught your emotional state at all?

(L.M.) I think this just happened. I think I’ve just understood why. It’s because all the research we did on the characters and on the story, we [as characters] had no idea about what was going to happen. We could not imagine that this was going to happen to us, and in the story it finishes when we go there. So our focus was not so much on what could happen to us, but more on the confusion and the state of communal fog. We debated about this and we tried to put it into context today. [In the play] there’s no violence yet, that’s why we weren’t morally questioning anything. Nothing awful happened and we were just moved on to a ‘better’ place. So we didn’t have so much debate and didn’t see it like this. But maybe from an audience point of view, who knew, things might have looked different.

(Interviewer) (To Rebecca) Did you think about those kinds of questions, those deeper moral, psychological questions?

(R.T.) I don’t think we did really. From our point of view, as a project it seemed so rushed and we were very overwhelmed by everything that was going on. We had to learn all the music by ear [...] It took a bit of time but we were all very much concentrating on that and also being in this different environment. We didn’t get to the stage of questioning why we were there and researching.
Findings and emergent issues

(I.T.) Especially because the music was complex. Julian used so many complex chords and the tunes weren’t symmetrical. It seemed as though it was going to be obvious but it never was. He composed it as people at the time would have done it. He did a lot of research into the music of the time and tried to show that in his music. Some people played from music, but those of us who were moving on stage didn’t have any music at all – we were just very much concentrating.

(Interviewee) Well, you seem to have internalised the music just as much as the actors internalised the script, and made it your own.

(R.T.) We still got it wrong, some of the time. I wouldn’t be able to say that there was a performance where everyone got it right. Getting all the notes right was a big challenge, and then remembering them from one rehearsal to the next. The actors were doing it nearly every day, whilst we were doing it once or twice a week, and not everyone was always there. So it was hard to keep it in your memory, where we’re used to just reading it.

(Interviewer) Did Christian’s approach maximise a feeling of shared responsibility in the group? Did this way of letting go, rather do what he has done before – you have to let go of that.

(L.M.) I think ‘letting go’ would be the main thing. In such a project with 30 people, if Christian hadn’t let go as much as he did, it would never have happened. If he’d tried to force things into something he had in mind, in a really restricted way, it would never have worked. What worked was the flexibility of what he had in mind, and the creativity that the artists proposed to him. He managed to embrace all these different points of view, and made it really an ensemble – he himself became a member of the ensemble. If the director, the leader, is too imposing or contrived, then there’s no ensemble. He gives us the freedom to be an ensemble. So, letting go is of most importance. Even as an artist we have our own vision of what it should be, how it should be. And oh, I didn’t like what he did and I’d rather do what he has done before – you have to let go of that.

(Interviewee) Did Christian’s approach maximise a feeling of shared responsibility in the group? Did this way of letting go, of allowing things to happen, actually strengthen the collective sense of responsibility? (L.M.) I think in that particular case I think it did, because with the little amount of time we had, we did as much research as we could individually and we shared it every morning with the group. But you know, this was done over weeks. At some point, like a week before the actual performance, I remember we had no shape. We had tried things. Some people were desperate, including Christian, and he admitted it. Most people were desperate to be honest. The honesty was one of the great things. He wasn’t faking anything. He wasn’t saying, yes, this is great, we’re going to make it symmetrical. It seemed as though it was going to be obvious but it never was. He composed it as people at the time would have done it. Everyone was looking round and trying to fit in and follow the actors in what they did. We all knew that if anyone was going to get it right, they could have done it on their own. We supposed the musicians didn’t have the confidence to stand out in the crowd. They didn’t have the confidence to lead in that situation. They were quite happy just to follow. But as time went on, you grew into yourself and you didn’t have to follow anyone anymore. I mean, people still did. I don’t know what the others felt, but by the end of it, I felt that you could be yourself and you didn’t need the support of the actors there […]

(Interviewee) In Badenheim did you miss the normal kind of leadership you are used to in music ensembles – e.g. a conductor or the leader of a smaller ensemble? Because it seemed to work.

(R.T.) It did work. Because we learnt the music in Badenheim by ear, everyone was listening to what everyone else was doing. It was very hard in that theatre to hear everyone, because the piano was in one position and we would be on the other side of the stage. You couldn’t really hear anyone else around you. I think you could latch onto the person next to you and hear what they were doing, just so you were in the right place at the right time. But it was quite hard in the theatre and we had a bit of a problem with that.

(Interviewer) But did you ever feel the need for a conductor?

(R.T.) No.

(Interviewee) You were taking on the responsibility yourselves.

(R.T.) Yes. No-one really saw that.

(Interviewee) That’s very interesting. There’s something to learn from that isn’t there, in a musical context?

(R.T.) Yes.

Collaboration and engagement with audiences

From their experience of working together in Badenheim 1939, Rebecca and Laurent could see quite significant ways in which collaborative work could strengthen the quality of their engagement with audiences.

(R.T.) I always saw audiences before as if there was a glass screen between you and the audience, with you performing and they were just watching. But having interaction with the audience, whether you’re talking to them or just looking at them, I think that brings them in a bit more. Last year people would say to me, you need to interact more with your audience when you’re playing. I never understood what they were talking about, because when I was playing I didn’t feel I was interacting, I was just turning up and play or someone was looking at me while they were playing, it would seem a bit weird. But it’s not looking at one particular person, it’s looking at an audience and getting out of the music and the stand, and just being open with your body language and with your playing.

(Interviewee) Your sense of presence. And you felt, because you were on a stage with actors, because that was a very different environment, this was much easier for you.

(R.T.) Yes.

(Interviewee) Because the conventions of normal classical performance were not there, and in that new environment you felt comfortable so the communication with the audience was a non-issue.
Working Together

findings and emergent issues

The final part of the conversation pursued further some of the benefits of collaborative forms of learning. Rebecca and Laurent have presented a refreshing and insightful perspective on what they gained from the experience and it is clear that this comparatively short four-week project made a strong impression on the actors and musicians. Both

Interviewer: Now Rebecca, how do you feel about this?

L.M.: Yes, I would agree with what you said. I think working in a collaborative way takes a lot pressure off your shoulders and it makes it more fun in a way. Being on the stage with the musicians was about a music festival. It was like, oh we’ve got some strong musicians here and the music is going to be fantastic. They’re going to smash it, we used to say, so we’d better smash it too. So it took a lot of pressure away.

In the rehearsal room there was a nice curiosity. Just to get to know each other and be confronted with something different, and just push ourselves further and break the walls you know, of being shy and pretending to be actors. So the curiosity was something that you could learn from, and that would engage your imagination. But overall I think it takes some pressure away working like that.

Benefits of collaborative forms of learning for students

It is clear that this comparatively short four-week project made a strong impression on the actors and musicians. Both Rebecca and Laurent have presented a refreshing and insightful perspective on what they gained from the experience and the final part of the conversation pursued further some of the benefits of collaborative forms of learning.

L.M.: What comes to mind immediately is the fact that you realise there are other things going on outside the acting corridor of the Guildhall. There’s another experience of art, and there’s other sorts of inspirations. There are other ways of expressing yourself, but the great feeling is that we’re all after the same thing. There’s this great diversity. Because I now know some musicians, when I go home and think about what I might do next, I’m like, oh I can do a play with musicians, whereas before this would have been, oh no, it would be too hard to find musicians. So diversity is one of the good outcomes.

Interviewer: You feel it’s opened up opportunities?

L.M.: Yes, of course. I’ve already started planning some projects with musicians, and with musicians only. I’ve come to love music so much. You know, with musicians, and no actors.

Interviewer: And that’s all since Badenheim?

L.M.: Yes.

Interviewer: The seeds were there before?

L.M.: The seeds were there before but working with Badenheim showed me that it was really possible.

Interviewer: Now Rebecca, how do you feel about this?

R.T.: I think for musicians it makes people more comfortable with themselves. A lot of musicians have performance anxiety problems. A lot of people come to the Guildhall with that and they try to face it. But I think acting can help them. Doing something different on stage, they’re still on stage, but they’re engaged in a different way. It helps people to be more comfortable in themselves and on stage, and performing in front of people.

I do think that when you do collaborative workshops, you still need a leader. You need someone to have a focus and an idea of where the workshop is going. It’s a very good thing for musicians to do, even if there’s no actors involved.

Interviewer: It’s a long journey, isn’t it? In a way Badenheim concentrated everything for you and opened a Pandora’s box – it’s been a very strong experience for you.

R.T.: Yes. I really enjoyed it. It was hard because it took up a lot of time.

L.M.: And you were hardly there!

R.T.: It was amazing. We didn’t understand how the actors did it. They did it every day and we found it so hard to be there for just a small fraction of the time we were supposed to be there. But it was worth it and I think everyone found it worth it.

Interviewer: Well, many, many thanks.

L.M.: My pleasure.

Interviewer: I hope you got something from it as well.

L.M.: That’s great. You see that’s one of the ripples of collaborative work. That’s another form of collaboration, and it’s endless you know – ripples for all of us in the future again, and that’s really nice. Laurent’s notion of a ‘ripple’ could serve as an apt metaphor for collaborative work with its sense of flow, effortlessness, quiet energy and openness to new possibilities – all valuable qualities in our search for working together.

Emergent issues

This enquiry has uncovered a wealth of creative ideas and energy from artists, producers, management, teachers and students working together right across the Campus. Their passion, insight and commitment are catching, but I think that everyone interviewed would acknowledge that what has been achieved so far is only the beginning of an exciting shared journey driven partly by different collaborations both within and beyond the Campus.

The final part of this chapter draws together some of the dominant themes emerging from the rich conversations that have formed the backbone of the enquiry. It is hoped that they are true to the mission of the Alliance, and that they might serve as a framework for possible future development and as an indicator for further research across the Campus.
Looking ahead

With collaboration and creative learning firmly embedded in the DNA of the Campus, the potential for future development is enormous. Both from the interviews and the various documents tracing the recent history of the Alliance, it is clear that there is no shortage of imaginative initiatives drawing on the shared experience of the many people who are motivated to work together. The synergy between the three organisations that form the Alliance can only act as a motor for further collaborative developments that will open up new opportunities for shared learning. The following questions might help to contribute to the debate about future developments across the Campus.

- How far will the Shift initiative generate opportunities for creative collaborative learning by:
  - acting as a catalyst and a hub for artistic, educational and community development?
  - becoming an active and radical alliance for artistic innovation, learning and research for all?
  - evolving a creative community embracing the international and local, and access and excellence?
  - aiming for quality creative learning experiences that are appropriate and bespoke to their particular context?
  - enabling the Guildhall School to develop a distinctive role as a laboratory?
  - strengthening the opportunity for the Barbican to "realise its vision to create the model for tomorrow's international arts and learning centre"? (Gregory, 2011, p.6)

- In what ways might Shift create a collaborative mentoring and co-mentoring development programme, providing support for artists, teachers, managers and producers working together across the Campus?

- What are the most productive avenues for building on existing initiatives in the Barbican, Guildhall School and LSO, for promoting further artistic collaborations in cross-arts, cross-discipline, cross-sector and cross-cultural contexts?

- From 17-20 March 2012 the third international conference, The Reflective Conservatoire: Performing at the Heart of Knowledge, will be held at the Barbican Centre and the Guildhall School. One of the main themes is creative collaborative learning, from one-to-one partnerships to ensembles and companies. In what ways might intellectual property be shared and cross-arts knowledge be most effectively exchanged across the Campus and beyond after the conference?

- How far might knowledge exchange be strengthened with other arts Higher Education institutions working in the area of cross-arts and cross-sector collaboration? For example, with the Research Group in Lifelong Learning in Music and the Arts in Prince Claus Conservatoire, Groningen, and the Royal Conservatoire, The Hague, where two of the research strands focus on 'Cross-arts and Cross-sector Practice' and 'Healthy Ageing through Music and the Arts'.
How far might collaborative work across the Campus be supported and strengthened by organising interactive, performance-oriented symposia in which participants could engage in and reflect on creative collaborative processes and performance? Participants could be drawn from a wide variety of people involved with the Campus – artists, directors, managers, teachers, community leaders, students and young people.

To what extent might further professional development opportunities be devised for facilitating a developmental approach to creative collaborations, with the aim of strengthening the quality, integrity and coherence of work across the Campus?

How feasible would it be to strengthen the range of income-generating courses drawing on the expertise of staff working across the Campus? For example, these could focus on:

- Pre-conservatoire or post-conservatoire skills development in music, drama or technical theatre
- Lifelong learning opportunities for adults wishing to deepen their knowledge of the arts
- Continuing Professional Development opportunities, especially those growing out of the Shift programme
- Adapting the Weekend Workout courses for public programming.

How far might a research programme be set up with the aim of creating a unified framework for measuring value and understanding the impact of arts practice?

To what extent might further research be promoted in aspects of creative collaborative learning, the scope of which could be extended to include doctoral students working in this area (e.g. Collaborative Doctoral Awards)?

How far might the growing knowledge base across the Campus be harnessed to design an external funding bid to support a major research initiative in the area of creative collaborative learning?

To what extent might cross-arts collaborations across the Campus be strengthened by building up links between the proposed Centre for Creative Learning and a possible Barbican Arts and Media Centre with a complementary vision? Might this serve as a laboratory for new ideas and practices, where artists, students and young people can experiment and work together?

To what extent might the possible partnership between Creative Learning and a state-of-the-art media centre benefit from being linked to the growing clusters of internet pioneers who are building up a hub of creative technology and design in Silicon Roundabout, Shoreditch? How far might these creative partnerships serve as a catalyst for research and development across the Campus and beyond?

This enquiry is testimony to the cultural shift that continues to take place across the Campus. But with this transformation of attitude and practice come renewed responsibilities. Collaboration per se is insufficient. It is intrinsically complex and any developments and initiatives have to be accompanied by an informed attention to quality, integrity and coherence. An understanding of shared artistic and educational goals has to underpin creative collaborative work. It is hoped that the voices of the participants in this enquiry, with their wide and varied experience, will have helped to inform and deepen knowledge of what is entailed in creative collaborative learning.
Morgan, along with other friends, collaborated on the first show that took place in Brighton in 2004 in an office block basement. The experience proved overwhelmingly positive for everyone involved. Passengers made a speech at a dinner party, were serenaded by a band in a cardboard box, stumbled upon a bored couple at home watching television and were greeted by friends and family at their own surprise birthday party.

Morgan became the perfect creative partner for further You Me Bum Bum Train shows. Together, with the support of friends and friends of friends, they scraped together money by hosting fundraising events, begging and borrowing props to keep the events going. You Me Bum Bum Train has only survived because of the thousands of kind people who have given up their time to support it during an inspiring five-year period.

After five years of not knowing whether You Me Bum Bum Train was theatre, art or entertainment, it was deemed ‘theatre’ by virtue of the Oxford Samuel Beckett Theatre Trust Award, which has resulted in vital funding and further recognition.

www.bumbumtrain.co.uk

Review

Secrecy is important to these encounters, as it is to the shows of Punchdrunk, godfather of the movement. Get wind of the plot, and you build up a cagey preparedness. Never more so than with the marvellous You Me Bum Bum Train. Reviewers are sworn to secrecy about its content but there’s no need for restraint about its effect. It’s a high-speed, ever-morphing, grab-you-by-the-guts show in which the audience – habitually referred to by the company as “passengers” – are never merely spectators, are sometimes on the brink of being fodder, but are nearly always dazed with delight. From the moment you are lowered into a wheelchair to the minute you arrive in a glitter-filled bar, you are guided – without bullying – to be treated you as if you’re an object of veneration, glory and derision. It transforms its audience as surely as it lights up the darkness that surrounds you.

It wheels you and pushes you and carries you aloft. It surrounds you with the glare and the gloom of everyday life and you are lowered into a wheelchair to the minute you arrive in a glitter-filled bar, you are guided – without bullying – to be treated you as if you’re an object of veneration, glory and derision. It transforms its audience as surely as it lights up the darkness that surrounds you.

You Me Bum Bum Train has only survived because of the thousands of kind people who have given up their time to support it during an inspiring five-year period.

In our reflection on this project we looked back on what stood out within this collaboration:

An engagement with the history, stories, and context of gamelan music that resulted from the LSO session and our work with Aris. We discovered a respect for the gamelan and found inspiration in the stories which inform much of Indonesian culture. This engagement and respect permeated the band. For example, we learned about the connection between a gamelan instrument and its spirit, and this had an impact on the way we approached our own instruments and the aim and intention of our music making.

In our approach to this piece, we looked deeply into how to structure the music as one group, creating a narrative that was inspired by the Ramayana and the monkey battle. This led to every member of the group having a real connection not only to individual pieces of musical material but also to how it might come together into a larger form. We made time to have a discussion as a group and work in a laboratory fashion to try out different structures and come to a collective decision.

There was a real sense of ownership of the material we created and each individual’s part within this. In our final structure, each member of the band was moving from playing the gamelan to their own instrument or vice versa in what might have been an incredibly difficult choreography. However, with each person in the band (even our youngest member of seven years of age!) not only taking a real responsibility for their part and its place within the greater structure but also where they might need to be next, this led to an awareness and fluidity that contributed to a seamless performance.

You Me Bum Bum Train — with guest artist Aris Daryodono

Working for four days, Future Band created and recorded a piece of music with guest artist Aris Daryodono, a gamelan artist and composer from Java. The project involved a day of work at the LSO Gamelan room as well as the three days composing and creating at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama. In the performance of the final piece, all members of Future Band moved fluidly from playing the gamelan to playing their own instruments, showing an ownership not only of the music they had created but of the process which had given rise to that music.

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April 2009 – with guest artist Maxwell Golden

Working for four days, Future Band created a piece of music with performance poet and MC Maxwell Golden. At the end of the four days we had a sharing which featured the band entering the performance area singing and moving through the space freely before finding their seats. Exploring movement, text, and our instruments within the context of a narrative created by the group, it was an exciting project for everyone involved.

Future Band

May/June 2010 – with guest artist Aris Daryodono

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Working Together

In our reflection on this project we looked back on what had made this a particularly explorative collaboration:

As a leadership team, Maxwell pushed us to approach new ways of working. The majority of the first day was spent exploring and having fun as a group. In addition to this, we created an additive narrative in which each and every member of the group contributed. With only forty minutes left of our first day, we finally got to work on our instruments. Even though we had waited so long and had only a very short time, the music making was immediate, strong and informed by all the work we had done as a group throughout the day.

‘We were all on the same page, in terms of our thinking, where we were and what we wanted.’

One of the new ways that was opened up to us through working with Maxwell relates to our role and identity as performers. This allowed us to move from a standpoint of a group of musicians working as instrumental band to a group of performing artists who were able to play with our space, our audience, our instruments and each other in a free and expressive way. Moreover, Maxwell’s skills as a poet, MC, and lyricist encouraged us to embrace the world of language, words, and vocal sound, whether through songwriting, storytelling or spoken word. This has come to have a lasting legacy with Future Band, infiltrating all of our subsequent work.

One thing that made this project special was that although it was conceived as part of an informal laboratory week, some of the material that was created was able to be developed further. In our 2009 Barbican performance, the love song that was part of this piece formed both a part of the Future Band set, and a starting point for tutti material that was performed by over 300 people from across the Creative Learning community.

February 2010 – with guest artists Dave Smith and Johnny Brierly

This project was a four-day lab week which explored free playing with two of London’s top jazz musicians. Drummer Dave Smith brought a self-composed starting point to the group, which formed the basis of a more groove-based and structured piece of music. We also spent much of our time exploring free improvisation through exercises that Johnny and Dave devised, both in smaller groups and as a whole ensemble. The resulting piece is included in this writing because it marked a real change in approach to sound and our relationship to each other and our audience.

This project was the catalyst for a long-term commitment to experimentation, openness and engagement with sound in its most general sense, and a real sense of shared responsibility and leadership.

Detta Danford
Natasha Zielazinski

7.1c

Co-teaching as co-learning

The project

Over the past six months a co-teaching pilot project has been run at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama. This project, which grew directly from work at the international Polifonia Innovative Conservatoire Seminars (Association of European Conservatories, 2010, p.93), brought together two tutors (Dinah Stabb and Armin Zanner) from the School’s Drama and Vocal departments, working in tandem once per week with the class of Year 1 Vocal students.

For a young conservatoire vocal student, learning recitative is hard. Bad enough in the student’s mother tongue, worse in a foreign language and near-unapproachable when it is a setting by J. S. Bach, laying bare the torments of the soul for a congregation of eighteenth-century Lutherans. The comment from one student that “I can’t sing this because I don’t believe it”, seemed to capture the problem and was the catalyst for a re-think of how to teach German Recitative at the Guildhall School.

The result was co-teaching between the recitative tutor and an actor/director from the Drama department. The classroom dynamic changed to one in which sharing was creative, experimenting was learning and dry rules of style and diction were taught in the most collegiate of contexts. The project demonstrates how co-teaching has become the starting-point for developments in co-learning between actors and singers. It resulted in a number of practical changes, including:

• a shift away from a conventional ‘masterclass’ format
• a consistent active involvement of the whole group
• an emphasis on shared learning through ‘doing’ rather than observing
• a new teacher-learner dynamic with two tutors

Lastly, this project saw the development of leadership from within the band. This ranged from individuals to whole sections being responsible for leading within the ensemble. At one point, our drummer, Sam Jones, led the whole band in a series of semi-improvised staccato stabs that acted as an interruption of a consistent percussive texture.

‘This project was the catalyst for a long-term commitment to experimentation, openness and engagement with sound in its most general sense, and a real sense of shared responsibility and leadership.’

Detta Danford
Natasha Zielazinski
Collaboration at Glyndebourne Festival

Katie Tearle
Head of Education, Glyndebourne

Katie Tearle founded the Education department at Glyndebourne in 1986. Her pioneering work is rooted in different forms of collaboration and it has inspired personal, creative and community engagement and development for a wide range of people of all ages and background. The programme of creativity, participation and learning has three strands: youth and community work, talks and events and new work. Major projects have included three site-specific community operas, the youth operas Misper and award-winning Zoe (filmed for Channel 4), School 4 Lovers, A Hip Hop Opera and most recently, Knight Crew, a new community opera with music composed by Julian Philips which was performed in March 2010. The opera, which involved over 100 young people alongside professional performers, was the subject of a BBC2 documentary series, Gareth Malone Goes to Glyndebourne.

Glyndebourne Education has, in recent years, been an important force behind the company's commitment to new work, commissioning an impressive number of works involving the community, both for the main stage, in community and educational settings in Sussex and across the country (community operas in Hastings, Ashford and Peterborough).

Katie Tearle worked closely with Julian Philips during his recent AHRC funded residency at Glyndebourne. This was a strong example of Glyndebourne Education producing and nurturing composers and creative teams in the context of education and the wider community.

Collaborative Learning within You Me Bum Bum Train

Kate Bond and Morgan Lloyd

You Me Bum Bum Train is a collaborative project where we act equally as creative directors and producers. Although we have created You Me Bum Bum Train experiences over the past six years, it was only last year that we called ourselves directors and producers, and assigned other job titles to members of the team. Originally the experience wasn't intended to be defined as a particular art form. The concept was pure, and so everyone who created it worked fluidly with their involvement without role definition. However the project was creatively led by us.

Unlike a fully funded production where the production team is chery picked, everyone and anyone is welcome to join. This is where the spirit of the production comes from. People aren't there to get paid (as no one is) so the project is all heart. The diverse range of people that come on board makes the process interesting and unusual. There is no manufactured outcome. Every single person is there with the same goal, having limited self-interest as there is neither a monetary reward nor individual accolades to achieve. Volunteering for this show is an altruistic act, sometimes involving repetitive unrewarding tasks to give passengers a magical, convincing experience. As there aren't official boundaries instilled in the structure – a diverse range of people that come on board makes the process interesting and unusual. There is no manufactured outcome. Every single person is there with the same goal, having limited self-interest as there is neither a monetary reward nor individual accolades to achieve. Volunteering for this show is an altruistic act, sometimes involving repetitive unrewarding tasks to give passengers a magical, convincing experience. As there aren't official boundaries instilled in the structure – a

Collaboration at Glyndebourne Festival

Katie Tearle
Head of Education, Glyndebourne

Katie Tearle founded the Education department at Glyndebourne in 1986. Her pioneering work is rooted in different forms of collaboration and it has inspired personal, creative and community engagement and development for a wide range of people of all ages and background. The programme of creativity, participation and learning has three strands: youth and community work, talks and events and new work. Major projects have included three site-specific community operas, the youth operas Misper and award-winning Zoe (filmed for Channel 4), School 4 Lovers, A Hip Hop Opera and most recently, Knight Crew, a new community opera with music composed by Julian Philips which was performed in March 2010. The opera, which involved over 100 young people alongside professional performers, was the subject of a BBC2 documentary series, Gareth Malone Goes to Glyndebourne.

Glyndebourne Education has, in recent years, been an important force behind the company's commitment to new work, commissioning an impressive number of works involving the community, both for the main stage, in community and educational settings in Sussex and across the country (community operas in Hastings, Ashford and Peterborough).

Katie Tearle worked closely with Julian Philips during his recent AHRC funded residency at Glyndebourne. This was a strong example of Glyndebourne Education producing and nurturing composers and creative teams in the context of education and the wider community.

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Every creative avenue we explored before collaborating on YMBBT, during and after university, didn’t quite make our hearts sing. Potentially because we were creating alone and unable to learn from others. Other people naturally fascinate us, so working with others keeps the project alive. The format of You Me Bum Bum Train inspires the imaginations of actors and passionate, so we could never predict and making the project to us. The format of You Me Bum Bum Train concept was therefore born out of trying to find meaning and fulfilment in life. We felt frustrated in not having found a creative outlet that truly inspired us, and were in desperate search for something that would. Having felt frustrated within the banality of life, we wanted to find something that felt magical, that would inspire people to interact more freely. The idea arose to create other realms where anything was possible.

As human beings, our experiences are limited due to the constraints we experience as an individual. We all want to live life to the full but how do you begin to live life to the full when there’s an infinite amount of options available? Which route is the right route? As You Me Bum Bum Train is essentially a series of unrelated moments without there being a before or after, it’s a no choice but to engage with the reality that’s thrashed in front of them. The You Me Bum Bum Train experience allows people to transcend themselves and experience other realms from other perspectives. As we are each moulded by our perception of ourselves and how we imagine others to perceive us, by creating a reality where ‘you’ are no longer you, as a passenger, you are not only gaining new experiences but you are liberated to experience yourself in a new way. Success and failure are not an option. For this one period in time you are no longer your ‘self’. By putting a person in the moment where they have no experience of the future, nor the chance to anticipate their reaction, the passenger is psychologically stripped of what can cripple us in our everyday lives, and their imagination is unleashed. Too many restricting factors in life prevent us from so much possibility. Dreams can be quashed through a poor education which doesn’t always, if ever, instil the sense that anything is possible. Having both felt that led by the education system, and uninspired by the working environments we have experienced, a huge part of You Me Bum Bum Train is that we hope to create a structure that isn’t bureaucratic or institutionalised. It is important for us to allow people to feel unhampered and enthused by the creative possibilities at their fingertips.

The ethos of what we do is to include everyone and create a real sense of equality – that we are all part of a whole, and that no role is more important than the next. It isn’t just about the means to an end or the final artistic outcome. It is about wanting to inspire the people who get involved and the group achievement of ‘We did it!’ at the end. The communal effort connects so many individuals that it creates a strong sense of belonging. You Me Bum Bum Train feels like one giant team-building exercise.

In regards to collaborating as creative directors on this project, being able to gain insight into each other’s perspectives enables us to reflect on our own ideas. There isn’t a single-minded vision as we both have to agree on each decision. It means that our ideas go through twice the amount of critical analysis than if there were one writer/director. This can only work if you truly trust the integrity and ability of your creative partner. The advantage of having a collaborative partner is when you come to a joint decision on a creative matter you have twice the belief and conviction to see it through. Being a force of two increases the confidence of an artist to put an idea into creation.

To be a good artist it could be argued that it helps to be sensitive and self-questioning, but having a self-critical personality doesn’t necessarily make you a good artist. It is only when you support each other at self-critical times. You can also discuss the stresses you are both under at any point and one may be able to overcome a problem where the other cannot. The disadvantage comes when you disagree with the creative opinion of the other. However, this stimulates further critical scrutiny of each other’s ideas which can only be a good thing when creating something worthwhile, and you will learn something out of the process.

We enjoy the unexpected element of not knowing what actors, set builders, prop-sourcers, and especially audience members will bring to each production. This surprise element is inspiring. Every element of the show changes with each production: the venue, the scenes and the team. This is a fundamental part of the format which prevents it going stale. There’s always a fresh spark that energises the project and it remains fresh each time. It’s also important for us to create something with people whose core intentions are honourable. The concept luckily mainly attracts kind, lovely people who want to be part of something creatively exciting and whose values we share. Because of this it is ambitious in the best possible way. People feed off kindness and are naturally uplifted and inspired by positivity, which is infectious in the group. There’s also the awareness that we are all attempting to create something together that feels completely unique. If we are easily comparable to something it might not be such a creative stretch for the team. Because of the enormity of the task at hand everyone involved gets far deeper into the project, staying all hours to get the job done.

The merging of people and the shared excitement brings the sense of belonging and community. It’s like a pocket-sized model of an ideal society that focuses purely on the imagination, without the drudgery of everyday life. The fact that our shows are temporary works to its advantage with its community of volunteers. The show manages to retain its enthusiasm and interest as it is only for a limited amount of time and it is over before it becomes an uninteresting everyday job.

Part of the magic of You Me Bum Bum Train is that all people, no matter who they are, are all made equal. People with status in their day jobs may perform in a subordinate role to someone whose experience of power may be novel to them. Likewise, audience members who are used to having status and respect may for the first time experience being inferior. Passengers are able to enter other realms that they may only dream about entering. This for us feels like an infintely creative project that we’d find it difficult to tire of.

Creative collaborative learning

Jill Shelley (Executive Producer, Creative Learning, Barbican and Guildhall School)

I first met Kate Bond and Morgan Lloyd when they were short-listed for the Oxford Samuel Beckett Theatre Trust Award (usually at the fringe theatre level), but have never had proper funding. The prize is aimed to be a potential ‘big break’ for companies, and as well as the money to put on the show, it is also part of the Barbican Theatre programme and gets the same press and marketing support as all the other companies in the programme. The Barican is a partner in this prize, and as well as a contribution to the prize fund, we also provide a lot of in-kind support, including the support that I give to each company. I see my role within this as a really important one. Companies who have won the Beckett Prize have often never worked with a large venue before, and learning how they operate and what sort of deadlines each department works to, is an important development for the winning company. I was clear that You Me Bum Bum Train was an incredibly ambitious project, and the way they described it was hugely exciting. It was obvious from their past experience that they had managed to deliver the near-impossible in the past.

In regards to collaborating as creative directors on this project, being able to gain insight into each other’s perspectives enables us to reflect on our own ideas. There isn’t a single-minded vision as we both have to agree on each decision. It means that our ideas go through twice the amount of critical analysis than if there were one writer/director. This can only work if you truly trust the integrity and ability of your creative partner. The advantage of having a collaborative partner is when you come to a joint decision on a creative matter you have twice the belief and conviction to see it through. Being a force of two increases the confidence of an artist to put an idea into creation.

To be a good artist it could be argued that it helps to be sensitive and self-questioning, but having a self-critical personality doesn’t necessarily make you a good artist. It is only when you support each other at self-critical times. You can also discuss the stresses you are both under at any point and one may be able to overcome a problem where the other cannot. The disadvantage comes when you disagree with the creative opinion of the other. However, this stimulates further critical scrutiny of each other’s ideas which can only be a good thing when creating something worthwhile, and you will learn something out of the process.
Working Together

YMBBT were short-listed and got an R&G grant of £2,500 to develop and test ideas for the show. This grant is always valued highly by the artists who receive it, and Kate and Morgan clearly benefited from having the money without the pressure to produce a fully finished show.

Kate and Morgan used the grant to produce 5 scenes: a mini You Me Bum Bum Train experience. Going through these scenes was exhilarating and really impressive. It was at that point that I really understood what they were trying to achieve as an ensemble project.

My role from then on was to work closely with Kate and Morgan on the planning stages. I’m very aware that the Barbican can be a daunting organisation to work with, especially for artists not used to large venues. Kate and Morgan don’t come from a traditional theatre background, so a lot of terminology (particularly around theatre job titles) was unfamiliar to them.

I feel that one of the key aspects of being a producer is to really understand artistically what the artists are producing, and to be as open and facilitative as possible. When Kate and Morgan talked ideas through with me, even when there were obvious challenges re licenses, managing audiences’ expectations (without giving anything away), I tried to approach the process as collaboratively as possible to retain the artistic vision they were looking to achieve.

One of my first jobs within the arts was working for the National Dance Agency, Dance 4. One of the projects that I took a lead on was called Show Room. This was a bi-monthly platform for emerging live artists in the East Midlands. I feel that I use many of the skills I learned during that process when I work with any of the Beckett Prize companies. I gained a real understanding of the importance it is as a producer to really understand the artistic ambition, as you are the person representing that with marketing, allowing artists the space and time to develop their ideas, and not to put practical hurdles in the way too early on. I realised how obvious challenges re licenses, managing audiences’ expectations (without giving anything away), I tried to approach the process as collaboratively as possible to retain the artistic vision they were looking to achieve.

My personal perspective is that artists should feel as free as possible to develop ideas. What is lovely about Kate and Morgan is that they are very open to understanding the boundaries that we needed to put around the show, and they were happy to work with me to find the most creative ways to do that.

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For me to do my job successfully, I need to allow myself to get artistically inspired by both the ambition of the final work, and by the artists making it.

Collaborative work in Future Band

Detta Danford and Natasha Zielinski

Our collaborative work together really started from when we first met on the MMus Leadership course at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama in September 2006. Over the course of our two years as part of the MMus programme we developed a strong personal and professional relationship based on shared experiences in which we explored new ideas and ways of making music together. This process of learning together helped to develop a strong foundation for all of our future work. In addition to this, we discovered a friendship, respect and admiration for each other, both for our differences and similarities. Throughout the course we were continually pushed to expand our playing and thinking approach to music-making within different contexts. These included projects with artists from different disciplines and cultures as well as within many different educational settings. Alongside this we were continuously collaborating as players within a range of ensembles, and slowly became aware of a musical dialogue and friendship which had an ease of understanding and felt both rewarding and worth investing in.

Towards the end of the Leadership course we quite frequently would get together to talk about ideas. In these discussions we discovered, in parallel to our musical relationships, an ease of communication and equality of energy and passion. We were able to bounce ideas off of one another and find a confidence and support which was the result of a very equal collaboration and dedication to both ourselves as co-collaborators and to the wider impact that our work aimed to effect.

When the opportunity arose to co-lead a new Connect ensemble in September 2008, it was this strong personal and professional relationship that enabled us to kickstart the ensemble with a clear understanding of what we wanted to achieve, the approaches we would use to bring this about, and the underpinning philosophy and values which informed all of these. This ensemble came to be known as Future Band and is now in its third year. Over the course of that time it has grown from a small ensemble of 10-15, to a band which has nearly 30-40 regular participants. From the outset we were privileged to have a great deal of trust and support both financially and otherwise from Barbican-Guildhall Creative Learning. The freedom that this gave us enabled the ensemble to develop organically and gave space and time to establish an atmosphere of inclusiveness, openness and experimentation, which has since become fundamental to our way of working. Furthermore, at the core of all of the work we have led with Future Band is a continuing dedication to the idea of collaboration. This is evident across the ensemble: between every participant and their relationship to the band as a whole, in the way we approach a concept or musical idea as a group, and in the way we realise those ideas as compositional structures. This has led to a strong sense of ownership by every member of the band, from participants to assistants to leaders.

Future Band meets three to four times a year, mainly in school holidays and half term breaks for 3-4 day projects. Over the last three years we have performed at the Barbican Centre and the Vortex Jazz Club and have completed a recording project at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama. One of the things we most love about Future Band is that we have the chance to work with musicians and artists of all backgrounds, genres and cultures. The process of collaboration that we are committed to as a band informs our approach to working with our guest artists. We have worked with jazz musicians, film makers, electronic musicians, theatre and poetry, as well as musicians from West Africa, Palestine and Java. Having the opportunity to work with these guest artists creates an amazing buzz within the band. For everyone, the process of collaborating and working together means that we are all constantly engaged and challenged to understand each other and find a common ground in which we can create something new. From the participants to the guest artists, to ourselves as leaders, musicians and composers, it is finding these meeting points that has led to such excitement and momentum.
Over the last five years, we have had the opportunity to work together in many different places and contexts. We hope to be able to continue this work and that the strength of our friendship and professional relationship will continue to grow and lead us down new paths. In our most recent work with Future Band we are exploring the possibilities of mentoring as a tool for developing the personal pathways of individuals within the group. We feel this is an exciting step forward for all of us, allowing more space to reflect and examine our practice, spark conversations and questions, and give individuals within the group the confidence to realise their ideas, be that musical or otherwise. All of our work with Future Band, from our first sessions to our most recent projects have had a powerful impact on our personal development and our growth as a collaborative team, and we feel that as the band has grown, so have we!

Further reflections on collaboration

In a conversation we recorded and transcribed, we looked at what collaboration meant to us and were able to distill it down to a few ideas.

Collaboration involves:

- coming together and sharing – the coming together of people, the sharing of ideas
- the creation of something new, that is a combination of all those ideas, involving some kind of exchange, interchange and conversation along the way
- the finding of meeting points or links, based on sharing and a mutual understanding
- working from this common ground, a sense of stretching, pushing and extending of processes, ideas and spaces which encourage growth and expansion in a new direction
- being comfortable without knowing, cherishing a sense of exploration
- openness and working very much in the moment and in a way that is defined by the context of a particular collaboration
- a sense of letting go of any individual agenda/aim/expectation in order to find an understanding of what these might be as a group
- a buzz or feeling that results from having found a ‘new space’ together.

Following on from the above discussion, we then looked at discovering why our own collaboration together, in a range of contexts, has been exciting, fulfilling and something we are interested in carrying further.

Between us we share:

- a mutual understanding of what collaboration involves
- dedication and commitment to shared priorities, ‘working towards the same goal’
- an ease of friendship and communication
- openness to and excitement about working with others
- willingness to push and stretch ourselves as individuals, within our own relationship and collaboration, and within the context of a wider community.

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Co-teaching as co-learning: e-mail conversation

Dinah Stabb and Armin Zanner

4 April 2011

Dinah Stabb to Armin Zanner

Dear Armin,

During the course of the interview with Peter, you were answering him and I suddenly understood the particular value of our work in the first year of the singers’ training.

I, for the first time, reflected on what I was asking from them, apart from openness, generosity etc. When I talked to them about connection and asking them what they wanted to say in a given recit or song, I was asking them to bring a personal investment into the work. At this particular moment, the beginning of their training, when it is all about a newly learnt sound, a ‘voice’ that is crafted and produced, it is essential to stay connected to the inner voice, so that it can grow alongside and stay at the centre of the new self. That is what I meant by a bridge between themselves and their developing singing voices. A big area of discussion, but do you have some thoughts to expand on Peter’s point?

Armin

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Peter in an e-mail recently writes that “the process that you and Armin have devised really does help the students to build a bridge between themselves (that is who they perceive who they are) and their developing singing voices”. A big area of discussion, but do you have some thoughts to expand on Peter’s point?

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I think that putting the German recit into a human context makes sure that the focus stays on communication as the goal of the work. When we demand that they know who they are speaking to, what is the situation, emotional and...
Dear Dinah,

13 April 2011

Armin Zanner to Dinah Stabb

Dear Dinah,

It has taken a bit for me to get back to you about these questions for Peter, but here goes...

You asked: As you reflect on your education as a singer can you identify when you became aware of your own voice in the work?

How or who helped you have an awareness of your autonomy as a creative person in music?

Challenging questions! The first is a challenge because I suppose the interest in singing came from two directions: one was discovering the repertoire, specifically song in German, French and English, later followed by operatic repertoire (which in my case I got to know backwards, from some of the key 20th-century works back), the other was my attraction to particular singers, those whose recordings I had access to or the few I was able to hear live. So the development of an own ‘voice’ was bound up with getting to know the music itself – its styles, its performance histories, its internal workings, its language, both poetical and musical – and with getting to know what certain singers did to bring that music to life in a way that spoke to me. In trying to emulate certain aspects of other singers’ uses of their voices because I wanted to achieve certain effects, I was starting to build up the technical tools that led towards an ‘own voice’. And in reading the texts, analysing them and the settings, playing the piano parts, thinking about the music from a more academic point of view, and in building experience through performance, that ‘voice’ was becoming increasingly present. It was finding a voice in stages.

But the turning point in understanding what my ‘voice’ might be, was: I was most aware that I was able to do what the music seemed to be telling me to do, was in the time I worked together with him and managed to get the ‘me’ out of the equation.

Funny that what I equate with being ‘my’ voice is also what turns out to be lacking in premeditation, planning, ‘crafting’.

Still working on it, too!

Does that give a few answers?

Now for your next question:

In our co-teaching and co-learning work with students we are aiming, I suppose, for them to let go and ultimately to find voices of their own. Yet that – as I discovered myself – is such an individual thing: it can take a very long time to happen, and everyone we work with will be at a different point on the trajectory towards finding that voice. Is there not a danger in co-learning situations that we eliminate that individuality and inadvertently hold some people back at the same time as others are helped forward?

Armin

3 May 2011

Dinah Stabb to Armin Zanner

Dear Armin,

You asked was there a danger in a co-learning situation that individuality might be compromised and because everyone develops at different rates some singers might be held back.

I think there are two questions there. Namely, does the ensemble dilute the imaginative development of the individual? And does unevenness of ability and progress in the group hamper the more able?

I am very sure that the answer to the first question is no. There is a journey of discovery to be made with your fellow singers, and everyone we work with will be at a different point on the trajectory towards finding that voice. Is there not a danger in co-learning situations that we eliminate that individuality and inadvertently hold some people back at the same time as others are helped forward?

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Armin
As to some being held back, that is a more difficult question to be sure about. In the Drama department the difference in experience not talent is very noticeable in the first year. It has as much to do with age as anything else. The students who come having done a first degree or have had some experience of independent living have to adapt to the different energy and concerns of the younger school leavers. I noticed the same amongst the first year singers.

However, what is learnt and how the individuals respond and influence each other depends on the development of a shared ethos. This is where leadership and generosity need to be fostered. There needs to be a shared goal amongst the members of the group and ways of managing the challenges that some members create.

Music-making is a collaborative endeavour. A known and trusted ensemble should be an ideal crucible for that development. A sharing of work, and in the struggle to improve, students are able to reflect on their own work and gain perspective on their development.

Individual lessons, coaching, small group lessons and private practice should be valued and given appropriate time and the fruits brought back and shared in this ensemble of learning. If successfully guided, I can’t see how it would hold a talented student back, only validate and reward their efforts.

My question to you is...

Since I have begun to understand the very different way the singers prepare their work and the lack of expectation of there being a creative exchange in the room, how can we move our work on so that there can be a more dynamic exchange between them?

What do the singers need to change or do you think it appropriate for them to change?

Dinah

Armin Zanner to Dinah Stabb

I think the issue of creative exchange in the room is one that is faced particularly by student singers. In the profession, singers work constantly with directors whose main experience is in straight theatre (terrible term, but I mean not opera), so they will be faced with that experience of creative exchange in the room. Of course, there are aspects of performing with music that restrict flexibility - timing is generally not flexible (at least in accompanied material) and the need to be heard over an orchestra demands certain stagepositioning or stamina tricks - so the nature of that creative exchange will inevitably be different, but it is creative nonetheless. The actor, however, can come to the rehearsal space a ‘clean slate’, ready to learn the role as it develops, from what I understand. That is simply impossible for a singer because of the technical vocal challenge of building the music physically into the system and of learning a whole musical structure along with words and character etc. Singers engaged for an operatic role will be learning it for a year or two, or even three, before they venture into the rehearsal. So the trick is to be creatively free and open, yet so well prepared vocally that the body and voice will allow that freedom.

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3 June 2011

Armin Zanner to Dinah Stabb

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In 2001 Peter Renshaw retired from the Guildhall School of Music & Drama as Head of Research and Development, where he pioneered the innovative programme in performance and communication skills (1984-2001) and was Gresham Professor of Music (1986-93). Formerly he was Lecturer in Philosophy of Education at the University of Leeds Institute of Education (1970-75) and Principal of the Yehudi Menuhin School (1975-84). He has a special interest in lifelong learning, mentoring, personal and professional development, and cultural change in organisations. He has devised and led mentoring development programmes for Prince Claus Conservatoire Groningen, the Royal Conservatoire The Hague, Guildhall School of Music & Drama, the Barbican Centre, the National Institute of Creative Arts & Industries, University of Auckland, the University of the Arts, London, The Sage Gateshead, Youth Music and Yo! Opera, Utrecht. Consultancies have included Bartif Centre for the Arts, Sydney Conservatorium, Queensland Conservatorium, Royal Scottish Academy of Music & Drama, the Irish Government (developing an Irish Academy for the Performing Arts), International Yehudi Menuhin Foundation, Brussels and the London Borough of Newham.

From 2001-2002 he was Chair of the Steering Group for Youth Music’s Creating a Land of Music and from 2001-2003 he was Moderator of the EU Socrates project, Sound Links, on cultural diversity in music education. In 2005, as part of Musical Futures, The Paul Hamlyn Foundation published his research report on Guildhall Connect, titled Simply Connect: ‘Next Practice’ in Group Music Making and Musical Leadership. His report Lifelong Learning for Musicians: the Place of Mentoring was published in 2006 by the Lectorate Lifelong Learning in Music at Prince Claus Conservatoire Groningen and Royal Conservatoire The Hague. In 2008 The Sage Gateshead published his evaluation report on REFLECT, the Creative Partnerships National Co-mentoring Programme. His book Engaged Passions: Searches for quality in Community Contexts was published in 2010 under the auspices of the Research Group in Lifelong Learning in Music & the Arts at Hanze University of Applied Sciences, Groningen and the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Design, Music & Dance, The Hague. For the last year he has been working on this enquiry into creative collaborative learning across the Barbican-Guildhall Campus.