

The Curious Child: Engaging very young audiences in the arts

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ABSTRACT

While artists and producers are showing increasing interest in developing artistic works for very young children, there is much uncertainty about how to write and perform for this audience. Policy and research in this field remain overwhelmingly focused on school-aged children and youth, and accessible examples of practice are all but non-existent. Focusing on participant-observations of integrated arts performances for children aged birth to eighteen months, this research aims to contribute to a better understanding of the ways in which artists can support very young children's engagement in these works. To achieve this aim, I have designed and undertaken a study that explores the field both broadly and intimately (Stake, 1981), and which balances the "gazing in" at my own experience with iterant "gazing out" towards literature and data (Tedlock, 2005). A progressive focusing research strategy (Patton, 2002; Stake, 1981) was followed, through which varying levels of breadth and intimacy were deemed appropriate at different times. This involved undertaking a field mapping study; reviewing theory and research from the fields of engagement, sociology of childhood, early childhood education, arts education, art and aesthetics, and child development; engaging in self-study; and identifying and more closely examining exemplary teaching-artist practices. Through a combination of reflective narrative and analytic discussion, I demonstrate how teaching-artists can best support very young children's engagement by focusing their practices on interactions, environment, learning and development, the image of the child, and art and aesthetics.

DECLARATION

This thesis only comprises original work towards the degree of Doctor of Philosophy;

Due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used;

The thesis is fewer than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

Signed

Jennifer Stevens-Ballenger

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my wonderful son and research partner, Hugo. Thank you for teaching me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing a doctoral thesis takes time: time to think, time to read, time to engage in field research, time to analyse, time to write, and – ok, I admit it – time to have the occasional brain meltdown. I would like to acknowledge and thank the many people who sacrificed their own time so that I could spend mine getting this thesis d.o.n.e.

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PART 1: CONTEXTUALISATION



Figure 1. A very young child engages in the integrated arts performance Rain at ArtPlay, Melbourne.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

1.1.1 An emerging interest

For the past three years, I have engaged as an early childhood consultant for a large multi-arts precinct in Melbourne. This organisation has a long and rich history of presenting new artistic works for adult audiences. Upon the appointment of a new Chief Executive Officer with an interest in arts education, a shift in focus towards creating and producing works for a broader audience was instigated, including the development of a dedicated children's programming arm to the organisation. A number of artists-in-residence, as well as external artists and volunteers, expressed interest in developing works for very young children. However, it was acknowledged by management and the artists themselves that there was a high level of uncertainty about what was appropriate when working artistically with children, and in particular, with very young children and families. As such, I was contacted and invited to share my theoretical and practical expertise about working with very young children in the arts.

Throughout the consultation period, I discovered that the artists felt strongly about the importance of providing artistic opportunities for very young children. They were cognisant that changes to their practice were necessary in order to engage this new audience, and many had made efforts to familiarise themselves with works by artists already successfully working in the field. Some had looked to policy and research but found that there was very little in the way of usable

advice for them here. As part of my consultation, I observed and spoke with the artists about their existing work, and their ideas for future projects. I responded to many questions about how very young children might be expected to respond to particular spaces, materials and interactions, and how the artists might encourage and enhance their engagement. With their questions in mind, I developed and presented a Working with Children in the Arts workshop for the producers, artists, volunteers and senior management of the multi-arts precinct.

My personal experience, as described above, reflects a movement that is happening more broadly in and across arts settings in Australia, as well as internationally. There is growing awareness of the importance of providing opportunities for very young children to engage in arts performances, resulting in an increase in the breadth of offerings for this audience (Fletcher-Watson, 2016). However, while artists and venues are demonstrating increasing interest in creating engaging works for very young audiences, the significant gap in the literature about how this might be achieved is creating a very real tension. The level of interest from those working in the field is taking some time to find its way across into related policy. References to arts performances for children in arts policy remain focused predominantly on children aged from around four or five years through to late teens (Arts Council England, 2016), and references to arts experiences for very young children in early childhood education policy remains focused on learning outcomes and caregiving (Department for Education, 2017; Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR], 2009; Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2010; Ministry of Education New Zealand, 2017; Scottish Government, 2009). Research literature focusing explicitly on very young audiences is also limited to near non-existent.

This creates challenges for any new researcher interested in this area of knowledge, as the “gap” in the literature is so significant that there is little to build upon. I admit that, on several occasions, I was tempted to shift my own research focus to an allied setting, such as early childhood education and care, or to projects with older participants. However, I was drawn back to the task each time by a persistent and overwhelming belief that very young children have a right to participate fully in arts and culture.

1.1.2 Participation in the arts benefits very young children

Although one might argue that the inherent value in very young children engaging in the arts is such that it requires little justification, the need to legitimise work for very young audiences is necessary (Weinert-Kendt, 2010). In practical terms, without clearly stated justifications, avenues for funding are rarely forthcoming, resulting in the continued marginalisation of this audience in arts programming. As such, in the following paragraphs I will summarise the key arguments in support of very young children’s participation in arts experiences, such as those that will become the focus of this study.

There is evidence that very young children and families who participate in the performing arts experience an enhanced sense of wellbeing (Australia Council for the Arts, n.d.; Creative Scotland, 2017; Creative Scotland & Children in Scotland, 2019; Fletcher-Watson, 2016; Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2010). In the literature, secure wellbeing was described as feeling satisfied (Creative Scotland & Children in Scotland, 2019), having sound mental and emotional health (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2010; Weinert-Kendt, 2010), reporting good health (Creative Scotland & Children in Scotland, 2019), finding happiness (Creative Scotland, 2017; Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2010) or thriving

(Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2010). Such outcomes were reported to have resulted from engaging creatively in an experience (Creative Scotland & Children in Scotland, 2019), participating culturally (Creative Scotland, 2017; Creative Scotland & Children in Scotland, 2019), bonding socially (Australia Council for the Arts, n.d.), or contributing to society (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2010). Strong wellbeing is an aspiration for individuals, organisations, and current governments alike. According to Bache and Reardon (2016), “the past decade has seen a dramatic increase in governmental interest in the idea of wellbeing” (p. 1). As such, legitimising performances for very young children based on their ability to enhance wellbeing may prove strategically effective when it comes to seeking financial or other support.

There is also evidence that participating in arts experiences supports very young children’s learning in the arts. That is, through engaging in these works, participants acquire knowledge and skills relevant to those artforms, such as an understanding of “duration, dynamics, pitch, timbre or tone colour, structure” (Barrett, 2012, p. 60) through participating in musical experiences or an understanding of “role and character, relationships, situation, voice, movement, focus, tension, space, time, language, symbol, audience, mood and atmosphere” (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2020, para. 10) through participating in dramatic experiences. According to Arts Council England (2016), “learning in an artform is developing the attributes, skills and techniques that will lead to increased mastery of that art form” (p. 12). Such learning is also thought to transfer to areas outside of the arts, particularly within the domains of language, physical, and social development (Australia Council for the Arts, 2014; Creative Scotland, 2017; Creative Scotland and

Children in Scotland, 2019), as well as to an enhanced capacity to engage creatively (Creative Scotland, 2017; Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2010; Ministry of Education New Zealand, 2017) and to express their understanding through a range of modes (Department for Education, 2017; Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR], 2009; Ministry of Education New Zealand, 2017). As the learning and development of very young children is something that is valued by governments, educators and families alike, highlighting such beneficial outcomes may help to legitimised arts experiences designed for very young audiences.

1.1.3 Loose parameters

The parameters surrounding arts performances for very young audiences are rather loose, making the task of defining the field somewhat of a challenge. Most artistic work for very young audiences spans across and integrates multiple artforms. That is to say, it is unusual for a performance to focus *only* on music, or *only* on theatre, or *only* on dance, without some element of another artform being incorporated in some way. Artists who self-identify as being part of the “theatre for early years” movement, clearly lead the field in terms of exploring what it means to produce and present work for very young audiences. But for those in this space, the term “theatre” is used broadly to include other artforms, and in particular, integrated approaches to performance (Fletcher-Watson, 2016). According to leading academic in early years theatre, Professor Gerd Taube (2012), “Pictures, tones, sounds, movements, materiality and the body are emancipated means of expression in the theatre for the youngest. But often other means are dominant, like physical movement, dancing or musical forms” (p. 21). Artistic director, Agnes Desfosses (2012) similarly notes that the act of combining

different modes of expression, including “design, acting, text, movement, sounds and music” (p. 99), is characteristic of theatre for early years. She goes on to note that each artform offers something that is both unique and of equal value to the overall work. In this thesis, I will use the term integrated arts performances to refer to these works.

Although a range of different artistic modes are likely to be observed in a work for very young audiences, the level of priority placed on creating works for this audience varies across artforms (Arts Council England, 2016). In his doctoral thesis about theatre for early years, British academic Ben Fletcher-Watson (2016), surmised that over 200 works had been performed for very young audiences in the UK since 1978, ranging across “opera, ballet, contemporary dance, mime, visual art installations and classical concerts” (p. 27). Even so, the vast majority of the discussion around these works is focused on just two: theatre and dance.

From within these two bodies of literature, is an emerging perception that dance offers significant benefits to participants. Dance, it is said, is a natural way for very young children to communicate in the absence of speech (Fowler, 2012; Simic, 2012). Very young children express themselves through movements and gestures, while also remaining highly receptive to the movements and gestures of others. Dance, therefore, allows them the opportunity to communicate new and existing ideas in a style that is developmentally appropriate. The active nature of dance is thought to offer physical and health benefits for participants, as well improving self-esteem (Creative Scotland & Children in Scotland, 2019). While it is accepted that dance offers such outcomes in general, it is unclear from the statements found in the literature whether there is any reliable evidence to support this claim when referring specifically to very young children’s

participation in dance-focused works (Arts Council England, 2016). Although theatre has the longest and most sustained history of all the artforms, the benefits for very young audiences are discussed less frequently. While traditional engagement in theatre is unlikely to offer the same physical and social benefits to dance, it is fair to assume that theatre performances that invite participants to engage in movement and dance as part of the work, as is common in theatre for early years, would offer similar outcomes (Arts Council England, 2016; Creative Scotland & Children in Scotland, 2019).

Those who create and present integrated arts performances for very young audiences originate from diverse backgrounds and identify in different ways (Andersen, 2017). Many consider themselves to be artists (only), distinct from teachers or educators in their beliefs, approaches and intentions. Others, note the educational value of their work as an important motivator for their practice, and consider part of their role as having pedagogical qualities. A small number of those who work in this field also engage as arts teachers, whether that be in an arts studio capacity or in educational contexts, and regard arts experiences for very young children as being a form of arts education. Of these individuals, some have formal teaching qualifications and others do not. With this spectrum in mind, I have chosen to refer to those working in this field as teaching-artists.

1.1.4 Example of an integrated arts performance for a very young audience

Defining and refining my understanding of this field has been an outcome of this research. However, because of the live and interactive nature of integrated arts performances, much is lost when attempting to condense what is important, common and unique about these works into a written academic statement. As noted by Fletcher-Watson (2016), performances designed for the very young

audience “look(s), sound(s) and feel(s) different to traditional theatrical forms for children” (p. 3). The use of thick narrative descriptions was found to be an effective way of capturing some of the nuances that would otherwise be missed in the translation from live interaction to written prose, and as such, I have used this writing device throughout the thesis. In the succeeding paragraphs, I offer a thick narrative description of an integrated arts performance for a very young audience as a way of supplementing and supporting the discussion in Section 1.1.3 above. This performance was one of sixteen that I observed during the data collection period for this study, as outlined further in Chapter 4.

1.1.5 Narrative: Lah Lah’s Magical Wonderland

There is very little traffic as I weave my car down through the city, towards the arts precinct that stretches south of Melbourne’s iconic Yarra River. It is mid-January, a time of year where many businesses are still closed following the Christmas-New Year holiday break, and children are yet to return to early learning centres and schools. Instead of the usual nine-to-five bustle of workers in suits, the city appears to be occupied by tourists and families, visiting galleries, gardens and – as I am about to do myself – The Melbourne Recital Centre, which is hosting a week-long Music Play Festival for young children.

I haul a sleeping Hugo from his rear-facing car seat, and immediately move to cover his exposed head with a sunhat. It is very hot out, and even the short walk from the car to the venue would be enough for him to develop a quick sunburn. We stroll out onto the main path leading to the venue’s entrance and fall in step behind a number of other families, all moving in the same direction, towards a saxophonist and a few ushers waiting to greet guests outside the main foyer doors. One of the ushers offers me a printed program, but as my hands are completely full of baby and bags, I am unable to take one. This is no problem as I have already

accessed the program, via the Festival's internet site, and have pre-saved a copy to my phone.

We enter and are immediately struck by a range of competing sounds: families talking loudly among each other, children squealing and yelling, babies crying, drumming sounds, and the jazzy melody of the saxophone still playing behind us. It is more than enough to wake a still-sleepy Hugo, and he lifts his body up in my arms, now wide-eyed and alert. The space is as visually chaotic as it is aurally hectic. Families mill around a number of roped-off installations, where performers of various ages (from very young children to adults) are performing, jamming, and exploring musical sounds. Although these sound experiences look really quite engaging, we don't have a lot of time to stop and participate in them. Hugo is due for a feed, and the music performance we have booked to see in the main auditorium is scheduled to begin shortly. I find a small space on a communal seat along one wall of the large foyer, and sit down to offer Hugo some milk. He is uncharacteristically disinterested in feeding at this time. The sights and sounds around him are far too interesting, and he pulls away and turns his body to observe two boys dance-wrestling in time to a djembe drumming session immediately in front of us. 'Look! They're dancing!', I say, and jig Hugo up and down on my knee as we watch. The drumming comes to a half-hearted conclusion, as the participants drift off one-by-one. As the last player stops, I pull out my phone to check the time. I don't want to enter *too* early as I worry that Hugo will become restless if he is made to sit still for more than a few minutes. But, at the same time, I don't want to miss the beginning. We rise, gather our belongings, and slowly meander up the stairs, and into the Elisabeth Murdoch Hall.

I have been to this venue on quite a number of occasions to see chamber orchestra performances, but this is the first time I have entered the hall with a child. It is always an impressive space to walk into – beautifully designed for acoustics and aesthetics, with timber panels surrounding the walls and the cathedral ceiling. An usher points us in the direction of our single seat, which is positioned on the lower tier, several meters back from the stage. As we shuffle past the other concert-goers in our row, I am

reminded that the seat backs are rather high in this auditorium. We sit down and I can see that this may prove to be a problem, as my own view is obscured by the adult in front of me, and Hugo upon my lap can see very little but the seat immediately in front of his face. I lift him to a supported stand on my knee, and he can now see more. I wonder whether I will be able to hold him this way for long, as he has neither the leg-strength nor the balance to stand for lengthy periods.

The hall is still fully lit, and I look around at the audience as we wait for the performance to begin. Most of the children in attendance range in age from small babies to approximately four years old. There are a number of larger families of two adults and several children but, like Hugo and me, the audience is predominantly made up of mothers or grandmothers with a single young child. The stage is set with many red and white umbrellas – some placed to the sides of the stage area, and some hanging above. A double bass, a keyboard, and a drum kit on a raised platform. Through their central positions and the use of spot lighting, they appear prominent and are the central focus of the performance area. I note that many of the older children in the audience are sitting up in their seats, looking expectantly at the stage. It appears that they are aware of the staged performance conventions, and are waiting for the performers to enter. The younger children, however, are more focused on their immediate surrounds than the stage. Babies interact directly with their caregivers, and toddlers fiddle with seats, programs, and move within the small floor spaces between rows.

The lights dim to a soft glow, which the audience take as a signal to become still and quiet. Four male performers enter the stage, wearing red, white and black striped clothing, in theme with the umbrellas surrounding them. Seeing that the auditorium is far from full, one of the musicians – a man with glasses, a goatee beard, and an expressive face – asks the audience to move closer toward the stage, ‘So we can sing right to you’. I wonder whether there is a level of discomfort at the distance between audience and performers, due to the band members’ mixed histories of performing at intimate jazz clubs, and teaching music to small classes of preschoolers. I

am quite familiar with this discomfort myself, having spent most of my music and teaching career working with and among a group of people. When faced with a situation in which I need to present to a large audience, I feel very uncomfortable, and do whatever I can to break down the presenter-audience barrier. This usually involves moving myself towards the people in the audience in order to make direct eye-contact and seek visual feedback, but sometimes, I do exactly what I am seeing here; I ask the audience to come to me. In any case, many families do move forward to empty seats in the front section of the auditorium. Some, like myself, choose not to relocate. I feel that the disruption does not seem worth the effort, especially as we are already seated reasonably near to the front – close enough to see the performers’ facial expression and their hands playing their instruments.

As the last of the families take their seats, the musicians begin to play... very poorly! They stop abruptly. The audience is silent as they look up at them expectantly. The performers indicate that they have “accidentally” picked up the wrong instruments, and each move to a new position, behind a different instrument: a drum kit, a double bass, a saxophone and a piano accordion. As they prepare to begin playing once more, the same man with the goatee – now standing behind his bass – tells the audience that there is one band member missing. He asks if they know who it could be, and some older children and parents call back loudly that it is “Lah Lah!” It is clear that they have some prior knowledge of the make up of the ensemble. A woman, with dark bobbed hair and a bouncing walk, enters the stage, waving. It is Lah Lah, the singer and leader of the band. As she does so, the band strikes up their most well-known piece, and the theme song for their group, Lah Lah’s Big Live Band. Wearing a head-set microphone, she joins them by singing the lyrics and leading a simple action-based dance routine. Although the ensemble has only five members, the style of music is quite big-band-ish in nature. I note that the quality of the music is much higher than I have observed in other performances during the field research period. Oftentimes, music for children does not have the full complexity of music that is written with a

discerning adult audience in mind. This is not the case here. The lyrical content is the only indicator that this piece has been written for a very young audience. It is stylistically strong and the band is tight. Hugo and I look at each other. We are both smiling. The musical introduction is followed by a scripted speech between two of the performers. They attempt to engage the audience by establishing a problem; the bass player has lost his “Boom-chugga” – which, according to the bassist, is the feeling one gets when they need to make music. The performers banter back and forth about this and refer to the audience for feedback. This section is reminiscent of the presentational technique used in pantomimes, where the actors overdramatise the story and encourage heckling from the children as a way of connecting performers and audience and eliciting higher engagement in the narrative. It appears that the older children in the audience are responding to this approach. They are looking carefully as the performers search the stage for the lost Boom-chugga, and a few are calling out suggestion as to where to look. Hugo, though unlikely to be comprehending the details of this emerging story, is also showing interest. This interest, however, is more in the older children’s responses than in what is taking place on the stage.

As the bass player launches into a song about losing and finding his Boom-chugga, some children begin to move their bodies up and down in time to the beat. The meter and quick tempo of the piece, and the modelled dancing by Lah Lah on the stage, inspires movement. I gently jig-jog Hugo up and down as he stands on my knee, and I note that other parents of younger babies and toddlers are helping them to move to the beat in similar ways. The piece is structured in a typical trad-jazz style, with whole-ensemble sections followed by individual band members taking turn to offer improvised solos on their instruments. As each musician plays his solo, the other band members turn and move towards him as a way of directing visual attention to the performer. The audience imitates, watching the way in which the instrument is manipulated to create its unique sound.

This structure – spoken dialogue between the presenters with some audience engagement, followed by a thematically related piece – continues through the rest of the performance. Exaggerated musical ideas such as *accelerando*, up-and-down pitch, pauses between bars, rhythmic patterns and beat, feature strongly. These are both inherent in the music, and explicitly directed and facilitated by the performers. Audience engagement in the performance appears highest in the older children. A handful have moved forward to a standing space directly in front of the first row of seats. These children are particularly involved in the performance, with all of them calling out to the performers, following actions, and dancing freely. Despite being quite some distance from the stage, and being unable to actively participate in the same way as the older children, young Hugo is occupied throughout the entire 30-minute concert. At no time does his behaviour need redirecting. His gaze moves between the musicians, the children dancing in the front row, and a toddler who is climbing up and down in an adjacent seat.

As *Lah Lah's Magical Wonderland* comes to an end, and I make my way toward the exit, I feel satisfied that I have offered Hugo something important. Some of my happiest childhood memories are of times spent playing and dancing to a soundtrack of live jazz music. Today has provided an unexpected, but welcome, opportunity to pass on something that I value. As we make our way through the crowded foyer, we pass Lah Lah and the band members. They have brought their instruments down from the stage to share with the children in the audience. A toddler is pulling at a bass string, and an older child is pressing the piano accordion keys. It is a pleasing sight, but we don't loiter long. With a warm glow of nostalgia, and a weary baby, I finally step out into the now-empty street, and head towards home.

1.2 ABOUT THIS STUDY

There was no single catalyst for this investigation. Rather, it was a combination of my experiences as a parent, teaching-artist and academic that led me to seek

to understand this field better. In the months preceding my enrolment in the PhD, I was a parent to three young children, and regular attendee of arts and cultural events for families. Most often, I tended towards experiences offered by larger venues and professional arts organisations within my city, relying upon their elite reputation to deliver a quality experience. This, however, was not always the result, as I noted in this early reflection, dated September 2013:

I am noticing many distracted, disinterested babies in this audience. Even though the themes appear to be 'infantile', the practices seemed more suited to an audience of much older children, or even adults. There seems to be a lack of understanding about how babies and toddlers experience the world, and how to engage them.

At the same time, I was working as an early childhood music teacher, a role which led other parents to regularly seek my advice about which arts and cultural events were valuable for their own children. I felt challenged to give them an answer. My experience as an early career academic, which involved opportunities to engage in a number of research projects with senior arts education academics, meant that I began to view this uncertainty through research-tinted glasses. Without knowing exactly what the questions were or might be, I decided to embark on an explorative research study of arts experiences for very young children in order to better understand the issues.

A full outline of the research design for this study, including justifications for the methodological choices made, can be found in Chapter 3 of this thesis. However, below I offer a summary of the research question and aim as well as the research methods that led to the study's key findings.

1.2.1 Research question

The research question for this study is:

- How can teaching-artists best support very young children's engagement in integrated arts performances?

1.2.2 Aim of the research

This research aims to contribute to a better understanding of the ways in which teaching-artists can support very young children's engagement in integrated arts performances.

1.2.3 How was this research conducted?

This research is underpinned by an interpretivist epistemology. Throughout the research process, as well as throughout the writing of the thesis itself, I strove to find a balance between the subjective and objective by "gazing in" at my own experience at times, and "gazing out" towards literature and data at other times (Tedlock, 2005). To do this justice, a custom bricolage methodology was created, through which I was able to bring together elements of case study, autoethnography, parent-research and narrative inquiry.

A progressive focusing research process was followed, particularly in the early stages of this research, during which time I engaged in a broad mapping study of the field over a 15-month period. Through iterative phases of observation and analysis of relevant literature, I came to develop the overarching research question for the study, while also defining and refining a series of thematic ideas for further exploration. Following this, I engaged in a self-study of my own practice as a teaching-artist, before moving on to look more deeply at exemplar examples of practices in the field.

Participant observations generated the primary data. This was supplemented by audio/visual artefacts, text artefacts and interviews. This data was analysed deductively, using themes generated through the mapping process. An openness to emergent questions and themes was also maintained throughout.

1.2.4 Key findings

This research identified eight practices that teaching-artists can adopt to support very young children's engagement in integrated arts performances. These ideas, listed below, are explored and discussed throughout the thesis, beginning broadly in the literature review in Chapter 3 and concluding with a distilled version of the practices in Chapter 9.

Practice 1	The teaching-artist acknowledges that the very young child belongs to many social groups and creates works with this in mind
Practice 2	The teaching-artist provides opportunities for the very young child to engage in self-directed exploration and discovery
Practice 3	The teaching-artist develops arts experiences that promote positive social relationships
Practice 4	The teaching-artist positions the very young child as a discerning connoisseur of the arts
Practice 5	The teaching-artist positions the very young child as an artistic collaborator
Practice 6	The teaching-artist demonstrates an understanding of the very young child's preferred ways of interacting with new and familiar stimuli
Practice 7	The teaching-artist provides opportunities for the very young child to develop new arts knowledge and skills
Practice 8	The teaching-artist practices the art of self-reflection

1.3 KEY TERMS

Art and art-making	Art is a process of making. It is both part of, and reflective of, everyday experience. Art “does something with some physical material, the body or something outside the body, with or without the use of intervening tools, and with a view to production of something visible, audible or tangible” (Dewey, 1934, p. 48). Art closely resembles play and refines our sensory system (Eisner, 2002). It is connecting or extending upon existing ideas in order to produce something of value (Rogoff, 1990; Dewey, 1934).
Aesthetics	Aesthetics is the audience’s perception of art (Dewey, 1934). In order for art to be aesthetic, the artist must try to foresee the audience’s experience of the art during the process of making (Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 2002). This involves empathy (Eisner, 2002), paying close attention to quality when making choices (Edwards et al., 1998), and showing an attitude of care towards things (Edwards et al., 1998; Rinaldi, 2005).
Integrated arts performances	One-off artistic works that are performative and may include some combination of theatre, music, dance, and visual art installation.
Very young children	Children aged from birth to 18-months. At times, when writing in the personal reflective narrative voice, I may use the term ‘baby’ to refer to a very young child.
Very young audiences	Children aged from birth to 18-months who participate in integrated arts performances (as defined above).
Teaching-artists	Professional artists who create and lead arts experiences with/for very young children. They generally do not hold a formal teaching qualification but may have particular interest in working with children (Andersen, 2017). At times, when writing in the personal reflective narrative voice, I may refer to these individuals as “artists”, “musicians”, or “performers”.
Engaging practice	Practices and pedagogies adopted by the teaching-artist that inspire the engagement of very young children in an integrated arts performance. (Refer to Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion.)

1.4 ROADMAP FOR THE THESIS

This thesis is presented in three sequential and interrelated sections. The first aims to provide the reader with the contextual knowledge that underpins the

research, including background information about the field (Chapter 1) and the researcher (Chapter 2), a review of relevant literature (Chapter 3), and an outline of the research methodologies and methods (Chapter 4). The second offers an exploration of the study's questions and findings, represented through three exemplar case studies (Chapters 5, 6 and 7) and an autobiographical case study (Chapter 8). The final section presents a distillation of the key findings in a form that aims to be accessible to teaching-artists who work with very young audiences, before drawing together and reflecting upon the ideas explored through the earlier chapters (Chapter 9). Figure 2, below, provides a visual representation of the structure of the thesis, including the three sections and their relationships to the thesis chapters.

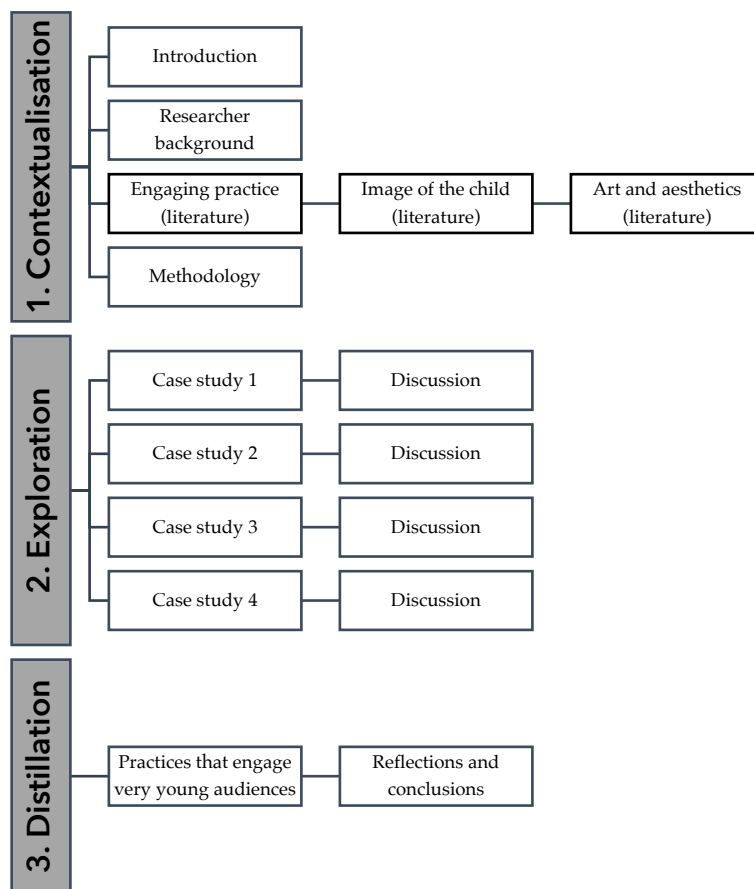


Figure 2. Structure of the thesis

CHAPTER 2. RESEARCHER BACKGROUND

This chapter acts as an extension of the introduction, providing further context about my background. Through engaging in autoethnographic self-study, I aim to position myself in relation to the research, and in doing so, acknowledge that the interpretation of data in this study is influenced by such beliefs and experiences. Four personal stories will be presented as a collective, herein. No attempts have been made to draw comparisons between them. Rather, the focus is bringing out “the voices within each narrative” (Chase, 2005. p. 663). Each story has been written to highlight particular aspects of my experience; the first is from the perspective as myself as a musician, the second as a learner, the third a parent of an infant, and the fourth a teacher. The stories are not random moments, taken indiscriminately from my life history. They were selected with an element of purpose, and with a particular goal of better understanding my complex views about integrated arts performances for very young audiences (Chase, 2005). These are but four stories from a life of 38 years, and countless experiences. They do not represent all of my beliefs about very young children, the arts, parenting, learning, or teaching, and nor could they. Rather, they aim to address the foundational interpretivist research question posed by Patton (2002), “How does my experience of this culture connect with and offer insight about this culture, situation, event, and/or way of life?” (p. 84). In choosing to present these stories alongside data-informed narratives from the field (Chapters 5, 6 and 7), I demonstrate my commitment to finding a balance between the “gaze in” and the

“gaze out” described by Tedlock (2005), as I subscribe to in the Methodology chapter of this thesis (Chapter 4).

2.1 FAMILY MUSIC

I come from a musical family. My grandfather was a jazz drummer cum cornet player. (One of his most popular Granddad Stories told of his decision to change to a smaller instrument, after struggling on the London public transport system with a drum kit one too many times!) His passion for music was an important part of his identity, and he shared this love with his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren whenever he could. At family gatherings, he would always lead us in an improvised jam session – with the “band” comprising of four generations of family members, of varying levels of ability. Musical skill was not a requirement for participation, and nor was age a barrier. Babies and young children were given kazoos, tambourines, and washboards to play, and if/when they started to formally learn an instrument, they would bring it along and contribute wherever and however they could. Partners of the family members were also included, as were unsuspecting friends and guests. The cutlery drawer was kept in reserve, as often participants outnumbered instruments, and I doubt there is a family member amongst us who cannot play the spoons! As my grandfather aged, and became less and less able to contribute musically himself, his role changed. His cornet and drumsticks were passed on to younger members of the family, and leadership of the ensemble gradually fell to his eldest two children – both competent musicians in their own right. He watched and sang with pride from the sidelines, spoons in hand, as his successors continued on the family music-making tradition, until his passing. Needless to say, we still pile the instruments in the car each time we have a family event, and the once-babies are now guitarists, singers, percussionists, brass players, and pianists in “the band”. Now it is their children who play kazoos and wear thimbles on their fingers, as they gather around the washboard.

2.2 DEVELOPING A PHILOSOPHY

It was a series of fortunate events that led me to first cross paths with Christoph Maubach. I was in the first year of university, studying for a Bachelor of Music degree, when Christoph was co-opted from the education faculty to lead a workshop with our cohort due to a staff absence. Well. Didn't that flip my life on its end! The course I was enrolled in was a fairly typical Bachelor of Music degree, covering subjects such as musical theory and language, history and styles, choral participation and direction, and practical solo instrumental tuition (in my case, piano). It was heavily weighted towards Western art music and was proudly conservative and traditional in its approach. When I walked into class that day, I instantly knew something was going to be different. The rows of desks, where we sat and listened week after week, had been pushed against the wall to one side, and the whiteboard and overhead projector were nowhere to be seen. Instead, there sat a man, on the floor, seemingly improvising on a (children's?) xylophone. He smiled and gestured for us to join him on the carpet, where he had laid-out a range of percussion instruments for us to select. Christoph led us through a series of explorative musical activities during that workshop. He spoke very little and at no time did we read, write or analyse music. Creating sounds and new musical ideas was the aim, which to many of my peers was a new and somewhat-uncomfortable scenario to find themselves in. There was quite a bit of questioning from the class about keys, requests for "the (sheet) music" and whispers of advice between neighbours, such as "Just go back to the tonic at the end of the phrase". Somehow, though, within the two-hour workshop, we collectively moved from panicking about keys, to contributing simple musical ideas, and eventually to co-creating an ensemble piece of music, complete with an accompanying dance. From that moment, I was hooked. I had to know: how on earth did that happen? How did this unassuming, smiling Christoph win over this group of reluctant teenage classical musicians, to the degree that they were now holding hands and dancing around the music studio? I felt an instant connection to this style of musical learning and participation, because it

mirrored my family “jam sessions” in many ways; everyone was welcome, all musical ideas were accepted, each participant’s level of contribution was self-directed, there was little talking and minimal explicit direction. But even more than that, it was fun. I found out afterward that Christoph was instrumental (no pun intended) in bringing the Orff approach to music and movement education to Australia and was a highly respected and sought-after Orff-inspired music educator. The next week, I entered the music studio to find that the desks had returned, and the overhead projector was displaying a Gregorian chant. It was in that moment that I made the decision to transfer from the straight Bachelor of Music degree to a combined music and education course. (Don’t get me wrong, I love a good Gregorian chant – but I’d much rather perform it than discuss it in an essay.) In hindsight, it was the right choice. I was fortunate enough to work with Christoph throughout my time studying in the education faculty, and I then went on to work and learn under his close direction across two postgraduate music education degrees. Although I am not as directly or closely influenced by the Orff approach as Christoph was, there are many aspects of his inspiring pedagogy that I continue to aim for in my own teaching. Creativity, participation, collaboration, student ownership, and learning through play, are always central in my decision-making and evident in most aspects of my work. And there are definitely no desks in my workshop spaces.

2.3 MUSICAL PARENTING

It wasn’t until I became a parent that I became fully aware that beliefs about children are not universally held. I recall being invited to a music workshop when my eldest son, Eamon, was only a few months old. Never one to pass up the offer of a jam, especially one involving homemade marimbas and found-percussion instruments, I bundled Eamon into a front-wearing baby carrier, jumped onto a city-bound train, and headed to the hall where the event was to be hosted. Despite being advertised as a “community music workshop” run by experienced educators, upon entering the bustling hall, I discovered that Eamon was the only child

there. I felt a little uncomfortable with this, wondering whether I had made a social blunder in my decision to bring him, yet at the same time indignant that he was, in fact, a member of the community. I considered making a stealthy exit, but my ever-present desire to hit things with big sticks enticed me to stay. I was glad I did; having recently rested my music practice during late pregnancy and into the weeks postpartum, it felt fabulous to play and sing with others once again. Eamon remained awake for the duration of the event, content to be held closely in the baby carrier while engaging with the novel sounds and sights around him. I received many comments from fellow participants, such as, "Look! I think he's enjoying that!" and "What a good baby!" I found this level of bemused interest in Eamon's participation surprising. To me, Eamon's involvement in the workshop was natural, his reactions typical, and his behaviours expected.

2.4 MUSIC WITH VERY YOUNG CHILDREN

I have taught many infant-toddler music classes, across a range of community and early childhood education settings. But there is one particular class that stands out in my memory; my first. Like many "firsts" in life – first steps, first day of school, first love, first job, first child – the memory of this first experience lives with me and has helped shape who I am as an educator, artist and parent. It is a fond memory, and I still look back, very many years later, with a strong sense of fondness for the very young children in this group, and a sense of attachment that has never quite been replicated through other teaching experiences.

I came to teach this class through a role as a specialist early childhood music teacher for a small private studio. I should note that, although this was my first experience working musically with very young children in an ongoing capacity, it was not my first early childhood music teaching experience; I had taught older toddlers and preschoolers for many years previously, as well as instrumental piano teaching from beginners to advanced. I also came into this role post-education degree, so there was a certain level of practical experience, pedagogy, and theoretical knowledge

in my kit bag. I think this certainly had an influence on the interactions that occurred in the classes, and I know it had an impact on how I viewed these interactions and experiences. I was ready for the challenges that it brought to my teaching practices and beliefs. The small studio I was employed by had an existing music curriculum for very young children, based largely on Orff and Kodaly ideas. However, it was not prescriptive, and I was encouraged to use as much or little of it as I felt was appropriate. The focus of the program was Musical Parenting, with the emphasis placed on the adults in the group learning to lead musical experiences with their very young child.

2.4.1 Dashiell

The first thing I learned, through working musically with very young children in this first music class, was that the traditional music circle – where the teacher and all participants gather on the floor in a circle – was not always an appropriate set-up. While it tends to work well with older toddlers, preschoolers, and early primary children, and provides a community sharing space where all musicians can see and hear each other, it has significant limitations with the very young. One of the children in this group, Dashiell, was what I often refer to as a “runner”. When I met him, he was learning to crawl and wanted to try out this new skill at every opportunity. The existing program was centred on music circle activities, with very young children sitting with parents. It was immediately evident that this was not going to suit Dashiell! As soon as he saw a chance, he was off exploring the open-shut technicalities of the doors, the chairs around the periphery of the room, and the baskets underneath the participants’ prams. Later, as he learned to walk (and not long after, run!) he would make an immediate beeline for the table which displayed the instruments and props for the music workshop. At first, his mother was very apologetic and expressed that she wished he would “just sit like the other children”. In time, and as we made changes to the program to incorporate Dashiell’s (and, indeed many young children’s) need to explore, this concern lessened, and Dashiell’s curiosity became something she was able to recognise as a positive learning attribute.

2.4.2 Charlotte

Whilst Dashiell was confidently exploring the music room, Charlotte was quietly sitting with her mother, often with her head snuggled tightly into her mother's chest, with one eye peeping out. Charlotte showed a strong preference for music experiences that were familiar and communal – that is, when we all sang and/or played previously learned pieces together, Charlotte would outwardly grow in confidence and would sing and play intently. She would wave her arms, vocalise, shake and tap instruments, and occasionally manipulate props. However, Charlotte would regularly cry or hide her head during transitions between a group circle activity and a movement or exploratory activity away from the circle. She would sit quietly when introduced to new material and would rarely “join in”. She was also reluctant to play or sing on her own or in duet with me or her mother. Working with Charlotte over a period of years reinforced to me the importance of building a strong working relationship with parents, and I believe Charlotte's development in music was positively enhanced through, what was essentially, a team-teaching effort between Charlotte's mum, Eve, and myself. While Charlotte was often a quiet observer in the music class, rather than an active participant, she would replicate the ideas once in the secure location of her own environment. Eve reported that, as soon as Charlotte was securely in the car and they were on their way home from the music session, she would begin singing loudly. She would practise music at home all week, until the next music class, where she would sit quietly once more. This delayed imitation was evident in Charlotte from a very young age, which challenged my thinking about child development. As far as I knew, this happened much later in toddlerhood! Although I intellectually understood the importance of repetition in early childhood, working with Charlotte really reinforced this concept. It was through the repetition of familiar pieces that Charlotte was able to show her understanding, and together we built a repertoire of Charlotte's Favourites which, when employed in the class, would have the effect of enticing her to participate. This also reinforced to me that very

young children understand far more than they show – again, something I knew theoretically but at times overlooked in the moment.

2.4.3 Gus

Gus was one of the dearest children I have ever taught, possessing all of the attributes that enthuse me as a teacher; a sharp intelligence, an inquisitive nature, enthusiasm, and a friendly disposition. I looked forward to seeing him each week. But the thing that I remember most about Gus was his mechanical mind. Each time he came across a new instrument or prop, rather than shaking, hitting, playing it – as the other children did – he would examine the object all over in great detail. He would turn it over, inspecting each of its parts closely, touching the components to see how they were attached and what would happen if they were moved. If it was a shaking object, he would experiment with different ways to shake it, but would also see what it was like when struck, or rolled, or dropped. If possible, he would deconstruct the object – removing its parts – and then reconstruct it, often repeatedly. This exploration would go on for some time, and Gus maintained a focus on his object discoveries even when the rest of the group moved into song or activity with the objects. After each explorative session, there would come a time when Gus would look up from his inquiry, look around the room to see how the other children were manipulating the object, and would join them. It was if he was saying, “Okay, I get it now. I’m ready to join in”. During the first few workshops, Gus’s mother tried to encourage him to immediately join the activity with the other children, but her attempts to divert his attention were not successful. After we built explorative phases into the program to cater to Gus’s interest, like Dashiell, Gus’s unique way of interacting with the materials became viewed as a positive learning attribute.

2.4.4 Frieda

There was one very young child in the class that behaved as I expected. Frieda was born into a musical family. Her mother, Grace, who also attended the classes, was a professional viola da gamba player and an experienced choral singer. Frieda had been exposed to live music from

before birth and was growing up in a home where singing and playing music was a natural and common form of communication and expression. The activities that we engaged in during the music sessions, therefore, were an extension on the learning that was already taking place in the home. Frieda was accustomed to being sung to and to singing. She was used to moving in response to music – alone and with her mother. She knew that people (including her own self) made music, and that manipulating instruments and objects in different ways, produced different sounds. The music classes provided Frieda and Grace with additional resources for music – new repertoire and ideas about how to respond to music through play and movement. They also provided Frieda with opportunities to share her lived experience of music with other children and families, in a supportive community context. As a result of this unity between home and class, Frieda was a confident musical learner, who participated enthusiastically in familiar and unfamiliar activities. She was particularly interested in new ideas and was able to quickly absorb them into her developing musical schemas. She reminded me of the children in my extended family, and now in retrospect, of my own children – all of whom have shared the gift of a musical family in which, and from which, to learn.

2.4.5 Differentiating the curriculum

With these four very young children in the same music class, it became immediately clear to me that using an existing curriculum was not going to provide the best learning outcomes, or even the most enjoyable experience, for the participants. What was needed was a program that catered to the individual interests and learning preferences of the participants, with space for Dashiell to move freely about, objects for Gus to test and explore, group activities, repetition and routines for Charlotte, and new repertoire and playful ways of responding to music for Frieda. As this amended and emergent program developed over the weeks, each of the children had opportunities to shine in various aspects of each workshop – which brought their mothers great joy, and in turn led to a positive experience for all of the participants. The program moved from a

Musical Parenting focus, which was inherently adult centred and led, to positioning the very young participants as the musicians and learners. It wasn't perfect. There are many things I would change about it if I were to go back now, after many more years of teaching, learning, and parenting. But it was a first: an eye-opening, ear-opening, heart-opening first, that provided me with a seed of understanding about engaging very young children in the art of music, and a direction to grow in my work.

2.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, I have offered personal stories as a way of bringing to light the myriad ways in which my previous experiences influence the interpretation of data for this study. This complements and extends upon the early insights about my background offered in the introductory chapter of this thesis (Chapter 1) and pre-empt more in-depth discussions about interpretivist research and auto-ethnography, which are presented in the Methodology Chapter (Sections 4.1.1 and 4.2.3).

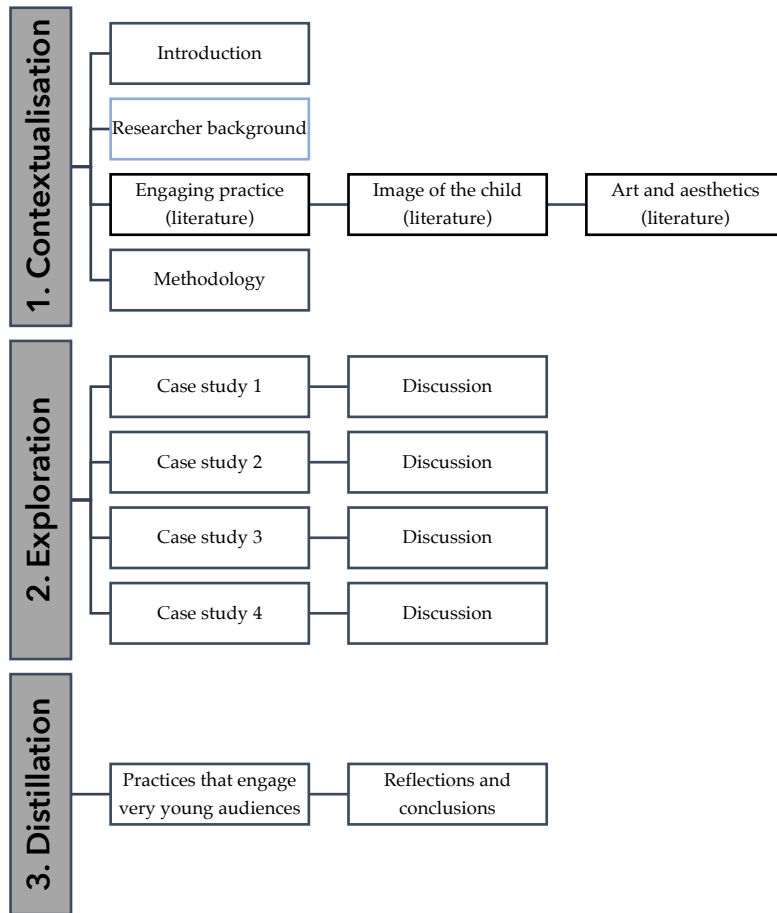


Figure 3. This chapter (highlighted in blue) shown in relation to the other chapters of this thesis.

CHAPTER 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review was conducted after spending several weeks observing integrated arts performances for very young audiences. As will be discussed in the Methodology Chapter (Chapter 4) of this thesis, this mapping observation period provided me with an opportunity to take notice of the range of practices adopted by teaching-artists who work in this field. What stood out, more than anything else, was that some practices appeared to inspire the engagement of the audience, but many did not. Although I held my own intuitive ideas about why some practices were more engaging than others (Eisner, 1976; Polanyi, 1966), the desire for a more research-based answer to this problem led me to the literature.

The following review aims to provide me with a summary of engaging practices that I can use to focus further field observations. It is guided by the emergent question:

- What does the literature say about practices that engage very young children?

3.1 ENGAGEMENT

The term *engagement* has gained significant traction in educational research and policy over the past two decades, to the point where it is now used widely and with seemingly different meanings, depending upon the context in which it is used. The focus on engagement, within the field of education, appears to have arisen largely in response to the perceived lack of engagement – or the disengagement – of children and adolescents in educational learning environments. According to Taylor & Parsons (2011), this was seen to be

evidenced by low student achievement rates, a general disinterest in learning, and high levels of school dropouts before graduation. Much of the research about engagement undertaken in 1980s-1990s continued to examine the at-risk and disengaged, with the aim of keeping students enrolled in school. Others, largely teacher-researchers, moved on to look at engagement in relation to improving behaviours within the classroom. A particular focus across research, policy, and practice grew around finding strategies to entice students to want to learn (i.e. to become self-directed, life-long learners), rather than simply displaying positive conduct and a willingness to participate (Chapman, 2003; Harris, 2008; Taylor & Parsons, 2011)). Although such aspirations are held for children of all ages, in the early childhood literature, the term engagement is used far less frequently. There is, however, a strong understanding that experiences should reflect a child's interest (Department for Education, 2017; Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR], 2009; Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2010; Ministry of Education New Zealand, 2017) – an idea that appears to overlap in many ways with discussions about engagement in the school sector. In the performing arts, the term engagement is also widely used, most often to describe or measure basic public participation (Arts Council England, 2016; Australia Council for the Arts, 2010; Australia Council for the Arts, 2014). However, around the margins where arts and education meet, such as in programs where artists work with schools, the conversations around engagement have started to shift towards the practices and artist pedagogies that encourage children to deeply connect with the content and delivery (Brown, 2015; English School Boards of Quebec, 2013; Imms et al., 2011; Jeanneret &

Brown, 2013; Sharp & Lee, 2015). It is these ideas that are most relevant to this study.

As diverse as the reasons for examining engagement, so too are the approaches taken to explain what engagement is (or is not), and what it looks like. One well-established model was developed by Fredricks et al. (2004). In this model, engagement is divided into three domains: behavioural, emotional, and cognitive. The behavioural domain focuses on a child's conduct, their involvement in learning, and their level of participation; the emotional domain focuses on attitudes, affective reactions, and sense of belonging; and the cognitive domain focuses on a child's investment in a task (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2013; Fredricks et al., 2004). Such a model has proven useful for many organisations, including the Victorian Government's Department of Education (DET), which uses it as a framework when supporting individual primary and secondary schools to develop behavioural policies (Victorian Government, 2018). Although I have included Fredricks et al.'s influential work in this literature review, I have chosen not to use it as a central organiser, as the overlap between concepts within each of the three domains was found to be so significant that the use of the categories was quite impractical. What's more, its relevance when thinking about an audience of very young children is unclear. Instead, I have opted to present dominant ideas from across the literature, with a view of later condensing and categorising these into a bespoke set of themes that will support my future data analysis.

This research makes no attempt to directly measure whether the audience was engaged, nor the indicators of such engagement. Rather, it aims to better understand the *teaching-artist practices* that inspire engagement in very young

audiences. The following literature review supports this outcome. To my knowledge, there have been no previous studies that have looked directly at this topic. As such, I have turned to eminent thinkers and researchers from across the related fields of engagement (broadly), the arts and engagement, child development and engagement, and parent-child engagement, for answers.

3.2. PRACTICES THAT ENGAGE VERY YOUNG CHILDREN

3.2.1 Social-relational focus

When reading across the literature, one idea emerged as being particularly common: a social-relational focus in an experience can support child engagement (Andersen et al., 2010; Bandura, 1977; Bronfenbrenner, 2009; Brown, 2015; Brown, 2016; Custodero, 2005; English School Boards of Quebec, 2013; Fredricks et al., 2004; Jablon & Wilkinson, 2006; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013; Lussier et al., 1994; Rogoff, 1990; Tayler et al., 2006; Turino, 2008; Vygotsky, 2009). Edwards et al. (1998) refer to this factor as the “pedagogy of relations” (p. 11). They suggest that when relationships are viewed as central they are more likely to empower children to act with agency and to support engagement.

Turino (2008) explored the importance of a social-relational focus rather directly in his theoretical writings on participatory music. He posits that collaborative music-making can have one of two aims: presentation or participation. In participatory music, the focus is on the social interactions with others, rather than any particular performance outcome. Judgements are based upon participation and contribution to the group. When pressure is taken off the presentational aspects of music-making, and value is directed towards the social-relational

outcomes of a group experience, Turino believes that participants are more likely to show engaged behaviours.

According to Fredricks et al. (2004), providing opportunities for collaboration can enhance a participant's experience in an activity, and make them more likely to exhibit engaged behaviours. The importance of collaboration was also a finding in Jeanneret and Brown's (2013) study into engagement in artist-led experiences for children. They found that collaboration – particularly between children, families and artists – was a feature of engaging practice. They went on to unpack this idea in more detail, indicating that the nature and quality of the collaboration (e.g. the social climate and positive relationships) influenced the level to which engagement was supported.

The combination of players involved in a collaborative experience was seen to be of significance to a number of the authors included in this review. The inclusion of family members was widely regarded as a key factor in supporting a child's engagement in an experience. While some authors left the definition of "family" somewhat open (Andersen et al., 2010; Fredricks et al., 2004; Tayler et al., 2006), Bronfenbrenner (2009) discussed the importance of the primary dyad – i.e. the relationship between parent and child – as particularly important. He believes that when young children are given opportunities to collaborate with their own parent, they are more likely to be engaged (and learn). Other authors were not quite as specific about this, but it was implied through examples or descriptions of the context for their research (Andersen et al., 2010; Brown, 2015; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013).

Same-age peer collaborations were also seen to be positively aligned with engagement. Custodero (2005) and Rogoff (1990) both found that even very

young children could benefit from peer-groupings, though both authors also noted the significance of adult-child interactions, indicating that perhaps collaborations that included both adults and children may be best supportive of engagement. This seems to align to some degree with Turino's (2008) suggestion of creating collaborative groups to include beginners, intermediate and experts – although I acknowledge that in many situations, a child may be the expert and an adult may be seen as unnecessary under this model. Fredricks et al. (2004) speak of the importance of peer acceptance, noting that this can influence ongoing levels of engagement. Although Fredricks et al.'s work is largely focused on older children and teens, and it is unclear whether this finding is transferrable to experiences for much younger participants, this is worth noting, and perhaps even exploring further as this research progresses.

Many authors noted that adults interacting with children was critically important to a child's level of engagement in an experience (Andersen et al., 2010; Bandura, 1977; Brown, 2015; Crimmins & Alberti, 1994; Edwards et al., 1998; Eisner, 2002; Eisner, 2004; Jablon & Wilkinson, 2006; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013; Lussier et al., 2003; Malaguzzi, 2016; Rinaldi, 2005; Rogoff, 1990; Turino, 2008; van Manen, 2015; Vecchi, 2010; Vygotsky, 1978; Warburton et al., 2014). However, it is the nature of these interactions and the impact of them on the social climate and relationships between participants, that has the greater influence. Unsurprisingly, a poor interaction between an adult and child is negatively associated with (i.e. it restricts) engagement. Adult-child interactions that support engagement are explored further through the themes below.

3.2.2 Play

Children from all cultures engage in play. The purpose of this activity, however, is not agreed upon. In the literature, definitions tended to align closely with the area of expertise that the author worked in. Those from the evolutionary biological sciences often view play as a primal, animalistic behavior that we share with other young mammals (Brown, 2009; Fagen, 1981; Goodall, 1968). Those coming from the neuroscientific fields tend to focus on the ways that it creates and supports neural pathways (Pellis et al., 2010). Psychiatrists speak of the importance of play for processing and expressing emotions (Erikson, 1950; Freud, 1966). And many educators believe that play is so closely interconnected with learning and development, that without it, children would fail to thrive cognitively, physically and emotionally (Fleer, 2017; Malaguzzi, 2016; Montessori, 1946; Walker & Bass, 2015). Despite the range of views about why children play, there appears to be consensus that play is “highly serious and of deep significance” (Froebel, 1896, p. 55).

Play peaks in the early to middle years of childhood, between the ages of approximately 2 and 9 years. After this time, children tend to move into more organised sports or social activities, and the time spent manipulating objects without purpose declines. Before 2 years old, children appear to “experiment” more than play, and the learning taking place in their behaviours appears more obvious. For example, a 3-year-old who is provided with a toy wooden train may push the train, make train sounds, connect the train with other trains, and use people to interact with the train. It is easy for the observer to see the child has an understanding of trains and is able to use her imagination to create or recreate a scenario that represents the real world. A 1-year-old provided with the same toy

may place the train in her mouth. She may throw the train to the ground and show pleasure when it is picked up and handed to her again. She may carry the train around. Although this child is learning from the train, these behaviours do not align as closely with common definitions of play. In his highly cited book, *Mind in Society: The development of higher psychological processes* (1978), Vygotsky notes that “early play” is more a replay of a child’s real-life experience than it is “play” as we have come to understand it. He goes as far as saying that children under 3 years of age cannot engage in play at all. This is not widely accepted, as the play of very young children can be viewed through the lenses of “schematic play” (Atherton & Nutbrown, 2016), object play (Brown, 2009; Montessori, 1966), and relational play.

That play emerged as a characteristic of engaging practice is no real surprise. A number of authors (Brown, 2015; Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Custodero, 2005; Dansereau, 2011) wrote directly about the importance of play and its positive impact on a child’s level of engagement in an experience. Play allows children opportunities to explore and self-direct their own interactions with the environment, materials and others – which, as discussed later in this chapter, are all positively aligned with engaging practice. Some authors chose to discuss play in relation to a particular characteristic. For example, Eisner (2004) emphasised the importance of providing children with tasks that prioritise “doing”; Fredricks et al. (2004) and Jablon and Wilkinson (2006) both spoke about making experiences “fun”; Brown (2015) noted that having “no set goals” was often found in engaging experiences; and Csikszentmihalyi (1991) asserted that “intrinsic rewards” can help motivate children. Authors also approached the topic of play by focusing on a particular type. Brown (2015), in particular,

provided detail about the types of play that were seen to be supportive of engagement in his research. He determined that “dramatic play”, “physical play”, “artful play”, and “imaginative play” were observed during episodes of engaging practice. Jeanneret and Brown (2013) added “creative play” to this mix, which could be seen to overlap in some ways with the artful and imaginative play ideas identified by Brown. Dansereau (2011) points to an important idea: free play. According to Weisberg et al. (2013), free play provides children with open opportunities to play with full autonomy and little, if any, guidance from adults. Whether this is a characteristic of engaging practice is unclear. Many of the authors included in this review made claims that appear to contradict this in some way (Andersen et al., 2010; Bandura, 1977; Brown, 2015; Brown, 2016; Chappell & Young, 2007; Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Custodero, 2005; Edwards et al., 1998; Fredricks et al., 2004; Jablon & Wilkinson, 2006; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013; Lussier et al., 1994; McWilliam et al., 2003; Rogoff, 1990; Tayler et al., 2006; Vygotsky, 2009). Adult guidance, whether that be through interactions, feedback, modeling, scaffolding, and so forth, was viewed as an important component in the engagement of children in a task and this tension will be explored further in this thesis.

Schema theory has its roots in Jean Piaget’s (1950; 1953; 1967) psychological work on child development. It is based on the cognitive constructivist notion that children learn through interacting with the environment and others, and that the feedback they receive – whether positive or negative – reinforces this learning and sets up a snowball-like trajectory of development. Such beliefs about how children learn dominated education and psychological discourse for many years, and elements of such thinking remains evident in the current educational

practices and theories. While current thought has moved increasingly towards social constructivism, and away from cognitive constructivism and its related positivism, there remains a place for some elements of Piaget's developmental propositions. Anyone who has worked closely with very young children, including parents and teachers, will likely have noticed that they develop preferred ways of interacting with the world. These preferences are so strong and noticeable that they are often referred to as "obsessions". A very young child may, for example, show a strong preference for mouthing objects. It would not matter whether that object was something designed to be placed in the mouth or not. The very young child is equally as driven to mouth a spoon, shoe, dog or hand. It is believed that this preference, or obsession, comes about because this is the most efficient and likely way for the child to learn about this object at this moment of his/her development.

Schematic play, as a developmental theory, is finding traction in early childhood education literature, particularly when very young children are the focus of study. Although it is experiencing somewhat of a resurgence, it is broadly based on ideas that arose during the constructivist boom in the mid twentieth century. According to Piaget (1953; 1967) and Montessori (1966), children in the first two years of life are driven to solve problems through developing repetitive patterns of behaviour. These patterns of behaviour emerge as freely chosen, highly satisfying ways of experiencing the world. They most often actualise in and through object manipulation. The child, driven to understand the environment, will enact her preferred pattern of behaviour against a wide range of stimuli. Oftentimes, especially during early phases of the pattern emergence, the behaviour may seem an unusual way of seeking to understand an object.

Atherton and Nutbrown (2016) give an example of this in their study of 8-month-old Annie, who was observed in a range of situations over a period of months. Annie showed a strong preference for what the researchers referred to as “containing and enveloping” (Atherton & Nutbrown, 2016, p. 66); placing objects inside others, emptying them out again, covering them over, and repeating this process over and over again. On one occasion, Annie enacted this pattern on a container of paint. When presented with a pot of paint and a brush, she grasped the brush and painted the back of her own hand. She then placed her whole hand inside the paint pot. The researchers concluded that, although an unconventional strategy, Annie was seeking to understand the “spatial interrelations of objects; the relation of contents to container” (p. 68) through schematic play.

3.2.3 Level of challenge

The level of challenge in any given experience, and the relationship that this has to engagement, is complex. It appears that most of the authors believed that “challenge” was a good thing. That is, when practitioners encourage children to take on new challenges (Jeanneret & Brown, 2013) or when an experience is inherently challenging (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Edwards et al., 1998), engagement is supported and enhanced. If this is accepted (and it is not universally so) then the question becomes how much challenge is too much, and how little challenge is too little? Turino (2008) explored this to some degree, stating that, ideally, a task should be “not too hard, not too easy”. But what does this mean in practice? According to Vygotsky (2009) and Rogoff (1990), the “sweet spot” between too much challenge and too little challenge can be found just above an individual’s current comfortable level of participation. The belief is that when an experience falls within this zone of proximal development

(Vygotsky, 1978) – whether that be through intervention and deliberate scaffolding by an adult (Brown, 2016; Tayler et al., 2006) or because it naturally falls within this zone – it is more likely to be engaging. Although most of the authors did not directly reference the zone of proximal development, they did use language that showed similar thinking about finding the right level of challenge. Csikszentmihalyi (1991) advises that an experience should stretch existing skills, with “complexity” offering a way into achieving this. Turino (2008) recommends that experiences should be planned with an ever-expanding ceiling of challenges, which aligns with Jeanneret and Brown’s (2013) finding that experiences that were accessible to diverse abilities and ages were generally found to be highly engaging. How to achieve the goal of offering the right level of challenge for all participants, while also ensuring that experiences have a social-relational focus, are playful, and position children with agency, is unclear, and may pose quite a significant challenge in and of itself. Rogoff (1990) suggests that a solution to this may be found when adults support a slow transfer of responsibility, from adult to child, as the child becomes able to take responsibility for the task.

3.2.4 Level of guidance

The role of the adult is central to the idea of engaging practice with young children. Throughout the literature, there were countless suggestions about what the adult should or should not do to support and enhance children’s engagement. How much guidance should they give – if any – in order to create a space where children feel a sense of autonomy and ownership? How much guidance should they give – if any – in order for children to find themselves in the zone of proximal development (Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978), where engagement is said

to be greatest? According to Brown (2015) and Andersen et al. (2010), experiences should ideally be both planned and responsive. Van Manen (2015) agrees, and notes that this tends to occur whether an adult has this in mind or not. He suggests that the live nature of interactions with children requires pedagogues to largely improvise, regardless of whether or not they entered the interaction with a plan to guide the outcome in a particular way.

After synthesising the literature, I have concluded that it is possible for an experience to be play-based (Brown, 2015; Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Custodero, 2005), child-led (Dansereau, 2011), creative (Dewey, 1934; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013), and artful (Brown, 2015; O'Neill & Senyshyn, 2012), while still allowing for more interventionist ideas such as modelling (Bandura, 1977), imitation (Bandura, 1977), providing feedback (Brown, 2015; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013), and scaffolding (Brown, 2016; Tayler et al., 2006). A planned experience may, for example, involve setting up a provocation that allows time and space for children to explore and direct their own learning. In this setting, the adult can co-play and model, while children explore and problem-solve. With adults working alongside them, children are able to observe and imitate in a naturalistic way (Bronfenbrenner, 2009; Lussier et al., 1994; McWilliam et al., 2003).

There is some debate around whether or not the adult should outline clear goals for the experience. Fredricks et al. (2004) say they should, as providing clearly articulated expectations, along with consequences for not adhering to these, can help children become and stay engaged. However, Fredricks et al.'s ideas seem to contradict a more common theme found across the literature – that experiences should be open-ended, and be developed and evaluated by the children themselves (Brown, 2015; Brown, 2016; Chappell & Young, 2007;

Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013; Tayler et al., 2006; Turino, 2008). It may be that goals can also be both planned and responsive. The adult may have an idea of the direction in which they want a particular experience to head, and plan around this – in what Csikszentmihalyi (1991) refers to as “embedded goals” – but stay open to moving with some (but perhaps not all) ideas that emerge from the children’s explorations and discoveries. How this looks in practice is of interest to me, and I would like to explore this further as this study develops.

In order for adults to be responsive, interventions should be naturalistic and individualistic. According to several authors, direct instruction has a place within this, especially with regard to the use of materials and techniques (Edwards et al., 1998; Jablon & Wilkinson, 2006; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013). Providing expert advice and opinion can be done in a way that adds to and extends upon a child’s own explorations. Knowing when to intervene takes experience and sensitivity on the part of the adult (Edwards et al., 1998), a point highlighted by Jeanneret and Brown (2013) when they identified that artists who had previous experience working with children often displayed attributes that aligned with engaging practice. The adult, according to Bronfenbrenner (2009), should be open to reciprocity. That is, the adult may provide advice and feedback to a child in the setting but may equally take advice and receive feedback from the child.

Feedback emerged as a key issue across the literature. It seems that the types of feedback, and the way it is delivered, can either support or hinder engagement. Engaging practice includes feedback that is responsive to the child (Jeanneret & Brown, 2013; Lussier et al., 1994) and/or the experience itself. It can be verbal or non-verbal (Eisner, 2002). It can be intentional (i.e. the adult provides direct

feedback with a view of reinforcing or improving an outcome) or it can be embedded in the task (i.e. a situation is planned and set up in such a way that the environment or context provides positive or negative reinforcement).

Scaffolding is an important component of the adult's role. It can be planned for when the topic, the materials, the goals, etc. are targeted within and just beyond the participant's existing comfort level (Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 2009). When there are multiple participants, the experience can be planned to have multiple entry points (Chappell & Young, 2007), varying levels of expertise required (Rogoff, 1990; Turino, 2008; Vygotsky, 2009), and an ever-expanding ceiling of challenges (Turino, 2008). Scaffolding also takes place in a responsive space, when adults provide on-the-fly feedback that aims to push a child's achievement in a task forward a little.

While Brown's (2015) and Andersen et al.'s (2010) proposition that engaging experiences should be both planned and responsive is insightful and reflective of the ideas expressed across the broader body of literature, how this plays out in practice, especially with very young children, is not entirely clear. What the adult says or does when providing feedback, for example, is rarely outlined. What an initial experience plan might look like – what is detailed and what is left open – is also unclear. These details warrant further inquiry, in order to fully understand what an adult can do to support a child's engagement.

3.2.5 Materials

Engaging practice ideally involves children being actively involved in an experience. Play, as discussed previously, is one way that this can be encouraged. While play can take many forms (dramatic play, social play, physical play, etc.),

when available, children will often choose to incorporate objects into their play scenarios. Providing access to materials, therefore, is one way that adults can support children's play, and potentially enhance their engagement. A number of the authors noted that materials were important to engagement (Andersen et al., 2010; Brown, 2015; Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 2002; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013; Lussier et al., 1994), but only a small subset described the nature of these materials in some detail (Andersen et al., 2010; Brown, 2015; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013). It seems likely that the quality of materials would have an influence on the level of engagement. Understanding the types of materials that support engagement, therefore, can bring us closer to better understanding engaging practice. Brown's (2015) and Jeanneret and Brown's (2013) research at ArtPlay is valuable here. According to Brown, adults should provide an assortment of materials for children to access. Jeanneret & Brown state that these materials should be simple for children to use, which makes sense when you consider that the aim is for children to explore with some level of autonomy and freedom (Chappell & Young, 2007; Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Fredricks et al., 2004). They also encourage the use of artist-quality materials which, depending on the materials in question, may be seen to contradict their earlier point. Some artist-quality materials, especially in fields such as music, may be inherently difficult for very young children to manipulate. Having said this, providing both simple materials and artist-quality materials supports Brown's idea of providing an assortment of materials, and also aligns with some of the ideas around an engaging experience being both planned and responsive, as discussed in the section above. One idea that authors overwhelmingly agreed upon, is that materials should be readily transformable (Andersen et al., 2010; Brown, 2015; Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 2002;

Jeanneret & Brown, 2013). Eisner (2002) believes that materials should stimulate the senses, and that they should require crafting by the child in order to be of use. He makes a particular reference to the inherent value in tactile materials. Dewey (1934) agrees, stating that materials must undergo change. It should be noted, however, that neither Eisner nor Dewey was focusing on very young children in these discussions. The nature of this change remains open and is something that I will aim to better understand through observing and reflecting on this in practice. Brown (2015) provides two more points about the incorporation of materials that are helpful for those of us wishing to better understand engaging practice: 1) that materials should be deliberately placed by the adult in the space, and 2) the materials should provoke aesthetic interest. Again, this needs further exploration to more closely comprehend what this might look like in practice.

3.2.6 Environment

There was some consensus across the literature that a supportive environment is a key characteristic of engaging practice. Dewey (1934) states that “life goes on in an environment; not merely *in it* but because of it, through interaction with it” (p. 12). Discussions on this point took one of two directions: either the authors focused on the nature of the physical environment (Andersen et al., 2010; Fredricks et al., 2004; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013) or they focused on the emotional climate of the environment (Andersen et al., 2010; Tayler et al., 2006). It seems both are equally important. Whether these two ideas belong under the same theme is unclear at this stage, but I expect this will become clearer as these ideas are further explored and problematised through this study.

In order for children to explore freely, the physical environment in which an experience takes place should be safe (Andersen et al., 2010; Jeanneret & Brown,

2013; Tayler et al., 2006). This seems like common sense, but the fact that it was highlighted by a number of authors indicates to me that it may not be universally upheld. Jeanneret and Brown (2013) suggests that a large space, with a single activity focus, can support engagement. This space should be both secure, and clean (Andersen et al., 2010). Children working may benefit from active interaction with their environment (Dewey, 1934), a point which overlaps to some degree with the earlier discussions about materials and play. Further to this, Fredricks et al. (2004) note that when children have opportunities to respond to variation in environments, their level of engagement may be enhanced. Andersen et al. (2010) also noted this in their observations at ArtPlay and encourage the use of spaces that can be transformed by the adult.

The emotional environment has a clear link to engagement. It is only when children feel emotionally safe (Tayler et al., 2006) – which can be evidenced by their level of input into an experience, and the freedom in which they explore and take risks – that they are in a position to engage. A relaxed environment may support a sense of emotional security, and Andersen et al. (2010) noted that this was a feature of engaging practice. Edwards et al. (1998) describe the link between a child feeling comfortable within her environment and her physical and emotional wellbeing. The ways in which an adult supports this outcome for the child is referred to as the “Pedagogy of wellbeing” (Edwards et al., 1998, p. 11).

Both Tayler et al. (2006) and Jeanneret and Brown (2013) encourage “family-friendly” environments, as the inclusion of a child’s immediate loved ones can help foster a positive emotional climate. Defining what is meant by a family-friendly environment, and better understanding how an experience can unfold

in a relaxed environment, are potential gaps in the literature that this study will try to fill.

3.2.7 Time

Time emerged as a possible characteristic of engaging practice. However, the ideas discussed were somewhat disparate, and few raised the same, or even related, ideas. Brown (2015) spoke of engaging experiences seeming “unhurried” in nature, suggesting that the pace of an experience should be considered. This is supported by Eisner (2004), who suggests that engaging activities should aim to slow down perception. Dewey (1934) recommended this also, noting that “continued acceleration is breathless and prevents parts from gaining distinction” (p. 38). Jeanneret and Brown (2013) agreed, and suggested that an effective pace – perhaps unhurried, as per Brown’s suggestion – should be carefully considered and planned for in advance by the adult. Jablon and Wilkinson (2006) advise that in order for children to stay engaged in a task, they should not be made to wait. Waiting for an instruction or access to materials is negatively associated with engaging practice. Finding the balance between an unhurried pace, and keeping children from waiting, seems like it would be a challenging problem for any practitioner. It makes sense, then, that Jeanneret and Brown (2013) found that ideal pacing was best achieved by those who had considered these issues, and planned with them in mind, prior to the experience.

Time was also discussed in the literature in relation to the duration of an experience. Lussier et al. (1994) found that young children need large amounts of time to interact with adults. Exactly how long this might be was not suggested, but one can assume that Lussier’s expertise in infancy and child development may have influenced her perception of this. That is to say, how long may be a

question relating to an individual child’s developmental level. Chappell and Young (2007) also proposed that children be given extended periods of time to engage. It is unclear whether Lussier et al. and/or Chappell and Young envisaged this taking place in a single experience, or whether they imagined multiple and ongoing experiences. Dewey (1934) uses the term “over time”, which seems to suggest the latter – that children may benefit from experiences that are not one-offs, or singular by nature. This is supported by Bronfenbrenner’s (2009) theory of “molar” activities, which he defines as ongoing activities as part of a continuing process. It seems to me, then, that the main question left unanswered from this review is whether a one-off experience is valuable for children if it does not have scope to be developed over time?

Edwards et al. (1998) were sceptical about this idea. They posited that in an early learning environment it is ideal if children and teacher groupings are maintained over many years. In the Reggio Emilia schools, this “pedagogy of continuity” (Edwards et al., 1998, p. 11) is viewed as important to children’s learning and development.

3.2.8 Summary of themes

As a result of this literature review, a total of 21 themes with a focus on *practices that engage very young audiences* were identified:

Collaboration	Participants work together towards a shared goal
Artist-child interactions	The teaching-artist communicates directly with the child
Child-child interactions	Children communicate directly with each other
Parent-child interactions	The parent/s communicates directly with the child
Responsive feedback	The child receives feedback on their individual contribution to the experience

Transfer of ownership	The adult encourages and facilitates increasing levels of leadership from the child
Zone of proximal development	Experiences are challenging yet fall within the child's current developmental capacity
Scaffolding	The adult supports the child to take on challenges that extend upon his or her current knowledge or skills
Co-play	The adult engages in play with and/or alongside the child
Repetition	Artistic ideas and themes are repeated
Movement	The child has opportunities to move freely around the space, without physical restriction
Child engagement	The teaching-artist monitors the child for signals of engagement
Observation	The child has opportunities to observe models engaging in art-making
Schematic play	The child has opportunities to draw upon his or her preferred ways of interacting with new and familiar stimuli
Free play	The child has opportunities to engage in free play, with minimal barriers in terms of time or space
Object play	The child has opportunities to manipulate objects and materials, without set expectation of outcome
Transformable space	The space has been created especially for the performance and has the capacity to be redesigned by the teaching-artists and/or participants
Safe, secure, clean space	The performance space does not pose a risk to the participants
Family-friendly venue	The venue provides appropriate facilities for families with very young children
Positive emotional climate	The participants feel emotionally safe, supported and encouraged
Artist-quality materials	The materials and resources used in the performance are of a high professional quality and standard

Further to this, each of the 21 themes were categorised as relating to either:

- Interactions, or

- Learning and development, or
- Environment

The following diagram demonstrates this relationship.

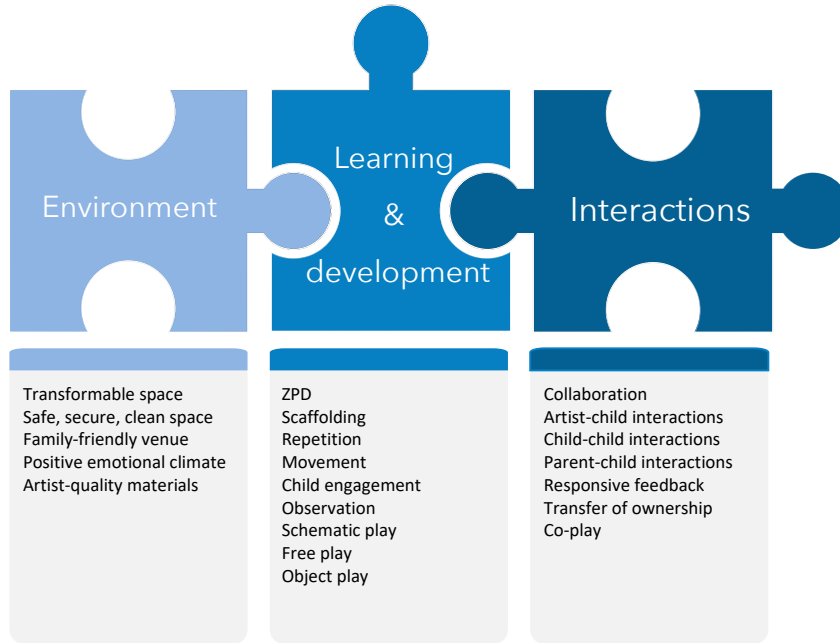


Figure 4. Themes from the literature relating to practices that engage very young audiences.

The identification and categorisation of these themes aim to support the deductive analysis of field data, as further outlined in the Methodology Chapter (Chapter 4) of this thesis.

3.3 FIRST ADDENDUM: IMAGE OF THE CHILD

As outlined in more detail in the Methodology Chapter (Chapter 4) of this thesis, this addendum to the literature review was made at the end of the second phase of the mapping study. After spending some weeks in the field, focusing on the ways in which artist practices aligned with the engaging practice themes that had emerged from the initial literature review conducted above, I noticed that there was something else of significance happening in the performances, and that this

“something else” was not being adequately captured by the existing themes. It was emerging that the artists who strongly demonstrated engaging practices when working with their very young audience, appeared to also be positioning the children more as artistic collaborators than as passive receivers of the arts. Their image of the child (Malaguzzi, 2016) appeared distinctive from the larger sample. It led to me question:

- What does the literature say about the different ways that adults position children, and how does this relate to engaging practice?

3.3.1 Image of the child

All work with, for and about children is informed by sociological beliefs about children and childhood (Sorin, 2005). Work related to young children should, therefore, aim to be explicit about how children are viewed by the adults involved – whether that work be in an educational, research or artistic sense (Malaguzzi, 2016). In reality, this is, of course, rarely the case. Beliefs about children and childhood tend to lay embedded in the decisions made, the practices practised, and the discussions had, rather than being publicly acknowledged and expressed (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). Nevertheless, it is possible for an informed observer to use dominant sociological constructions of children and childhood (Mayall, 2002) as a lens through which to interpret actions, symbol or discourse. According to Rinaldi (2005), what an adult believes about children – i.e. their “image of the child” (Malaguzzi, 1993) – will impact upon the opportunities that they are afforded.

3.3.2 The child as a co-constructor

There is a great deal of evidence to suggest that the ways in which a child is positioned within an experience can directly affect their level of engagement. Practices that provide opportunities to make choices (Fredricks et al., 2004; Jablon & Wilkinson, 2006) and input ideas that are pivotal to the development of the experience (Chappell & Young, 2007; Fredricks et al., 2004), are said to be supportive of the voice of the child. The relationship between increased child voice and positive engagement is long established. When children are given a meaningful say in matters that affect them (Alderson & Morrow, 2011; United Nations, 1990), the adults involved are said to be positioning these children as active constructors of their own experience (Rinaldi, 2005). The degree to which adults support the voice of the child can vary widely, and with it, the level of engagement. Too little voice, and engagement can be negatively impacted (Montessori, 1966). Too much voice without support or scaffolding – particularly with very young children – and, again, engagement can be negatively impacted (Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978). The elusive sweet spot is thought to move about, somewhere in between, and is dependent upon the individual child, the relationship dynamic, and the context. While this certainly makes it challenging for those who design programs for very young children, it becomes workable when they strive to position young participants as co-creators, with a strong sense of interdependence between adults and children (Rogoff, 1990). Engaging practices that support this outcome include providing opportunities for children and adults to co-play (Andersen et al., 2010; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013), allowing children to self-direct their own explorations (Brown, 2015; Custodero, 2005; Eisner, 2004), and actively recognising a child's previous and current experience

(Tayler et al., 2006). When children are positioned in this way in integrated arts performances, they become viewed as co-constructors of knowledge and experience (Rinaldi, 2005).

The image of the child as a co-constructor is rooted in postmodern ideals. Those who hold this position aim to partially reject the notion of a universal childhood, in which it is believed that all children share a similar natural state (James & Prout, 1990; Mayall, 1994). Rather, childhood is seen as being almost entirely contextual. In this image, there is not “a child” but many children. Likewise, there is not a single construction of childhood but many childhoods. This construction acknowledges that children are part of a large and many small social groups, both within the family and separate to the family (Bronfenbrenner, 2009). Although children, by the virtue of sharing similar age, may belong to a universal “childhood” social group, this group is no more or less important than other social groups within which a child may belong. Providing opportunities for very young children to interact and collaborate with other members of their social group is said to support engagement. This can include collaborations with parents (Andersen et al., 2010; Bronfenbrenner, 2009; Brown, 2015; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013), other adults (Bandura, 1977; Chappell & Young, 2007; Crimmins & Alberti, 1994; Edwards et al., 1998; Eisner, 2002; Eisner, 2004; Jablon & Wilkinson, 2006; Lussier et al., 2003; Malaguzzi, 2016; Rinaldi, 2005; Turino, 2008; van Manen, 2015; Vecchi, 2010; Vygotsky, 1978; Warburton et al., 2014), and other children (Custodero, 2005; Rogoff, 1990).

Children who are positioned as co-constructors are strong, active, self-directed learners. They do not wait for adults to impart information upon them (Dahlberg et al., 2007) and nor do they engage in learning to become a skilled adult (Lee,

2001; Sorin, 2005). Rather, through acts of communication and collaboration with other adults and children, and through exploration of their environment, they are able to curate and scaffold their own learning in the here and now (Dahlberg et al., 2007; Edwards et al., 1998; Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978). That is to say, although rich learning rarely occurs in isolation from others, children have the capacity and drive to take ownership of their own learning trajectory and will largely do so regardless of adult intentions or interventions (Edwards et al., 1998; Montessori, 1966). Teaching-artists who work with very young audiences can support both learning and engagement through creating and providing an environment that encourages children to act with agency (Rinaldi, 2005).

3.3.3 Summary of additional themes

As a result of this first addendum to the literature review, seven new themes with a focus on the *image of the child as a co-creator* were identified:

Child's voice	The child is provided with opportunities to have a meaningful say in planning, developing and/or implementing the performance
Interdependence	Adults and children are equally dependent upon each other
Co-creating	The active participation of the audience is received an act of art-making and significantly contributes to the performance
Many social groups	The performance is designed to encourage interaction between and within families, local community groups, and wider cultural groups
Self-directed learning	The created environment encourages the child to engage in autonomous exploration and discovery
Strong communicator	The child uses a range of non-verbal communication strategies to make his or her ideas and needs known
Agency	The child makes choices about how he or she would like to engage in the performance and is provided with opportunities to enact them

The following diagram demonstrates the ways in which these build upon the themes from the earlier literature review.

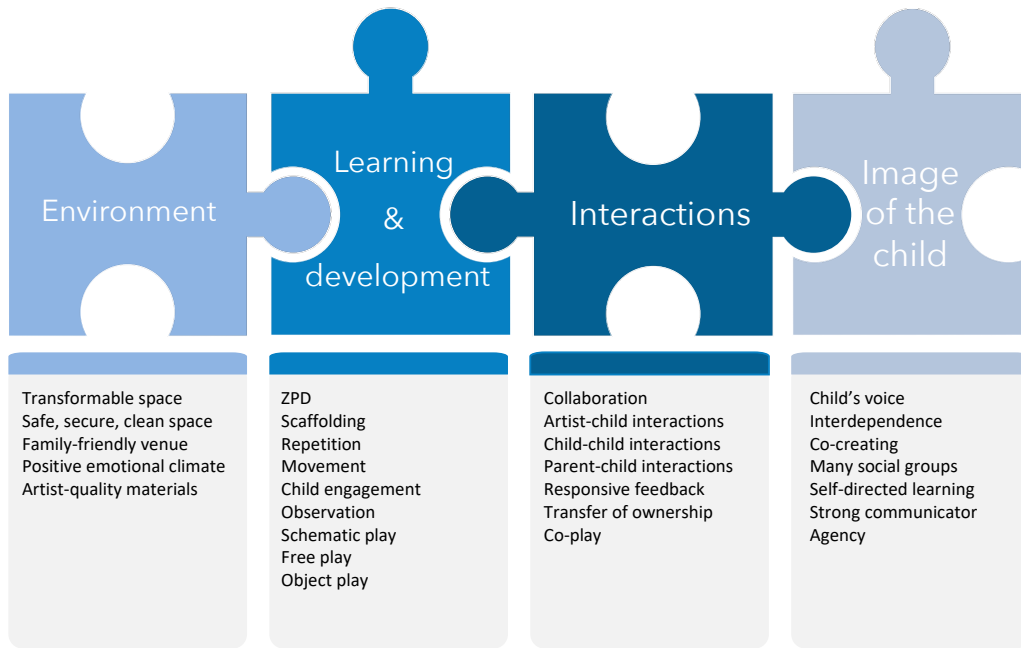


Figure 5. Themes from the literature relating to image of the child as a co-constructor and their relationship with the themes from the earlier literature review.

The seven *image of the child as a co-constructor* themes aim to further support the deductive analysis of field data, as outlined in more detail in the Methodology Chapter (Chapter 4) of this thesis.

3.4 SECOND ADDENDUM: ARTS AND AESTHETICS

As outlined in more detail in the Methodology Chapter (Chapter 4) of this thesis, this second addendum to the literature review was made at the end of the third phase of the mapping study. I was fortunate, during this phase, to participate in an immersive opera for very young children, performed by an internationally acclaimed operatic company. The artistic elements within this performance stood out as being exemplary in the field and were notably different to those I had observed previously. The engaging practice themes that I had been using to guide my field observations, as described earlier in this chapter, did not adequately capture the artistic elements of the work, which led to me question:

- What does the literature say about art and aesthetics, and how do these concepts relate to engaging practice?

3.4.1 Art and art-making

Art is a process of making (Dewey, 1934). Although engaging practice is not exclusively aligned with art or the arts, art-making experiences are often inherently designed to include characteristics that engage participants. Csikszentmihalyi (1991), Eisner (2002; 2004), Dewey (1934), Turino (2008) and Brown (2015) have each noted strong connections between the arts and children's engagement. Their arguments are validated by extensive literature support and original research, and their beliefs and findings are also supported by those outside of the arts. Fredricks et al. (2004), for example, describe a number of characteristics of engaging practice that align with art-making: responding to variation in environments, work that allows for the development of products, and an ownership of the conception, execution, and evaluation of an idea. Each of these are naturally embedded within quality arts practices. Similarly, Rogoff (1990) touches on the way in which transformations of perspective can maintain engagement, which is not too dissimilar to the idea of transformative environments and materials presented by Andersen et al. (2010) and Brown (2015). Both Vygotsky (1978; 2009) and Edwards et al. (1998) note the importance of adults passing down practices and providing instruction in tool use and technique – which is, as Jeanneret and Brown (2013) note, precisely how artists work with children.

Dewey (1934) opined that the arts have long suffered from problems of inaccessibility, due in part to their separation from the everyday. Art that is performed in theatres and concert halls, to an audience of an elite minority, may

lack the authenticity required to carry genuine meaning for most. Art, says Dewey (1934), should be clearly associated with everyday experience; it should emerge within existing communities and be reflective of the life within that community. Artists can support the engagement of very young children when they aim to produce work that is authentic in this way (Rinaldi, 2005).

Works that connect with, or extend upon, existing ideas within a community are desirable when working with very young audiences (Rogoff, 1990). Teaching-artists, therefore, need not strive to create something that is entirely novel in order to engage. This is in part because very young children will often demonstrate a preference for familiar stimuli (Mather, 2013), but also because in order for art to be aesthetically experienced it needs to be perceivable and recognisable (Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 2002).

According to Eisner (2002), art-making closely resembles play. As outlined earlier in this chapter, play featured heavily in the literature and it is widely regarded to have strong potential to engage (Brown, 2015; Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Custodero, 2005; Dansereau, 2011). Eisner (2002) notes that art and play have imagination in common, but it is his discussion on the ways in which art refines the sensory system that may be more relevant when thinking about the very youngest of children. Where imaginative play episodes are not commonly observed in the first year (Vygotsky, 1978), sensory play is highly favoured by children from birth. Sensory play is loosely defined as being “play that engages one or more of the senses... [it] differs from other types of play in that the sensory focus adds a significant and integral extra dimension” (Gascoyne, 2012, p. 5). While sensory play may often overlap with object play, it can also occur without object manipulation, particularly when the sense of sight or sound are central.

When children are provided with opportunities to engage in sensory play, their play processes appear to align closely with Dewey's (1934) definition of art-making: "Every art does something with some physical material, the body or something outside the body, with or without the use of intervening tools, and with a view to production of something visible, audible or tangible" (p. 48). Sensory play, therefore, may offer very young children a pathway into art-making that is both developmentally appropriate and engaging.

3.4.2 Aesthetics

Aesthetics is intimately related to art. Where art is a process of making, aesthetics is the audience's perception of the product made (Dewey, 1934). Edwards et al. states that "beautiful products are testament to beautiful processes" (1988, p. 301), highlighting the closeness of this connection. When making art, the artist aims to produce something of value, and to do this must constantly shift back and forth between the role of art-maker and perceiver (Dewey, 1934). They must imagine their audiences' experience of the art. It may be challenging for an artist to predict how their art will be received by a very young audience. It requires not just imagination, in this instance, but empathy of the audience experience and some understanding of what is known to engage very young children (Vecchi, 2010).

Vecchi (2010) believes that searching for beauty is a primary human need and that aesthetics are of particular importance to children. Rinaldi (2005) agrees, affirming that very young children are greatly receptive to, and affected by, their immediate environment. She advises that adults take great care and consideration for very young children's sensory experience when designing spaces for them. Both authors claim that the aesthetic environment has the power

to affect a child's sense of wellbeing, as well as support or restrict their learning and development. Montessori (1966) is critical of aesthetic choices made by many adults who work with very young children, believing that, oftentimes, they mistakenly believe that children prefer objects that are "loud" because they appear to capture attention. Children, she insists, do not have bad taste. While there will always be differing opinions regarding what is and is not an aesthetically inviting space (for anyone, least of all very young children), evidence suggests that it is the intention behind the choices that can make the difference. Vecchi (2010), who herself works as an artist with children, describes this aesthetic intention as "an attitude of care and attention for the things we do, a desire for meaning; it is curiosity and wonder; it is the opposite of indifference and carelessness, of conformity, of absence of participation and feeling" (p. 5). When adults show an attitude of care towards things, with a view of creating an aesthetic and sensory environment, very young children's engagement is likely to be enhanced (Edwards et al., 1998; Eisner, 2002; Ministry of Education New Zealand, 2017; Vecchi, 2010).

According to Dewey (1934), aesthetic experiences are inherently cohesive and integrated. That is, experiences that are too loose, with no real beginning or end, and experiences that are too tight, which do not flow naturally from part to part, are least likely to be aesthetic. While it seems to me that the way in which this idea connects with concepts such as improvisation, creativity, and play suggest that it may be an important component of engaging practice, further research is needed to truly understand whether and how this might be the case in integrated arts performances for very young audiences.

3.4.3 Summary of additional themes

As a result of this second addendum to the literature review, eight new themes with a focus on *art and aesthetics* were identified:

Making	The participants engage in art-making
Demonstrating tool use and technique	The teaching-artist models artistic practices, including tool use and technique
Everyday / authenticity	The performance is accessible and reflects the life and experience of the participants
Connecting with existing ideas	The artistic elements of the performance connect with, or extend upon, existing and familiar ideas
Sensory play	The child is provided with opportunities to engage in play experiences that engage the senses
Empathy with audience	The teaching-artist considers and monitors how elements of the performance are being experienced by the audience
Attitude of care	The teaching-artist takes care to create an aesthetic environment
Cohesive and integrated	There is flow and connection between the different components of the performance

The following diagram demonstrates the ways in which these build upon the themes from the earlier literature review, including the first addendum.

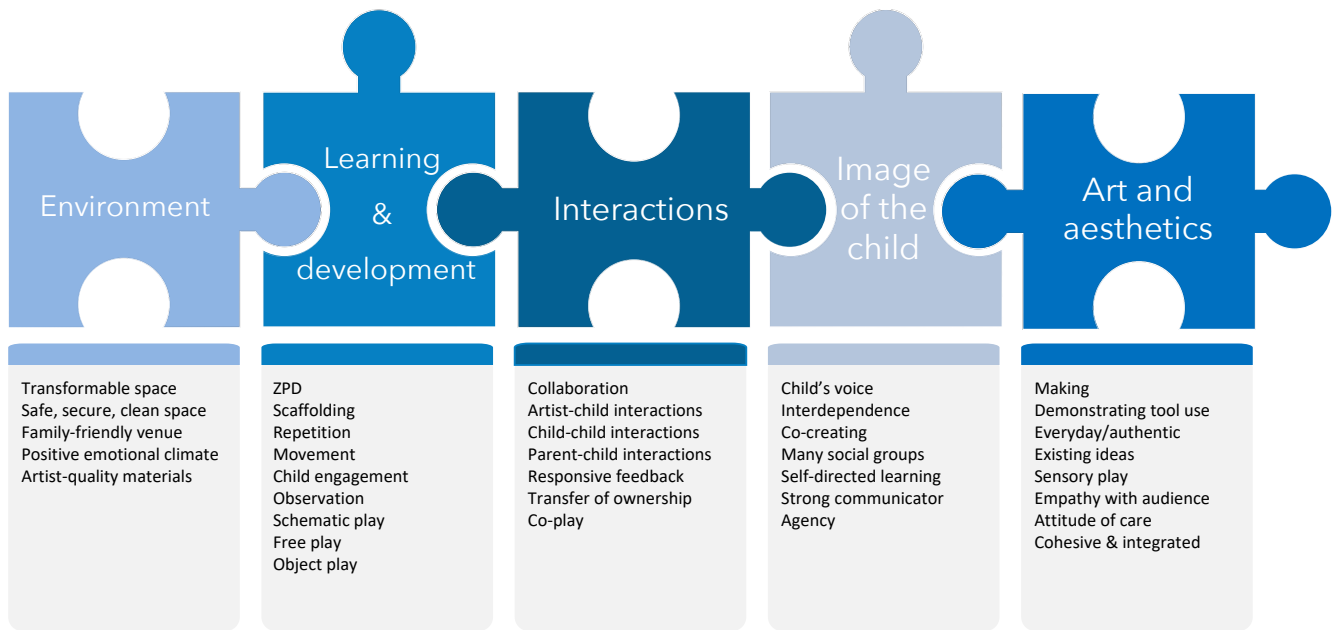


Figure 6. Themes from the literature relating to art and aesthetics, and their relationship with the themes from the earlier literature review and the first addendum to the literature review.

The eight *art and aesthetics* themes aim to further support the deductive analysis of field data, as outlined in more detail in the Methodology Chapter (Chapter 4) of this thesis.

3.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, I have compared and contrasted theoretical and research literature from across the arts, education, engagement, child development, and sociology of childhood to find answers to the following three questions:

- What does the literature say about practices that engage very young children?
- What does the literature say about the different ways that adults position children, and how does this relate to engaging practice?

- What does the literature say about arts and aesthetics, and how do these concepts relate to engaging practices?

Through this process, I synthesised and condensed the points raised into a series of themes, for further exploration and to use as a guide when undertaking field observations. This is a significant outcome, as the themes are central to the research and feature regularly throughout the thesis. They are discussed and further analysed in relation to the three exemplar case studies (Chapters 5, 6 and 7), and again in the autoethnographic case study (Chapter 8). They will also appear in a distilled form in the concluding chapter (Chapter 9).

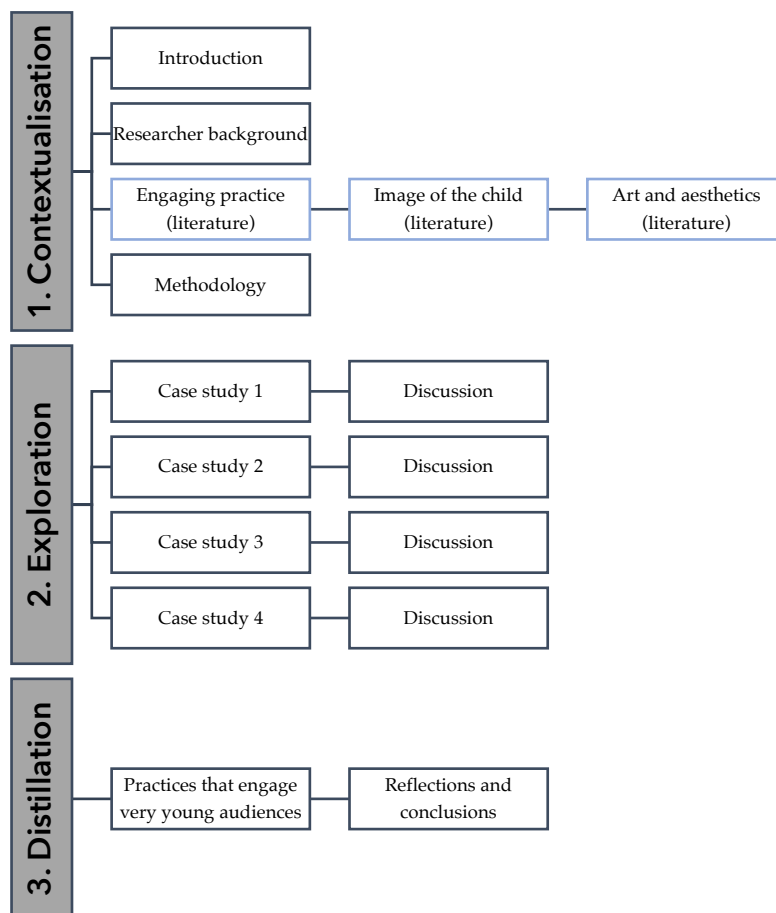


Figure 7. This chapter (highlighted in blue) shown in relation to the other chapters of this thesis.

CHAPTER 4. METHODOLOGY

This research aims to contribute to a better understanding of the ways in which teaching-artists can support very young children's engagement in integrated arts performances. The benefits of this are expected to be threefold: firstly, the research findings will support my own artistic practice, and act as a guide when planning future integrated arts performances for very young audiences; secondly, the research findings may offer guidance to other teaching-artists who work with, or wish to work with, very young children and families; and finally, the research findings will give me the confidence to offer informed advice to those arts organisations, producers, and teaching-artists who continue to seek my consultation on this topic. To address the research aim, I undertook a broad mapping study, three field case studies and one autoethnographic self-study. The question that guided the investigation was:

- How can teaching-artists best support very young children's engagement in integrated arts performances?

4.1 EPISTEMOLOGY

4.1.1 Interpretivism

I begin this chapter with a discussion on knowing; that is, how one can come to know any given phenomenon and what is important to know. The phenomenon that is being examined in this research – integrated arts performances for very young audiences – is important to know, and through the practice of research, can be known, at least to some extent. To what degree we can truly know a

phenomenon has been a key tension I have grappled with throughout my doctoral candidature and is one of the key learnings in my journey as a developing researcher.

Epistemologically, this research sits within a broader interpretivist movement, common to the social sciences (Guba, 1990; Stake, 2010). Research necessitates interpretation. The goal of any researcher is to acknowledge and unpack the layers of interpretation that surround any claim of truth (a finding, for example, or a theme). Questions need to be asked about the researcher's own experience and the impact it has on the interpretation of the phenomenon being studied. Collecting a range of views, whether through multiple observations of practice, literature analysis, interview, etc., can add new layers of meaning and provide a broader palette from which to form conclusions. However, as one can never collect *all* views, or ask *all* questions, this has limitations. The researcher chooses from the colours in front of her, and what is painted, although stimulated by the phenomenon and influenced by the data, says as much about the researcher as it does about the research. The challenge, then, is to make the researcher's experience explicit – how many other views to collect, what questions to ask to edge closer to knowing, and how to keep striving to be as close as possible to the phenomenon without ignoring the rich stories that can surround the interpretation of the data – while also systematically generating knowledge, grounded in the data, that is valid and resonant to others. In this chapter I will explore the ways in which my experience has influenced my research choices, as well as how my research choices have impacted upon the findings.

4.1.2 Beliefs

In the previous chapter (Chapter 3), I discussed the importance of exploring one's own beliefs about children and childhoods, in order to better understand how these assumptions may influence personal decisions and practices (Section 3.3.1). Malaguzzi (2016) posits that a "declaration [about one's image of the child] is not only a necessary act of clarity and correctness, it is the necessary premise for any pedagogical project" (p. 374). The reality of undertaking such self-examination, however, is not as straightforward as it may seem. One's image of the child is influenced by a complex mix of historical, societal, cultural, and experiential influences. As such, regardless of how closely these beliefs are examined, it is highly improbable that a single image will be revealed. At any one time, and in any given scenario, a combination of images is likely (Rinaldi, 2005). The following paragraph aims to make known my personal mix of beliefs about very young children, in order that this study be contextualised within a sociological framework.

The very young child is highly competent. He is capable of discovering what he needs in order to grow intellectually, physically, socially and emotionally. This is best fostered when adults provide a rich and aesthetic environment, but then take a step back to allow the child to act with autonomy within that setting. The very young child is an artist and aesthete, who has a right to pursue, experience and contribute to beauty. He is an expert at play, and it is through engaging in self-directed play that he is best able to scaffold his own learning and development. He welcomes challenge and a complexity of ideas and will seek adult guidance if, and when, this will support him in achieving his goals. The very young child is an active citizen who contributes to the construction of each

community of which he is a part, as well as to broader society. He is highly social and a strong communicator; able to influence outcomes that benefit both himself and others.

4.2 METHODOLOGY

4.2.1 Bricolage

Interpretivist research requires a research design that supports and reflects the human experience being examined. An eclectic, or *bricolage*, approach is a valid way to get to know complex phenomena (Kincheloe, 2001; Kincheloe & Berry, 2004; Lincoln, 2001). Although it has faced some criticism outside of qualitative research circles (Morse, 2015), the argument for creating a custom conceptual framework for a study – through the careful selection and piecing together of research methodologies and methods – is sound. Rather than losing validity, as is often the concern expressed by detractors (Kieser & Leiner, 2009; Kincheloe & Berry, 2004; Morse, 2015), a bricolage approach is well placed to respond to issues of both objectivity and subjectivity. Thus, it is an important component of building what some refer to as *internal validity* (Morse, 2015), and others, *trustworthiness* in qualitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). According to van Manen (1990), objectivity and subjectivity are not in opposition. They are equally important to the interpretivist researcher and both should be given due consideration. When looking at human experience, objectivity does not imply that a researcher should be completely removed from the experience being examined, nor that they should create a forced distance between themselves and what they are researching. On the contrary, “Objectivity means that the research remains true to the object” (van Manen, 1990, p. 20). The “object”, in the case of

this research, is the artful world created by the artists, the very young children, and the parents. It is what happens in the space at the time of participation. Remaining true to this particular object required me to become fully immersed in the experience; as is the case in a lot of interpretivist research, and as is the case in most research in lived experience. Therefore, research methodologies that support this immersion were chosen.

Subjectivity is far less problematic to the interpretivist researcher than objectivity can be. Permission to get close to our object of study, and to provide thoughtful disclosure of the influences underpinning our interpretations of what we notice and include, is one of the major components linking different qualitative approaches. According to van Manen (1990), "Subjectivity means that we are strong in orientation to the object of study in a unique and personal way" (p. 20). This, too, supports the argument for a bricolage research design; one that brings together elements that assist the researcher to explore the phenomenon in new and multiple ways, drawing upon their own influences and experiences whilst attempting to understand the lived experience of others. The different elements of the bricolage research design for this study will be discussed below.

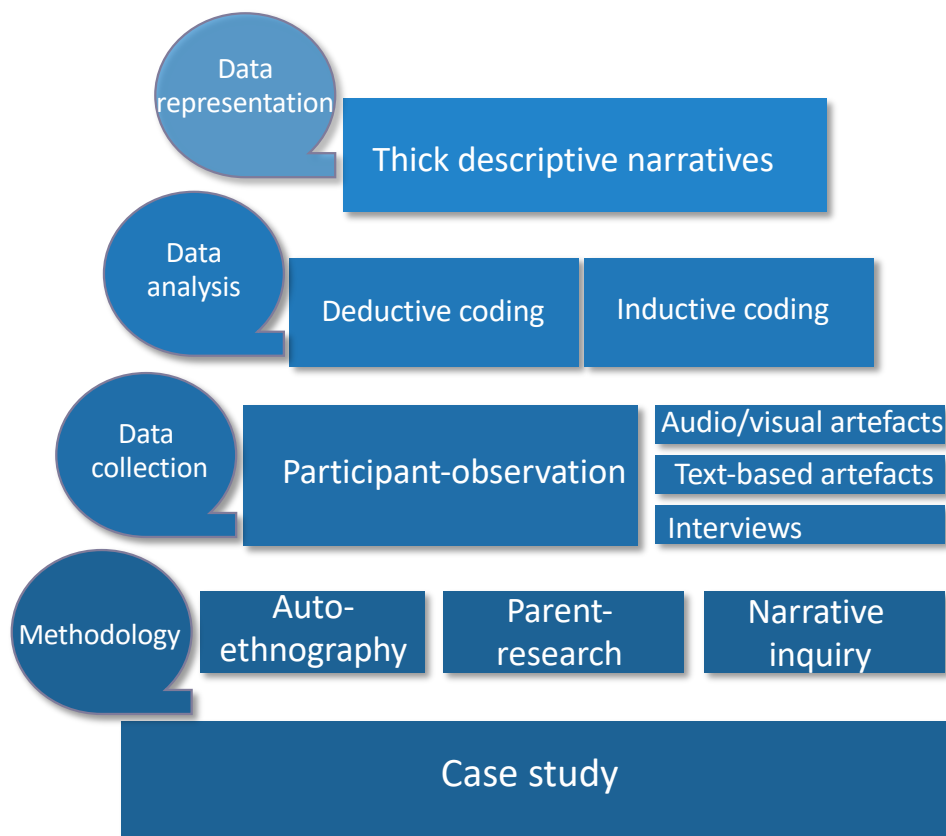


Figure 8. A visual representation of the bricolage research design for this study.

4.2.2 Case study research

Yin (2014) recommends case study methodology when a research question aims to explain *how* something is. The research question for this study, *How* can teaching-artists best support the engagement of very young audiences? aims to do just this. Case study methodology is an important, and an appropriate, methodological component of the bricolage research design for this study.

When a researcher declares that they are using case study in their research, as I have done, this can mean one of many things. According to Willig (2008), it may mean that they are focusing their research on “an organisation, a group of people, a patient, a school... a situation, an incident, and experience” (p. 74). They may have one or many cases, use qualitative and/or quantitative research methods,

and take any stance in regard to objectivity and subjectivity (Yin, 2014). As case study can mean almost anything, part of the researcher's job is in defining "the case". In this research, the case is a one-off integrated arts performance.

Three independent case studies are presented in this thesis. Each one was chosen, from a larger sample of sixteen integrated arts performances, as exemplars. Their 'exemplar' status was determined based on how well they aligned with the themes identified through the literature review (as first outlined in sections 3.2.8, 3.3.3 and 3.4.3, and then further explored in sections 4.3.3, 4.4.5, 4.3.7 and 4.3.9 below). No attempts have been made to compare the cases or to engage in critical evaluation. Rather, the focus is on describing, interpreting and explaining each performance, approaches that are said to define good case study implementation (Merriam, 1998; Simons, 2009).

4.2.3 Autoethnography

Autoethnography can be viewed on a spectrum. On one end is the researcher who significantly preferences their own experience; what Barbara Tedlock (2005) refers to as the "gaze inwards" (p. 467). This researcher may be the "object" of inquiry, *and* the interpreter of the experiences, *and* the disseminator of the findings. On the other end of the spectrum is the researcher who significantly preferences the experiences of others; what Tedlock (2005) refers to as the "gaze outwards". This may be the qualitative researcher who collects views from others, conducts a form of thematic analysis, *and* (importantly) who makes some reference to their position within the research. Most researchers who are mindfully incorporating autoethnographic approaches in their research sit somewhere towards the middle of that spectrum: they attempt to be both subjective and objective (van Manen, 1990); they attempt to both gaze inwards

and outwards (Tedlock, 2005); they attempt to be both reflective and reflexive. Dewey (1934) touches on this when he states that “a balance between furthering and retarding is the desirable state of affairs” (p. 63). In this study, I have taken opportunities to gaze inwards, and to make these positions explicit through narrative. I have also taken opportunities to gaze outwards; primarily through engaging in theory but also through the collection of supplementary data which attempts to better understand the perspectives of the teaching-artists.

4.2.3 Parent-research

Although parent-research is a relatively uncommon methodology, it is not new. Studies that feature elements of parent-research, such as those where a principle researcher invites parents to participate as co-researchers (Hackett, 2017), are far more likely to be found in the literature than those where the principle researcher *is* the parent. In my own practice as an arts educator, I have been influenced by two seminal studies that feature this second type of parent-research. Piaget (1950) famously studied his own children, Jacqueline, Laurent and Lucienne, in his child development work in the mid-20th century. Although I lean more towards socio-constructivist beliefs about learning and development in general, his cognitive constructivist ideas about schemas continue to influence my thinking and practices, as evidenced by the inclusion of schematic play theory in this thesis. I have not attempted to replicate Piaget’s experimental research methods, as they are not appropriate for this field nor relevant to the research question. Rather, I use this as an example of the legitimacy of and history behind parent-research.

Closer to home, Australian music education researcher, Peter de Vries (Bennett & de Vries, 2017; de Vries, 2004; 2011a; 2011b), documented the musical learning

and development of his son, Jack, in his own home environment. In this longitudinal study, de Vries was positioned as the researcher, the parent, and the educator. His findings have long supported my beliefs that parents are the first and best arts educators for very young children, as is evidenced in my discussion of my own practice in Chapter 4 of this thesis. What's more, the way in which the researcher and the child are positioned as co-constructors in de Vries' study, responding to each other and building understanding through shared attention and reciprocation (Rogoff, 1990), is similar to the roles that Hugo and I have taken in this research.

When I reflect back over this study, I feel an overwhelming sense of privilege at having had the opportunity to explore not only the research question, but also my own self in relation to the research. In particular, I feel fortunate that I was able to engage in the data collection process with own child – allowing for a unique insight into how my personal experience as a parent influenced my interpretation of events. Initially, I had some concerns about whether this approach would allow me to adequately distance myself from the data, both in the collection and analysis phases. However, I came to realise that closeness can be as, if not more, valid, particularly when the aim of the research is to interpret the layers of meaning embedded in an experience. This view is supported by Adler and Adler (1997) and Hackett (2017), who agree that parent-research offers advantage over other ethnographic studies of young children because the interactions are naturally occurring, the parent has almost full access to the child's range of experiences, and the parent and child already share close social membership. I have included the following researcher reflection, composed in April 2014, as a way of demonstrating how my role as a parent influenced my

perspective, and gave me insight into the experience that I may not have had, should I have participated in the experience differently:

At this moment, I am a parent. It is a role in which I am familiar. It is, perhaps, the role that is most closely connected with my current personal identity, my everyday life. It is part of my private world, quite different from the *Me* that turns up to work as a teacher and researcher, and different again from the *Me* that studies, plays and appreciates music. *Parent Me* is focused somewhat outwardly – towards my baby, but not a great deal further. I am attuned to his needs above my own, and my awareness of the world around me is largely in relation to how it impacts on and interacts with my child.

The ethical considerations for conducting parent-research are discussed further along in this chapter, in section 4.6.1.

4.2.4 Narrative inquiry

Narrative inquiry, as a research methodology, houses within it a range of communities of practice; each with varying levels of narrative and, indeed, of inquiry. Elements and practices from the broader narrative inquiry movement that were deemed relevant and useful were incorporated into the bricolage research design of this study.

I was firstly drawn to the idea of narrative because it supports the notion of experience as central to research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) put it beautifully when they proposed that, “The answer to the question, Why narrative? is, Because experience” (p. 50). In a narrative inquiry approach, as in many qualitative approaches, the researcher is not required to position themselves as a distant, disconnected, objective observer. In fact, it requires the complete opposite from the researcher; full immersion and full

analysis of influences on the data is the aim. This study aligns with narrative inquiry in this way.

The second, and perhaps the most notable, use of narrative inquiry for this study is in the re-telling of each case study performance through thick descriptive narratives. These stories, which feature throughout Chapters 5 to 7 of this thesis, are not simply a running record of moments from the participatory period, told in some ordered manner, and pulled from the memory of the researcher after the event. If this were the goal, other observations methods, such as those from the overt non-participatory school of thought, would likely be more accurate and effective. Instead, these narratives offer both a form of interpretivist analysis, and a way of representing these ideas (Goodall, 2000; Simons, 2009). Creating thick descriptive narratives requires that the researcher makes choices about what the important messages were in the experience. It requires that she bring these messages together in a way that captures the imagination of the reader and takes them on a journey into a world that closely resembles the experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). It also requires of the researcher a high level of meta-cognition, as she unpacks the *hows and whys* behind her selection, interpretation, and description of the narrative content. In this way, the “narrative as a way of telling” is a practice that strongly correlates with autoethnographic research methods.

4.3 THE RESEARCH PROCESS

4.3.1 Progressive focusing

In order to be both reflective and reflexive (Tedlock, 2005), and therefore true to the elements within the bricolage design I had created for the study a research

process that allowed for ongoing reflection and adaptation was adopted. Without knowing exactly where the exploration would lead, but with a view of moving closer and closer to the heart of the experience itself, I conducted five iterative research phases, before moving on to focusing on three case studies. This structure finds some commonality with the hermeneutic cycle (Patton, 2002; Ricoeur, 1981), as well as Stake's (1981) ideas about progressive focusing. According to Stake, "Progressive focusing requires that the researcher be well acquainted with the complexities of the problem before going to the field, but not too committed to a study plan. It is accomplished in multiple stages: first observation of the site, then further inquiry, beginning to focus on the relevant issues, and then seeking to explain" (1981, p. 1). The following discussion outlines this process.

4.3.2 Phase one

The first phase was part of an initial explorative mapping exercise. In this phase, I observed four integrated arts performance for very young audiences, participating as a parent audience member with my own son. I aimed to keep the focus of my observations broad, allowing for questions to emerge based on what was most noticeable and resonant (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Through this process, I generated a starting question for the research – *What is currently understood about practices that engage very young audiences?* This question led me to the literature. In the previous chapter (Chapter 2) I presented a literature review about engaging practices that was undertaken as a result of this starting question. Here, 21 practices that engage very young audiences were identified. These were then formed into three categories (environment; interactions; learning &

development) in order to support the progressive focusing of observations in a second planned phase of mapping the field.

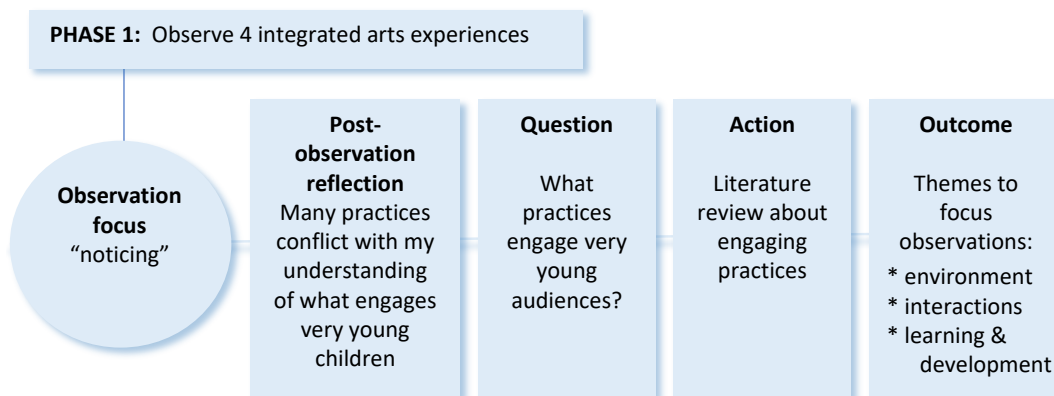


Figure 9. Phase 1 of the study.

4.3.3 Phase one integrated arts performance summaries

Four integrated arts performances were observed as part of phase one of the study, as summarised below:

Performance	1/16
Artform/s	Theatre Puppetry Music
Presenters	Collaboration between an international television company and small touring theatre company (UK)
Site	800-seat theatre within a major urban arts venue, Melbourne
Audience	The audience is predominantly made up of families, with children aged anywhere between birth and eight years of age
Space/s	Traditional raised stage Audience in theatre seating Only the stalls are used (490 seats)
Features	Puppetry Characters are known to some children (from television) Electronic and pre-recorded orchestral atmospheric/mood music is used to enhance the drama

Demonstrating tool use and technique	Somewhat evident
Everyday / authenticity	Somewhat evident
Connecting with existing ideas	Somewhat evident
Sensory play	Somewhat evident
Empathy with audience	Somewhat evident
Attitude of care	Somewhat evident
Cohesive and integrated	Somewhat evident

Performance	2/16
Artform/s	Music Theatre
Presenters	A five-piece dedicated jazz band for young audiences
Site	1000-seat capacity music hall in a major urban arts venue, Melbourne
Audience	The audience is predominantly made up of families, with children aged anywhere between birth and five years of age
Space/s	Traditional raised stage Audience in theatre seating with a low tier
Features	<p>Live music throughout</p> <p>Jazz ensemble with an opera trained vocalist</p> <p>Instruments included double bass, drum set, saxophone, accordion, vocalist (soprano), supporting vocals (tenor)</p> <p>Repertoire included original songs in a traditional jazz style, with lyrical themes aimed at a young audience</p> <p>Most pieces had a fast tempo, with exaggerated changes</p> <p>Tutti sections with solos interspersed</p> <p>Highly skilled jazz musicians</p> <p>Weaving of the pieces into an overall narrative, with spoken sections in between pieces</p> <p>Pantomime-type drama, with hidden objects that the musicians couldn't find but which the audience could see</p> <p>Interaction with the audience, by asking them to put their hands up, copy actions, and call out in response to the dramatic narrative</p>

	Themes from everyday life (e.g. brushing teeth, washing hands) A focus on the instruments in the jazz ensemble, and their different timbres	
Alignment with the literature	Transformable space Safe, secure, clean space Family-friendly venue Positive emotional climate Artist-quality materials Zone of proximal development Scaffolding Repetition Movement Child engagement Observation Schematic play Free play Object play Collaboration Artist-child interactions Child-child interactions Parent-child interactions Responsive feedback Transfer of ownership Co-play Child's voice Interdependence between adults & children Co-creating Many social groups Self-directed learning Strong communicator Agency Making Demonstrating tool use and technique Everyday / authenticity Connecting with existing ideas Sensory play Empathy with audience	Not evident Somewhat evident Somewhat evident Somewhat evident Highly evident Somewhat evident Not evident Somewhat evident Not evident Somewhat evident Highly evident Not evident Not evident Not evident Not evident Not evident Not evident Not evident Not evident Not evident Not evident Not evident Not evident Not evident Somewhat evident Not evident Not evident Not evident Not evident Highly evident Somewhat evident Highly evident Somewhat evident Somewhat evident

	Attitude of care Cohesive and integrated	Somewhat evident Somewhat evident
Performance	3/16	
Artform/s	Music Dance	
Presenters	A vocalist/guitarist who writes music for children, accompanied by an ensemble of children and teens	
Site	A children's music festival held in an urban show grounds venue, Brisbane	
Audience	The audience is predominantly made up of families, with children aged anywhere between birth and seven years of age	
Space/s	Traditional raised stage Audience in open, free, floor seating	
Features	Live singing Children performing onstage as professional musicians, singers and dancers A mix of acoustic and electric instruments Original compositions in folk style Puppetry Visual reinforcement of narratives within each song, through dance and costume Australian animal and Australian landscape themes No overarching narrative Pantomime-type drama	
Alignment with the literature	Transformable space Safe, secure, clean space Family-friendly venue Positive emotional climate Artist-quality materials Zone of proximal development Scaffolding Repetition Movement	Somewhat evident Not evident Somewhat evident Somewhat evident Somewhat evident Somewhat evident Not evident Not evident Not evident

Child engagement	Somewhat evident
Observation	Highly evident
Schematic play	Not evident
Free play	Not evident
Object play	Not evident
Collaboration	Not evident
Artist-child interactions	Somewhat evident
Child-child interactions	Not evident
Parent-child interactions	Somewhat evident
Responsive feedback	Not evident
Transfer of ownership	Not evident
Co-play	Not evident
Child's voice	Not evident
Interdependence between adults & children	Somewhat evident
Co-creating	Not evident
Many social groups	Highly evident
Self-directed learning	Not evident
Strong communicator	Not evident
Agency	Not evident
Making	Not evident
Demonstrating tool use and technique	Somewhat evident
Everyday / authenticity	Somewhat evident
Connecting with existing ideas	Somewhat evident
Sensory play	Not evident
Empathy with audience	Not evident
Attitude of care	Somewhat evident
Cohesive and integrated	Somewhat evident

Performance	4/16
Artform/s	Theatre Music
Presenters	Two well-known professional actors and a keyboard player
Site	A suburban hall, Melbourne

Audience	The audience is predominantly made up of families, with children aged anywhere between birth and four years of age	
Space/s	Traditional raised stage Audience in open floor seating, with some chairs towards the back of the hall	
Features	Repertoire of traditional and well-known songs and stories Keyboard player performs in full view of the audience Use of everyday objects Presenters model actions for songs Props and characters that are known to some children (from television) No overarching narrative Audience is encouraged to clap a beat, dance, sing along, stand up	
Alignment with the literature	Transformable space	Not evident
	Safe, secure, clean space	Highly evident
	Family-friendly venue	Highly evident
	Positive emotional climate	Somewhat evident
	Artist-quality materials	Somewhat evident
	Zone of proximal development	Somewhat evident
	Scaffolding	Not evident
	Repetition	Somewhat evident
	Movement	Somewhat evident
	Child engagement	Somewhat evident
	Observation	Highly evident
	Schematic play	Not evident
	Free play	Not evident
	Object play	Not evident
	Collaboration	Not evident
	Artist-child interactions	Not evident
	Child-child interactions	Not evident
	Parent-child interactions	Somewhat evident
	Responsive feedback	Not evident
	Transfer of ownership	Not evident
	Co-play	Not evident
	Child's voice	Not evident
	Interdependence between adults & children	Not evident
	Co-creating	Not evident

Many social groups	Highly evident
Self-directed learning	Not evident
Strong communicator	Not evident
Agency	Not evident
Making	Not evident
Demonstrating tool use and technique	Somewhat evident
Everyday / authenticity	Highly evident
Connecting with existing ideas	Somewhat evident
Sensory play	Not evident
Empathy with audience	Somewhat evident
Attitude of care	Somewhat evident
Cohesive and integrated	Somewhat evident

4.3.4 Phase two

The second phase was an extension of the first; part of an explorative mapping process through which I aimed to progressively familiarise myself with and within the field as well as continue to refine the focus for the study. In this phase, I observed a further four integrated arts performances for very young audiences. I participated as a parent audience member with my own son, in much the same way that I had done previously. This time, however, I chose to direct most of my attention to the practices of the teaching-artist. My observations were guided by the themes that emerged from the literature review undertaken as part of phase one: I took particular note of the nature of the built environment, as well as the emotional climate in the room (environment); I observed the teaching-artists' role within the performance more closely, and the ways in which the players are given opportunity to interact (interactions); and I also looked for observable indicators regarding the teaching-artists' understand of the learning preferences and developmental needs of very young children (learning and development). During this phase I was fortunate to participate in an integrated arts performance that I deemed to be exemplary. It stood out from the others as being well-aligned

with the engaging practice themes discussed throughout the literature. While these themes were proving useful as a tool for focusing the observations, I also noted that the way in which the teaching-artists positioned the children in this performance was potentially another important factor; one that was not being adequately captured. It was necessary to return to the literature to better understand it. As such, I posed a new question – What does the literature say about the different ways that adults position children, and how does this relate to engaging practice? – and created an addendum to the existing literature review (refer to section 3.3) in order to include this emergent idea.

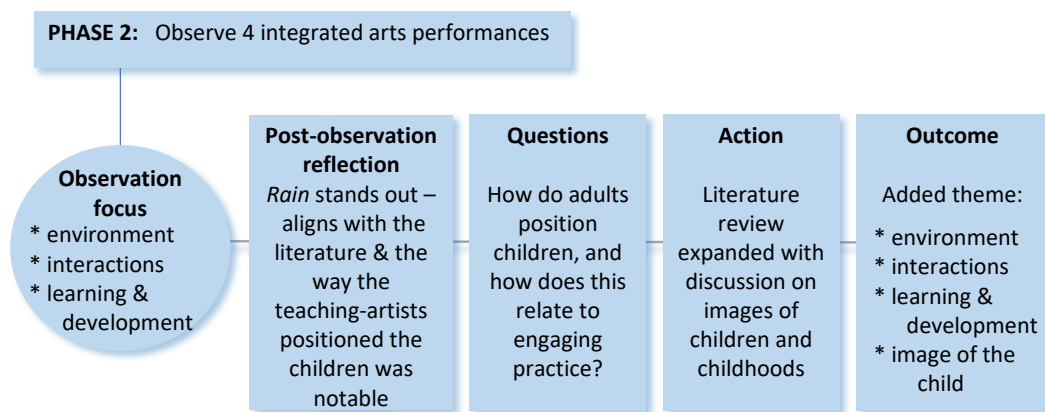


Figure 10. Phase 2 of the study.

4.3.5 Phase two integrated arts performance summaries

Four integrated arts performances were observed as part of phase two of the study, as summarised below:

Performance	5/16
Artform/s	Music Dance
Presenters	Early childhood music education company
Site	Urban wildlife park, Melbourne

Funding	Ticketing, as part of wildlife park entry	
Audience	The audience is predominantly made up of families, with children aged anywhere between birth and ten years of age	
Space/s	<p>Raised outdoor stage</p> <p>Grass audience area in front of the stage</p> <p>Set within a larger picnic area within the wildlife park</p>	
Features	<p>Two live vocalists, with microphone headsets</p> <p>Repertoire of traditional and popular children's songs, most with accompanying actions; a number of pieces with an animal theme, to correspond with the wildlife park setting; an original piece themed around the name of the company Pre-recorded backing track</p> <p>Encouragement of the audience to participate in singing and copying actions modelled by the performers</p> <p>Surprise sensory interaction – bubble machine into the front row of the audience at the conclusion of the performance</p> <p>Audience interaction – presenters stamp the hands of children who come up to the front of the stage at the conclusion of the performance</p>	
Alignment with the literature	<p>Transformable space</p> <p>Safe, secure, clean space</p> <p>Family-friendly venue</p> <p>Positive emotional climate</p> <p>Artist-quality materials</p> <p>Zone of proximal development</p> <p>Scaffolding</p> <p>Repetition</p> <p>Movement</p> <p>Child engagement</p> <p>Observation</p> <p>Schematic play</p> <p>Free play</p> <p>Object play</p> <p>Collaboration</p> <p>Artist-child interactions</p> <p>Child-child interactions</p> <p>Parent-child interactions</p> <p>Responsive feedback</p> <p>Transfer of ownership</p>	<p>Not evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Highly evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Highly evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p>

Co-play	Not evident
Child's voice	Not evident
Interdependence between adults & children	Not evident
Co-creating	Not evident
Many social groups	Somewhat evident
Self-directed learning	Not evident
Strong communicator	Not evident
Agency	Not evident
Making	Not evident
Demonstrating tool use and technique	Not evident
Everyday / authenticity	Somewhat evident
Connecting with existing ideas	Somewhat evident
Sensory play	Not evident
Empathy with audience	Not evident
Attitude of care	Not evident
Cohesive and integrated	Not evident

Performance	6/16
Artform/s	Theatre Music Visual arts (installation)
Presenters	A children's theatre company, in collaboration with a musician and a group of installation artists
Site	A dedicated arts venue for children and families, Melbourne
Audience	The audience is made up of 12 very young children, aged birth to eighteen months, and their carers
Space/s	An open gallery that has been divided into three smaller performance spaces using curtains and non-permanent fixtures
Features	Immersive experience A combination of performance and free exploration of the installation A range of abstract objects are provided for the children to manipulate Live cello music accompanies the children's free movements Active participation of the audience Encourages movement throughout the space

Connecting with existing ideas	Highly evident
Sensory play	Highly evident
Empathy with audience	Highly evident
Attitude of care	Highly evident
Cohesive and integrated	Highly evident

Note: This performance was selected as an exemplar case study (Case Study 1, Chapter 5) due to its close alignment with the literature

Performance	7/20	
Artform/s	Music	
Presenters	Professional orchestra	
Site	Small concert hall at the orchestra's home venue , Melbourne	
Funding	Ticketing	
Audience	The audience is predominantly made up of families, with children aged anywhere between birth and five years of age	
Space/s	Open hall with performers and audiences both on the floor level	
Features	Professional orchestra performing classical works Performers in close aural and visual proximity to the audience Children are provided with a small percussion instrument to play with Children are encouraged to respond to the music by playing along with their own instrument A narrator weaves together the pieces in the form of a story Children sit on small mats on the floor, generally alongside their parent and/or siblings	
Alignment with the literature	Transformable space Safe, secure, clean space Family-friendly venue Positive emotional climate Artist-quality materials Zone of proximal development Scaffolding Repetition Movement Child engagement	Somewhat evident Highly evident Highly evident Somewhat evident Highly evident Somewhat evident Not evident Highly evident Not evident Somewhat evident

Observation	Highly evident
Schematic play	Somewhat evident
Free play	Somewhat evident
Object play	Somewhat evident
Collaboration	Not evident
Artist-child interactions	Not evident
Child-child interactions	Not evident
Parent-child interactions	Somewhat evident
Responsive feedback	Not evident
Transfer of ownership	Not evident
Co-play	Somewhat evident
Child's voice	Not evident
Interdependence between adults & children	Not evident
Co-creating	Somewhat evident
Many social groups	Somewhat evident
Self-directed learning	Not evident
Strong communicator	Not evident
Agency	Not evident
Making	Not evident
Demonstrating tool use and technique	Somewhat evident
Everyday / authenticity	Not evident
Connecting with existing ideas	Highly evident
Sensory play	Somewhat evident
Empathy with audience	Somewhat evident
Attitude of care	Somewhat evident
Cohesive and integrated	Somewhat evident

Performance	8/16
Artform/s	Electronic music (DJ) Dance Film
Presenters	Collaboration between a popular television program for young children and a small touring performing arts company (Canada)
Site	A children's festival held in an urban show grounds venue, Sydney

Audience	The audience is predominantly made up of families, with children aged anywhere between birth and five years of age	
Space/s	<p>Raised stage, with large screens behind</p> <p>A mixture of tiered stadium seating, floor level chair seating, and carpeted floor seating in front of the stage</p>	
Features	<p>Full-bodied puppets</p> <p>Characters known to some families and children from television</p> <p>DJ performance</p> <p>Electronic music with choreographed dances</p> <p>Strong beat</p> <p>Characters model the choreography and audience encouraged to imitate</p> <p>Large video screens project footage of children dancing, shadows, words that correspond with the live action and music</p> <p>Many short musical pieces separated by spoken dialogue between characters</p> <p>No overarching narrative</p>	
Alignment with the literature	<p>Transformable space</p> <p>Safe, secure, clean space</p> <p>Family-friendly venue</p> <p>Positive emotional climate</p> <p>Artist-quality materials</p> <p>Zone of proximal development</p> <p>Scaffolding</p> <p>Repetition</p> <p>Movement</p> <p>Child engagement</p> <p>Observation</p> <p>Schematic play</p> <p>Free play</p> <p>Object play</p> <p>Collaboration</p> <p>Artist-child interactions</p> <p>Child-child interactions</p> <p>Parent-child interactions</p> <p>Responsive feedback</p> <p>Transfer of ownership</p>	<p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Highly evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Highly evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p>

Co-play	Not evident
Child's voice	Not evident
Interdependence between adults & children	Not evident
Co-creating	Not evident
Many social groups	Highly evident
Self-directed learning	Not evident
Strong communicator	Not evident
Agency	Not evident
Making	Not evident
Demonstrating tool use and technique	Somewhat evident
Everyday / authenticity	Somewhat evident
Connecting with existing ideas	Somewhat evident
Sensory play	Not evident
Empathy with audience	Not evident
Attitude of care	Somewhat evident
Cohesive and integrated	Not evident

4.3.6 Phase three

After conducting the literature review addendum at the end of the second phase, I again entered the field. In this third phase I observed a further five integrated arts performances for very young audiences, participating once again as a parent audience member with my own son. I continued to focus on the environment, interactions, and learning and development, as I had done previously. However, I now also took particular notice of the image of the child, using the themes identified in the literature review addendum as a guide. During this phase, I was fortunate to participate in another integrated arts performance that I deemed exemplary, by nature of its close alignment with the literature. This performance was also noteworthy for the very high standard of presentational art – an emergent factor that was not adequately captured by the existing themes. As such, I turned once more to the literature in search of answers to the question –

What does the literature say about arts and aesthetics, and how do these concepts relate to engaging practice?

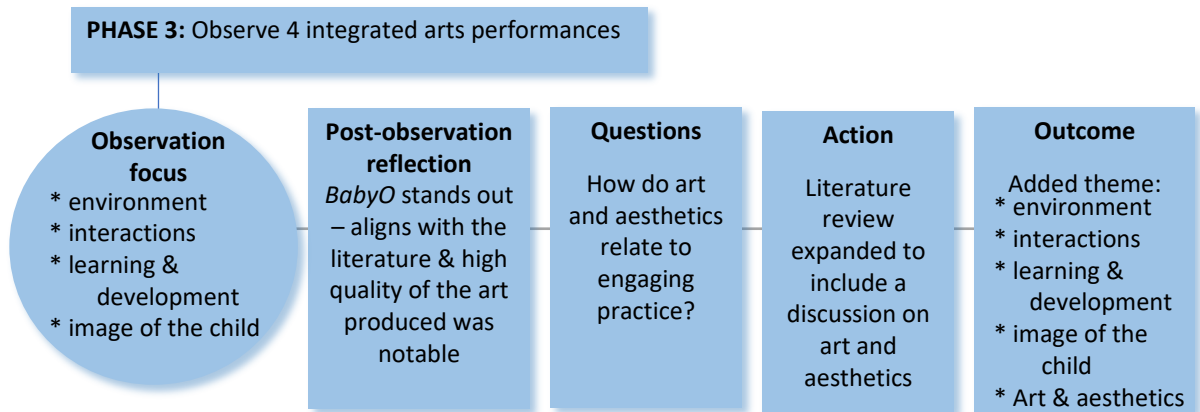


Figure 11. Phase 3 of the study.

4.3.7 Phase three integrated arts performance summaries

Four integrated arts performances were observed as part of phase three of the study, as summarised below:

Performance	9/16
Artform/s	Music
Presenters	A well-known Australian singer-songwriter, accompanied by her band
Site	A traveling spiegel tent, Melbourne
Audience	The audience is predominantly made up of families, with children aged anywhere between birth and five years of age
Space/s	A large circular tent, with a combination of cushioned floor seating and table and chair booths
Features	A wide range of live instruments, including voice, electric bass guitar, double bass, drum kit, glockenspiel, violin, multi percussion, novelty percussion Diversity of sounds Performers in close aural and visual proximity to the audience Instrumental solos High sound quality Musical echo between the musicians and parents

	Clapping patterns modelled directly by the percussionist Older children encouraged to free dance in the open floor seating area No overarching narrative Songs are from the singer-songwriter's new album for children	
Alignment with the literature	Transformable space Safe, secure, clean space Family-friendly venue Positive emotional climate Artist-quality materials Zone of proximal development Scaffolding Repetition Movement Child engagement Observation Schematic play Free play Object play Collaboration Artist-child interactions Child-child interactions Parent-child interactions Responsive feedback Transfer of ownership Co-play Child's voice Interdependence between adults & children Co-creating Many social groups Self-directed learning Strong communicator Agency Making Demonstrating tool use and technique Everyday / authenticity Connecting with existing ideas	Somewhat evident Highly evident Somewhat evident Somewhat evident Highly evident Somewhat evident Somewhat evident Highly evident Somewhat evident Somewhat evident Highly evident Not evident Not evident Not evident Not evident Somewhat evident Not evident Not evident Not evident Not evident Not evident Not evident Not evident Somewhat evident Somewhat evident Not evident Not evident Not evident Not evident Highly evident Somewhat evident Not evident

	Sensory play	Not evident
	Empathy with audience	Somewhat evident
	Attitude of care	Somewhat evident
	Cohesive and integrated	Not evident
Performance	10/16	
Artform/s	Theatre Music Dance	
Presenters	Collaboration between an international television company and small touring theatre company (USA), Melbourne	
Site	1400-seat stand-alone theatre	
Audience	The audience is predominantly made up of families, with children aged anywhere between birth and three years of age	
Space/s	Large raised stage, with multi-level tiered audience seating	
Features	Full-bodied puppets Choreographed dances Pre-recorded musical accompaniment Spoken narrative interspersed with songs Traditional use of sets, props, staging and lighting Explicit teaching of alphabet letters Characters known to some children and families (from television) Encouragement of audience participation, including hand gestures, swaying body motions, spoken words Modelling of hand gestures by performers 2 acts, separated by a 20-minute interval Merchandise stands and roving sales	
Alignment with the literature	Transformable space Safe, secure, clean space Family-friendly venue Positive emotional climate Artist-quality materials Zone of proximal development Scaffolding	Not evident Somewhat evident Somewhat evident Not evident Somewhat evident Not evident Not evident

Repetition	Highly evident
Movement	Not evident
Child engagement	Somewhat evident
Observation	Highly evident
Schematic play	Not evident
Free play	Not evident
Object play	Not evident
Collaboration	Not evident
Artist-child interactions	Not evident
Child-child interactions	Not evident
Parent-child interactions	Not evident
Responsive feedback	Not evident
Transfer of ownership	Not evident
Co-play	Not evident
Child's voice	Not evident
Interdependence between adults & children	Not evident
Co-creating	Not evident
Many social groups	Somewhat evident
Self-directed learning	Not evident
Strong communicator	Not evident
Agency	Not evident
Making	Not evident
Demonstrating tool use and technique	Somewhat evident
Everyday / authenticity	Somewhat evident
Connecting with existing ideas	Somewhat evident
Sensory play	Not evident
Empathy with audience	Not evident
Attitude of care	Somewhat evident
Cohesive and integrated	Somewhat evident

Performance	11/16
Artform/s	Music Theatre Visual arts (installation)
Presenters	A national opera company, Edinburgh

Site	Hall at a university	
Audience	24 children aged between 6 and 18 months, and their carers	
Space/s	A large open hall, with intimate audience floor seating surrounding the performers	
Features	Professional opera singers Acapella singing Harmonies Vowel sounds and simple blends in place of words Performers in close proximity to audience Performers interact directly with each child Familiar objects used as props and set Children provided with objects to manipulate Heavy repetition of sound patterns and musical phrases Increasing harmonic complexity Individually themed pieces with very loose overarching narrative	
Alignment with the literature	Transformable space Safe, secure, clean space Family-friendly venue Positive emotional climate Artist-quality materials Zone of proximal development Scaffolding Repetition Movement Child engagement Observation Schematic play Free play Object play Collaboration Artist-child interactions Child-child interactions Parent-child interactions Responsive feedback Transfer of ownership	Somewhat evident Highly evident Somewhat evident Somewhat evident Highly evident Highly evident Somewhat evident Highly evident Not evident Highly evident Highly evident Somewhat evident Not evident Somewhat evident Not evident Highly evident Not evident Somewhat evident Not evident Not evident

Co-play	Somewhat evident
Child's voice	Not evident
Interdependence between adults & children	Not evident
Co-creating	Somewhat evident
Many social groups	Somewhat evident
Self-directed learning	Not evident
Strong communicator	Not evident
Agency	Not evident
Making	Not evident
Demonstrating tool use and technique	Highly evident
Everyday / authenticity	Somewhat evident
Connecting with existing ideas	Highly evident
Sensory play	Somewhat evident
Empathy with audience	Somewhat evident
Attitude of care	Highly evident
Cohesive and integrated	Highly evident

Note: This performance was selected as an exemplar case study (Case Study 2, Chapter 6) due to its close alignment with the literature, particularly in the areas relating to art and aesthetics and learning and development.

Performance	12/16
Artform/s	Theatre Music
Presenters	Collaboration between a best-selling children's author and small touring theatre company (UK), Sydney
Site	400-seat theatre in an urban arts centre
Audience	The audience is predominantly made up of families, with children aged anywhere between birth and five years of age
Space/s	Raised stage, with tiered audience seating
Features	Pantomime Actors in animal character costumes Characters known to some children and families (through picture books) Pianist accompanying throughout, in full view of audience Spoken sections interspersed with singing

	<p>Performers playing percussion instruments</p> <p>Audience participation, including spoken, clapping, singing of particular phrases</p> <p>Performers teach participatory parts to the parents in the audience through call and response</p> <p>Comedic sections, including slapstick</p> <p>Surprise sensory element – bubbles blown into audience by a machine</p> <p>Merchandise stand</p>	
Alignment with the literature	<p>Transformable space</p> <p>Safe, secure, clean space</p> <p>Family-friendly venue</p> <p>Positive emotional climate</p> <p>Artist-quality materials</p> <p>Zone of proximal development</p> <p>Scaffolding</p> <p>Repetition</p> <p>Movement</p> <p>Child engagement</p> <p>Observation</p> <p>Schematic play</p> <p>Free play</p> <p>Object play</p> <p>Collaboration</p> <p>Artist-child interactions</p> <p>Child-child interactions</p> <p>Parent-child interactions</p> <p>Responsive feedback</p> <p>Transfer of ownership</p> <p>Co-play</p> <p>Child's voice</p> <p>Interdependence between adults & children</p> <p>Co-creating</p> <p>Many social groups</p> <p>Self-directed learning</p> <p>Strong communicator</p> <p>Agency</p> <p>Making</p>	<p>Not evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Highly evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Highly evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Highly evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p>

Demonstrating tool use and technique	Highly evident
Everyday / authenticity	Somewhat evident
Connecting with existing ideas	Somewhat evident
Sensory play	Somewhat evident
Empathy with audience	Somewhat evident
Attitude of care	Somewhat evident
Cohesive and integrated	Highly evident

4.3.8 Phase four

Phase Four concluded the explorative mapping process. Through the iterative process of observing, reflecting, posing questions, looking to the literature, and defining and refining themes, I had now landed upon five categories of engaging practice to use as an interpretive lens: interactions, learning and development, environment, image of the child, and art and aesthetics. In this fourth phase, I observed four last integrated arts performances for very young audiences, using these themes in order to guide what I was observing. During this period, I was fortunate to participate as a parent audience member in an exemplary dance performance for very young audiences. I found the themes to be effectively capturing the engaging practices of the teaching-artists in this work.

While I was feeling satisfied that the mapping process had provided me with opportunities to better understanding the field, and to refine the focus for the study, the teaching-artists' lived experience of designing and performing in these events remained somewhat elusive. My limited personal experience of brief engagement teaching-artist work, and a lack of literature around this (as noted in section 3.2.7), led me to question – *Does the one-off nature of an arts experience for a very young audience influence a teaching-artist's choices, and if so, how?* In order to find out, I planned a fifth study phase, in which I would design and lead a one-

off integrated arts performance for an audience of very young children and their parents.

In order to move the study forward, and to intensify my investigation into the ways in which teaching-artists can best support the engagement of very young audiences, at the end of phase four, I selected three exemplar integrated arts performances from the total of twenty observed, for further inquiry and analysis. Each case is presented as a stand-alone chapter in this thesis (Chapters 5, 6 and 7).

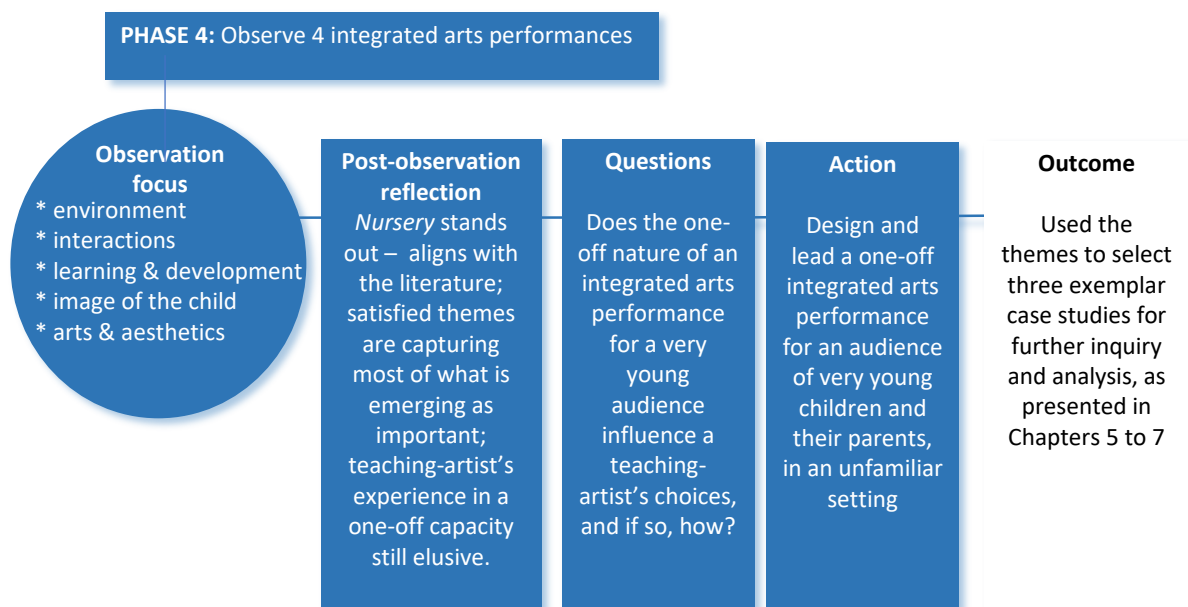


Figure 12. Phase 4 of the study.

4.3.9 Phase four integrated arts performance summaries

Four integrated arts performances were observed as part of phase four of the study, as summarised below:

Performance	13/16
Artform/s	Theatre Sound Installation

Presenters	Theatre company with experience in theatre for young audiences	
Site	Regional arts centre, Gippsland	
Audience	Very young children aged birth to 12 months and their primary carers	
Space/s	An enclosed waiting and sound-recording pre-performance space, and a large open hall	
Features	<p>Immersive experience</p> <p>A created environment</p> <p>Highly sensory, particularly visual and aural</p> <p>Pre-recorded atmospheric soundscape</p> <p>Audio of parent's voices saying their own child's name as part of the soundscape</p> <p>Intimate</p> <p>Calm aesthetic</p> <p>Parents are actively encouraged to give the children autonomy within the space, including a moment when they are asked to leave children in the space unaccompanied (but still observed) by adults</p>	
Alignment with the literature	<p>Transformable space</p> <p>Safe, secure, clean space</p> <p>Family-friendly venue</p> <p>Positive emotional climate</p> <p>Artist-quality materials</p> <p>Zone of proximal development</p> <p>Scaffolding</p> <p>Repetition</p> <p>Movement</p> <p>Child engagement</p> <p>Observation</p> <p>Schematic play</p> <p>Free play</p> <p>Object play</p> <p>Collaboration</p> <p>Artist-child interactions</p> <p>Child-child interactions</p> <p>Parent-child interactions</p> <p>Responsive feedback</p> <p>Transfer of ownership</p>	<p>Highly evident</p> <p>Highly evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Highly evident</p> <p>Highly evident</p> <p>Highly evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Highly evident</p> <p>Highly evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Highly evident</p>

Co-play	Somewhat evident
Child's voice	Highly evident
Interdependence between adults & children	Not evident
Co-creating	Somewhat evident
Many social groups	Somewhat evident
Self-directed learning	Highly evident
Strong communicator	Highly evident
Agency	Highly evident
Making	Somewhat evident
Demonstrating tool use and technique	Not evident
Everyday / authenticity	Not evident
Connecting with existing ideas	Somewhat evident
Sensory play	Highly evident
Empathy with audience	Highly evident
Attitude of care	Highly evident
Cohesive and integrated	Somewhat evident

Performance	14/16
Artform/s	Music
Presenters	Early childhood music teacher and composer/performer of music for children
Site	A children's music festival held in an urban show grounds venue, Brisbane
Audience	The audience is predominantly made up of families, with children aged anywhere between birth and five years of age
Space/s	Small outdoor with surrounding grassed area for free audience seating
Features	<p>Singer with acoustic guitar</p> <p>Performer moved down from the stage into the grassed audience area to be closer to the children</p> <p>Engaged in reciprocal conversations with parents and older children</p> <p>Explicit teaching of musical phrases by call and response</p> <p>Discussion and demonstrations of sounds made by his instruments – guitar and kazoo</p> <p>Each piece had an independent theme, with no overarching narrative</p>

	<p>Engaged in “follow the leader” musical games with the audience Encouraged the audiences to stand and follow him in a line, moving through the space in time to the music</p> <p>Engaged in observation of the audience and chose to perform songs that resembled their interests</p> <p>Elicited ideas from the audience and incorporated these in his music-making</p>	
Alignment with the literature	<p>Transformable space</p> <p>Safe, secure, clean space</p> <p>Family-friendly venue</p> <p>Positive emotional climate</p> <p>Artist-quality materials</p> <p>Zone of proximal development</p> <p>Scaffolding</p> <p>Repetition</p> <p>Movement</p> <p>Child engagement</p> <p>Observation</p> <p>Schematic play</p> <p>Free play</p> <p>Object play</p> <p>Collaboration</p> <p>Artist-child interactions</p> <p>Child-child interactions</p> <p>Parent-child interactions</p> <p>Responsive feedback</p> <p>Transfer of ownership</p> <p>Co-play</p> <p>Child’s voice</p> <p>Interdependence between adults & children</p> <p>Co-creating</p> <p>Many social groups</p> <p>Self-directed learning</p> <p>Strong communicator</p> <p>Agency</p> <p>Making</p> <p>Demonstrating tool use and technique</p>	<p>Highly evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Highly evident</p> <p>Highly evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Highly evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Highly evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Highly evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Not evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Highly evident</p>

Everyday / authenticity	Somewhat evident
Connecting with existing ideas	Somewhat evident
Sensory play	Not evident
Empathy with audience	Somewhat evident
Attitude of care	Somewhat evident
Cohesive and integrated	Somewhat evident

Performance	15/16	
Artform/s	Dance (ballet)	
Presenters	International ballet company	
Site	2000-seat theatre in a major arts venue, Melbourne	
Funding	Ticketing. Audience members aged birth to 12-months are free when seated in the lap of a paying adult.	
Audience	The audience is predominantly made up of families, with children aged anywhere between birth and seven years of age	
Space/s	Large raised stage, with multi-level tiered audience seating	
Features	<p>Ballet</p> <p>Follows the story of a group of young dancers who wish to audition for ballet school</p> <p>Solo and ensemble performances</p> <p>No spoken dialogue</p> <p>Use of occasional written signs to clarify ideas</p> <p>Characters known to some children and families</p> <p>Reinforcement of gender norms – a single male character who dances hip hop and misbehaves, female characters dance ballet in beautiful costumes and act shocked by the behaviour of the male character</p> <p>Pre-recorded musical accompaniment</p> <p>Traditional use of sets, props, staging and lighting</p> <p>2 acts, separated by a 15-minute interval</p>	
Alignment with the literature	<p>Transformable space</p> <p>Safe, secure, clean space</p> <p>Family-friendly venue</p> <p>Positive emotional climate</p> <p>Artist-quality materials</p>	<p>Not evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p>

Zone of proximal development	Not evident
Scaffolding	Not evident
Repetition	Somewhat evident
Movement	Not evident
Child engagement	Somewhat evident
Observation	Highly evident
Schematic play	Not evident
Free play	Not evident
Object play	Not evident
Collaboration	Not evident
Artist-child interactions	Not evident
Child-child interactions	Not evident
Parent-child interactions	Somewhat evident
Responsive feedback	Not evident
Transfer of ownership	Not evident
Co-play	Not evident
Child's voice	Not evident
Interdependence between adults & children	Not evident
Co-creating	Not evident
Many social groups	Somewhat evident
Self-directed learning	Not evident
Strong communicator	Not evident
Agency	Not evident
Making	Not evident
Demonstrating tool use and technique	Highly evident
Everyday / authenticity	Somewhat evident
Connecting with existing ideas	Somewhat evident
Sensory play	Not evident
Empathy with audience	Not evident
Attitude of care	Somewhat evident
Cohesive and integrated	Highly evident

Performance	16/16
Artform/s	Dance Music

Presenters	Theatre for early years group with expertise in dance	
Site	A dedicated arts venue for children and families, Melbourne	
Audience	Very young children aged 4 to 18 months and their carers	
Space/s	A created performance space has been created within a larger gallery, using curtains and non-permanent fixtures	
Feature	<p>Dance performance</p> <p>Live acoustic music performed in close, clear view of children</p> <p>Singing of simple, repetitive phrases</p> <p>Immersive experience</p> <p>Combining of visual, aural and kinaesthetic modalities</p> <p>Dancers interacting directly with individual members of the audience</p> <p>Encourages children to move throughout the space</p> <p>Intimate</p> <p>The performers model ideas for the children</p> <p>The performers switch between leading and responding to children's ideas</p> <p>Dance improvisation</p> <p>Dance play</p> <p>The director actively observes and provides suggestions to the performers</p>	
Alignment with the literature	<p>Transformable space</p> <p>Safe, secure, clean space</p> <p>Family-friendly venue</p> <p>Positive emotional climate</p> <p>Artist-quality materials</p> <p>Zone of proximal development</p> <p>Scaffolding</p> <p>Repetition</p> <p>Movement</p> <p>Child engagement</p> <p>Observation</p> <p>Schematic play</p> <p>Free play</p> <p>Object play</p> <p>Collaboration</p>	<p>Highly evident</p> <p>Highly evident</p> <p>Highly evident</p> <p>Highly evident</p> <p>Highly evident</p> <p>Highly evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Highly evident</p> <p>Highly evident</p> <p>Highly evident</p> <p>Highly evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Somewhat evident</p> <p>Highly evident</p>

Artist-child interactions	Highly evident
Child-child interactions	Somewhat evident
Parent-child interactions	Not evident
Responsive feedback	Somewhat evident
Transfer of ownership	Highly evident
Co-play	Highly evident
Child's voice	Highly evident
Interdependence between adults & children	Highly evident
Co-creating	Highly evident
Many social groups	Highly evident
Self-directed learning	Highly evident
Strong communicator	Highly evident
Agency	Highly evident
Making	Highly evident
Demonstrating tool use and technique	Highly evident
Everyday / authenticity	Not evident
Connecting with existing ideas	Somewhat evident
Sensory play	Highly evident
Empathy with audience	Highly evident
Attitude of care	Highly evident
Cohesive and integrated	Highly evident

Note: This performance was selected as an exemplar case study (Case Study 3, Chapter 7) due to its close alignment with the literature

4.3.10 Phase five

Phase five was an auto-ethnographical exploration of my own work as a teaching-artist. In this phase, I designed and led a one-off arts experience for very young audiences and parents, in an unfamiliar venue. Through this, I aimed to better understand the lived experience of the teaching artist. A detailed account of this work is presented in Chapter 8 of this thesis, including a reflective analysis that focuses on the unforeseen challenges I discovered when working in short engagement with an audience.

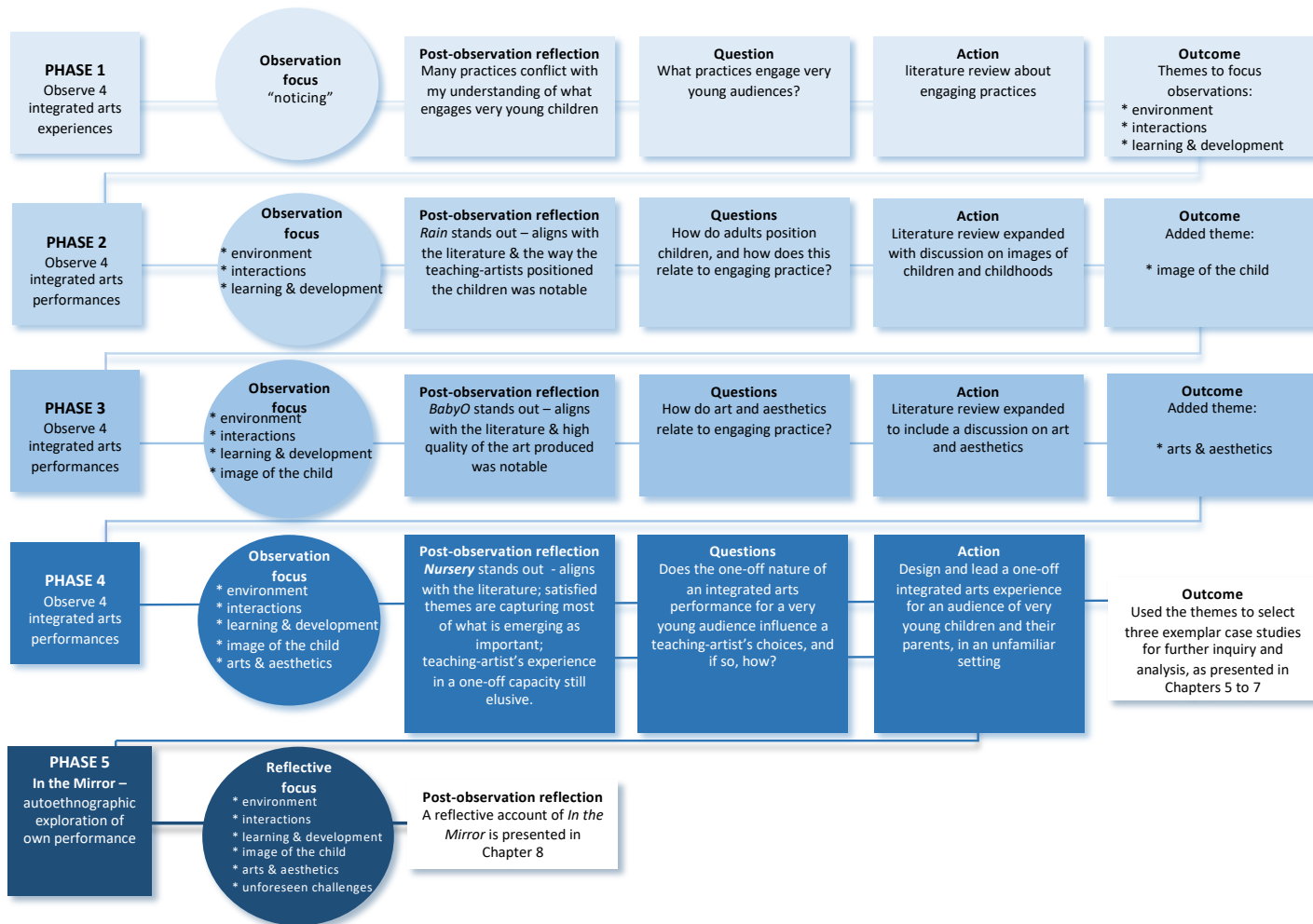


Figure 13. The five phases of the mapping study.

4.4 THE DATA

4.4.1 Data collection

Immersing oneself in an event first-hand, in real time, can be a useful way to move towards understanding an experience (Denzin, 1997; Stake, 2010). When adopted as a research strategy, the aim of the researcher is to lose herself in the moment; to become part of the experience, rather than simply an observer of the experience. The more authentically she engages, the more secure the reported findings are thought to be (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This creates some challenges. Consideration needs to be given to data collection methods. The researcher cannot be both fully immersed and making observational commentary at the same time. The act of recording ideas during the observation period, regardless of what observation strategies or tools are implemented, can detract considerably from the full participation of the researcher. In this study, I found it necessary to gently put aside my researcher urge to just “collect data” in order to be fully present in the experience, and to better absorb the collective communications taking place in the space. The implications of this on the research design were significant. Not collecting data during the participatory period meant that the experience could only be retold after the event. The observation data is, therefore, a reflection of the lived experience that I participated in as a parent, interpreted and expressed by myself as a researcher. This aligns with Malaguzzi’s idea that observation is a way of examining experience, as well as a tool “which can refine, develop, and requalify our professional conduct” (2016, p. 236).

My focus during the data collection was on the practices and pedagogies that supported audience engagement. I took note of the critical observable events, the spaces and materials, and the interactions, with a focus on the teaching-artists, myself, and my infant son. Alongside this, I noted my thoughts on these in relation to my existing understandings.

4.4.2 Primary data

Participant observations generated the primary data. In these observations I co-participated in the performing arts experiences as a parent audience member. Because of the immersive nature of the experiences, participating fully and as intended by the artists – as a parent with an infant, amongst other parents with infants – was an ideal position. According to Montessori (1966), very young children's actions can be best understood through observation. But it is not as simple as watching a remote child through a theoretical lens. The way in which a child is observed that is of the utmost importance. Knowing the child and interacting directly with the child, in a range of ways, is ideal (Edwards, et al., 1998; Rogoff, 1990). As an observer, I listened, I sang, I played, I moved, I spoke, and I watched.

While observing, I took particular notice of the environment and spaces, interactions between participants, the non-verbal communications, the art-making, and the performance elements. I did not make any written notes during the performances. I realised in an earlier pilot exercise that note-taking during the performance did not bring me any closer to understanding. On the contrary, I found that creating field notes distracted from full participation in the phenomenon, and that I often missed moments because I was too busy writing. It was important for me to ensure that I was in the best position to create a

meaningful thick description of each of the integrated arts performances, and to do this, my full attention and involvement was necessary. For this reason, I chose to make my field notes immediately after each of the events (Patton, 2002). To further eliminate the logistical challenge of researching and parenting, I arranged to have my son cared for by a family member each time I undertook this process. This was a minor drawback only, as it is my overwhelming view that I was gifted a most timely and unique opportunity to engage in research about integrated arts performances for very young audiences with my own child.

Three types of field notations were made following each observation period. The first consisted of an observation running record of what took place during the experience, from beginning to end. The second recorded the contextual information, including an outline of the spaces, people, and materials used. The third aimed to elicit a more personal interpretation of the experiences, through reflective writing about moments and ideas that stood out to me. An example of this third type of field notation, taken in August, 2013, is outlined below:

In this setting, I am a parent amongst parents. I feel a strong sense of comfort in being with others who are similarly focused. I feel there is a connection between us, as we come together to experience this workshop. It's not just babies that we have in common. Each of us has decided, as a parent, that this workshop is worthwhile. Each of us wants this music experience for our child and has made considerable effort to attend – arriving dressed, on time, in the city, with nappy bags full of baby paraphernalia, is no small feat. None of us can possibly have avoided the daily challenges in parenting an infant, and this knowledge creates in me a sense of relief. In some ways, I feel I can relax knowing that any potential baby behaviours (like crying) or demands than need to be met (like feeding) will be easily understood by my co-participants. This is

expressed, both subtly through knowing smiles, and more explicitly through conversations about parenting. I feel at home.

This reflection speaks quite clearly of my experience as a *parent* having an impact on the way that I was observing. Being a parent was very prominent at the time of the data collection, and very influential, particularly due to the way I was participating alongside my very young son in the field. In his book, *Pedagogical Tact*, van Manen (2015) suggests the term “child-sense” (p. 77), to explain the extent to which an adult understands children and their experience of the world. As a mother of three children, including a very young child, my child-sense during the data collection period was heightened. This likely explains why a large number of the reflective field notes were centred around the theme of parenting. After becoming aware of this, and analysing this data further, it became evident that I was predominantly telling the story of what happened through three lenses: that of an artist (musician), a parent, and an educator. These were rarely compartmentalised, with the perspectives overlapping in myriad combinations.

4.4.3 Supplementary data

In the days surrounding each of the participant observations, a range of supplementary event artefacts were collected. These artefacts added a second layer of detail to the thick narrative descriptions, and I found that on several occasions, the artefacts reminded me of occurrences that I had forgotten or had overlooked in my observations. I initially excluded these less-formal forms of data. However, during my first attempt at descriptive narrative writing, I became aware that some of what I was recalling about each experience was influenced by them, and that my descriptions were all the better for this added layer of

knowing. The following three categories of supplementary artefact data contributed to the creation of the case study narratives:

Audio / visual artefacts

Audience photography was not permitted during any of the case study performances, and as my aim was to participate in the full capacity of a parent audience member, I chose not to collect photographic data during these times. However, photographs provided by the teaching-artists, as well as those used in marketing for the event, were collected, analysed, and used to support the development of the descriptive narratives. A total of 34 photographs were included in this study.

Similarly, I did not take audio or audio-visual recordings of the performances at the time of my participation. I did, however, include a range of audio (only) and audio-visual recordings that were provided by the artists. I was given access to an audio-video recording of the entire performance of *Nursery* (Case study 3), which I used to supplement the primary data. In order to preserve my participant experience, I chose not to view or analyse this footage until after I had completed making field notes. I was also given access to short audio-visual excerpts of *Rain* (Case study 1) which had been recorded by the artists to share on social media, and an audio (only) recording of the four musical pieces in *BabyO* (Case study 2). Again, these were analysed only after the primary data generation and analysis processes had been completed.

Text-based artefacts

A range of supplementary text-based artefacts were also collected and treated as data, including: event programs and concert notes (total 4), collected during the

participatory period; texts from promoter and artists websites (total 16), collected before the participatory period; and social media posts (total 5), collected in the days leading up to the participatory period and for several days after the event was bumped out.

Interviews

Teaching-artists from two of the three exemplar cases were interviewed in the weeks following the observation period (total 3). The interviews were conducted in order to supplement the primary data. The decision to collect interview data was made during early data analysis. As I was coding, it occurred to me that I was at risk of making ungrounded assumptions about the intentions behind creative decisions and practices, and in order to avoid this, it was best to seek clarification. I came to a similar conclusion to Simons (2009) who said, "In interview people often reveal more than can be detected or reliably assumed from observing a situation" (p. 43). I undertook three semi-structured interviews (Willig, 2008), framed loosely around the emerging themes, and added this data into the mix before moving on to another phase of analysis. The questions were tailored to specific events that took place during the performance.

	CASE STUDY 1		CASE STUDY 2		CASE STUDY 3	
PRIMARY DATA	Running record	1	Running record	1	Running record	1
	Field notes: context	1	Field notes: context	1	Field notes: context	1
	Field notes: reflections		Field notes: reflections		Field notes: reflections	1
SUPPLEMENTARY DATA	Photographs	9	Photographs	7	Photographs	12
	Video excerpts	2	Audio recording	1	Video (full performance)	1
	Website texts	5	Website texts	5	Website texts	6
	Social media posts	3	Social media posts	2	Website texts	1
	Programs, concert notes	2	Programs, concert notes	2	Director's report	
	Interviews	2	Interviews	1		

Table 1. Summary of the data case by case.

4.5 DATA ANALYSIS

4.5.1 Synthesising the literature

Finding a focus for this research was an iterative process that took both time and careful consideration. With few existing studies about integrated arts performances for very young audiences, the challenge was not so much about finding a “gap” to investigate, as is commonly a starting point for new research, but finding a “thread” that was attached to existing knowledge in associated fields. As discussed above (in section 4.3), in the early stages of this project, I went in search of such threads by engaging in the mapping field study and by reading broadly about very young children, the arts, learning and pedagogy. Through exploring this literature and comparing what I was reading with what I was noticing in the field, dominant ideas began to merge together until an initial focus

question came into view. This question – *What is currently understood about practices that engage very young audience?* – was used to guide a review of literature. Further to this, two emergent questions were posed, explored, and discussed – *What does the literature say about the different ways that adults position children, and how does this relate to engaging practice?*, and *What does the literature say about arts and aesthetics, and how do these concepts relate to engaging practice?*

In Chapter 3 of this thesis, I presented the review of literature in three parts. Here, a total of 36 themes that were commonly found across research, policy and theory were discussed and critiqued, before being condensed into five categories, as outlined below.

The 36 themes:

Transformable space	The space has been created especially for the performance and has the capacity to be redesigned by the teaching-artists and/or participants
Safe, secure, clean space	The performance space does not pose a risk to the participants
Family-friendly venue	The venue provides appropriate facilities for families with very young children
Positive emotional climate	The participants feel emotionally safe, supported and encouraged
Artist-quality materials	The materials and resources used in the performance are of a high professional quality and standard
Zone of proximal development	Experiences are challenging yet fall within the child's current developmental capacity
Scaffolding	The adult supports the child to take on challenges that extend upon his or her current knowledge or skills
Repetition	Artistic ideas and themes are repeated
Movement	The child has opportunities to move freely around the space, without physical restriction
Child engagement	The teaching-artist monitors the child for signals of engagement
Observation	The child has opportunities to observe models engaging in art-making

Schematic play	The child has opportunities to draw upon his or her preferred ways of interacting with new and familiar stimuli
Free play	The child has opportunities to engage in free play, with minimal barriers in terms of time or space
Object play	The child has opportunities to manipulate objects and materials, without set expectation of outcome
Collaboration	Participants work together towards a shared goal
Artist-child interactions	The teaching-artist communicates directly with the child
Child-child interactions	Children communicate directly with each other
Parent-child interactions	The parent/s communicates directly with the child
Responsive feedback	The child receives feedback on their individual contribution to the experience
Transfer of ownership	The adult encourages and facilitates increasing levels of leadership from the child
Co-play	The adult engages in play with and/or alongside the child
Child's voice	The child is provided with opportunities to have a meaningful say in planning, developing and/or implementing the performance
Interdependence	Adults and children are equally dependent upon each other
Co-creating	The active participation of the audience is received an act of art-making and significantly contributes to the performance
Many social groups	The performance is designed to encourage interaction between and within families, local community groups, and wider cultural groups
Self-directed learning	The created environment encourages the child to engage in autonomous exploration and discovery
Strong communicator	The child uses a range of non-verbal communication strategies to make his or her ideas and needs known
Agency	The child makes choices about how he or she would like to engage in the performance and is provided with opportunities to enact them
Making	The participants engage in art-making
Demonstrating tool use and technique	The teaching-artist models artistic practices, including tool use and technique
Everyday / authenticity	The performance is accessible and reflects the life and experience of the participants

Connecting with existing ideas	The artistic elements of the performance connect with, or extend upon, existing and familiar ideas
Sensory play	The child is provided with opportunities to engage in play experiences that engage the senses
Empathy with audience	The teaching-artist considers and monitors how elements of the performance are being experienced by the audience
Attitude of care	The teaching-artist takes care to create an aesthetic environment
Cohesive and integrated	There is flow and connection between the different components of the performance

The five categories:

Image of the child	This relates to the way in which the teaching-artist positions the child, and is underpinned by his or her sociological beliefs about children and childhoods
Arts and aesthetics	This relates to the artistic and aesthetic choices made by the teaching-artist, as well as his or her demonstrated level of skill and knowledge in their chosen artform(s)
Environment	This relates to the nature of the built environment, as well as the emotional climate in the room
Interactions	This focuses on the teaching-artist's role within the performance, and the ways in which the players are given opportunity to interact
Learning and development	This relates to the teaching-artist's understanding of the learning preferences and developmental needs of very young children

4.5.2 Analysing the data

A qualitative deductive analysis strategy was undertaken on each data set, using the themes from the review of literature as categories in which to sort the data (Cohen et al., 2007). Below is an example of a piece of artefact data, from the first case study, that has been coded and categorised using this technique.

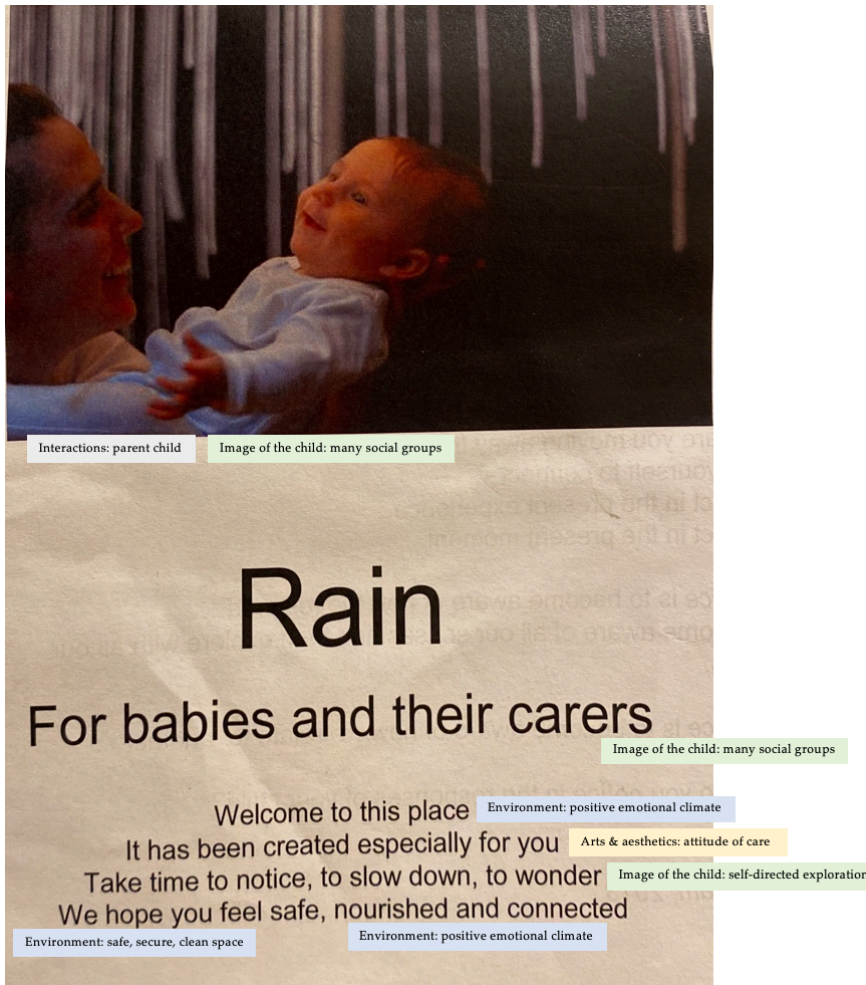


Figure 14. Artefact data, coded and categorised using the themes from the literature review.

Thick descriptive narratives were then composed, informed by the entire set of thematically categorised data. These are presented as case study narratives in chapters five through seven of the thesis. As discussed in section 3.2.4, composing these narratives involved progressive analytic focusing and, as such, should be considered part of the data analysis strategy for this research (Goodall, 2000; Simons, 2009).

The full range of refined themes and sub-themes are presented in Chapter 9 of this thesis.

4.6 ETHICS

This research complies with the practices and principles required of Research Higher Degree candidates at the University of Melbourne.

4.6.1 Informed consent

Informed consent was an ethical issue that challenged me at various points throughout this research. During the mapping phases of this study, I attended a number of large-scale integrated arts performances, with audiences numbering in the hundreds at times. Although I was only engaging in observation during these events, and it was not a requirement of the university, nor a recommendation of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (National Health and Medical Research Council et al., 2018), that I seek formal consent, using data relating to non-consenting audience participants did not sit well with me. This early mapping process also brought to light that the very young participants in these events could not provide informed consent, due to their age and level of understanding (Graham et al., 2013; Lundy & McEvoy, 2012; Truscott et al., 2019). For this reason, observations of teaching-artists, myself, and my own child became the focus of the data collection and representation.

Involving my own child in this research was something I considered very carefully, and I looked to a small body of literature about parent-research (Adler & Adler, 1996; Bennett & de Vries, 2017; de Vries, 2004; 2011a; 2011b; Hackett, 2017) and a much larger body of literature about children's participation in research (Bitou & Waller, 2017; Dockett et al., 2012; Pellegrini et al., 2013; Salamon, 2015; Spyrou, 2016; Truscott et al., 2019) before making the decision to

continue with the study. While I acknowledge that a power imbalance occurred when I gave permission for my preverbal son to participate in the research (Truscott et al., 2019), I believe this was countered by the positive social and emotional benefits that the experiences afforded him.

My son, Hugo, is now of an age where he is able to clearly indicate his preferences. His choices have been honoured throughout this thesis. Hugo was recently involved in selecting images that depicted his participation in the research, including Figure 38, which he referred to as his “best one”. He also requested that his real first name, *Hugo*, be used throughout the thesis rather than a pseudonym. Although he cannot remember his participation in the events, he has engaged in the data through watching video, listening to audio recordings, and looking at photographs. He has expressed on a number of occasions that he enjoys listening to my readings of the narratives. As his mother, it has been important to me that he be depicted in a way that would “do no harm” (Alderson & Morrow, 2011) to his sense of self over time. I wrote this thesis with a view that Hugo will likely one day read it, and that when that time comes, he will feel a sense of connection with the narratives and a sense of pride in his contribution to the creation of this work. Today, Hugo has chosen to express his understanding of this contribution through a drawing of himself participating in the research.

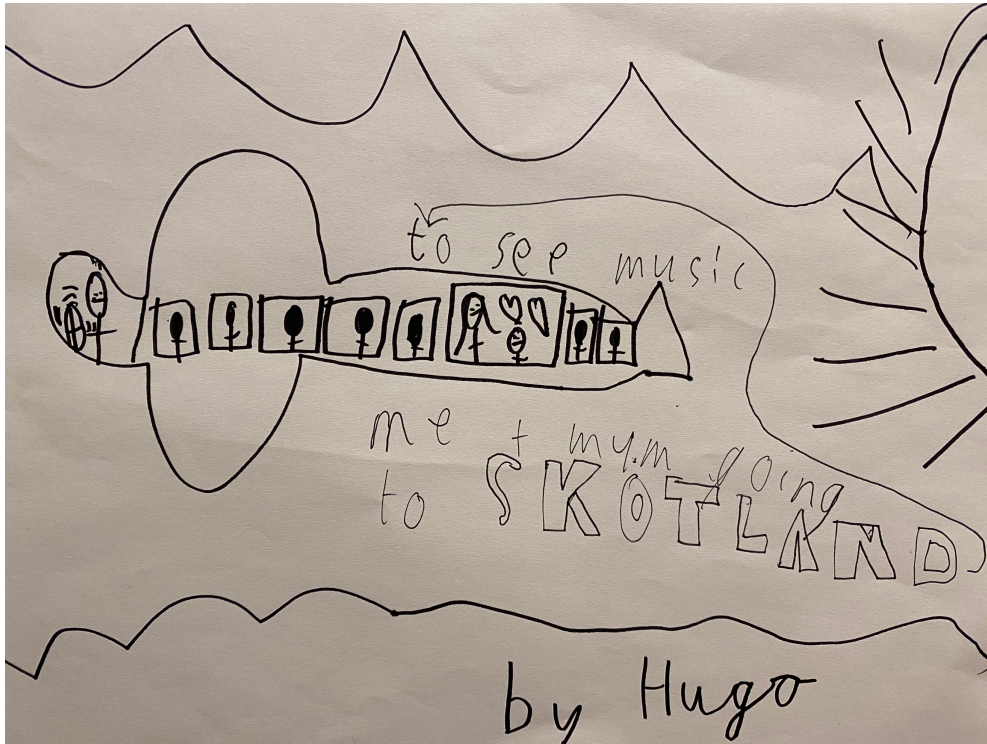


Figure 15. Illustration by Hugo: Me + Mum going to Skotland [sic] to see music.

The three case studies, represented through the narratives in Chapters 5 to 7 of this thesis, reveal a lot about the teaching-artists and the nature of their work. Choosing to focus the discussion on their exemplary practices was not only a decision that aimed to provide the greatest level of insight into the field, but also acted as a means of protecting the participants' professional reputations. All teaching-artists who engaged in interview during the supplementary data collection phase did so after providing full written consent to have their ideas represented in this thesis as well as potential publications arising from it at a later time.

4.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, I have discussed the design of the research and justified the methodological choices made, with a particular focus on the ways in which they

are best suited to respond to the questions and aims of the study. I have also demonstrated the ways in which the various elements of the research design interconnect, creating a project that aligns with current beliefs about cohesion and trustworthiness in interpretivist, qualitative research.

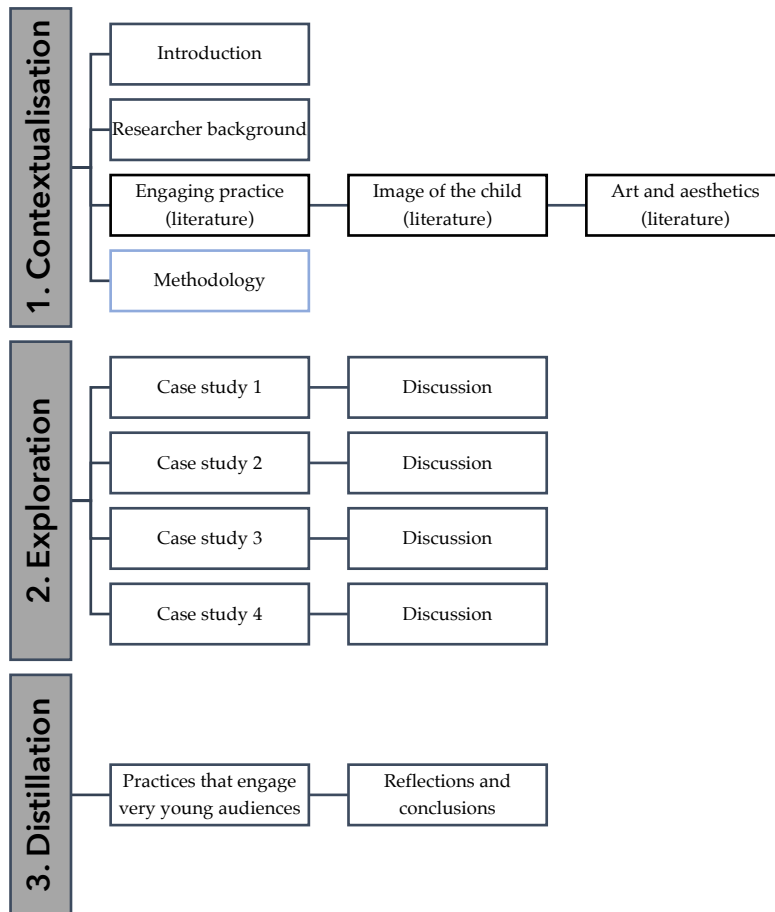


Figure 16. This chapter (highlighted in blue) shown in relation to the other chapters of this thesis.

PART 2: EXPLORATION



Figure 17. A very young child explores his reflection while participating in the integrated arts performance, *Rain*, at ArtPlay, Melbourne.

CHAPTER 5. CASE STUDY 1

5.1 CONTEXT

This chapter aims to describe a captivating integrated arts performance that I attended with my 6-month-old son, Hugo. It has been selected as an exemplar case due to its close alignment with the literature on engaging practices, images of children and childhoods, and arts and aesthetics, as discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. *Rain, for Babies and the Carers (Rain)* was designed by a small, independent theatre company, a musician, and a group of installation artists. It was developed and performed at ArtPlay in Melbourne, Australia, and co-funded by the City of Melbourne and private crowd-funding sources. A more comprehensive case study profile is detailed below. A first-person narrative of the performance will be offered as a way of representing and making sense of the data collected during the field research period. An analytic discussion of the case study findings will then follow. This discussion will focus on the ways in which *Rain* was seen to align with the literature, as well as how it challenges and extends upon it.

5.2 CASE STUDY PROFILE

Artform/s	Theatre Music Visual arts (installation)
Artists	DropBear Theatre: Sarah Lockwood and Carolyn Ramsey are both co-founders and members of DropBear Theatre; a small company of actors and drama educators who create and perform works predominantly for children across New South Wales and Victoria. <i>Rain</i> was their first piece for very young audiences, having previously worked with audiences aged from 5-years and up. Sarah and Carolyn were the leading performers in <i>Rain</i> .

Zoe Barry: Zoe is a professional cellist, who also has experience leading music within school classroom environments. Zoe was the leading musician in *Rain*.

The Seam: The Seam are a Melbourne team of four artists who work together to create installations, photo-media and a range of performative projects. They focus particularly on explorative, immersive, experiential artworks. The Seam created the installation for *Rain*.

Edwina Cordingley: Edwina is a professional cellist, who specialises in explorative music. She composed much of the original music for *Rain*, before handing over the performance role to Zoe Barry.

Sophie Kurylowicz: Sophie is a professional theatrical lighting designer and electrician. She has experience working with theatre companies and schools, as well as lecturing in this area at a tertiary level. Sophie was the lighting designer for *Rain*.

Site	ArtPlay Birrarung Marr Russell Street Extension Melbourne Victoria, Australia
Funding	City of Melbourne: <i>Rain</i> was funded through the ArtPlay New Ideas Lab. The artists took residency at ArtPlay for a period of several months, during which time they developed <i>Rain</i> , trialled ideas with families, and created the final performance installation. Ticketing: <i>Rain</i> was partly subsidised by the sale of audience tickets. Crowd funding: DropBear Theatre crowd funded the costs associated with paying the musician through a Pozible campaign, advertised predominantly through social media.
Audience	12 “pre walkers” – very young children aged birth to 18 months 15 adults, made up of mothers, fathers and grandmothers of the very young participants
Space/s	The ArtPlay Gallery, as shown in the ArtPlay floorplan below:

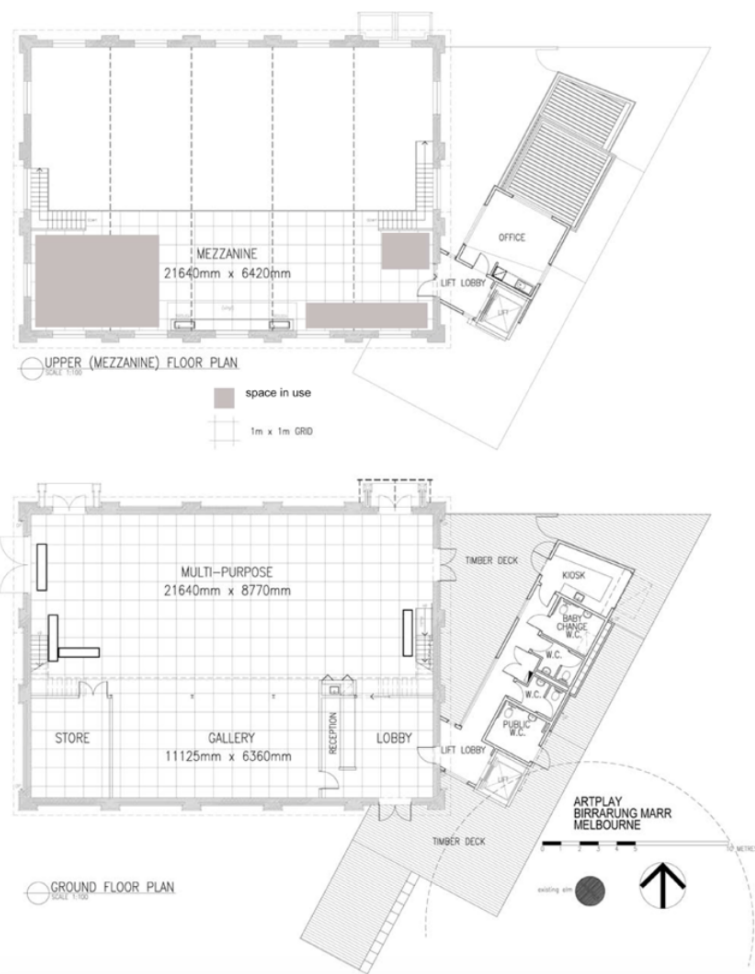


Figure 18. The ArtPlay floorplan.

Instruments

A cello

Two mezzo soprano voices

Program goals

The teaching-artists' goals:

Welcome to this place

It has been created especially for you

Take time to notice, to slow down, to wonder

We hope you feel safe, nourished and connected

(Artefact: note given to parents during the performance)

The venue's goals:

"ArtPlay's program for children and families aims to be challenging, creative, enlightening and meaningful. Children explore their creativity and self-expression and share unique artistic experiences with professional artists" (ArtPlay, 2013).

5.3 DATA

The following narrative was composed after the collection of five data sets: field notes, interviews, photographs, videos, and texts. The primary data was generated through participant observations and recorded in the form of descriptive field notes. This data was supported by two unstructured interviews with the teaching-artists. The interview questions posed to the artists emerged from gaps in my understanding around their intentions when designing the artwork, which were left unanswered by the observations. The teaching-artists provided access to their collection of photographs taken within the spaces, including photographs of very young children and their carers participating in the *Rain* performance. They also provided access to video excerpts of the same. Finally, online text data was collected from the presenter's website, the teaching-artists' websites, event brochures, and social media posts.

As discussed in Section 4.5.2 of this thesis (Chapter 4), each data set was analysed through a deductive qualitative process. Themes emerging from the reviews of literature were used to further categorise and code the data. The data was also treated inductively, with emergent themes noted and recorded. After this analytic process was complete, the following narrative was composed, with the aim of "bringing to life" the research findings (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

5.4 NARRATIVE: RAIN, FOR BABIES AND THEIR CARERS

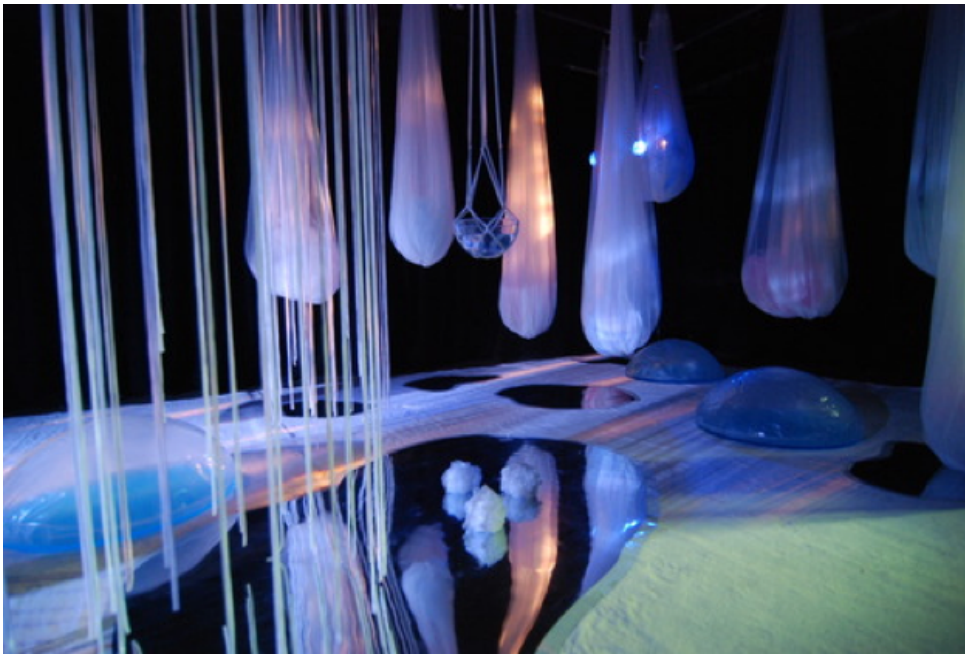


Figure 19. *Rain*, interactive art installation.

5.4.1 Arrival at the venue

“Whoosh”, someone rushes past us, as we head out of the station towards Birarrung Marr – a park-like space nestled between Melbourne’s CBD and the Yarra River that runs through it to the south. “Whoosh”, another person passes by, also in some sort of hurry. “Whoosh”, another. I look up from the pram that I am pushing to see that the path beside the river, that I have walked countless times since becoming a resident of the City of Melbourne, is today being shared by a large number of runners wearing lycra. Whilst it is not unusual to see people running along the banks of the Yarra, many sporting the latest shiny pants from Nike, the sheer volume of runners (and, more tellingly, the fact that they are all displaying identification numbers across their backs) indicates to me that I have distractedly pushed baby Hugo into the middle of an organised race.

Accessing ArtPlay – a physical and conceptual space where children are given opportunities to work creatively with professional artists (City of Melbourne, 2016) – is proving uncharacteristically difficult on this day,

due to the Melbourne Marathon taking place in the venue's immediate surrounds. As I enter the familiar red brick building, with only minutes to spare, I am surprised to find that there is only one other family waiting in the foyer. I am immediately greeted by a friendly member of the ArtPlay staff [environment] and advised that the performance I have booked to see, *Rain for Babies and Their Carers*, is to be delayed due to impact of the marathon on local parking and transport. Receiving such news causes a slight rise in anxiety in me, as I set about mentally recalculating Hugo's sleep and feeding times. I have a strong desire to avoid the "entertaining the tired/hungry baby" game, that I am beginning to foresee in our not-too-distant future. Hugo stirs in his pram as I move to a seated area to wait for the rest of the participants to arrive. Knowing, from previous experience, that a very young child who has just woken from a long nap can be quite a vocal and disengaged audience member, I take the opportunity to feed him while we wait. It turns out that the delay may have worked in our parent-baby scheduling favour, as by the time we are called into the pre-performance space, Hugo is sated, wide awake, and ready for action.

5.4.2 Welcome

Upon entering a second waiting area, we are greeted by two performers from the show; Sarah and Carolyn. They are wearing matching light blue sleeveless dresses and white leggings. Sarah is pregnant, which instils in me an unexpected sense of comfort. I feel very much as though I among peers in this community of parents, babies and pregnant artists, and it brings to my attention that this is not an overly common feeling to have when you are a new mother out in the broader society [environment]. In soft tones, Sarah and Carolyn offer a warm, unstructured welcome; not just to the parent participants, but to each baby [image of the child]. As they move forward to greet Hugo, I note that they engage him through a combination of eye-contact, touch, smiles, and gentle speech [learning and development]. He responds by returning theirs smiles and kicking his legs. I cannot help but smile also [environment].

This welcoming component of the experience is largely about logistics (e.g. where to park your pram, when to remove your shoes, etc.), but it is also used as an opportunity for a short parent briefing about how best to participate in the performance. The main message being expressed by the teaching-artists is that *Rain* has been designed especially for infants [image of the child]; with infant behaviour at the forefront of their minds. That is, that anything that very young children might naturally engage in – feeding, exploring, eating, crying – is expected and permitted [learning and development]. The one exception to the, “Anything is allowed” (Sarah), message is that parents are encouraged to, “Just be with your baby” (Carolyn) [interactions], and to leave any photography until after the experience has concluded. For this reason, we are instructed that mobile phones will not be permitted in the main performance space until near the conclusion of the event.

5.4.3 The first movement

As I pull back a thick black theatre-curtain, and enter into the pre-performance space, I am taken aback by the stunning effect of hundreds of white material cords hanging from the roof. These cords contrast starkly with the surrounding backdrop of thick black curtains, plain timber flooring, and the dim lighting [art and aesthetics]. Hugo immediately reaches out to grab one of the cords, bringing it across and into his mouth [learning and development]. I also feel compelled to reach out and impact the cords with my free hand, and as I do so, I note how they sway and bounce in the light as they are pushed from side to side. They seem somehow responsive to the lilting cello music that is accompanying our exploration of this section of the installation. Hugo seems to notice the uniqueness of this visual-aural intersection, and his gaze affixes on the dancing materials in front of him for an unusually long period [art and aesthetics]. As we weave through the space, Hugo continues to grab excitedly at the cords, clutching and bringing handfuls of them towards his mouth each time. I look up to notice how the ribbons are connected to the roof, and as I do so I realise that, while looking upwards is something that I rarely do as an adult, it is

something that Hugo does regularly [environment]. I recognise in this moment that he is an expert at knowing how to be in this space [image of the child]. He leads – grabbing and swishing at the ribbons, indicating the direction in which he wishes to move by angling his body and reaching [learning and development]. I notice the other very young children moving in similar ways, as if modeling how to engage in this experience to the adults in the room [interactions]. I follow Hugo’s lead, and he is right [image of the child]. The tickling feeling, of the ribbons on my face as I grab them, brings a sense of nostalgia, and I find myself drawing upon my many experiences of moving through rain, with it falling on my skin. I wonder if Hugo relates this feeling to our earlier experience that day; making our way through the rain, umbrella-less, to ArtPlay. I don’t know for sure, but it doesn’t seem to matter. I feel relieved at the shift in leadership between myself and Hugo. He is teacher and I am learner [interactions / image of the child]. I feel open.

I notice a performance space, glowing in soft white light, towards the end of the corridor of rain. I’m not sure if it is revealed by moving a curtain, whether it is suddenly lit, or whether a change in cello music grabs my attention, but we all begin to move into the space [environment / arts and aesthetics]. It is an almost ethereal moment as we, together as an audience, move towards the light and enter into a new section of the performance [art and aesthetics].

5.4.4 The second movement

As we enter, the cellist, who has been a warm presence from the very beginning of our exploration, becomes more visibly and aurally prominent [art and aesthetics]. She is facing towards a seated area of floor-pillows, and we use this as an unspoken cue that this is where we should take a seat. The adult audience members (one to two per baby) sit on the cushions provided, with those arriving into the performance space first showing a courteous effort to make room for those still entering. The very young children are seated mostly in laps, though there is one child laying on the floor in front of her mother, and a few younger participants being held in

arms [interactions]. I am aware of a couple of “childless” observers, seated on chairs behind the audience, in a darkened space. They do not appear to be noticed by the very young children, and it does not take long for me to forget that they are there. The two performers, Sarah and Carolyn, join the stage area, which is positioned on the floor level and within arms-reach of the audience. They sit comfortably on the lightly padded floor, with one performer on either side of the cellist, and lower their faces and bodies to align with the height of the very young audience members. In this position, they are able to make immediate eye contact with the children, and in doing so, make it clear from the outset that their primary aim is to gain the attention of the younger members of the audience [learning and development].

With the performers large in the foreground, and with parents and babies to my left and right, it takes me a moment to notice and take-in the extraordinary scene that has been created behind the performance area. The backdrop appears to be a deep, interactive set installation [art and aesthetics] / environment]. While the details are not clearly visible from the low, audience seating position, it looks like an enticing combination of hanging white objects, floor mirrors, and soft white materials. I can imagine Hugo being very enthusiastic about physically exploring this space [learning and development, and remembering that Sarah had told us that everything in the room was designed with this purpose [image of the child], I am filled with a sense of positive anticipation.

With the cello accompanying, the performers open by singing a simple refrain;



Figure 20. Notation: Rain is Falling Down refrain.

Between sections of singing, they move their bodies and make a range of vocal sounds, with exaggerated facial expressions [art and aesthetics]. The barrier between the stage and audience is broken down, as the teaching-

artists move forward to physically interact with the very young children throughout the performance. Carolyn leans forward to touch Hugo's hand three times as she simultaneously chants, "Drip, drip, drip". He responds by looking at his hand with wide eyes as she does so, and then grabs his own hand as she moves away to "drip" another child [learning and development]. As the piece develops the performers introduce new ways of interacting with both the audience and the theme of rain. At one time, they gently spray a mist of water over the heads of the very young children, and at another moment, drip water on tiny hands using syringes [learning and development]. With each new interaction, Hugo's focus moves from an outward watching of the events, to a more self-focused gaze of the body part that is being impacted [interactions].

One of the more mobile children, clearly captured by the events unfolding in front of her, enters the performers' space. Her mother tries to grab her back – a move I can understand. It is not generally culturally acceptable to enter the stage area during a performance. Sarah indicates, through hand-gestures and facial expressions, that it is ok to let her explore on and around the performers [image of the child]. The child crawls under the chair of the cellist, and grabs props from behind the performers [environment]. The mother is clearly uncomfortable with this, and after a short period, moves to collect the child and return her to the audience area.

Between where we are seated and the performers are two large water-filled gel-like objects, each about the size of a half-deflated beach ball. I assume that it represents a large raindrop, given the theme of the event. The performers bounce fingers and hands on these objects a number of times throughout the performance, showing how it bounces when struck [interactions]. Each time they do so, very young children seated close to it, attempt to imitate [learning and development]. About eight minutes into the performance, Hugo wriggles away, aiming for the large raindrop. He commando-crawls across the floor and reaches out and hits it, stopping to watch the result. He repeats this action many times, and then, as if trying to get even closer to it, plants his face in the object with his mouth wide

open [environment / learning and development]. He mouths the raindrop for some time until I am concerned that he cannot breathe with his face planted so heavily in the plastic, and I help to sit him up in front of it instead.

One child – a confident crawler – moves towards the cello as it plays a more rhythmic section. He climbs up, using the body of the cello to support him [environment]. The cellist smiles and indicates to the parent that this is ok [image of the child]. The child places hands on the body of the cello as it plays, and I find myself emotionally moved by this musical interaction [art and aesthetics]. Throughout these happenings, parents smile at each other as they observe children reacting to the performance in different ways. This particular occurrence elicits a particularly positive response from the audience [environment].

The Rain is Falling Down refrain features several times throughout the performance, and it is with this same musical phrase that opened the second movement of the *Rain* performance, that this section comes to a conclusion [art and aesthetics].

5.4.5 The third movement

As the music fades, Carolyn tells the audience that they can now move into the space behind the stage to explore freely [environment / image of the child]. I move Hugo closer to the large raindrop and place him, supported, on top of it. He hits it, as before, and sucks it, as if trying to take in the object. I reflect upon the fact that, as a very young child of 6-months, these are currently his dominant modes of absorbing information [learning and development]. Hugo spends some time here – longer than he might usually choose to spend in one place – and then directs his body toward the cello. The cellist is accompanying the exploration; improvising in reflection to the action in the room [image of the child]. Seeing that Hugo has expressed an interest in the cello, she encourages me to place Hugo's hands on the cello "so he can feel the vibrations" [art and aesthetics]. I do so, but he does

not keep his hands there [image of the child]. He returns to rest his body in the safety of my lap.

We move further into the space, and I sit down; cross-legged on the floor with Hugo on my knee [interactions]. He seems to be displaying a preference to sit with me initially, until he spots something of interest and moves away towards it. Hugo observes a “puddle” on the floor and slides his body enthusiastically towards it. It is a large reflective surface, cut into an irregular shape and covered with clear adhesive plastic to affix it to the material that is covering the floor. Hugo crawls on top of the surface and is mesmerised by his reflection. He face-plants, as if kissing the reflection, and then pushes up onto his arms whilst watching his own reaction [environment]. He repeats this action many times and stays on top of the puddle for several minutes [learning and development]. As he is doing this, he begins to vocalise, “Ahhhhhh”.

The teaching-artists wander quietly through the space, watching without leading or offering directions. They distribute a small note to each parent, that provides written encouragement and support for allowing the very young children to lead the explorative play [image of the child]. It is a nice touch, and I find myself comforted that they seem to agree with the way in which I am interacting with the space, i.e. facilitating Hugo’s exploration by stepping back and allowing him to lead [image of the child].

5.4.6 Winding down

Hugo gives clear signs when he has had enough of a particular experience, turning his whole body away and looking around for other stimuli [image of the child / learning and development]. I note that this often coincides with a change in music – a change of tempo, for example, or a new thematic idea [environment]. He spies one of a number of white rounded loofahs scattered around the floor area, and reaches for it, placing it immediately in his mouth [environment]. The texture is rough, and he pulls a face and cries out. He repeats this, gaining the same result [learning and development], and discards the loofah. He indicates that he wishes to be picked up (using

subtle body language and tones I have become accustomed to observing, but which I cannot accurately describe), and I do so [image of the child]. He is getting tired.

We move towards a hanging mobile of cords. It is a round ring at the top, with white ribbons of material attached. I place us both inside the circle, which I think will look and feel quite interesting. Hugo does not find this appealing and grabs angrily at the cords [image of the child]. It is time to stop.

We stand and watch some of the other babies and parents and note that several have already left the space [image of the child]. The music comes to an end with a gradual diminuendo and ritardando [art and aesthetics], as I sit in the space to feed Hugo [environment]. I carry him out, asleep, back through the room of hanging rain, and place him in his pram. He sleeps for several hours afterwards, as I wander back along the river, towards home.

5.5 DISCUSSION

5.5.1 Image of the child

The children who participated in *Rain* were positioned as co-constructors of the experience (Dahlberg et al., 2007; Malaguzzi, 1993; Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978). This appeared to be a mindful decision by the team who created and performed it. From the verbal instructions provided before the performance began, to the set design, and through the program itself, it was clear that the very young children were perceived as the central figures in the design and implementation of the performance. The space was pre-designed to be manipulated by very young children, but it was the ways in which this occurred in the moment that made the final art piece. Similarly, a significant proportion of the music was composed prior to the performance, but it was the ways in which the infants moved about the space that determined the improvised sections and, therefore,

the final score. The very young children, the designers, the presenters, and the parents each had a role in creating the *Rain* experience, and all were dependent upon each other (Brown, 2016).

By bringing multiple sets of parents-infants together, the teaching-artists were reinforcing the notion of a community social group (Bronfenbrenner, 2009; Edwards et al., 1998; Tayler et al., 2006), building on the experiences of the participants as parenting and being a young child in the city of Melbourne, and also tapping into their shared interest in the arts. The artists spoke of the importance of parent-child bonding, and it was one of the main goals of *Rain* to support the family social group through the experience. The way in which *Rain* was structured – with the majority of activities being centred around individual parent-child teams, and with parents and very young children each taking turns in guiding – was a practical way in which this goal was realised. Although there were no instances in which very young children were expected to interact with each other, there were opportunities throughout *Rain* for them to be aware of each other's explorative play. Having the very young children in close proximity to each other, exploring side-by-side, was a developmentally appropriate way to support a childhood social group – children bonded by their childness, as distinct from their parents (Custodero, 2005; Rogoff, 1990).

Of all the performances for young audiences I attended, *Rain* gave the highest emphasis to open-ended, child-led exploration and discovery (Jeanneret & Brown, 2013). The creation of an interactive installation, and an unrestricted amount of time given to participants to engage in and with this, created a balance with the more performative aspects of the event. The teaching-artists appeared aware of the importance of the exploration being “child-led” (Dansereau, 2011).

They stepped back from guiding in this third movement, and also explicitly encouraged the parent participants to follow the interests of their child (Montessori, 1966). The installation itself was important in supporting the exploration and discovery. It provided enough options to capture the imagination of all participants – regardless of their developmental level(s) and individual interests (Jeanneret & Brown, 2013; Turino, 2008).

The very young children who participated in the *Rain* performance were positioned by the teaching-artists as cultural citizens, with “citizens’ rights and citizens’ responsibilities” (Edwards et al., 1998; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013). The children were not passive receivers of the arts. They were the performers and the facilitators. The individual ways in which they interacted with the materials, moved through the space, and responded to the stimuli, was integral to the overall piece. They were given access and freedoms that very young children are often excluded from in day-to-day life, and authority as arts-makers that was considered as important – if not more important – than the adult participants (Rinaldi, 2005). The very young children’s individual contributions, when side-by-side, in combination, was *Rain*.

The children were given opportunities to take ownership of the execution of the artwork (Rinaldi, 2005). This was particularly evident in the less performative sections of *Rain*, such as when the children moved through the hanging cords in the pre-performance, and when they explored the installation. In recognising the expert knowledge of the children (Malaguzzi, 2016), and taking a deliberate step back from the decision-making, the adults allowed them the freedom to lead and to model appropriate ways of interacting within the space (Edwards et al., 1998; Montessori, 1966). They were able to make decision about what to engage with

and what to reject. For example, Hugo chose to fully embrace the raindrop and the mirror but rejected feeling the vibrations of the cello and the loofah. In doing so, Hugo could be said to have engaged in ongoing evaluation of the artwork (Dewey, 1934; Malaguzzi, 2016). Although Hugo was not involved in the conception of the work, *Rain* was developed through a series of workshops with very young children, all of which took place some weeks before the final work was shown. According to Sarah, a number of the families who were involved in the workshops returned to participate in the performance. This is an ideal situation in terms of positioning children as co-constructors of the work, as these very young children were provided with opportunities to take ownership of all stages of the work - from conception, through execution, to evaluation (Fredricks et al., 2004).

5.5.2 Art and aesthetics

The teaching-artists positioned the very young children as discerning connoisseurs of the arts. This was evident through the highly aesthetic environmental choices and decisions that were made, both in the production period and during the performance itself. The teaching-artists paid careful attention to the quality of the set, choosing materials that were perceived to be attractive to both the young participants and their families (Montessori, 1966; Rousseau, 2004). In the narrative, I described several occasions where I felt emotionally moved by the visual and aural components of the work. Hugo demonstrated a similar appreciation for the aesthetic qualities (Rinaldi, 2005), which was demonstrated by his stillness, attentive gaze, quietness, and eagerness to participate.

The teaching-artists incorporated live music, performed by an accomplished musician on a professional instrument. They consulted an expert team of installation artists to create the set. They used professional lighting and staging crafts to create movement and distinction between parts. They engaged in weeks of rehearsal, with an intense focus on producing a refined work. All of these choices, and especially in combination, indicated that the teaching-artists were concerned with the quality of the work and the way it would be perceived by the very young audience (Dewey, 1934; Vecchi, 2010).

It was highly evident that the teaching-artists modelled artistic practices, including tool use and techniques (Jeanneret & Brown, 2013; Vecchi, 2010). Musically, they demonstrated bowing and pizzicato techniques on the cello, before encouraging the very young children to manipulate the instrument. In the second movement, where the work became more performative, the teaching-artists cleverly introduced ideas about how to manipulate objects in the space by incorporating them into the drama. They bounced their fingers on the large raindrop; an act that enticed Hugo to engage in immediate and deferred imitation of this movement. Modeling in these ways provided the very young children with artistic ideas and techniques with which to work (Bandura, 1977).

The very young children and the cellist worked in collaboration to develop and perform the third movement (Fredricks, et al., 2004; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013; Rogoff, 1990). The energy and movement that the very young children brought to the exploration of the installation was mirrored in the cellist's improvisational response. At the same time, the cellist's musical ideas enacted change in the very young children's explorative artful play. The installation acted as the third artist in the room, providing opportunity and feedback, movement and sound (Eisner,

2002; Montessori, 1966). It was through this careful design that the teaching-artists provided opportunities for the very young children to engage in producing the artwork *Rain* (Malaguzzi, 1993). They demonstrated their acceptance of the children's artistic contributions by recording elements of the performance (Edwards et al., 1998) and, with permission, publishing excerpts of this work online.

5.5.3 Environment

Rain provided a range of opportunities for the very young children to engage in explorative play, with the third movement being in particular alignment with the literature. When the children moved into the installation space, there were an abundance of intriguing objects for them to find and manipulate. A combination of unguided free play (Froebel, 1896; Weisberg et al., 2013), object play (Brown, 2010; Montessori, 1966), schematic play (Atherton & Nutbrown, 2016), and artful play (Brown, 2010; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013) emerged as a result. While play was an important feature of *Rain*, I feel it is important here to note that there were a number of themes relating to play that were not observed – with good reason. Whilst the literature notes that dramatic play, imaginative play, creative play, and social play opportunities may be characteristic of engaging practice (Brown, 2010), such play would be very unlikely to be present in any experience involving children younger than 2 years old (Vygotsky, 1978). The play episodes that were observed in *Rain* (free play, object play, schematic play, artful play) appeared to be correctly targeted at the very young participants' developmental levels.

In collaboration with installation artists, The Seam, the teaching-artists created four spaces for the audience to move through. A waiting area, immediately outside the first performance space, was fit for purpose. That is, it was well

placed and provided adequate room for waiting, pram parking, and removal of shoes. Within the performance spaces, furnishings and other materials were chosen for their safety and suitability for the very young audience (Andersen et al., 2010; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013; Tayler et al., 2006). The large black drapes that defined the performance spaces kept crawling children within sight at all times. Hot lighting was kept out of reach. The floor was covered in soft material but was adhered to the floorboards underneath to stop any slipping. Seating consisted of soft cushions on the floor, which allowed the parents to remain in close proximity to their child. The only piece of traditional adult furniture in the space was a single chair. This was occupied by the cellist throughout the entirety of the performance, thus removing the potential for a very young child to pull him or herself up on to it without support, or to hit his or her head as they moved under and through, as crawling children are known to do. There was adequate seating for all participants in the second movement, and the explorative installation space in the third movement was large enough to accommodate all twelve families comfortably, without being so large that the very young children moved out of sight of their carers.

There was a high level of evidence that the creators of *Rain* designed the environment to meet the needs of the audience and the artwork (Montessori, 1966). The ArtPlay gallery space that was used was completely transformed and unrecognisable. As an immersive installation, the entire *Rain* experience was dependent upon the transformability of the space, and the materials within this (Jeanneret & Brown, 2013; Malaguzzi, 2016). The same experience could not be performed in a bare space, in a seated auditorium, or in a small room. It was built within the confines of the lofty ArtPlay gallery space, building upon the floors,

making use of the two levels of ceiling, and with permission to hang heavy items from above. It is known that *Rain* has since been performed in several other venues. When this happens, the essence of the performance spaces created at ArtPlay is maintained, but it is rebuilt with some minor adaptations, depending upon the new confines of venue space.

The space and the objects themselves were inherently challenging and transformative (Andersen et al., 2010; Brown, 2015; Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 2002; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013). Rather than the adults monitoring and scaffolding the children towards more complex ways of interacting, the very young children led this through testing and monitoring their own capacities to manipulate what was in front of them (Piaget, 1950). They drew upon their range of schemas, in attempts to get new levels of feedback from the environment, and shifted their behaviours in response. An example of this was described in the narrative, when Hugo moved to explore the large raindrop. At first, he struck the object with his hand, and observed the way in which it rebounded. He repeated this several time, striking it with different amounts of force in order to test the effects. Once he had gained the amount of feedback he was after from this action, he moved on to a new schema, using his mouth to seek new information (Atherton & Nutbrown, 2016). He placed his mouth on the raindrop gently at first, and then with increasing pressure as he shifted more and more of his body weight onto the object. The raindrop transformed in shape and flexibility with these movements, offering a different experience with each attempt.

Although music was not considered to be the primary artform in *Rain*, its importance to the unfolding of the experience was undeniable. Besides adding to the overall atmosphere – in a similar way to what one might imagine a film score

does to a film – it also had a significant impact on the behaviours of the participants. The cellist, Zoe, was quite skilled in improvisation. She created an interplay between herself and the other participants, including the other performing artists, sometimes following their lead, and sometimes leading them with the music (Edwards et al., 1998). Although she had some general ideas of the music score, and played some more structured written passages during the second movement performance, she was also responsive to the audience in her playing (Rinaldi, 2005). If their energy of movement appeared high, she would respond musically to this, playing quick, invigorating passages. This accompaniment seemed to further encourage this energy and movement. On the other hand, there were times when Zoe led transitions between ideas through the music. To indicate a change, she would choose to slow, soften, and select musical pitch structures that would indicate coming to a conclusion (cadenza-like cadences, for example). The response of the audience to this was noteworthy. The very young children seemed to pick up on the hint of a change and would stop exploring the object that had been focusing on, looking for guidance as to what might be coming next. The adult participants looked to the artists and each other during these moments, and there were times where – just because of changes in the music – transitions took place with no direct or verbal instructions being needed.

Sarah, Carolyn and Zoe thought carefully about how to create a positive emotional climate for the participants (Andersen et al., 2006; Edwards et al., 1998; Tayler et al., 2006), and it was evident that their goals in this area were achieved. They implemented a range of different strategies to create an environment that was welcoming and encouraging. From the very first moments, they chose to

forgo the traditional divide between performers and audience. They greeted participants upon arrival, making a particular effort to direct their attention to each child. As described in the narrative, this was well received by Hugo, who smiled and kicked his legs upon receiving this individualised welcome. The parents were put at ease when they were told that all behaviours and responses from the very young children were welcome in the space. This lack of restriction provided the support needed for the adult participants to follow their child's lead without intervening (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Montessori, 1966). The way the spaces themselves had been designed also enhanced the emotional climate. With parents positioned in close proximity to each other, they were able to offer each other reassurance and support, and to connect through a shared understanding of the behaviours of very young children. The parents' comfortability had a flow-on effect, and the twelve very young children remained relaxed throughout, which enhanced their opportunities to remain engaged in the performance.

5.5.4 Interactions

Rain was developed with a strong focus on social-relational ideas. Sarah and Carolyn expressed – both explicitly through interview, and symbolically through practice – that the experience was designed to support bonding between parent and child (Bowlby, 1982; Custodero, 2005; Fredricks et al., 2004; Rogoff, 1990). This was evidenced in multiple ways. Upon greeting the families and welcoming them into the *Rain* performance space, the presenters actively encouraged parents to focus on the time spent with their baby. These verbal instructions were supported by modelled behaviours, when the teaching-artists interacted closely with, and responded to, each child (Bandura, 1977). Reminders, given

throughout the performance, including in a written note given to parents during the third movement, reiterated what had been spoken during the introduction.

The way in which the space was configured also supported collaborations between parent-child (Fredricks et al., 2004; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013). In the first movement, each child was guided through the hanging cord installation by their parent. The experience of “moving through” was both dependent upon and supportive of non-verbal communication between these couples. It also highlighted the intimate ways in which a mother and child interact (Bronfenbrenner, 2009; Rogoff, 1990). In the second movement, as the focus was directed more towards the performers, interactions between the parent and child were less evident. However, it could be said that Sarah and Carolyn were using this time to model ways in which to positively and effectively interact with very young children – through direct gestures, touch, and use of associated verbal, musical, and embodied symbols (Bandura, 1977). The third movement allowed the very young children and parents to co-construct the experience through co-play (Andersen et al., 2010; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013; Montessori, 1966). As they moved through the installation together, there were times where the parents led, and times where the very young children led. It was in these moments that parent-child interactions were at their deepest. The participants were both focused completely in on each other, and dependent upon each other, while being stimulated and directed by the space and materials.

Although the nature of the *Rain* experience provided opportunities for families to work along-side each other, there was very little evidence of parent-parent collaboration, or of child-child collaboration. The seating arrangement in the second movement provided some natural opportunities for parents to interact.

The slight semi-circle, with babies in front of the adults, meant that the families were able to observe each other during this section of the *Rain* performance. Although there were some positive non-verbal communications between parents – smiling, nodding, laughing, making space for each other – opportunities for more direct collaboration were not observed. Similarly, in the third movement, when Hugo was given free reign over the installation space, there were occasions where he met with another child along his explorative travels. These were largely incidental interactions, and probably could not be considered weighty enough to be termed child-child collaborations, as such (Custodero, 2005; Rogoff, 1990).

There was some evidence of adults providing modelled guidance in how to manipulate objects (Bandura, 1977). Sarah and Carolyn demonstrated how to make the giant rain drop bounce by being struck with their hand, for example, and this was imitated by Hugo. Through their performance, they also offered subtle suggestions for parents about ways in which to interact with their child in the space. There was little evidence of the teaching-artists giving direct instructions about the drama or the music ideas presented, and nor were these ideas taken up by the participants during the performance.

The teaching-artists resisted interrupting the very young children during moments of deep engagement (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). Examples of this were described in the narrative. In particular, it was noted that Hugo spent a prolonged period of time interacting with two objects – the large raindrop and the floor mirror. During these extended moments of exploration, the adults observed from a distance, allowing Hugo to take ownership of, not only how he engaged with the objects, but also for how long (Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 2002). As a

result, he repeated and refined his actions many times, and longer than I would have anticipated.

The teaching-artists offered two types of feedback to the participants: direct person-to-person feedback (Brown, 2016; Vygotsky, 1978) and feedback that was embedded in the spaces and materials provided (Froebel, 1896; Montessori, 1966). The former was largely directed at the parent-participants and was most often delivered in the form of non-verbal gestures and facial expressions (Eisner, 2002). The latter was largely directed at the child-participants and occurred when they manipulated objects and observed the response (Montessori, 1966).

5.5.5 Learning and development

There were a wide range of experiences offered to the very young participants in the third movement of the *Rain* performance. This allowed for each individual child to take on opportunities that were of interest to them and within their developmental range of abilities (Turino, 2008). While it was evident that the set of offerings were designed with a target developmental range in mind (specifically, “babies in arms to pre-walking infants”), the choices within this were wide-ranging. Hanging objects meant that the youngest of the very young children, who were not yet rolling or crawling, were able to engage with ideas from a comfortable carried-in-arms position. Very young children who were able to lift their head from a prone position could be placed on the soft flooring in front of, or on top of, objects such as mirrors, which could be manipulated from above. Those who were more mobile were encouraged to crawl to, and amongst, a range of floor-based objects. The way in which they had been placed closely together, clearly in view from any nearby position, made this enticing and also physically possible for these very young children to self-manage. Very young

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children who preferred to sit still, in a single position, had access to objects such as the large rain drops, which could be manipulated with hands, kicking feet, or – as noted in the above narrative description – with mouths (Piaget, 1950). Finally, very young children who were pulling to a stand were able to reach up against the body of the cello. There were fewer opportunities for those participants who wished to practice standing – possibly because of the target developmental range that was set. It mattered very little, as even those with an active interest in standing were provided with exciting alternatives, such as crawling among the different objects placed around the space.

It was difficult to know whether the symbolic representations of “rain” were understood by the very young participants. Whilst it is understood that very young children do have the capacity to understand symbolic representations of familiar objects (Edwards et al., 1998; Gardner, 1990; Wright, 2012), particularly with things like visual representations of faces and commonly used words for objects that are of importance to them, the symbols for *Rain* appeared quite abstract. Even as an adult who is quite familiar with symbolic representations, it took me a little while to register that the hanging cords that we moved through in the first movement were representative of rain falling down. It was only as they hit my face that I made the connection with the feeling of raindrops on skin – a feeling I had experienced many times in my 35 years, but which Hugo had experienced only once or twice. The large raindrop prop, that was introduced in the second movement and which was a favourite of Hugo’s, was another object that was not immediately recognisable. The difference in size, materials, texture, etc. created a distance between the real-life object (a raindrop) and the symbol. It is unlikely that the very young participants would have bridged this connection.

The aural symbols of rain (dropping sounds, simple known refrains about rain) were similarly abstract, but in some ways more recognisable – at least to me, a musician. Regardless of the children’s interpretation of the symbolic representations of the performance theme, these ideas certainly captured the interest of the very young audience. The topic was not entirely out of the previous experience of the participants, and having a theme running through the different sections of the performance, provided a sense of sequence and development (Dewey, 1934).

Flexibility and responsiveness to the very young participants was evident throughout *Rain* (Brown, 2016; Chappell & Young, 2007; Turino, 2008), but the ways in which this balanced with more fixed and planned ideas varied throughout (Fredricks et al., 2004; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013). In the first movement, where the very young children were being carried through the hanging raindrop installation, most of the ideas were established and fixed. That is, the cellist played music that was pre-determined, the space was set, and the materials were limited. However, the way in which the participants interacted within these boundaries was quite open and free. There was no set way in which to move or explore, and the decision-making around this, was left up to each parent-child couple. This openness was planned by the teaching-artists (Fredricks et al., 2004), but it was not guided beyond the initial set-up. In the second movement, many of the ideas offered were similarly pre-planned and fixed. Because this section took on more traditional performance ideas, a separation existed between the teaching-artists and the audience. Fewer opportunities were given for the very young children to input ideas and impact on the art-making, and in turn, this created limited opportunities for the

performers to respond to the participants. The performers, did, however, go to some efforts to encourage participation and exploration – although, it did not appear that the pre-planned performance ideas changed a great deal when the very young children took this on. It was in the third movement, where the infants were encouraged to interact with the installation, that flexibility and responsiveness to child input became a notable feature (Brown, 2016; Chappell & Young, 2007; Turino, 2008) particularly in terms of how the music supported the explorative play. Here, the music was partly improvised to respond to the pacing of the very young children. They headed off into the installation with high energy and intrigue, and the music reflected this. As they began to explore objects more deeply (Montessori, 1966), staying on task for longer periods (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991), the music featured more a moderate tempo, longer phrases, and less dynamic range. When signs of fatigue became apparent, the music slowed further, and became almost lullaby-like in its nature.

It was evident that the creators of *Rain* had experimented with the duration and timing of the experience. The first movement, as detailed in the narrative, had a free duration. That is, how long each parent-child participant spent moving through the hanging rain cords was entirely up to them. At no time did the presenters hurry the participants or indicate that time was up (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Eisner, 2002). Rather, music and lighting were used to entice the participants into the next space, in preparation for the second movement. The second movement of *Rain* was more structured in terms of timing. The three performers followed a set script, with a set duration. The timing of this section was responsive to the short attention span of the very young children, lasting for only about ten minutes all up (Dewey, 1934). Because there was enough variation

in this section, it is not known whether the teaching-artists would have altered the performance in the event of wavering audience interest. It should be noted that the duration and variation in this section was workshopped with several groups of very young children throughout the development stage of the work. This was possible through the ArtPlay residency program, which invited families into the space in the weeks leading up to the final performances. The third movement of *Rain* was, perhaps, the most free and responsive in terms of timing, although the role of monitoring the engagement of the very young children was transferred to individual parent participants at this point. The teaching-artists explicitly outlined to the parents that their baby was welcome in the space for as long as they liked and encouraged them to let their baby take the lead (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Edwards et al., 1998; Rinaldi, 2005). In doing so, the pacing became tailored to each individual child and family. As a parent, I knew it was time to conclude when Hugo showed clear signs of fatigue – losing interest in his surroundings and beginning to cry. This happened quite quickly, and I was able to respond to his needs immediately because of the way the experience was structured.

Rain was presented in three movements, which were connected and distinct (Dewey, 1934). The first movement was transitional. It offered glimpses of what might be coming in the second and third movements, without detailing these. It was physically connected to the performance and installation areas, as well as being thematically connected (rain), and anticipatory in its use of materials (hanging cords) and sounds (the cello). The second movement was presentational (Turino, 2008). It built on ideas established in the first movement, introduced new ideas, and modelled the exploration of materials that would

feature in the third movement. The final movement was highly participatory (Turino, 2008). It provided opportunities for the participants to physically engage with the ideas presented in the first two movements (Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 2002), with scope for them to also offer and lead new experiences within the space and among their peers. Each movement flowed naturally to the other, with the right balance of variation and similarity.

Rain ran a short season at Melbourne's ArtPlay. Generally speaking, it was designed for the very young child to experience as a single, one-off, interactive performance. A small number of children and families engaged in the development phase of the work, attending a workshop in which the artists observed the level of engagement during particular scenes, and made adjustments in response to this. These families were invited to attend a later performance (Dewey, 1934), but it is unknown how many of them did so. Hugo and I participated on one occasion.

5.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, I have presented an exemplar case study, *Rain, for Babies and their Carers*, as a way of illustrating how teaching-artists might best support very young children's engagement in an integrated arts experience; which, as outlined earlier in the thesis (Section 1.2.1) is the research question for this study. Through narrative, I offered a thick description of the performance, using participant-observation and supplementary data to inform it. I then moved on to analyse and highlight how the practices described supported, challenged or extended upon the literature (as discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis). This chapter is the first of three to address the research question in this way, with the following two

chapters (Chapters 6 and 7) also dedicated to presenting exemplar examples of teaching-artist practice.

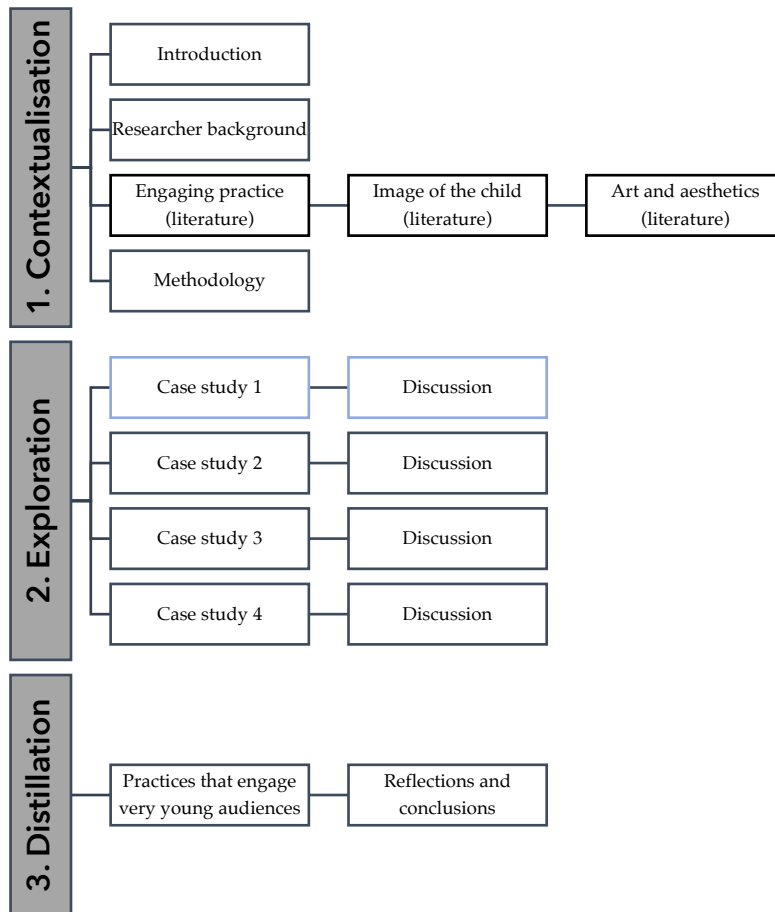


Figure 21. This chapter (highlighted in blue) shown in relation to the other chapters of this thesis.

CHAPTER 6. CASE STUDY 2

6.1 CONTEXT

This chapter aims to describe an opera performance that I attended with my 7-month-old son, Hugo. It has been selected as an exemplar case due to its close alignment with the literature on engaging practices, images of children and childhoods, and art and aesthetics, as discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis. *BabyO* was devised and composed by Dr Rachel Drury in collaboration with Scottish Opera. The work was initially developed to expand the Scottish Opera's education and outreach program within Scotland. After a successful run in Edinburgh, they went on to tour the work throughout Britain and internationally. This tour included 16 performances at Edinburgh Festival Fringe, which is where I engaged in the work as a participant observer. *BabyO* was financed by the Scottish Government as part of the Scottish Opera's annual government funding. A more comprehensive case study profile is detailed below. A first-person narrative of the performance will be offered as a way of representing and making sense of the data collected during the field research period. An analytic discussion of the case study findings will then follow. This discussion will focus on the ways in which *BabyO* was seen to align with the literature, as well as how it challenges and extends upon it.

6.2 CASE STUDY PROFILE

Artform/s	Music (opera)
	Theatre
	Visual arts (installation)

Artists	<p>Dr Rachel Drury: Rachel is a musician and composer with a special interest in music education for children with additional support needs. <i>BabyO</i> is an outcome of her doctoral thesis in music psychology. She developed the concept, composed the music, and collaborated with Scottish Opera in the development of the work.</p> <p>Ali Maclaurin: Ali is an experienced theatre designer and teacher who specialises in developing work for young audiences and schools. She has been involved in designing three works for children with Scottish Opera. <i>BabyO</i> was her first.</p> <p>Lissa Lorenzo: Lissa was a recipient of the Scottish Opera Emerging Artist award in 2013, through which she developed her skills in directing operas for children and other marginalised members of society. Lissa directed <i>BabyO</i>.</p> <p>Linda Payne: Linda is an accomplished artist with a special interest in inclusive arts. She has developed a number of successful works with and for people with physical disabilities. Linda was the choreographer for <i>BabyO</i>.</p> <p>Gloria Ellis: Gloria is an opera singer with Scottish Opera. In this role, she has had opportunities to perform for a range of audiences, including youth and children. Gloria also works with young singers as a singing teacher and coach. Gloria was the principal soprano vocalist in <i>BabyO</i>.</p> <p>Alan McKenzie: Alan is an opera singer with Scottish Opera. In this role, he is involved in schools' outreach projects. Alan has had an extensive career as a professional opera singer and has also starred in West End musical theatre productions. Alan was the principal baritone vocalist in <i>BabyO</i>.</p> <p>Arlene Rolph: Arlene is an opera singer with Scottish opera. She has had an international career as a professional singer and has increasingly specialised in contemporary opera and educational programs. Arlene was the principal mezzo-soprano vocalist in <i>BabyO</i>.</p> <p>Jane Davidson, MBE: Jane is the Director of Outreach and Education for the Scottish Opera, a role that she has held for 36 years. Jane was involved in producing <i>BabyO</i>.</p>
Site	<p>Paterson's Land</p> <p>The University of Edinburgh</p> <p>Holyrood Road</p> <p>Edinburgh</p> <p>United Kingdom</p>
Funding	<p>Scottish Government: Scottish Opera, which holds charity status, is financed by the Scottish Government. <i>BabyO</i> was developed and performed under their annual funding arrangements.</p> <p>Ticketing: <i>BabyO</i> was partly subsidised by the sale of audience tickets.</p>
Audience	<p>Very young children: 24 children aged 6 to 18 months.</p> <p>Parents/carers: 24 parents/carers seated in the central audience position, plus external seating for at least 10 additional family members.</p>
Space/s	<p>Godfrey Hall (4), as shown in the map of Paterson's Land below:</p>



Figure 22. Godfrey Hall location.

Instruments 1 soprano voice
 1 baritone voice
 1 mezzo soprano voice

Program goals The composers' goals:
 "I think it is important to introduce children to a wide variety of music – classical or otherwise – so that an appreciation for music can be fostered. Music is a great leveller. It's a form of communication that doesn't rely on everyone being able to speak one specific language. As babies are pre-verbal, music is an ideal medium through which to interact and engage" (Two Moors Festival, 2014).

Scottish Opera's goals:
 "We are committed to bringing the widest possible range of opera, performed to the highest possible standards, to the maximum audience throughout Scotland and the UK" (Scottish Opera, n.d.).

6.3 DATA

The following narrative was composed after the collection of four data sets: field notes, interview, audio recordings, and texts. The primary data was generated through participant observations and recorded in the form of descriptive field notes. This data was supported by a semi-structure interview with the composer and creator. The interview questions posed to the composer emerged from gaps in my understanding around her intentions and motivations when writing the opera, which remained unanswered by observation method. An audio recording of four pieces from the performance was provided to me by the teaching-artists. Finally, online text data was collected from the company's website, event brochures, and social media posts.

6.4 NARRATIVE: BABYO



Figure 23. *BabyO* teaching-artist performing Wellington Boots for a very young audience.

6.4.1 A long journey

I wake up early, unsure whether this is a result of jetlag or whether it is in anticipation of the performance I have travelled across the world to see. Today, Hugo and I will attend a performance of *BabyO*, an opera for very young children that was composed by music researcher Rachel Drury and produced and performed by the Scottish Opera [image of the child]. I am keen to get there, as the ticket states “general entry” and I want to secure a good seating position. I know it is important that Hugo has close visual and auditory access to the performance in order to become and stay engaged [learning and development].

After traveling across town on a special International Edinburgh Fringe Festival bus, we enter Paterson’s Land, which is situated within the Faculty of Education at the University of Edinburgh. I am struck with an overwhelming sense of familiarity. Although far from home, and despite the historic Scottish façade, this education faculty looks and feels like any other I have ever studied or worked at. The long white corridors – free from students on this Saturday morning – are lined with high-traffic commercial flooring. The walls are unadorned but for a single student noticeboard outlining teacher placement requirements and subject outlines. Closed doors, leading off the main thoroughfares, bear the names of those who work within, with the odd lecture theatre unobtrusively tucked in between. The only indicator that there is to be any sort of performance happening within this venue today is a lone staff member from the Fringe Festival standing in welcome.

6.4.2 Pre-performance

Having arrived quite early, we are directed to a bar area to await further instructions. A bar seems an unlikely choice for very young children and their caregivers to gather, I think to myself, but this is a fringe festival after all. I take the opportunity to feed Hugo before the performance [environment]. As I do so, a number of other families arrive and begin feeding and changing their children.

Around 20 minutes before the performance, we move over towards the hall where *BabyO* is to be held. We are greeted and directed by staff to line up in a long corridor, where we stand with other families, awaiting the cue to enter the performance space. While waiting in the line, I overhear parents speaking loudly to their children and to each other, often commenting on what their child is currently doing, narrating their own actions to their child, or discussing their child's recent developmental achievements [interactions].

After what seems like a significant period of waiting – very young children are getting restless, people are looking at watches [learning and development] – we are invited into the performance space; a rather large hall in which a smaller performance and audience space has been created using a set and props [environment]. We are greeted by three teaching-artists, opera singers Gloria, Alan, and Arlene. They ask us to “park our prams” on one side of the hall, and to then gather on the other side of the building where pairs of small cushions (I assume one for parent, one for baby) are arranged in a semi-circle around the outside of a performance space [environment]. With young Hugo in arms, I rush to find a good position on the floor, realising as I am doing so that it is a bit of a futile exercise. Upon examination, this appears to be a kind of theatre-in-the-round experience, with no obvious focal point and with all audience members essentially in the front row [environment]. I wish I had slept in a little longer this morning.

After selecting a pair of cushions, we sit and watch as other parent-child couples enter the space [interactions]. Those with more than one accompanying adult (i.e. a second parent, grandparent, adult friend) are asked to decide who will sit on the floor with their very young child, and who will watch from “observer” chairs around the outside of the circle. The second adult is encouraged to sit on the opposite side of their participating parent-child friend, in order that they can more directly observe their child. As we sit and I look around at the set and the other families, I noticed that Hugo is not doing the same. He has spotted a bright pink flower sticker on the green set floor in front of him and is quite intent

on reaching it and feeling it with his hand. He leans forward and attempts to grasp the flower many times. This flower holds his attention for several minutes, and he is not distracted from it; not when another (older) child moves into his vision, nor when one of the three artists make an announcement to parents less than a meter in front of him [environment].

As I look around at the other very young children, I noticed that it is the items of the floor that are capturing their attention. Even the older, newly walking, children are captivated by close floor-level props, including the cushions themselves [environment]. The adults, on the other hand, are looking around and up at the props that are at and above our eye level. I find myself watching the three teaching-artists, as well as other parents and the observers on the outside of the space [interactions]. The adults sit still on their cushions as they observe these pre-show happenings, while the very young children move towards objects that capture their attention. Several of those who can walk or crawl, attempt to do so. In all cases, they are quickly captured and returned to their designated cushion by their parent [image of the child]. Those who are pre-crawling direct their heads, bodies and limbs towards objects of interest [environment].

6.4.3 Morning

I watch the teaching-artists move casually towards a basket prop and pull out some rope. Gloria begins humming quietly as she attaches it to a hook. Alan grabs the other side of the rope and moves to attach it to a hook across the space [environment]. As he does so, he also begins to hum, creating a harmony. The three performers come together, both physically and musically, singing brightly as they begin to pull pieces of fabric out of the basket and hang them over the line. Each singer has a strong operatic voice, with beautiful tone and clear articulation [art and aesthetics]. In combination, they produce a rich harmonic sound, which evokes in me an all over tingling body sensation [art and aesthetics]. It is not often that an audience is given the opportunity to engage so intimately with a cast of professional opera singers [art and aesthetics]. I feel pleased that Hugo is able to experience this at such a young age and I wonder what impact it might

have, if any, on his future relationship with the arts [image of the child]. As Gloria, Alan and Arlene continue to sing, I realise that they are not using any recognisable words. Rather, they are singing on simple sounds, including those that very young children might make themselves [learning and development]. Hugo and I both sit, unmoving, captivated by the performance. With the sound of the very first note, Hugo shifts his head towards the sound. His gaze, however, does not lift to view the washing line where the movement is taking place. Perhaps it is too high and out of clear view [environment]. Rather, his gaze drops to the flower in front of him. Although he is not looking at the teaching-artists, he still appears to be listening – his body and head are still, and his eyes are wide and alert. As the music develops thematically, and the texture thickens, a calmness flows across the room [art and aesthetics]. With the washing line now filled with fabrics, the teaching-artists begin to move their bodies to represent wind blowing. They produce long fluid motions with their arms as they dance across the performance space, their bodies following the arch of the melody [art and aesthetics]. As the piece begins to gradually fade, the dancers slow and begin to dismantle the washing line. Hugo, too, changes his movements, from still and alert, to reclined and relaxed [environment].

6.4.4 The bee

A distinctly new piece is introduced, with a return to a thinly textured, single line vocal melody. This time, an egg maraca is used as a percussive accompaniment, creating a higher level of energy [environment]. Arlene produces the vocal sound “Zzz” in place of more commonly used lyrical ideas. Although this is not a sound that very young children can make themselves, it is clearly representative of the sound a bumble bee makes as it flies. This may demonstrate an understanding that, as very young children enter toddlerhood, their emerging verbal labelling often focuses on animal sounds [learning and development].

One by one, each teaching-artist pulls out a long rod, that had been hidden behind a section of the set. They move swiftly to position themselves in close proximity to the audience of very young children. As Alan moves

closer to where we are seated, I am able to see that a large bee toy has been attached to the rod with a piece of elastic [environment]. Alan bounces the bee in time to the music, providing a visual reinforcement of the beat [art and aesthetics]. The teaching-artists move around the circle, stopping in front of each child to ensure that the bouncing is visible to them. With his body lowered, Alan moves directly in front of us. He makes good eye contact with Hugo and smiles warmly as he sings [interactions]. As the bee bounces up and down, Hugo leans forward in an attempt to reach out and grab it. Alan holds the prop just out of reach [learning and development]. Hugo watches as the bee is flown in front of his neighbour, and then again as it moves to his neighbour's neighbour [interactions]. Once the object is out of close sight, Hugo looks around to see if he can find another bee to follow visually. When he cannot, he turns to observe the very young child sitting next to him [interactions]. The bees continue to make their way around the audience, as the music shifts and changes with the introduction of new ideas. Without lyrics to provide meaning, the singers are free to explore long and short sound combinations with good effect. "Beeeee" for example is combined with "bip", opening up a range of pattern possibilities. As the piece comes to a close with a perfect cadence, I am left wondering how the bee theme connected to the previous piece [art and aesthetics]. As adults we are used to following a narrative, but I realise this is of little relevance to Hugo.

6.4.5 Falling, bump!

After only a short pause, a new piece begins [learning and development]. The teaching-artists sing together, in perfect harmony [arts and aesthetics], the phrase "Falling, bump!"

The image shows three staves of musical notation for the phrase "Falling, Bump!". The top staff is in treble clef, the middle in alto clef, and the bottom in bass clef. All are in 8/8 time. The melody is a simple descending line: a quarter note on G4, a quarter note on F4, a quarter note on E4, followed by a quarter rest, a quarter note on D4, a quarter note on C4, and a quarter note on B3. The lyrics "Fall - ing bump!" are written below the notes. The word "Fall" is under the first note, "ing" is under the second note, and "bump!" is under the third note. There are rests under the fourth, fifth, and sixth notes. The music ends with a double bar line.

Figure 24. Notation: Falling, Bump!

The clear descending melody is interpreted through whole body movement, as the teaching-artists stand tall, float slightly down, then fall abruptly to the ground with “Bump!” This repetitive movement has a slapstick comedy quality to it [art and aesthetics], and Hugo laughs whenever one of the teaching-artists “bumps” within his sight [interactions]. Before long, Gloria moves directly in front of Hugo. She has a woollen blanket draped carefully across her arms as she positions herself close to the floor. Gloria places the blanket over her head, removing it with a quick jerking action at the sound “bump!” is heard. She is playing one of Hugo’s favourite games – peek-a-boo. Gloria repeats this movement sequence several times, and each time she does so, Hugo laughs at the reveal [interactions]. Around us, other children are heard laughing and squealing. The other two teaching-artists are performing the action in unison at different positions along the stage. A growing sense of excitement is felt as the children’s voices blend with the teaching-artists’, and the rich operatic singing fills the space [environment]. The music develops into a full, lush sound due to an increase in the complexity of the melodic and harmonic lines [image of the child], before abruptly concluding with the phrase, “Falling, splash!”

6.4.6 Wellington Boots

The teaching-artists smoothly transition in full view, returning the blankets and each pulling a new prop from a space hidden from the

audience. At first, it is unclear to me what the props are. As they begin to sing, I soon come to understand.

Bum - pa - da dum - pa - da bum - pa - da dum - pa - da

3
Well ies
Bup - ba bup - ba Bum - pa - da dum - pa - da Bum - pa - da dum - pa - da

6
Well-ies
Bup - ba bup - ba Bum - pa - da dum - pa - da Bum - pa - da dum - pa - da

Figure 25. Notation: Wellington Boots.

Carol sings the word “Wellies”, accompanied by Alan and Arlene on vocal sounds “bah”, “bum”, “dah” and “dum”. This piece, it seems, is about wellington boots and the props are coloured rain boots attached to long

sticks [environment]. The teaching-artists stomp and dance the boots, which almost appear like puppets, past each audience member [art and aesthetics]. The boots jump in invisible puddles, corresponding with ascending and descending musical phrases [art and aesthetics]. As a second-generation Australian child, I realise that Hugo is unfamiliar with the term “wellies”. Rain boots are more commonly referred to as “gumboots” in his culture. What’s more, as this is also his first winter, Hugo has had few, if any, opportunity to experience rain boots in his daily, urban life. It doesn’t seem to matter, as it is the movement of the objects [learning and development], the way they dance in time to the music in an exaggerated theatrical way [art and aesthetics], that is of real interest.

Still singing, each of the teaching-artists move back towards the edge of the set to exchange their rain boot for a tub filled with bright yellow rubber ducks [environment]. Arlene distributes a rubber duck to the very young child seated beside us. Hugo watches with the interaction with interest [interactions] then turns his attention to the tub. I follow his direction and note that there are ducks of various sizes [environment]. Arlene approaches Hugo, smiling as she sings, and selects a small yellow duck from her tub. She hands him the object and he takes it greedily, lifting the duck immediately to his mouth [interactions]. The duck is the ideal size for Hugo to grasp [learning and development]. With enthusiasm, he engages in a mouthing, dropping, grasping routine, repeating it over and over again [learning and development]. His attention is entirely consumed by the duck.

There is a shift in music, and with this the teaching-artists move to the centre of the performance space and, in unison, open brightly coloured umbrellas [environment]. It is quite a visual spectacle [art and aesthetics]. Regardless, Hugo does not avert his gaze away from his duck play. They swirl through the space as they sing repeated patterns over and over again [learning and development], before they slow their movements in correspondence with a musical ritardando and diminuendo [art and aesthetics].

6.4.7 Revising the themes

Alan positions himself in the centre of the stage. Gloria hands him an oversized book. He proceeds to “read” the book, as a teacher might read to a class of children, with the pages facing outwards towards the audience [art and aesthetics]. Each page has a symbolic representation of a musical piece from the performance. The images are large, simple and clear: there is fabric on a washing line, a bee on a stick, a face emerging from beneath a blanket, rain boots and a duck. As Alan moves from page to page, the teaching-artists sing an abridged version of the music from each scene. With the visual aid, it becomes easier to recall each of the pieces [learning and development]. I note that, although I had previously believed that each theme was unrelated to another, the book suggests an overarching cohesiveness, particularly with regard to the musical elements [art and aesthetics]. Hugo shows little interest in the book, as he continues to manipulate the rubber duck, using his mouth and hands [learning and development]. I wonder whether he recognises the pieces as they are performed for the second time.

6.4.8 Night Time

Sharing the story, with less movement and fewer visuals, has created a more tranquil mood. The introduction of a new, hymn-like piece further adds to this atmosphere [art and aesthetics]. In rich harmony, the performers sing on both previously explored sounds – “bah”, “dah”, “bum” – and new sounds – “ah”, “ooh”, and “hum” [art and aesthetics]. As they slowly sing, the teaching-artists drop brightly coloured feathers in front of the audience. One falls in front of, but out of reach of, Hugo [environment]. He immediately drops his duck and rotates his body in an attempt to move into the space to collect it as it hits the ground. With the object some distance from where he is seated, Hugo becomes irritated [learning and development]. He wriggles his body and arches his back, movements that tell me that he is feeling tired [image of the child]. The power of the lullaby is taking effect. I reach forward, grab the feather, and hold it up in front of Hugo’s hand. He immediately grabs it from me with his fist, and lifts it

toward his mouth. The feeling of the feather on his tongue cause Hugo to screw up his face in disapproval. He thrusts his tongue and hits his mouth with his hand to dislodge the feather, before reaching for it again, grabbing it in his fist, and lifting it to his mouth once more. This time his reaction is less extreme as the feather reaches his mouth. He pulls it away, looks closely at it, and then drops it in front of him, tracking its movement as it falls to the floor [learning and development].

6.4.9 Post-performance

The final piece fades and I clap enthusiastically to indicate my appreciation for the performance, the company, and the three performers [art and aesthetics]. The teaching-artists smile and bow their heads, before moving to collect the rubber ducks from the children. As they take Hugo's duck, they hand him a *BabyO* compact disk in clear packaging, which is his to keep [learning and development]. It features an abridged version of four pieces from the performance to listen to at home. Also contained within the clear packaging, are two brightly coloured feathers – a visual prompt, perhaps, to assist with the recall of the Night Time piece [learning and development]. With the compact disk in hand, the very young children are then given opportunity to move into the performance space for the first time, as recorded music plays [environment]. Hugo turns his body around towards me, seeking comfort. I hold him in my arms, and we walk together through the set. Hugo reaches out to touch the washing line [environment] but then snuggles his face into my chest, indicating his sleepiness. I take this as a sign that we have finished our shared experience [image of the child]. It is time to go. We collect our pram, leave the venue, and make our way back into central Edinburgh to enjoy the festival.

6.5 DISCUSSION

6.5.1 Image of the child

BabyO was both part of both the International Edinburgh Festival and the Scottish Opera's summer season. It was the only performance specifically for very young

children, aged from birth to eighteen months, on either program. When adults attend a performing arts event, most often they do so because they have a personal attraction to one or more aspects of the show. They may feel favourably towards the company or one of the performers, they may be familiar with the work being presented, or they may simply be regular consumers of arts events. On the other hand, the very young children who attended *BabyO* were not responsible for the decision to be there. Rather, they were in attendance because an adult carer had determined, on their behalf, that it was a worthwhile experience (James & Prout, 1990). Choosing to attend a performance with a child says quite a deal about a parent's beliefs and values, even if the very young child's own feelings are not clearly represented. Attending an opera may indicate that the parent is musically educated, has had the privilege of attending operatic events themselves (either as a child or adult), is familiar with the reputation of the company, or simply wishes their child to be a consumer of this style of performance. When adults position very young children as cultural consumers of the arts (Edwards et al., 1998), they may do so in the belief that this will influence the child's future choices, once they have the capital to make their own decisions about whether to attend performing arts events, and the nature of such events (Lee, 2001).

Whether the very young children chose to be there or not, there was evidence that the teaching-artists positioned the children as discerning connoisseurs of the arts (Edwards et al., 1998; Montessori, 1966; Rinaldi, 2005). As noted in the narrative, the quality of the singing was extremely high. The Scottish Opera drew upon three members of their regular ensemble to perform for the very young audience, indicating their belief the children were deserving of the very best

(Vecchi, 2010). *BabyO* was a highly professional, almost flawless, performance which had clearly been well-rehearsed. The performers knew the music and the staging intimately, their harmonies were tight, and there was seamless flow between sections (Dewey, 1934). The Scottish Opera as a company specialises, not in works for children, but in more traditional Western art music productions for adult audiences. In order to develop an exemplary work for very young children, they sought the expertise of a known expert in early childhood music and commissioned her to compose a work especially for this purpose. These decisions indicated to the audience, including the very children, that the way in which their work was received was of high importance (Dewey, 1934; Rinaldi, 2005).

Successfully applying to perform a work in the International Edinburgh Fringe Festival, and the subsequent inclusion of *BabyO* in the program, acted as a public statement about the rights of very young children to meaningfully engage in cultural events (Edwards et al., 1998; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013; Tayler et al., 2006). Following the performance that Hugo and I attended, the company went on to tour *BabyO* internationally. This could be viewed as an act of advocacy for very young children as a social group (James & Prout, 1990; Mayall, 1994; McDowall Clark, 2016).

There was little evidence that the very young children were positioned as co-constructors of the *BabyO* performance (Dahlberg et al., 2007; Malaguzzi, 1993; Rogoff, 1990). The separation between those who actively engaged in the conception and execution of the performance (the artists) and those who were receivers of this same performance (the very young children and their parents) was clear. The performance space was set apart from the audience, and as

described in the narrative, when children crossed this divide, they were returned to their designated seating. When the very young children were afforded opportunities to actively engage in the performance, their contributions were highly regulated. The children manipulated only those objects that were directly gifted to them by the teaching-artist, and for a limited period of time before the teaching-artists retracted them. It could be said that *BabyO*'s very young audience only actively engaged within the boundaries set by the adult artists.

6.5.2 Art and aesthetics

BabyO was, in a general sense, in the style of an opera. That is, it featured music that accompanied a dramatized narrative. As described in the narrative, there were also unexpected moments of slapstick comedy and puppetry. The teaching-artists were, therefore, required to draw upon a range of complementary arts practices and techniques, thus broadening the very young children's exposure to multiple, integrated artforms (Kelman et al., 2017).

Explicit demonstrations by the performers provided some observable cues of ways in which to engage artfully with the ideas offered. On every occasion that props were distributed to the very young children, the teaching-artists moved directly in front of the children, down at eye level, to demonstrate how to manipulate the object (Bandura, 1977; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013; Vecchi, 2010). Although the very young children did not directly imitate these demonstrations, the parents did. The parents then went on to become the models themselves, increasing the likelihood that the behaviours being observed would be taken on board by the very young children (Lussier et al., 1994; McWilliam et al., 2003; Tayler et al., 2006). In providing guidance to the parents, the performers also opened up the possibility of these ideas being further reinforced at a later time.

It was the adult participants who carried with them the potential to continue the ideas back in the home, and in doing so, increasing the likelihood of imitation (Bronfenbrenner, 2009; Edwards et al., 1998). This was essential, as imitation of the performers was only observed in the parents. Due to the very young age of the children, it is unlikely that they would display delayed imitation of the ideas presented in the performance (Bandura, 1977). Unless the ideas were presented to the very young children again, outside of the performance setting, the very young children would not retain and imitate the material at a later time.

The teaching-artists demonstrated a very strong understanding of how to manipulate the musical elements to create musical and dramatic effect. There were a number of examples of this described in the narrative. Ascending and descending melodic contours were made more explicit through the use of props, which were lifted and lowered in direct relationship, or through the teaching-artists' bodies, which followed the arch of the melody as they flowed through the space. Through a compositional technique of pattern layering, and a gradual increase in internal complexity, the texture of the music was used as a device for shifting the mood within the room. It was noted that when the vocal harmonies became more detailed, the participants appeared more relaxed and still. The ability to successfully achieve this result indicated that the composer and the performers were accomplished in their respective fields (Vecchi, 2010).

6.5.3 Environment

Objects were an important part of the *BabyO* performance, and it was evident that the composer, Rachel Drury, had some understanding of the ways in which objects can support and enhance very young children's schematic play (Atherton & Nutbrown, 2016). The performance was structured around four main themes,

each presented with an associated object: rain boots, a rubber duck, a feather and a bee. Opportunities were provided for the very young children to directly and indirectly interact with these objects. In order to understand them, the very young children drew upon a range of schemas, including reaching, grasping, mouthing, dropping, and pushing (Piaget, 1950). While each object offered the potential to be explored through play, all but one – the rubber duck – were kept at a physical distance from the children, thus limiting the schematic repertoire from which they could draw. Free play episodes were not observed during the data collection period.

Although a number of the very young children showed an interest in exploring the *BabyO* set, this was restricted during the performance. There were limited opportunities for the very young children to really test the environment, although an amended version of the space (with most props removed) was left open for families to explore after the performance. Regardless of these confines, the very young children showed a persistent preference for learning through testing their surroundings (Dewey, 1934; Montessori, 1966; Piaget, 1950). Hugo explored ways to manipulate a two-dimensional sticker. He repeatedly dropped an object from his hand onto the hard floor, watching it bounce and hearing the sound it made as it struck. He observed what happened when he grabbed another child's arm and tested the outcome of a reaching out towards a performer as she moved past him. Providing further opportunities to explore the space may have further enhanced very young children's engagement during the performance.

Paterson's Land proved an appropriate setting for the *BabyO* performance. Although the venue had not been purpose built for arts productions for children

and families, the spaces were spacious and transformable (Andersen et al., 2010; Brown, 2015; Tayler et al., 2006). The education faculty's student bar became a suitable place for families to gather before the performance, to feed and change their children. The pop-up performance set was constructed within a much larger hall, which allowed for intimate artist-audience exchanges while also providing additional space for non-participating observers and for secure pram parking (Andersen et al., 2010).

There was no clear evidence that the teaching-artists had considered the importance of building a positive emotional climate (Andersen et al., 2010; Edwards, et al., 1998; Tayler et al., 2006). Although there existed a shared sensibility between the participants, all of whom were gathered, side by side, to experience the same cultural event, the lack of interactions between participants, and between participants and teaching-artists, limited the sense of community. There was some level of tension when the very young children expressed a desire to interact more directly with the environment (Dewey, 1934) and the parents were required to intervene to ensure they did not (Dahlberg et al., 2007; Malaguzzi, 2016). On the other hand, the way in which the teaching-artists positioned the children as discerning connoisseurs of the arts, enhanced feelings of positivity (Edwards et al., 1998; Montessori, 1966; Rinaldi, 2005). Regardless of this mixed evidence, my personal experience was that a positive tone was maintained throughout the duration of the performance.

6.5.4 Interactions

BabyO was designed especially for parent-child duos. One might imagine that this would increase the likelihood of collaboration or co-play between a very young child and his or her own family (Jeanneret & Brown, 2013; Rogoff, 1990;

Taylor et al., 2016) or between a very young child and his or her same-age peers (Custodero, 2007; Rogoff, 1990). However, there was very little evidence that this was the case. Rather, the duos sat side-by-side, most often with the very young child in front of the parent, all facing inward, towards the performance space. In this position, there were limited opportunities for the participants to communicate with each other, or to work together to achieve a shared goal. However, in the narrative there were several occasions described where parents watched each other without communicating or where the very young children showed an awareness of the other children sitting around them. Hugo, for example, paid special attention to the teaching-artist, Arlene, as she interacted with another child. Although he did not participate in this exchange, it clearly captured his attention and supported his engagement in the performance.

Due to the one-off nature of the *BabyO* performance, the musicians had no prior knowledge of the participants. They did not, therefore, have an understanding of their individual interest, nor their individual levels of knowledge, skills, and development (Vygotsky, 1978). The performance was not crafted with the particular audience members in mind, but created to be as inclusive of a broad range of interests and abilities as possible (Jeanneret & Brown, 2013). Because of the performative nature of the experience, the musicians were also not in a position to formatively assess the children's engagement, nor to scaffold learning (Bandura, 1977; Vygotsky, 1978). Their focus was on performing the opera as well as possible, following the score and direction from beginning to end. The parents, on the other hand, had exceptional knowledge of their own child's interests and developmental levels (Bronfenbrenner, 2009). Though they were better at accurately targeting ideas at an individualised level, there was neither the time

nor the space to focus on enhancing learning in this environment. For example, when Hugo was handed a rubber duck, he immediately dropped it. The duck rolled under my leg, out of his direct line of sight and, without a firm sense of object permanence, he was unable to locate it. In order for him to explore the object more effectively, I sat him in a supported seated position on the floor, with his legs open wide and the duck on the floor between his feet. This way, when he grabbed and dropped the duck – as he was likely to do – it would fall into his line of sight, in a place where he could pick it up again. While I was aware of his individual current level of development, I was not in a position to enhance his development (perhaps through exploring object permanence) in this setting, as the performance quickly moved on and developed into another idea.

Despite the many opportunities for the very young children to observe, interact with, and imitate people and materials, when they did so, there was little in the way of direct reinforcement of their achievements. That is, neither the teaching-artists nor the parents provided a great deal of feedback about the best ways in which to engage (Lussier et al., 1994; Malaguzzi, 2016). The small amount of direct reinforcement that was observed was largely focused around behavioural expectations (Lee, 2001). For example, when the children attempted to move into the performance space, they were re-directed by their parents. Similarly, when a very young child attempted to use another child as a prop to pull himself to a standing position, he was quickly moved away by his father. A crying child was taken from the room until she settled and was then reintroduced to the experience once calm. Reinforcement of positive responses came largely from the environment itself. That is, through explorative object play, the children worked out for themselves the best way to interact (Dewey, 1934; Montessori, 1966;

Weisberg et al., 2013). When Hugo could not grasp the flower on the floor, he adapted his behaviour until he could manipulate it in some way. When he placed a feather in his mouth several times, experiencing the discomfort of the fluff on his tongue on each occasion, he stopped doing it, and instead held the feather in his grasp.

6.5.5 Learning and development

The composer of *BabyO*, Rachel Drury, had a strong understanding of infant development and it was clear that she drew upon this knowledge when creating the work. *BabyO* provided opportunities for the participants to engage through their senses – most notably, sound, sight and touch (Eisner, 2002). Throughout the duration of the performance, the children were surrounded by the rich vocal harmonies. They were also positioned to take in the movements of the teaching-artists and their props and were presented with objects in which to manipulate with their hands and mouths. In isolation, each of these sensory experiences offered the potential to engage the very young children. The power, however, was unleashed whenever the senses interacted with each other. It is well understood that multimodality supports very young children's learning and development (Eisner, 2002), and this was evident in *BabyO* each time the teaching-artists sang while moving props, or when they provided the very young children with the props to move themselves.

There were some opportunities for the very young children to draw upon their preferred ways of interacting with new and familiar stimuli. In the narrative, I described how Hugo engaged in reaching, grasping, mouthing and dropping schemas (Atherton & Nutbrown, 2016; Piaget, 1950) in order to explore the rubber duck. It was noted that the rubber duck was selected especially for Hugo

from a selection, as it appeared the perfect size for him to hold and place safely in his mouth. This demonstrates that the teaching-artists were able to anticipate the ways in which he might choose to interact with it. When Hugo attempted to use his same suite of schemas to explore the feather, he soon found that his mouth was not the ideal schema for this job. He was provided with feedback from the object, without the need for explicit feedback from an adult (Montessori, 1966).

Rachel Drury used a great deal of repetition of themes and patterns in her composition. This decision demonstrates her understanding that very young children are attracted to and benefit from ongoing and recurring ideas (Piaget, 1950; Montessori, 1966). Once introduced, new themes were expanded upon and revisited many times. Motifs occurred regularly within each distinct piece of music, as well as in an overarching way across the various sections. Furthermore, with the introduction of each new piece, the teaching-artists followed a similar structure. They would take a new prop (rain boots, for example) and move with it around the audience circle, close to the very young children. There was some evidence that the very young children came to expect the teaching-artists to bring them a new prop to observe or manipulate, thus showing their understanding of the repetitive structure of the work. Hugo, for example, watched in anticipation as the teaching-artists began to move from the central performance space towards the audience, even dropping an object he was holding to prepare for a new one. The teaching-artists managed to strike the right balance between novel and familiar ideas, which according to theories of habituation and dishabituation (Colombo & Bundy, 1983; Friedman, 1972; Groves & Thompson, 1970), is something that can support very young children's engagement in the arts.

While the teaching-artists knowledge of very young children was evident, there were a few important areas that did not align with what is understood about engaging practices. For example, there were limited opportunities for the very young children to engage in play or to move without restriction (Moyles, 1994). Further, the participants did not have free or prolonged access to materials, as the performance was heavily planned and the teaching-artists strictly managed the timing (Dewey, 1934).

6.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, I have presented an exemplar case study, *BabyO*, as a way of illustrating how teaching-artists might best support very young children's engagement in an integrated arts experience; which, as outlined earlier in the thesis (Section 1.2.1) is the research question for this study. Through narrative, I offered a thick description of the performance, using participant observation and supplementary data to inform it. I then moved on to analyse and highlight how the practices described supported, challenged or extended upon the literature (as discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis). This chapter is the second of three to address the research question in this way.

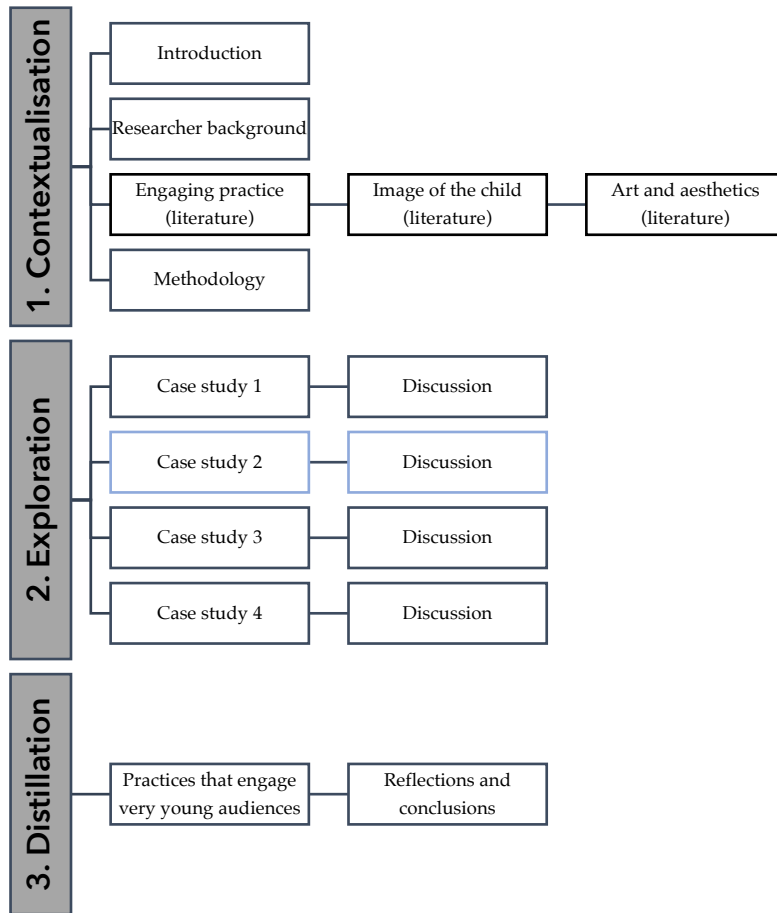


Figure 26. This chapter (highlighted in blue) shown in relation to the other chapters of this thesis.

CHAPTER 7. CASE STUDY 3

7.1 CONTEXT

This chapter aims to describe a dance performance that I attended with my 17-month-old son, Hugo. It has been selected as an exemplar case due to its close alignment with the literature on engaging practices, images of children and childhoods, and art and aesthetics, as discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis. *Nursery* was created and directed by an experienced dance and infant mental health practitioner, Sally Chance, in collaboration with a composer, designer, visual artist/maker, and writer. It has been toured nationally and internationally. Part of this tour included a performance at ArtPlay in Melbourne, Australia, which is where I engaged in the work as a participant observer. *Nursery* was financed by Australia Council grants, audience ticket sales and City of Melbourne (local government) funding. A more comprehensive case study profile is detailed below. A first-person narrative of the performance will be offered as a way of representing and making sense of the data collected during the field research period. An analytic discussion of the case study findings will then follow. This discussion will focus on the ways in which *Nursery* was seen to align with the literature, as well as how it challenges and extends upon it.

7.2 CASE STUDY PROFILE

Artform/s

Dance

Music

Visual arts (installation)

Artists

Sally Chance: With a background in maternal and infant mental health, Sally has worked extensively with parents and very young children in community and education settings. In her work, she uses dance as way to encourage

positive relationships between mother and child. *Nursery* was Sally's second international touring theatrical piece, developed after a successful run with her first work for very young audiences, *This [Baby] Life*. Sally was the creator and director of *Nursery*.

Heather Frahn: Heather is a professional composer and musician, with a long history of successful collaborations with Sally Chance. Heather was the composer of *Nursery* as well as the lead musical performer.

Stephen Noonan: Stephen is a professional dancer with expertise in experimental, street, and improvised dance works. *Nursery* was his second collaboration with Sally, having previously performed in *This [Baby] Life*. Stephen was one of two dance performers in *Nursery*.

Ade Suharto: Ade is a professional dancer with expertise in exploring cultural practices through dance. *Nursery* was her second collaboration with Sally, having previously performed in *This [Baby] Life*. Ade was one of two dance performers in *Nursery*.

Gaëlle Mellis: Gaëlle is an Australian theatre designer of high repute, with particular expertise in creating immersive environments. She collaborated with Sally to design and install the set for *This [Baby] Life*. Gaëlle was *Nursery*'s principal designer.

Hiromi Tango: Hiromi is a visual artist who works with and within communities to co-create object-based artworks. She collaborated closely with set designer, Gaëlle, to design and create the props for *Nursery*.

Janeen Brian: Janeen is a celebrated Australian children's author and qualified teacher. She has published many picture-story books for young audiences and received a Children's Book Council of Australia notable book award in 2002. Janeen was involved in writing *Nursery*.

Site	<p>ArtPlay</p> <p>Birrarung Marr</p> <p>Russell Street Extension</p> <p>Melbourne 3000</p> <p>Victoria, Australia</p>
Funding	<p>Insite Arts: <i>Nursery</i> was partially funded by Australian performing arts producer, Insite Arts, with support from Australia Council grants.</p> <p>Local government: <i>Nursery</i> was partially funded by the City of Melbourne, through the venue, ArtPlay.</p> <p>Ticketing: <i>Nursery</i> was partly subsidised by the sale of audience tickets.</p>
Audience	<p>Very young children: 17 babies aged four to 18 months</p> <p>Parents/carers: 17 parents, primarily mothers</p>
Space/s	<p>The ArtPlay Gallery, as shown in the ArtPlay floorplan in Figure 18.</p>
Instruments	<p>1 alto metallophone</p> <p>4 tone bars</p> <p>2 mezzo soprano voices</p>

	1 hand bell
	1 large natural seed pod shaker
Program goals	<p>The artists' goals: "We aim for an atmosphere of 'heightened normality', combining the friendliness of a playgroup, with the aesthetic impact of a performance" (arTour, n.d.)</p> <p>The venue's goals: "ArtPlay's program for children and families aims to be challenging, creative, enlightening and meaningful. Children explore their creativity and self-expression and share unique artistic experiences with professional artists" (ArtPlay, 2013).</p>

7.3 DATA

The following narrative was composed after the collection of four data sets: field notes, video, creator/director report, and texts. The primary data was generated through participant observations and recorded in the form of descriptive field notes. This data was supported by a video of the performance provided to me by the teaching-artist. A report written by the creator / director was also included as data and analysed for themes. Finally, online text data was collected from the presenter's website, the teaching-artists' websites, event brochures, and social media posts.

7.4 NARRATIVE: NURSERY



Figure 27. *Nursery teaching-artist engaging in collaborative dance with very young children.*

7.4.1 Gathering

Birds tweet and whistle, almost as if in response to the soft, lyrical murmurs between the very young children and mothers, who have gathered in an enclosed theatre space at ArtPlay Melbourne [interactions]. I hold Hugo in my lap as I look around the circular floor-seating at the other participants. I notice that there are very young infants, held in arms, as well as children who are sitting, either supported or unsupported. The adults smile politely at each other across the space, saving their particularly supportive grins for instances where a child is protesting or attempting to move away from the seating area [environment]. Hugo begins to writhe in my lap. He is drawn to a cage-like structure, covered with soft fabrics, positioned at the edge of the performance space [art and aesthetics]. As I loosen my grip, he pushes himself to stand and toddles towards it. When he reaches his target, he lifts himself high by reaching and pulling on a bar and begins to pull out mallets and bells [environment]. I suspect these items have been placed inside, out of direct sight or reach, for the

performers to use during their performance. He throws them behind him enthusiastically. Throwing, along with climbing, are his preferred actions at this time [learning and development]. He is in his element.

7.4.2 Can you hear the music?

“Everyone, everyone...” croons composer and musician, Heather Frahn; with a metallophone strapped to her torso and a headset microphone to her mouth [art and aesthetics]. The audience of adults and very young children stop vocalising immediately and lift their faces to look in the direction of the sound [environment]. Hugo rushes back to me and sits in my lap as director, Sally Chance, walks into the space, offering a narrated provocation:

“Can you hear the birds in our garden?” <long pause, as the pre-recorded bird sounds come in to focus>

“Can you see the people in our garden?” <short pause>

“That’s you as well [interactions].” <long pause, inviting the participants to look around at each other>

“Can you hear the music?”

With this, Director Sally plays a single note on a handheld bell. Hugo, who has been moving and wriggling about a little in my lap, raises his head, eyes wide, as the unexpected sound vibrates to a gentle close.

All of this sets the artistic tone for what will unfold over the next half-hour [art and aesthetics]. Director Sally takes a moment to give a brief verbal introduction to the parents, which includes predictions about how the very young children may choose to participate (exploring, joining in the dance, staying close to parents) [learning and development], assurances that all behaviours are fine, and advice about keeping everyone safe [environment]. She positions herself as an active director – one who will closely monitor both the participants and the dancers, and who will make suggestions for modifications and extensions as the performance unfolds [interactions]. With

this, Sally moves to the side of the circle, allowing space for the musician, Heather, to enter the space once more.

7.4.3 Round and round the garden

A soft alto metallophone melody plays as two dancers – Stephen Noonan and Ade Suharto – begin rotating around the circle at an easy walking pace [art and aesthetics]. Ade is carrying an object that has no recognisable features, but which reminds me of coral, in soft pinks, greens and whites. Attached to this is a large shaker, made from dark natural seed pod materials [environment]. As the dancers move, they gently pass the “coral” between each other, taking great care as if they are nurturing a precious object in their arms. They place it on the floor, and slowly unravel it.

A rhythmic percussive line is introduced and the tempo of the music increases [art and aesthetics]. With this comes a notable change in performance energy. The dancers immediately shift their movements towards more dynamic shapes, using their upper bodies to swing through the space [art and aesthetics]. When the music again softens and slows, they return to a seated position on the floor. With the performers down at his visual level, Hugo appears to be called to action [interactions / learning and development]. He vocalises, with more strength and intention, and begins to crawl into the performance space in search of objects and people [environment]. The very young participants watch each other and begin interacting at some distance. I observe another child imitating Hugo, and Hugo notices this too. He watches the other child closely as he moves about. There is a reciprocity in the interaction [interactions].

Dancer Stephen stands. He jumps. He jumps again, and as he lands a new rhythmic motif is introduced [art and aesthetics]. Musician Heather finds a groove by manipulating a set of finger bells to produce several different tone colours [art and aesthetics]. Dancer Ade joins Stephen, and together they shake, roll, pose, look inwards, look outwards, and create shapes in the performance space [art and aesthetics], as Heather chants and plays,

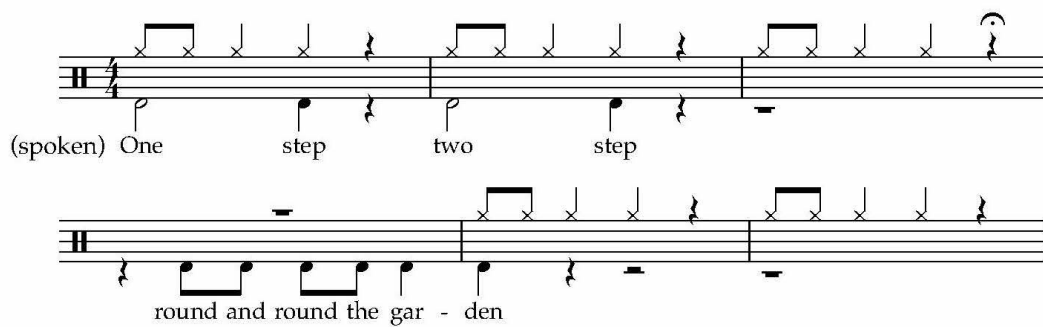


Figure 28. Notation: Round and Round the Garden.

“One step, two step,

Round and round the garden...

Tickle you!

Tickle you over there!”

The combination of movement and sound stimulates the babies’ bodies and voices [learning and development]. There is a noticeable increase in vocalisations around the room and very young children moving into the performance space to explore [environment]. Hugo appears to find the dancers’ floor shapes (^ v) amusing and exciting. He beams as he watches them, crouches down to peek into their faces, first from the front and then from the back, instigating a game of peek-a-boo [interactions]. After a brief period, he returns to my lap to reconnect [interactions].

7.4.4 Curious!

Dancers Stephen and Ade move to low positions as the music again shifts and a new piece is introduced:



Figure 29. Notation: You, Curious!

“You... curious,

Curious! (spoken directly to babies)”

Dancer Stephen crawls directly in front of Hugo, makes eye contact, and then begins to directly imitate the ways in which he is positioned and moving – upright, straight back, straight face, and one hand moving [interactions]. He waits and watches [learning and development], and as Hugo begins to shift his body, he responds in unison. They are dancing together [art and aesthetics / image of the child].

Director Sally, who has been observing from just outside of the circle, visible to both the performers and the families [environment], encourages Dancer Ade to approach another very young child who has moved into the space. She, too, begins to mirror the child’s actions [interactions]. As the child crawls across the space on all fours, Dancer Ade crawls right along beside her [interactions]. As these interactions take place, pre-recorded music is heard [art and aesthetics]. It is both melodic and rhythmic, with occasional vocals singing the ‘You curious’ refrain. The tempo is such that a toddling child could walk quickly in time, and for those who are mobile, that is exactly what they do [learning and development]. More and more, the very young children vocalise as they wander, crawl through or watch the performance. Very young children in arms lift their heads, and pull their bodies forward into the space [environment]. The collective pitch of their singing rises as the tempo and dynamics increase [art and aesthetics / image of the child].

7.4.5 Towards an ending

As the dancers move into a more performative role, with less direct engagement with the participants [interactions], the very young children begin to explore further away [environment]. The more mobile children move outside of the circle. Hugo attempts several times to climb up onto a black theatre box but slips down each time. Deterred, he makes a beeline for a gap in the black curtains that surround the entire performance space.

He exits the space briefly, then returns, searching for me visually before toddling towards my lap with some urgency [interactions]. It appears that he finds emotional safety in having a parent to reconnect with between periods of exploration, and he is able to regulate the amount of time he spends in each of these zones without my assistance [environment / interactions].

The music slows, as the movements of the dancers draw to a close in response to a noticeable decline in audience engagement. As the very young children begin to vocalise with more urgency, parents soothe and distract, by offering pacifiers, rocking, tickling, cuddling and jiggling their children on their knees. Sally, well attuned to this [learning and development], tells the participants that the performance is over, but that there is no rush to leave [environment]. Hugo, however, is very keen to exit promptly. He rushes for the gap in the curtain he had discovered earlier and leads the way out of the space, towards the ArtPlay foyer [image of the child].

7.5 DISCUSSION

7.5.1. Image of the child

Sally Chance, the director of *Nursery*, positioned the very young children as co-constructors of the experience (Dahlberg et al., 2007; Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978). She encouraged them to enter the performance space freely, and to interact with the teaching-artists and with the artwork. The children's artful contributions were accepted by the teaching-artists and they changed their own practice in response (Edwards et al., 1998). An example of this was described in the narrative, when the dancer Steve observed and mirrored Hugo's movements, incorporating these new ideas into the dance performance. Though the work was largely pre-planned, room was left for the children's improvisations (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013). Through a collaborative

process, the teaching-artists and the very young children co-constructed the final work that became *Nursery*.

There were moments throughout *Nursery* where the very young children were given opportunities to take ownership of the execution of the artwork (Edwards et al., 1998; Rinaldi, 2005). It was noted that, on several occasions, Hugo moved into the central space to explore. As the dancers moved around him, his explorations became part of the dance. Hugo's choice of movements – where he ventured, how fast he moved, how high or low he positioned his body – all influenced the ways in which the dancers moved their own bodies. At times, they shifted to allow him more space, at other times they moved over him, or came in close to match his position and shape. During these moments, it was clear that Hugo's was leading the dance (Rogoff, 1990).

Sally Chance is a strong advocate for very young children (Edwards et al., 1998; Rinaldi, 2005). When speaking with parents, she gently encourages them to trust the behaviours and artistic choices of their children. In writing works for very young audiences, and touring them nationally and internationally, she sends a strong message about the importance of including children under two years of age as cultural citizens (Jeanneret & Brown, 2013; Tayler et al., 2006). Considered a leader in her field, Sally is regularly invited to speak to artists about developing works for a very young audience. During these discussions, she has been known to highlight the importance of positioning the very young participants as co-constructors, rather than as merely recipients of an adult-produced work (Dahlberg et al., 2007; Malaguzzi, 1993).

7.5.2 Art and aesthetics

The creators of *Nursery* took particular care to create an aesthetic environment. From the draping of soft fabrics to the range of sounds introduced, each item was placed in the space with intentionality (Rousseau, 2004). In the narrative, I describe a coral-like abstract object which I believed to be mindfully crafted to appeal to the very young audience. The combination of soft colours, tactile textures, and natural materials aligns with Maria Montessori's (1966) recommendations around creating an aesthetic environment for children. This particular object was not just visually attractive, but was also aurally stimulating as, when it was manipulated by an act of shaking, the natural seed pod pieces rattled together creating a distinctive sound. A range of tone colours, such as this, were used throughout the performance – including the resonating sound of a single bell, a lone unaccompanied voice, and the clear short sounds of a metallophone and tone bars. There was evidence that the quality of each sound was important to the teaching-artists, as they exclusively used top professional percussion instruments (Vecchi, 2010).

In the section above (Section 7.5.1), I described how Hugo was afforded opportunities to lead the performers in dance. However, what I did not note was how this outcome was supported by the teaching-artists. The dancers, Ade and Stephen, modelled a number of artistic techniques in the lead up to this moment (Bandura, 1977; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013; Vecchi, 2010). They provided the very young children with ideas about ways to move within the space, including a variety of shape formations. There was some evidence that they flowed through the space with a dual purpose – to present an artwork that was well-received by the very young audience, and to encourage co-participation from that audience.

The three teaching-artists, Stephen, Ade and Heather, are highly skilled and experienced in their particular artform. Stephen is a professional, multi-award winning, contemporary performance artist who has performed nationally and internationally. Ade is an Indonesian-Australian dancer and choreographer, with expertise in Javanese classical dance. Like Stephen, she has performed nationally and internationally in a professional capacity. Musician Heather is a professional sound artist and vocalist of some twenty years, who has composed and directed music for a range of purposes. Her work has been commissioned and celebrated in festivals around the world. In choosing professional artists to work on the production of *Nursery*, Sally Chance showed a commitment to producing a high-quality piece of the art (Rinaldi, 2005; Vecchi, 2010).

The way in which Sally Chance enacted her directorial role was rather unique. By taking a step back from the action of the performance, she was able to clearly observe in order to better understand the very young audience. Loris Malaguzzi (2016) speaks of the importance of observation, particularly for ateliers. He states that it is through this process that they can come to improve their own practice when working with children. Sally's ongoing observations of the performance, therefore, may partially explain why *Nursery* was considered an exemplary example of how to engage the very young child.

7.5.3 Environment

The design and structure of the *Nursery* performance encouraged the very young participants to engage in play. The children were free to explore and interact within the space with few restrictions. They had the autonomy to choose where to play, how to play, and for how long (Eisner, 2002). In *Hugo*, I observed a combination of physical and artful play behaviours (Brown, 2009; Jeanneret & 194

Brown, 2013). His dominant modality was kinaesthetic (Montessori, 1966). He crawled, climbed, walked, crouched, rolled, and created shapes with his body in order to both understand the artwork and to contribute to it (Atherton & Nutbrown, 2016). Each time he made deliberate movements with his body, a new shape was formed in the space. With three teaching-artists and 17 children participating and moving, it became a very dynamic environment.

Nursery was performed at Melbourne's ArtPlay: a venue dedicated to presenting works by artists and created for young audiences (ArtPlay, 2013). An appropriate space within the ArtPlay building was made available for the *Nursery* production. It was clean, spacious, flat, and easily transformable (Andersen et al., 2010; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013; Tayler et al., 2006). The teaching-artists created an intimate space within this, by encircling a small performance area with adult floor seating. Once the participants entered and were all seated, it became evident that a protective circle of adult bodies had been formed, within which the very young children could freely explore and participate in the work while being safely supervised.

The intimacy of the space, and the limited number of participants that could work in that space, helped to develop a positive emotional climate (Andersen et al., 2010; Edwards et al., 1998; Tayler et al., 2006). Sitting in close proximity and within direct eye contact from each other, the parents were encouraged to interact, which they did, largely through non-verbal communication. The director, Sally Chance, also helped to foster a positive emotional climate through warmly greeting the participants and reassuring them that she was going to be taking an active role in ensuring the very young children were engaged and safe in the space.

7.5.4 Interactions

Nursery offered some opportunities for the very young audience to collaborate with their own family (Andersen et al., 2010; Fredricks et al., 2004; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013; Tayler et al., 2006) and with same age peers (Custodero, 2005; Rogoff, 1990). Although the very young participants attended and sat with their parent or carer, the interactions between the child and primary adult were largely incidental. They did not collaborate to engage in art-making and to participate in the dance, the very young children often separated for a short period of time, while their parents remained in the role of an audience member. Similarly, occasional interactions between the children were observed. But again, these were more a case of the children being in a shared space than they were about collaborating with a common goal. There was one exception to this described in the narrative, when Hugo and another child were observed imitating and closely watching each other's actions. Overwhelmingly, however, the very young children participated in parallel. This was, in a sense, the most appropriate approach for their young age and stage(s) of development. According to Parten (1932), collaborative play tends to begin around the fourth year, whereas parallel play can be evident anywhere after the first birthday.

Although there was very little evidence that the very young children participated in co-play with their parent or carer, many, including Hugo, engaged in co-play with the adult teaching-artists (Andersen et al., 2010; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013). The narrative describes an episode in which Hugo is drawn into the performance space by the artistic choices of the teaching-artists. He observed them shifting their bodies into a variety of static low and medium shapes. He showed particular delight in shapes where the teaching-artists' heads were positioned

low to the floor, and he sought out eye contact with them by lowering his own body. This instigated a spontaneous game of peek-a-boo between him and the dancers, in which all three were actively and enthusiastically playing.

There was mixed evidence that the teaching-artists scaffolded new skills through encouraging simultaneous imitation. They demonstrated an understanding that very young children learn best when they are provided with opportunities to actively imitate a model without any period of delay (Bandura, 1977). That is, it is better for very young children to mirror the actions of an adult rather than watch or listen and then repeat back. Through sharing the performance space with the very young children, the teaching-artists were able to dance in close proximity to the children, offer movement suggestions, observe the children's response, and shift the nature or pace of their own movements in response. Although they engaged in modeling, the teaching-artists provided very little feedback to the very young participants (Eisner, 2002; Lussier et al., 1994), thus limiting the amount of individualised scaffolding that took place.

Nurse was a dynamic performance piece. It was structured around a number of independent musical compositions that were synchronised with partially choreographed dances. Though distinct, and seemingly unrelated in symbolic meaning, these pieces flowed together without separation (Dewey, 1934). And while some of the pieces were gentle and soft in nature, the overall pace was quick. This was a deliberate choice by the teaching-artists, and it demonstrated an understanding of very young children's preference for short, changeable tasks that support their ability to focus. It is unclear whether the rapid shifts between pieces disrupted the children during moments of deep engagement

(Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Montessori, 1966), or whether the developmental appropriateness of this artistic choice supported their engagement.

7.5.5 Learning and development

The teaching-artists set goals that were both planned (Fredricks et al., 2004) and responsive (Brown, 2016; Chappell & Young, 2007; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013; Turino, 2008) to the live situation. It was evident that large sections of the performance were composed and choreographed in advance. The ways in which musician Heather, and dancers Ade and Stephen, performed in time with each other, and especially in the ways that Ade and Stephen danced in perfect unison, made this clear. A great deal of rehearsal had taken place to achieve this product. It was also evident that the more improvised sections were tightly structured within the overall work. Rather than being completely spontaneous and left to the whim of the individual artist, there were particular moments in the performance where the teaching-artists were encouraged, by the director Sally, to respond to the ideas of individual children. The planned element supported the high quality of the art produced by the teaching-artists, and the responsive element resulted in the children's own contributions to the work (Rogoff, 1990).

The creators of *Nursery* demonstrated that they understood the importance of movement in the development of children (Froebel, 1896; Montessori, 1966; Warburton et al., 2014). More so than in any other performance I attended and observed, *Nursery* provided opportunities for the very young audience to move, largely unrestricted by time or nature, in order to understand and contribute to the artwork. In the narrative, I describe a range of ways that Hugo explored the work through movement. He reached, pulled, lifted, walked / toddled, pushed to stand, threw, climbed, crawled and crouched (Atherton & Nutbrown, 2016;

Piaget, 1950). This was in stark contrast to performances in which he was positioned as a non-participating audience member, such as those we attended as part of the mapping study (refer to Section 4.3 for examples).

The teaching-artists also provided the very young children with opportunities to interact with the performance through engaging their senses (Eisner, 2002). By carefully combining the aural and visual elements of *Nursery*, the children had multiple ways to enter the performance. As described in the narrative, at times it was the noticeable shift in music that encouraged Hugo's re-engagement and subsequent active participation, and at other times, it was the movement of the dancers. A particularly uplifting moment occurred during the second half of the performance where the teaching-artists' music-making and dancing merged with the very young children's own vocalising and movements. In this moment, senses were heightened, the children engaged in art-making, and zones of interactivity between artforms and artists were created (Kelman et. al., 2017).

7.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, I have presented an exemplar case study, *Nursery*, as a way of illustrating how teaching-artists might best support very young children's engagement in an integrated arts experience; which, as outlined earlier in the thesis (Section 1.2.1) is the research question for this study. Through narrative, I offered a thick description of the performance, using participant observation and supplementary data to inform it. I then moved on to analyse and highlight how the practices described supported, challenged or extended upon the literature (as discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis). This chapter is the third, and final, to address the research question in this way. In the following chapter (Chapter 8), I

will present an autobiographical account of an integrated arts performance that I developed and led with a very young audience.

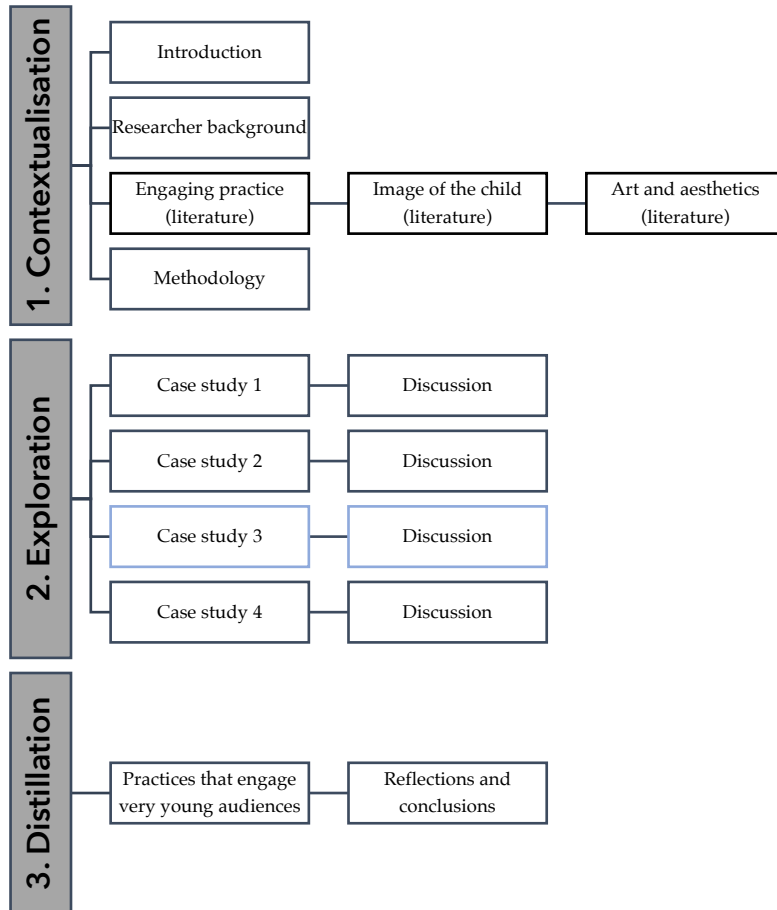


Figure 30. This chapter (highlighted in blue) shown in relation to the other chapters of this thesis.

CHAPTER 8. CASE STUDY 4



Figure 31. René Magritte's *The False Mirror*, 1929 is used as a provocation.

8.1 CONTEXT

In this chapter I will describe and unpack an immersive music performance for very young children – *In the Mirror* – that I both wrote and facilitated. The decision to explore my own practice in this way was an outcome of the mapping study, described in Chapter 4 of this thesis. After observing 16 integrated arts performances for very young children, including the exemplars presented in the previous chapters (5, 6 and 7), I noted that the lived experience of the teaching-artist remained somewhat elusive to me. My personal history of working artistically with very young children and families, although reasonably

extensive, had almost exclusively focused on ongoing workshop-type experiences, through which I was able to develop a relationship with each child and create work based on my observations of their interests and preferred ways of knowing. The one-off nature of the integrated arts performances, that are the focus of this study, are not as intimately known to me. For this reason, I chose to create and implement a one-off integrated arts performance for a very young audience, in order to place myself “in the shoes of” the teaching-artist and, as a result, gain a better understand of their choices and challenges.

In the Mirror was performed in a community arts centre in Melbourne, Australia. Seven participants aged between four weeks and four months of age, and their parents, engaged in the work. *In the Mirror* was one of several works for children that I developed in cooperation with Footscray Community Arts Centre during the data collection period, although it was the only work to include newborn infants and new parents. A first-person narrative description of the performance will be offered as a way of representing and making sense of the data. An analytic discussion of the case study findings will then follow. This discussion will focus on the ways in which *In the Mirror* was seen to align with the literature, as well as how it challenges and extends upon it.

The following narrative is an autoethnographic account of my own work. I drew upon field notes, planning documents, photographs, music samples, and props as a way to focus my retelling of this performance.

8.2 NARRATIVE: IN THE MIRROR

The following narrative is an autoethnographic account of my own work. I drew upon field notes, planning documents, photographs, music samples, and props as a way to focus my retelling of this performance.

8.2.1 Bumping in

My car boot is stacked with instruments, sound-makers and props, and I hear them tinkering and crashing as I pull into the community arts centre carpark, 45 minutes before the performance is due to begin. I am grateful that I have been scheduled early on this wintery Saturday morning, as the carpark is empty, and this has allowed me to park as close as possible to the building. I begin ferrying objects back-and-forth between the car and the venue, and as I do so, I am reminded of the physicality involved in music teaching – the lifting of instruments, the carrying, the moving of furniture, the ups-and-downs from the floor, and the intentional rhythmic movement through space [art and aesthetics].

Once inside, I enter the space where I have chosen to hold the performance this morning. It is an empty space, with a large rug, a blank wall, and natural light filtering in through elevated north-facing windows. It is a space that is highly suited to an immersive performance with parents and very young children [environment]. The emptiness of the space allows me to make choices about the set-up. I choose to have the blank wall behind me, and the windows opposite. This will allow me to project an image on the wall, with the participants facing it at the beginning of the performance. Having the winter sun lighting the space behind the very young children, I think to myself, will hopefully help to indicate that it's "play time" in their natural feed-play-sleep cycles, though of course, very young children's cycles are not really this easy to manipulate [learning and development]. There is no need to turn on harsh fluorescent lights in the space, which is much more pleasant for everyone, but particularly for babies-in-arms, who are often facing upward, towards the ceiling. I have

requested a large rug to cover the hard flooring, and I am pleased to see that this has been rolled out into space before I arrived, and that it looks like it has been recently cleaned [environment]. Although I have brought along my own cushions for parents to sit on, and the very young children will be placed on bunny rugs (if/when they wish to move away from parents' arms or laps), I know that once things get moving in the performance, the participants could end up anywhere [environment]. A soft floor is essential.

I begin unpacking the props from the tubs and bags I have stored them in. To some degree, I have planned where the different items will be placed – although, I haven't recorded this down in any way; it's just a mental image I have been carrying with me since I first conceived of this performance. As I am setting up, I make adjustments to the placement of materials, based on the space and how I imagine they will be used by the participants [art and aesthetics]. I want to encourage use of the whole room, so that the number of bodies in the contained space does not seem overwhelming. There are to be a number of different experiences within this performance, and so I place materials accordingly. The plan is to all congregate in a semi-circle in the centre, move to different "stations" at different ends of the room, and move/dance back in the centre once materials have been removed from the floor and it is safe to do so [environment]. As I am setting up, I reflect on how important materials are to music learning, but also how challenging they can be to manage when there are multiple people using a range of objects in a small space. One advantage of working with pre-walking children is that I can leave materials stored on the floor behind where I am sitting, ready to be easily accessed and revealed to the participants at planned times throughout the performance [learning and development]. I know from working with toddlers and preschool aged children that placing materials in view – especially attractive materials like instruments and props – can encourage children to come and explore them, whether you are ready for them to do so or not! This is not something I have to consider today, although I do cover some of them with a cloth, just to add an element of surprise and novelty for both the very young children and their grown-ups [learning and development]. Once I am

satisfied that the room is set-up in a way that is safe, logical for the flow of movement that will happen through the different phases of the performance [environment], and with a combination of instant aesthetic appeal and opportunities for introducing unexpected experiences [art and aesthetics], I rummage through my bag to find the final item to be installed in the space: a washing line. I attach one end to the south facing wall, using a removable hook that I attached in a previous workshop, and run the line, as tightly as I can, across the room to hook on the opposite wall. The line is approximately chest height on me, so – for the sake of safety and comfortability – it is installed as far to one side of the space as possible [environment]. I begin to peg a few white “clouds”, which I have made from soft white cushion padding, along the length of the line. This installation will become an important interactive part of today’s performance.

8.2.2 The False Mirror

I check my phone to see what the time is, and I note that participants may begin arriving in about 15 minutes. I quickly hide all of the bags, tubs, and materials I have decided not to use, in a store cupboard outside of the space [environment]. I then return to attach my computer to the data projector and to a portable sound system I have brought along with me. I bring up the main stimulus for today’s performance – a projected image of René Magritte’s *The False Mirror*, 1929 (Figure 31) [art and aesthetics]. I am rather enthused about exploring this visual artwork through music today. Using a painting as a stimulus for music-making is an idea that I and my colleagues in arts education at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education have been refining over the past few years. I have seen the positive impact of integrating the arts first-hand in the tertiary setting, when working with preservice teachers across visual arts, music and drama [art and aesthetics]. But this is the first time I’ve had an opportunity to attempt to transfer some of this learning, and the associated strategies, into an immersive performance designed for very young participants and families. The image projects clearly onto the blank white wall and gives the space an even greater sense of lightness – which supports the overall

aesthetic aim I have been working towards [art and aesthetics]. The selection of this artwork took some careful thinking. I wanted to choose something that was reasonably abstract, in order to have the freedom to construct the meaning through the music-making. I feel the layers within surrealist art lend themselves well to this. I chose this particular work by Magritte because, upon viewing it, I could image the world in front of the artwork, as well as through and beyond it. This sense of “moving through” brings up ideas of forward melodic movement and, with reference to the sky that features centrally in the artwork, a sense of lightness that has the potential to be explored through pitch, instrumentation, and thinness of texture. What’s more, the mirror concept is particularly well suited to musical ideas, both through the contrary motion of melodic patterns or through the use of echo [art and aesthetics]. It seems to me that, from the perspective of a musician, there is a lot to work with in this piece – certainly enough for a single 20-minute performance. I am also aware, when selecting this artwork, that the two main figures – the eye, and the clouds – are visions that even the youngest participants have likely experienced outside of this setting. I recall reading that very young children can differentiate between a simple drawing of a face and any other image. The face is one of the first things a newborn will see and, along with the voice of their carer, it is the main source of stimulation in the early months [learning and development]. There is a chance that Magritte’s eye, therefore, may be something that resonates with the very young children. Similarly, particularly for the older children in the group, the clouds in the sky may align with their experience of being outside, facing upwards, as very young children often do in prams or in arms. I don’t feel overly confident that this image will conjure up imagery from their own experience for all participants, particularly at this early stage of their development [learning and development], but I admit that it did influence my thinking when selecting an artwork.

8.2.3 Technology

The final component for the set-up of today’s performance, and a significant one, is getting the recorded music ready to play. I need to ensure that the playlist I have created is correctly sequenced, and that the

sound coming through the room's speaker system is balanced [image of the child]. Fortunately, all goes smoothly with this task today. I hear myself audibly sigh with relief at this. Managing the technology side of music workshops and performances, in both arts and education settings, is something that is known to raise my anxiety levels. Knowing that I am without technical support in this environment has influenced my creative decisions in preparing this immersive performance. I have deliberately minimised the reliance on technology by choosing to incorporate only a small number of recorded pieces, and a single overhead projection. I have also prepared some alternative ways into elements of the performance that can be achieved without any technology at all. Knowing that everything seems to be working well now, prior to the performance, though sigh-inducing, does not take away my awareness that the technology may fail at a later point. However, I feel confident that I am adequately prepared to deal with this in the moment, should the need arise.

8.2.4 Connecting

With everything now ready, and with ten minutes until the scheduled start of the performance, I head out into the foyer to wait for the participants to arrive. The arts centre receptionist is now on site, and we exchange greetings and discuss how many families have finalised their booking for today's session. I learn that there will be eight very young and their accompanying grown-ups. I am pleased with this number, as I had requested a cap of eight. Some families like to attend with two or more adults, and occasionally siblings will also join [interactions]. A work with eight very young child can, therefore, result in 20 or more participants in the one space. I reflect on the privileged position I am in to have an option of such a small cap on participant numbers. As a community arts centre, the venue is subsidised and not-for-profit and can make decisions to support small-scale projects such as this. Many other venues do not have this option, as the number of participants through the door has an impact on their viability as an organisation.

The glass sliding doors open, and I look around to see the first family entering into the foyer. It is a bright-eyed child of some four months, reclining in a pram, pushed by his mother and accompanied by his grandmother. They are regular attendees of the arts centre, and I recognise them from having attended two previous workshops I delivered for older children in the same space [learning and development]. I know from talking to them in the weeks previous that they live locally to the centre (close enough to walk there) and visit regularly. They like to visit the child-friendly café on site after each session, making quite a Saturday morning outing of it [interactions]. I move to welcome them. I intentionally greet the young child first, for two reasons: 1) the performance has been designed for him, and he is – along with his very young peers – the primary participant and central focus [image of the child], and 2) from experience as both an educator and a mother, I know that parents can feel comforted when other adults acknowledge their child directly. It is all too common for very young children to be viewed as additional-to-adults, rather than citizens in their own right [image of the child]. The young boy beams back at me as I call him by name and crouch down to touch his small hand and make direct eye contact [interactions]. His mother and grandmother are also smiling as I then stand to welcome them. I am told that they have had a disrupted night's sleep, due to some fairly typical baby-waking-for-a-feed issues that can arise as a very young child is moving towards needing the addition of solid food in their diet. They tell me, as a form of warning, that there may be some tired behaviours displayed by their child in the performance. I assure them that I, along with all of the other parents who will be attending, are empathetic with both their experience and their concern, and advise that they are welcome to stay in the space regardless or leave and re-enter at their discretion. I sense that they feel some relief about having had the opportunity to express their concern, and also that they have been offered support and flexibility [environment]. The family moves over to an area that has been designated a “pram parking” space and begin to unpack the basket under their pram which appears to hold blankets, small toys, bibs and nappies. As they do this, other families begin arriving, and a similar greeting pattern is repeated, until there are half-a-

dozen very young children waiting in the foyer with their grown-ups. Parents who are familiar to each other chatter away – mostly about their children – as they prepare themselves and their child for the experience ahead [interactions]. As I mark each child’s name off on an attendance list, I encourage the families to enter the performance space at their leisure. One mother, another returning participant, asks if she has time to quickly “top up” her very young child (a reference to offering an additional small amount of breast milk with the aim of lengthening the time a very young child will stay satisfied), and I tell her she does, and that there are some comfortable chairs suitable for this purpose both inside the performance space, and in the foyer [environment]. She chooses to enter, along with a number of other parents, as I wait a few more minutes for any latecomers. Because of the unpredictability of very young children’s routines and health, it is not uncommon for parents to be running late, or for them to need to cancel attendance with late (if any) notice. A mother, holding her newborn in arms, enters the foyer, looking quite flustered and apologising for her tardiness. She is not very late at all, and I assure her that she has time to settle before the performance will begin. As she enters the performance space, I hand the attendance sheet to the venue receptionist, who will direct the eighth registered family towards the right room, should they arrive. I move to the door of the room I have earlier prepared, now full of very young children, parents and grandparents, take a deep breath, and walk through as a musician [art and aesthetics].

8.2.5 Tuning in

“I say Shhh, You say Shhh... Shhh” I indicate with an exaggerated expression and hand pointing gesture that the parents should echo my vocal sound [art and aesthetics]. They do: “Shhh”. I continue, introducing increasingly complex rhythmic patterns, using sounds “Shhh”, “Ha”, and “Baa”. The parents echo back clearly and confidently [interactions]. As we develop the ideas, I over-emphasise making eye contact with the very young children, and the parents imitate. The children respond; some by smiling, some by grabbing at their parent’s face, and some by kicking their

legs [interactions]. I think to myself that the one-off nature of these performances does have quite an impact on the ways in which the very young children participate. When working with the same very young children regularly, over many months, I have observed their early singing behaviours beginning to emerge. The vocal sound “Baa”, for example, is one that they learn to readily and successfully repeat. None of the very young children are attempting to vocalise here today. I am hopeful that the performance may act as a kind of music professional development for the parents, and that they might take some of these ideas away with them to share with their very young children after they return home. There is no real way of knowing whether this will take place, but I decide – as I am chanting – to create a short summary of and justification for the performance, to email to the parents in the days after we meet. Perhaps this will increase the likelihood of repeated experiences for the very young children [learning and development].

I begin to introduce a vocal glide; starting with a low note and moving up several octaves [art and aesthetics]. The parents echo, and I notice a renewed interest from the very young children as they do so [interactions]. I encourage the participants to stand, lifting their very young children higher as the pitch ascends. I grab a large, lightweight, coloured scarf and move this in response, adding a visual reinforcement [art and aesthetics]. We then begin to glide downwards, and then up and down. I hand the scarf to a grandmother [interactions], who has her hands free, and move to a glockenspiel that I have set-up behind where I have been sitting. I begin to play ascending and descending scale patterns, and as I do so, the parents and very young children move up and down in response [learning and development]. Finally, I introduce a song, which draws upon a number of the rhythmic patterns introduced at the beginning of the performance, as well as the ascending and descending pitch ideas.

Go-ing up, I'm go-ing up, as high as I can go. I'm go-ing down, I'm go-ing down, I'm

go - ing ver - y low. Up, up up, up, up, up, up, up, up!

Down, down, down, down, down, down, down, down.

Figure 32. Notation: Going Up, Going Down.

Because of the simplicity of this piece and its relationship to the ideas already explored, the parents pick this up immediately [interactions]. They sing and move with their very young children, up and down, in line with the lyrical instructions [interactions].

8.2.6 Developing themes

With the parents and very young children now standing in the semi-circle shape, alert from the previous movement activity, I pick up my remote and press <play>. The second movement of Beethoven's *Sonata No. 13, Opus 27 No.1* begins to play through the speakers at the pre-set volume. Without speaking, I place a pile of blue scarves, identical to the one I had been waving earlier, in the middle of the circle, and pick one up. The parents do the same, and when all of the participants have the prop in hand, I lead them in moving out into the space to dance freely in response to the recorded music [interactions]. The piece I have selected has some obvious changes in pitch – low/high – and I make sure my movements correspond with this, i.e. I wave my scarf low to the sections with low pitch and wave my scarf high to the sections with high pitch. I also aim to respond to the tempo and the stylistic feel of the music, and I note the parents are largely doing this also [art and aesthetics]. It is more difficult for them to move freely while holding their very young child in arms, but they do well at making the scarves noticeable to the children and at moving up, down and through

the space. The ideas of “up, down, and through” were stimulated by my interpretation of Magritte’s painting, so this particular experience feels more reflective of the artwork, to me, than the previous ideas. Perhaps it is also the lightness of the movements, and the closeness to the projected image, that make it seem this way [art and aesthetics]. As the piece comes to an end, I place my scarf in a large tub, and then move to collect all of the remaining scarves from the participants. We briefly sit back down in the semi-circle shape, and I move to the child immediately to my left, with one of the soft white cotton clouds in my hand. I sing,



Figure 33. Notation: Up, Down, Flyin’ Around (adapted from Godwin, 1956).

as I touch the very young child on the head, foot, and torso with the cloud [interactions]. I give the cloud to the child to explore, as I move to the next child in the circle and do the same. Then the next, then the next, until all of the very young children have a cloud in their hands. I then give out a second cloud to each of the parents and explain that we are going to “fly” around the space, moving slowly towards the washing line hanging at the far end of the space. The line has a small number of clouds already pegged and hanging from it, and underneath are several small buckets of pegs. I do not feel the need to explain how to peg the clouds. The visual installation should provide adequate information about the expectation of the experience [environment]. I stand, and the parents follow. I then pick up my melodica and begin to play music to accompany the very young children “flying” through the space [art and aesthetics]:



Figure 34. Notation: Those Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines (adapted from Godwin, 1956).

The piece of music, though only performed as an instrumental, appears to be familiar to some of the adult participants. Some sing softly along, as they move, and others fly their very young children up and down to correspond with the lyrics. I slowly walk the space as I am playing, motioning closer and closer towards the washing line as I go. One mother moves to the line to begin attaching the cloud in her hand. She places her very young child on the floor, under the line, so that her hands are free to use the peg. Another mother sees this and does the same [interactions]. Soon all of the very young children are lying or sitting under the line, and the washing line is full with clouds. Some parents attached their child's cloud to the line, and others – where the very young child was grasping or manipulating their own cloud – left them in hand [environment]. I am glad that I had the foresight to distribute a second cloud to each of the parents to attach, because removing an object from a very young child can be difficult, unpleasant at times, and unnecessary [learning and development]. With the very young children all under the washing line already, I begin to push on the line with my hand – up and down – adding a vocal glide to accompany the motion. A number of the very young children reach for the clouds as they fall down towards them [environment]. All are watching the clouds as they bob up and down. I move to a more rhythmic up and down motion, finding a beat, and then begin to sing [art and aesthetics]:



Figure 35. Notation: See Saw, Up and Down (Traditional).

The parents join me and we all sing together, as the clouds move in time in close visual range of the very young children [interactions]. I hand over the hand movement on the washing line to two of the parents and add a hand drum beat as a further aural reinforcement. I sing loudly and

deliberately, and slow the drumbeat, to indicate the end of the piece and activity. The parents clap in a show of appreciation, smiling at the very young children as they do so. This always makes me smile too, as it is a clear signal of enculturation – parents sharing their understanding of performing arts audience behaviour with their children [image of the child].

As a concluding movement experience [learning and development], and to extend upon the “moving through” concept, I press <play> on the remote one final time. A recording of *Those Magnificent Men in Their Flying Machines* (Godwin, 1965) streams through the speakers and the parents seem to instinctively know, from this aural cue, that they will be transitioning to a new experience [environment]. They move to pick their children up from under the line, and as they do so, I demonstrate a sweeping movement around the room – holding my arms high and in front of my body, as if I am holding an invisible child [interactions]. The participants imitated and begin moving through the space in response to the music [environment]. I lower my body as I head towards the line of hanging clouds, and swoosh underneath, rising up again as I reach the other side. One by one, the parents take turns swooshing their very young children under and through the installation. Several of the very young children vocalise as they move swiftly through the air. The room is filled with a mixture of infant-laughter and squeals, and adults singing and sound-making – “Weeeee!” in the form of vocal glides [interactions]. This increase in volume brings about a feeling of reaching the musical climax of the performance [art and aesthetics]. As the piece of music comes to an end, the parents fall to the ground with their very young children in arms, and once again form a semi-circle. I do not need to say anything for this to happen. The music is directing the actions [environment].

8.2.7 Settling

With just five minutes left to go, and knowing that the very young children have been quite stimulated, I aim to close the performance with a deliberate calming and soothing experience [art and aesthetics]. I am aware that sleep and feed times are approaching for many of the young

participants, and I want the parents to be able to leave the session quite soon after the very young children settle, but before they grow too tired. It is important that this final section is concluded promptly. Using verbal instructions for one of the first times, I ask the parents to place their child down on the floor in front of them, face up. Many very young children find this position unappealing so, to prevent any resistance, I begin singing immediately, indicating with my face and body gestures that the parents should sing along, leaning over and looking closely at their child's face as they do so [learning and development]. The singing corresponds with a rhythmic touch activity in two sections [art and aesthetics]. In the first eight bars, the parents hold their child's hands out wide, and then bring them in to cross the midline. The out and in motion is done to the beat of the accompanying song. In the second section, the parents touch the right hand, right foot, left foot, left hand, moving around the body to the corresponding beat in a clockwise motion [learning and development]. This is done two times, making up the second eight bars of the 16-bar song. We do this several times, singing softly now, and slowly:

Oh, how love - ly is the e - ve - ning,

Is the ev - e - ning, when the bells are

soft - ly ri - ng - ing soft - ly ri - ng - ing

Ding, dong, ding, dong

Figure 36. Notation: Oh, How Lovely in the Evening (Traditional).

In the second section, I add the sound of a triangle as the body parts are manipulated, in order to both reinforce the beat, but also to highlight the musical structure of the simple piece [art and aesthetics]. Upon hearing the triangle, the very young children appear to listen more intently – eyes widen and bodies are still. I continue leading this experience until I get a sense that the very young children are no longer re-engaging as noticeably as before, and then I slow the piece down to a soft ending [learning and development]. The performance is over.

8.2.8 Transitioning

The participants begin to disperse. Some parents begin talking to each other, again about their very young child; others move to find a space to feed; and some pack up quickly and head for home [interactions]. As they move about, I begin to slowly pack-up the room. I do not want to rush the participants out of the space, so I make conversation with a few different parents as I do so [environment]. Before I am finished returning all of the objects to their tubs and bags, the place is empty and silent. I feel a little weary from the expended energy that it has taken to present, lead, and monitor the immersive performance [art and aesthetics], and I wonder how the very young children and parents are faring in the wake of it. I whistle *Those Magnificent Men in Their Flying Machines* to myself, as I disconnect the technology, pull the blinds on the large windows, and head for my car. It is time to return home to my own baby.

8.3 DISCUSSION

8.3.1 Image of the child

There is evidence that the very young children were positioned as cultural citizens (Edwards et al., 1998; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013; Tayler et al., 2006). In the narrative, I lamented that very young children are often positioned as an extension of parents rather than as citizens with full rights and responsibilities. An attempt was made to right this perceived wrong, through designing a

performance with the specific preferences of very young children central to the work (Rogoff, 1990). This work was produced in an inner-suburban community arts centre that has a solid and celebrated history of engaging adults and teens in the arts. *In the Mirror* aimed to invite very young members of this community into this venue, in recognition of their right to participate in the arts (Edwards et al., 1998; Malaguzzi, 2016; Rinaldi, 2005).

The careful attention that was paid to the quality of the venue, the performance space, the materials, and the sounds, indicate that I positioned the very young children as discerning connoisseurs of the arts (Edwards et al., 1998; Montessori, 1966; Rinaldi, 2005). In the narrative, I describe the thinking behind selecting an artwork to use as a stimulus for the work. Rene Magritte's *The False Mirror, 1928* was a painting that I had been particularly drawn to when I saw it at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Choosing to share this with the very young audience was an invitation for them to join me in appreciating this thought-provoking piece of surrealist art. The use of professional instruments, the testing and balancing of sound equipment, and the level of music rehearsal that was undertaken before the performance, were all further indicators that I was expecting an educated and discerning audience.

There was limited evidence that I provided opportunities for the very young children to take ownership of the artwork (Malaguzzi, 2016; Rinaldi, 2005). There were moments where I, as the teaching-artist, appeared to "listen" to the preferences of the very young audience. I provided them with choices about how to manipulate some objects (Montessori, 1966), and for how long (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 2002), and adapted the timing of sections based on their level of engagement. However, the very young audience

were not provided with opportunities to participate in the development of the work or to lead the artistic ideas that may have emerged had it not been so heavily planned and scripted (Fredricks et al., 2004). Providing space for the very young children to contribute ideas would enhance their artistic autonomy (Malaguzzi, 2016) and position them as co-constructors of the experience (Dahlberg et al., 2007; Malaguzzi, 1998; Rogoff, 1990), both of which are positively associated with engagement. The participants in this performance of *In the Mirror* were younger than I had observed in my field work. There were several newborn infants and all of the very young children were pre-crawling. This did have some impact on the way the children were positioned, as it relied more heavily upon the adults to co-participate (Lussier et al., 1994; McWilliam et al., 2003).

8.3.2 Art and aesthetics

In the narrative description of *In the Mirror*, I make reference to my aesthetic aims and intentions. That is, how I want the space to be perceived and experienced by the very young audience (Dewey, 1934; Rinaldi, 2005). I discuss the importance of natural light and then go on to explain how my inclusion of the Magritte projection will enhance this effect. I explain that I chose the performance space from a number on offer before explaining how I transformed the space to meet my aesthetic goals. I describe the way in which I carefully placed materials in the space and demonstrated that I considered how they might be experienced by the audience. This aligns with Dewey's (1934) ideas about the relationship between art and aesthetics; that art is the making and aesthetics is how the art is perceived by others. In Dewey's vision, the artist would ideally foresee, as far as is possible, how the audience might interpret the work. Under this definition, writing and

installing *In the Mirror* was an act of art. The product was created through a process of making and reflecting on the future audience. Writing and installing *In the Mirror*, however, was only part of the finished work. The live performance itself featured very young children and parents as key actors. The many ways in which they interacted with what I had written and installed, and the ways in which we all communicated within the space, became the art product in its complete form (Fredricks et al., 2004; Malaguzzi, 2016; Rogoff, 1990).

There were a number of episodes in which I modelled artistic practices to encourage the active participation of the audience (Bandura, 1977; Edwards et al., 1998; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013; Vecchi, 2010). This was done with mixed success. On one occasion I describe how I moved my own body through the space to demonstrate how one section of the *In the Mirror* might be performed. The adult participants responded through imitation. I discuss how I led the singing of simple sounds, phrases and melodies. Again, it was the parents who imitated and joined in with the vocal ideas that I offered. I recall that I also played a range of percussion and keyboard instruments as part of my role as the artist, which were positively received. Neither the parents nor the very young children were provided with an opportunity to engage in a similar way. While it appears that the adult participants were encouraged to engage in collaborative moments of artmaking when I modelled artistic practices and provided them with the necessary resources (Fredricks et al., 2004; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013; Rogoff, 1990), there is no such evidence that this was so for the very young children.

8.3.3 Environment

There is evidence that, when preparing to perform *In the Mirror*, particular attention was given to creating an environment that was clean and safe

(Andersen et al., 2010; Tayler et al., 2006). In the narrative I make several references to indicate that the participants' comfort was at the forefront of my thinking (Jeanneret & Brown, 2013). I discuss the suitability of the space for the audience, including the size, emptiness, and strong natural lighting. I note the importance of utilising the entire space to allow adequate room for the very young children and parents to move freely. I make mention that I had organised to have the floor rug professionally cleaned, knowing the very young children would be placed upon it, and I evaluate whether this cleaning has taken place. And finally, I make adjustments in the period immediately before the performance before concluding that I was satisfied that the room was set-up in a way that was safe.

Creating a strong emotional climate, in which all participants felt welcome and supported, was important to me and this is reflected in the narrative (Andersen et al., 2010; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013; Tayler et al., 2006). I spent some time discussing the interactions I had with the very young children and their parents before the performance, as it was in these first moments that the tone of the work was set. I made conscious choices to connect with the adults on a parent-to-parent basis, expressing an empathetic attitude when they raised issues such as sleeping and feeding. I sought eye contact with the very young children as a way of connecting and used a range of positive gestures to indicate my attention. Bringing together parents from the same community, each with a child aged in the first months of life, helped to create a bond between participants that may not have been present under other circumstance. The chatter between the parents, both before and especially after the performance, was a result of, and an addition to, the positive emotional climate created.

There were limited opportunities for the very young children to engage in play, and this is an area that could be enhanced when designing future works for very young audiences (Dansereau, 2011; Eisner, 2002; Froebel, 1896; Montessori, 1966). However, the few moments of play that were observed were developmentally appropriate. That is, because many of the very young children were pre-mobile, they were largely reliant on an adult to support their explorations. Providing the audience with soft, textured clouds to manipulate was the most successful way of encouraging play behaviours. The very young children were observed reaching, grasping and mouthing the clouds in order to better understand them, in what could be described as a combination of object and schematic play (Atherton & Nutbrown, 2016; Brown, 2009).

The spaciousness, limited furniture and fixtures, and the neutral colour palette made the space highly suitable for a teaching-artist to transform (Jeanneret & Brown, 2013). In the narrative, I discuss the ways in which I was able to change the aesthetic by adjusting light, projecting artwork, hanging props, and playing recorded music (Rinaldi, 2005). There was also some evidence that the very young children and their parents were provided with opportunities to physically transform the environment. By adding clouds to the line, they co-contributed to the creation of the small installation (Rogoff, 1990). What's more, the way that the participants moved through the space, on one occasion with large coloured scarves floating up and down, and the combination of their singing and vocalisations, shifted the dynamic in the room, creating an ongoing process of transformation (Malaguzzi, 2016).

In the Mirror provided opportunities for the audience to respond to variations in the environment (Montessori, 1966, Rinaldi, 2005) and in particular, variations in

the aural environment. Music was used as a way of indicating change and supporting transitions from one idea to another. For example, when the very young children were introduced to the sound of a triangle for the first time, they responded to the shift in the environment by changing postures and facial expressions and demonstrating an increase in engagement. Similarly, when the parents heard a new musical piece introduced, or when they heard a musical piece conclude, they changed their movements and position within the space. No verbal directions were needed for this to happen (Eisner, 2002). As I noted in the narrative, “the music is directing the actions”.

8.3.4 Interactions

In the Mirror provided opportunities for the very young children to collaborate in art-making with a parent (Fredricks et al., 2004; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013; Rogoff, 1990; Tayler et al., 2006). The parents were active participants in the performance, often acting as the connection point between myself and their child. There were numerous examples of parents singing to and moving with their child, and there was evidence that the children were equal participants in these interactions. The very young children were observed smiling, grabbing faces, kicking, and vocalising in response to their parent’s singing and dancing, which encouraged the adults to continue to contribute to the performance (Rogoff, 1990).

Modeling to parents was a pedagogical strategy that I used to support the engagement of the very young children. Although the literature focuses on adults modeling directly to children, in a setting such as this, where multiple very young children are participating side by side, it seems most appropriate to model artistic practices for the parents. They, in turn, can interact directly with their

own child (Bandura, 1977). This aligns with what is understood about very young children's preference for engaging with their own primary caregiver (Rogoff, 1990). As such, both simultaneous and delayed imitation between myself and the parents was observed. At times, I sang, and the parents joined me, either immediately or as a call and response. I modelled gestures and facial expressions, which the parents imitated and enacted when interacting with their very young child. I also led moments of dance, using my own kinaesthetic actions as a guide for the parents to follow or respond to when moving through the space.

Although there were few examples of direct instruction noted in the narrative description of the *In the Mirror* performance, this was an artistic choice that was made. Rather than giving direct verbal instructions to the participants, I allowed the music and/or my own movements to suggest how the participants may like to engage and contribute to the performance (Eisner, 2002). This resulted in a more dynamic performance, with fewer moments of waiting for the very young children (Dewey, 1934; Jablon & Wilkinson, 2006).

There were missed opportunities to provide the very young children and their parents with feedback about their contributions (Bandura, 1977; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013). Building in moments where I followed their lead through imitation may have enhanced the participants' feelings of connectedness with the work.

8.4.4 Learning and development

There was evidence that *In the Mirror* performance offered experiences that were inherently challenging for the very young audience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Edwards et al., 1998) and which fell within their zone of proximal development

(Vygotsky, 1978). They were observed achieving joint attention with their primary caregivers (Rogoff, 1990), and listening and responding physically to changes in music. The restricted age range of the very young children (birth to four months) aimed to support this outcome. While an increase in observations of individual children's developmental needs and interests, and consultations with families prior to the performance, would have led to more targeted experiences (Bronfenbrenner, 2009; Rogoff, 1990), there are challenges to realising this in a one-off community arts performance setting. More thought was needed in this area.

The very young children who participated in *In the Mirror* had opportunities to interact with the performance using their preferred way of knowing. The combination of aural, visual, and kinaesthetic modalities enhanced the children's sensorial experience, leading to an increase in the level of engagement observed (Eisner, 2002; Kelman et al., 2017). The heavy use of repetition, both in terms of the melodies and rhythmic patterns, and in the overall structure of the work, aligned with what is understood about pedagogies that support the learning and development of very young children (Montessori, 1966; Piaget, 1950). The very young children were also observed enacting their current schemas, such as reaching, grasping and mouthing, to explore new stimuli (Atherton & Nutbrown, 2016; Piaget, 1950; 1953; 1967).

In the Mirror was heavily planned and largely followed a set script from the beginning of the performance to the end. This was particularly evident in the first parts of the narrative, where I describe my choices regarding the set, the anticipated use of space, the repertoire, and the instrumentation. I note that particular choices "took some careful thinking" and that I was relieved that I

“had the foresight” to predict ways in which the very young children may choose to interact with the materials or respond (Fredricks et al., 2004). There were a few moments of flexibility throughout the performance, such as when I shortened particular sections and transitioned quickly to another idea in order to maintain the engagement of the very young children (Dewey, 1934). However, overall, the performance did not align with Jeanneret and Brown’s (2013) recommendation of finding a balance between planned and responsive ideas.

According to Jablon and Wilson (2006), children should not be made to wait for instruction or to access materials, as doing so can cause them to become disengaged. Contrary to this opinion, I describe in the narrative making the deliberate decision to hide materials from the audience to minimise the likelihood of free exploration. I explain this as an artistic choice that preferred the slow “reveal” of new objects and ideas to create a novelty effect. As this, too, is known to enhance engagement (Colombo & Bundy, 1983; Friedman, 1972; Groves & Thompson, 1970), it seems there is a tension between these two practices. It is unclear, from either the research or the literature, which of these is more suitable when working with very young audiences. Perhaps the combination is the ideal.

The one-off nature of the *In the Mirror* performance makes it challenging for me, as the teaching-artist, to know whether the experience has any long-term benefits for the very young children (Chappell & Young, 2007; Edwards et al., 1998; Lussier et al., 1994). This is a concern that I first raised in the literature review (Chapter 3) and then again questioned during my early field observations (Chapter 4). In the narrative, I note the absence of children vocalising in response to the simple sound patterns and cannot help but compare this to my

observations of the very young children that I work with in ongoing music workshops, who do participate in this way. I suggest that the three-way relationship between myself, the parents, and the very young children may be in some way supportive (Bronfenbrenner, 2009). Encouraging the parents to join me in co-leading the singing and responsive movement elements of the performance may provide them with the confidence and ideas to continue the learning at home. Following the *In the Mirror* performance, I developed a brief overview of the performance content and distributed this to the families via email, in order to further encourage this.

8.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, I have presented an auto-biographical case study, *In the Mirror*, as a way of further describing and unpacking how teaching-artists might best support the engagement of very young audiences in integrated arts performances; which, as outlined earlier in the thesis (Section 1.2.1) is the research question for this study. Through narrative, I offered a thick description of the performance. I then moved on to reflect upon and highlight how the practices described supported, challenged or extended upon the literature (as discussed in Chapter 3). This is the final chapter in the Exploration part of this thesis. I will now move towards a distillation of the key ideas and will present these in a final, concluding chapter (Chapter 9).

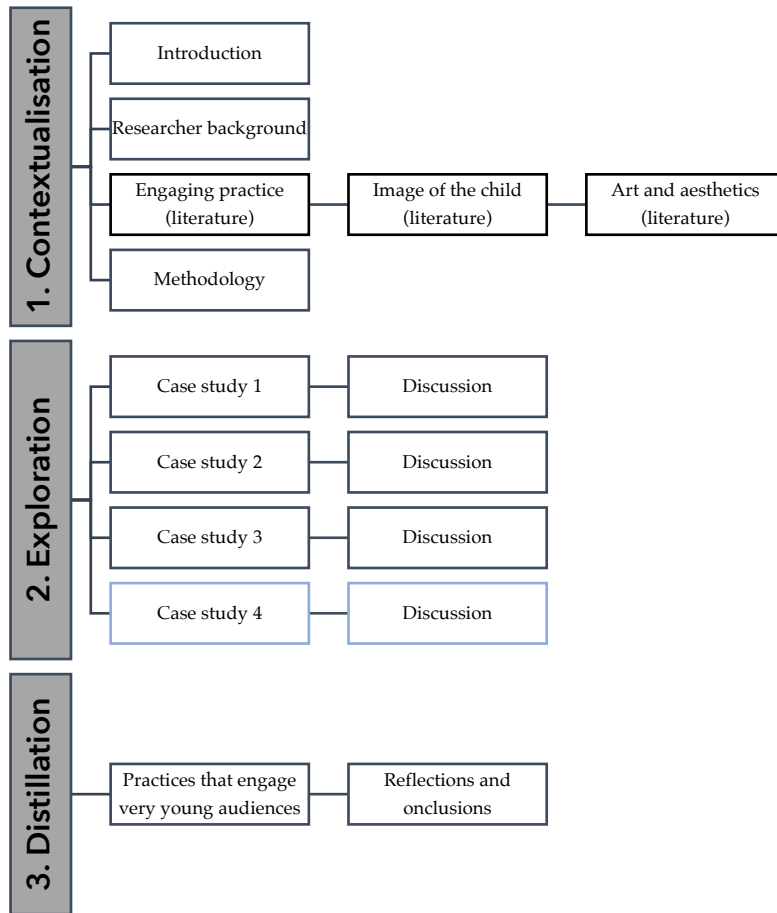


Figure 37. This chapter (highlighted in blue) shown in relation to the other chapters of this thesis.

PART 3: DISTILLATION



Figure 38. Hugo and teaching-artists engaging in the integrated arts performance, Nursery, at ArtPlay, Melbourne.

CHAPTER 9. PRACTICES THAT ENGAGE VERY YOUNG AUDIENCES IN THE ARTS

9.1 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH

As stated at the outset of this thesis (Chapter 1), this research aimed to contribute to a better understanding of the ways in which teaching-artists can support very young children's engagement in integrated arts performances. To meet this aim, I designed and undertook a study that explored the field both broadly and intimately (Stake, 1981), and which balanced the "gazing in" at my own experience with iterant "gazing out" towards the literature and data (Tedlock, 2005). This involved undertaking a field mapping study; reviewing theory and research from the fields of engagement, sociology of childhood, early childhood education, arts education, art and aesthetics, and child development; engaging in self-study; and identifying and more closely examining exemplary teaching-artist practices. The components of this research were not undertaken in isolation and nor did the study follow a linear process. Rather, a progressive focusing research strategy (Patton, 2002; Stake, 1981) was followed, through which varying levels of breadth and intimacy were deemed appropriate at different times. Through a combination of reflective narrative and analytic discussion, I described how teaching-artists can support very young children's engagement in integrated arts experiences (Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8). In this chapter, I present a distillation of those findings.

9.2 ENGAGING PRACTICES

The following eight points (sections 9.2.1 through 9.2.8) provide a summarised and distilled answer to the research question: *How can teaching-artists best support very young children's engagement in integrated arts performances?*

9.2.1 Practice 1: The teaching-artist acknowledges that the very young child belongs to many social groups and creates works with this in mind

THIS MAY BE EVIDENT, FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN THE TEACHING-ARTIST:

designs an arts experience for an audience of very young children and their parents (family social group)

designs an arts experience for an audience of like-age peers (universal childhood social group)

designs an arts experience that is accessible to very young members of the local community (local community social group)

designs an arts experience that intersects with the everyday experience of the audience (local community social group)

successfully advocates for the inclusion of works for very young audiences within existing public arts programmes (cultural citizenship)

THIS MAY BE EVIDENT, FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN THE VERY YOUNG CHILD:

works in close collaboration with their parent

works in parallel with other very young children

engages in an arts experience that is offered within his or her local neighbourhood

engages in an arts experience that reflects his or her previous and/or emerging everyday experience

engages in an arts experience that has been designed for an audience of very young children, and which is offered within an existing public arts programme

9.2.2 Practice 2: The teaching-artist provides opportunities for the very young child to engage in self-directed exploration and discovery

THIS MAY BE EVIDENT, FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN THE TEACHING-ARTIST:

provides a space that is readily transformable

encourages free play with and within the space

provides unrestricted access to objects within the space

resists interrupting moments of deep engagement

embeds naturalistic feedback into the design of the space and materials

THIS MAY BE EVIDENT, FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN THE VERY YOUNG CHILD:

makes choices about which objects he or she would like to explore

makes choices about how he or she would like to explore each object

makes choices about how long he or she would like to spend exploring each object

makes changes to the environment that may be temporary or permanent

9.2.3 Practice 3: The teaching-artist develops arts experiences that promote positive social relationships

THIS MAY BE EVIDENT, FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN THE TEACHING-ARTIST:

designs arts experiences principally for child-parent dyads

designs arts experiences that encourage participants to work together

is considerate of, and immediately responsive to, the emotional climate

THIS MAY BE EVIDENT, FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN THE VERY YOUNG CHILD:

observes others

demonstrates a desire to explore the space and materials

communicates with others, most often their own parent

collaborates with others, most often their own parent

9.2.4 Practice 4: The teaching-artist positions the very young child as a discerning connoisseur of the arts

THIS MAY BE EVIDENT, FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN THE TEACHING-ARTIST:

demonstrates an attitude of care towards the aesthetic elements of the artistic work

carefully considers how their artistic work will be perceived by the very young audience

uses and provides artist-quality materials

creates arts experiences that feature recognisable artistic approaches and techniques

creates an artistic work that is cohesive and integrated

THIS MAY BE EVIDENT, FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN THE VERY YOUNG CHILD:

provides feedback to the artist about their artistic choices and execution

9.2.5 Practice 5: The teaching-artist positions the very young child as an artistic collaborator

THIS MAY BE EVIDENT, FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN THE TEACHING-ARTIST:

plans for, and leaves significant room for, artistic contributions from the very young child

engages in live art-making with the very young audience

plans for, and successfully implements, a transfer of ownership from the adult-artist to the child-artist

THIS MAY BE EVIDENT, FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN THE VERY YOUNG CHILD:

engages in sensory play and/or other forms of live art-making with the artist

takes increasing ownership over the space, materials and interactions

communicates his or her artistic ideas through action

accepts and values the creative contributions of the very young child, and exhibits their work

9.2.6 Practice 6: The teaching-artist demonstrates an understanding of the very young child's preferred ways of interacting with new and familiar stimuli

THIS MAY BE EVIDENT, FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN THE TEACHING-ARTIST:

provides a range of objects for the very young child to manipulate with their hands, mouths, and bodies

provides ongoing opportunities for the very young child to move about the space

creates artistic work that features elements of repetition and pattern

creates artistic work that includes a balance of novel and familiar ideas

engages in co-play with the audience

combines different artforms to create a work that is multimodal

THIS MAY BE EVIDENT, FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN THE VERY YOUNG CHILD:

engages in and through schematic play

uses movement to explore and respond to stimuli

engages in co-play with other participants, most often adults

uses multiple senses, at times in combination, to explore and respond to stimuli

9.2.7 Practice 7: The teaching-artist provides opportunities for the very young child to develop new arts knowledge and skills

THIS MAY BE EVIDENT, FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN THE TEACHING-ARTIST:

models artistic practices, including tool use and technique

takes notice of a child's existing skill and supports them to move beyond it

provides responsive and individualised feedback, which may be non-verbal or embedded in the task

supports the very young child's access to ongoing experiences and continuing processes

THIS MAY BE EVIDENT, FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN THE VERY YOUNG CHILD:

imitates artistic practices, most often simultaneously with the adult model

engages with, and responds to, new stimuli

adjusts and refines their actions in response to feedback, which may be non-verbal or embedded in the task

9.2.8 Practice 8: The teaching-artist practices the art of self-reflection

THIS MAY BE EVIDENT, FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN THE TEACHING-ARTIST:

THIS MAY BE EVIDENT, FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN THE VERY YOUNG CHILD:

actively shifts between different roles, which may include artist, teacher, director, observer, curator, mentor, advocate n/a

seeks feedback from the audience and engages in observation in order to improve his or her own practice

changes his or her pedagogies in response to feedback and observations, both in the moment and in his or her future work

acquires and maintains a high level of skill and experience in his or her artform/s



Figure 39. Practices that engage very young audiences in integrated arts performances.

9.3 REFLECTIONS ON THE THEMES

The following reflections are intended to act as a support for the rich narratives and discussions presented in Chapters 5 through 8 of this thesis. Where the narratives and succeeding discussions aimed to be particular to each case, these reflections are somewhat more generalised.

9.3.1 Image of the child

In this study, the “image of the child” related to the ways in which the teaching-artist positioned the child. This was underpinned by his or her sociological beliefs about children and childhoods. By undertaking a literature review, I identified 7 themes that related to this idea (Figure 5). I then explored what these looked like in practice, through looking closely at the three exemplar case studies and developing my own integrated arts performance for a very young audience.

A teaching-artist can potentially support the engagement of a very young child by providing him or her with opportunities to have a meaningful say in the planning, development and/or implementation of an integrated arts performance (Chappell & Young, 2007; Fredricks et al., 2004; Jablon & Wilkinson, 2006). In the early mapping study, I noted that this practice was not widely adopted. When looking across the data, “child’s voice” was evident in only 4 out of 16 of the performances observed. As I discovered when attempting to plan and implement my own work for a very young audience, teaching-artists may find it challenging to include this practice in their work, due to the one-off nature of these performances. Without an existing relationship with the participants, gathering children’s ideas in order to inform the planning and development phases of a new work is not always feasible. However, the exemplar case study *Rain* (Case Study 1), demonstrated that it is possible with the right supports in place. The teaching-artists in *Rain* were able to adopt this practice by securing a funded residency at ArtPlay, through which they were able to workshop early ideas with very young children and families. By entering into these workshops with a loose plan (Brown, 2015; Brown, 2016; Chappell & Young, 2007; Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013; Tayler et al., 2006; Turino,

2008), observing children's interests, and incorporating emergent ideas into the the planning and developing phases, they were able to honour and celebrate the child's voice (Alderson & Morrow, 2011). In general, teaching-artists had more success and opportunity to make room for children's ideas in the implementation phase of their work. Creating an environment that encouraged the very young child to engage in autonomous exploration and discovery (Brown, 2015; Custodero, 2005; Eisner, 2004) was consistently supportive of this, as the children's actions and behaviours within the space became part of the performance dynamic. When the very young children engaged actively in this way, they became co-creators of the live art that was unfolding in the moment (Rogoff, 1990).

This findings from this study indicate that integrated arts performances for very young audiences, by their very nature, may encourage interaction between and within families, local community groups, and wider cultural groups. According to Bronfenbrenner (2009), the engagement of very young children is enhanced when they are viewed as belonging to many social groups, in this way. These events encourage the bringing together of members of the wider public who share a "young family" status. Findings from the mapping study showed that all 16 performances observed achieved this outcome to some degree.

9.3.2 Art and aesthetics

In this study, "art and aesthetics" related to the artistic and aesthetic choices made by the teaching-artist, as well as his or her demonstrated level of skill and knowledge in their chosen artform(s). By undertaking a literature review, I identified 8 themes that related to this idea (Figure 6). I then explored what these

looked like in practice, through looking closely at the three exemplar case studies and developing my own integrated arts performance for a very young audience. In the introductory chapter of this thesis (Chapter 1), I discussed how those who create and present integrated arts performances for very young audiences originate from diverse backgrounds and identify in different ways (Andersen, 2017). Some consider themselves to be artists (only), distinct from teachers or educators in their beliefs, approaches and intentions. Others note the educational value of their work as an important motivator for their practice, and consider part of their role as having pedagogical qualities. A small number of those who work in this field also engage as arts teachers, and regard integrated arts performances for very young children as being a form of arts education. Some have formal teaching qualifications and others (most) do not. Through exploring my own practice as part of this study, I became aware that where a teaching-artist falls on this spectrum can influence his or her practice. In particular, I discovered that, as someone who sits more towards the “teacher” end, my practice was not as strong in the area of “art and aesthetics” as it was in “learning and development”. This tension was also noted across the mapping study. On the contrary, the teaching-artists from the exemplar case studies, all of whom were professional artists and fell more towards the “artist” of the spectrum, showed a strong capacity to engage very young children through their artistic and aesthetic choices. Most notable was their capacity to find a balance between demonstrating tool use and technique (Edwards et al, 1998; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013; Vygotsky, 1978; 2009) and providing space for the children to engage in live art-making through sensory play (Gascoyne, 2012).

9.3.3 Environment

In this study, the “environment” related to the nature of the built environment, as well as the emotional climate in the room. By undertaking a literature review, I identified 5 themes that related to this idea (Figure 4), then explored what these looked like in practice through looking closely at the three exemplar case studies and developing my own integrated arts performance for a very young audience.

There was clear evidence that spaces that are created especially for an integrated arts performance for a very young audience, and which have the capacity to be redesigned by the teaching-artists and/or participants, are the most suitable for this type of work (Andersen et al., 2010; Brown, 2015; Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 2002; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013). An open floor space, where very young children and parents are positioned in close proximity to the teaching-artist/s, is a practice that can support children’s engagement. In the mapping study, it was noted that 11 of 16 performances observed adopted a more traditional separation between artist and audience. 7 of these used theatre style seating, with the very young children being held in the laps of parents. This particular set-up was found to be restrictive, as it did not provide opportunities for children to actively engage in the work (Montessori, 1966). The exemplar case studies provided three examples of how teaching-artists can customise an environment to maximise opportunities for very young children to engage.

9.3.4 Interactions

In this study, “interactions” focused on the teaching-artist’s role within the performance, and the ways in which the players were given opportunity to interact. By undertaking a literature review, I identified 7 themes that related to this idea (Figure 4). I then explored what these looked like in practice, through

looking closely at the three exemplar case studies and developing my own integrated arts performance for a very young audience.

From the literature review, three relationships were identified as being potentially important to very young children's engagement in integrated arts performances: the artist-child relationship (Andersen et al., 2010; Bandura, 1977; Brown, 2015; Crimmins & Alberti, 1994; Edwards et al., 1998; Eisner, 2002; Eisner, 2004; Jablon & Wilkinson, 2006; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013; Lussier et al., 2003; Malaguzzi, 2016; Rinaldi, 2005; Rogoff, 1990; Turino, 2008; van Manen, 2015; Vecchi, 2010; Vygotsky, 1978; Warburton et al., 2014), relationships between child participants (Custodero, 2005; Rogoff, 1990), and the parent-child relationship (Andersen et al., 2010; Bronfenbrenner, 2009; Brown, 2015; Jeanneret & Brown, 2013). This study has shown that, when looking at the very youngest of audiences, it is the parent-child relationship that is most important. The co-attending parent significantly impacts the very young child's experience. In the four narrative re-tellings, of performances that I experienced as a parent-researcher (Chapter 1, Chapter 5, Chapter 6, Chapter 7), I describe many episodes in which I am interacting directly with Hugo, in order to support his engagement. According to Bronfenbrenner (2009), doing so was likely to have been effective, as very young children respond more positively to their own mother than any other person. The teaching-artist may, therefore, choose to look to transfer some skills and responsibility to the parent, in order to make ideas more accessible to the child. Although this was not found in the literature, there was evidence from the field that a fourth relationship – that between the teaching-artist and parent – may be significant.

It was unclear from the literature review whether planning for child-child interactions was appropriate or relevant in works for very young audiences, although this was seen to be the case when groups of older children came together (Turino, 2008). After examining the practices of the teaching-artists in the exemplar case studies, I conclude that it is not necessary to plan for direct child-child interactions, as these are not developmentally appropriate in the earliest months of life. Parallel child-child experiences, however, did appear to be valuable.

9.3.5 Learning and development

In this study, “learning and development” related to the teaching-artist’s understanding of the learning preferences and developmental needs of very young children. By undertaking a literature review, I identified 9 themes that related to this idea (Figure 4). I then explored what these looked like in practice, through looking closely at the three exemplar case studies and developing my own integrated arts performance for a very young audience.

Knowledge of infant and child development can be an asset for a teaching-artist (Drury & Fletcher-Watson, 2017). Rachel Drury, the composer and creator of *BabyO* (Case Study 2) was a good example of how such knowledge can translate into practice. She used her child development expertise to help guide the creation of an opera that featured modelling, repetition, object play, and the musical elements. These were also features in my own work, *In the Mirror*; a fact that I attribute to my previous experiences in early childhood education. However, as I noted in Section 9.3.2, there is a risk that focusing too closely on “learning and development” may negatively impact on other aspects of a performance that are known to engage a very young audience, such as “art and aesthetics”. It seems

that striking the right balance is a challenge that even the teaching-artists in the exemplar cases continued to grapple with.

Montessori (1966) noted the critical importance of movement for the learning and development of the very young child. In this study, there was evidence that those integrated arts performances which encouraged children's freedom of movement, such as *Rain* (Case Study 1) and *Nursery* (Case study 3), were also likely to position children as co-constructors of the experience. In combination, these practices provided the audience with opportunities to meaningfully engage with, and contribute to, the work.

After conducting the literature review (Chapter 3), there remained some uncertainty about which forms of play were relevant to, and appropriate for, very young children. This study has demonstrated that schematic play, where the very young child has opportunities to draw upon his or her preferred ways in interacting with new and familiar stimuli (Atherton & Nutbrown, 2016), and sensory play, where the child is provided with opportunities to engage in play experiences that engage the senses (Gascoyne, 2012), are both highly appropriate and should be encouraged.

It is well accepted that very young children learn through observation (Bandura, 1977; Piaget, 1950; 1953; 1967). Observation can, therefore, be an appropriate element of a performance for a very young audience. However, it is not enough to simply perform *for* children. Models should work in close proximity to the child, and act responsively.

9.4 OTHER KEY LEARNINGS

9.4.1 Choices made by the teaching-artist are central to engagement

When it comes to the engagement of very young audiences, the teaching-artist is central. The choices that they make can have a significant influence upon the very young child's experience; particularly those choices relating to art and aesthetics, the environment, and the interactions between players, which were shown to have the capacity to support or restrict a very young child's level of engagement. Teaching-artists who choose to work with this audience, therefore, should be encouraged to take particular care when planning, developing and implementing integrated arts performances. Artistic decisions should be made with intentionality, with an awareness that every choice they make matters, and with a high level of consideration for the unique experience of the very young child.

9.4.2 Integrated arts performances are beneficial for very young children

In the introductory chapter of the thesis (Chapter 1), I claimed that there is evidence that very young children and families who participate in the performing arts experience an enhanced sense of wellbeing (Australia Council for the Arts, n.d.; Creative Scotland, 2017; Creative Scotland & Children in Scotland, 2019; Fletcher-Watson, 2016; Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2010). I drew such a conclusion through examining existing research and policy. Although it was not the focus of this study, there was some supporting evidence that Hugo and I experienced enhanced wellbeing through our participation in the case study performances. In the narrative in Case Study 1 (*Rain*, Chapter 5), for example, I noted: "Sarah is pregnant, which instils in me an unexpected sense

of comfort. I feel very much as though I am among peers in this community of parents, babies and pregnant artists". This aligns with what was described in the literature regarding wellbeing, where it was asserted that bonding socially through arts experiences (Australia Council for the Arts, n.d.) and participating culturally (Creative Scotland, 2017; Creative Scotland & Children in Scotland, 2019) can improve reported feelings of satisfaction (Australia Council for the Arts, n.d.) and emotional health (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2010; Weinert-Kendt, 2010). Although I would confidently surmise that my own wellbeing was enhanced through participating in these events, and that my parent-child relationship with Hugo was positively impacted by having opportunities for us to engage in partnership during the performances, the extent to which Hugo benefited cannot be easily reported. In the case study narratives, he is described as being "in his element" (*Nursery*, Case Study 3, Chapter 7), showing enthusiasm (*Rain*, Case Study 1, Chapter 5), and laughing (*BabyO*, Case Study 2, Chapter 6) during the performances, which do demonstrate a certain sense of positive wellbeing, at least during moments of participation. However, to confidently claim this as a finding of this study, one would need to adopt a different research approach.

9.4.3 Very young audiences require special care

Very young audiences are really quite different to other arts audiences, and thus require special care. There can be no short-cuts for those who wish to work with very young children. It simply does not work to transplant or simplify practices that are known to engage older children or adults, as the ways in which the very young child experiences the world is unique. For teaching-artists who wish to work in this space, I suggest limiting the age range of the audience as far as

possible. The mapping study (Chapter 4) revealed that many integrated arts performances leave an open or wide age range (e.g. “under 5 years”) to encourage families to attend, resulting in practices that were less likely to engage the youngest participants. Using physical development indicators such as “babies in arms” or “early walkers” is an alternative way that teaching-artists are limiting their audience. This can be useful. However, it is important to remember that physical development does not always neatly align with cognitive and emotional development, and that one child may be an early walker at 10-months of age while another may be yet to walk at 18-months of age. (This may also unintentionally discriminate against children with physical disability.)

9.5 REFLECTIONS ON THE METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research is rarely a linear process and this study took many twists and turns. As a student researcher, I found this challenging at times. The nature of the bricolage design is such that I was required to build a customised structure to suit the particular questions and field of study. This was a complex task. Defining and refining the study design became as important as the study itself, and at times threatened to overshadow the aim of the research. While this choice was appropriate for an explorative study in a reasonably uncharted field, in hindsight, I may have benefited from adopting an existing conceptual framework. What’s more, writing a thesis that explained this iterative and multifaceted process proved difficult, as the thesis required a more logical and linear retelling than was experienced.

Although I was initially unsure whether the power relationship between myself and my son, Hugo, created an ethical problem for the research, I ultimately found

that the benefits it afforded outweighed any concern. Parent-research gave me unique insight into the experience and enhanced my ability to interpret what I observed. As outlined in Section 4.6.1 of this thesis, and as demonstrated through his drawing *Me + Mum going to Skotland [sic]to see music* (Figure 15), Hugo has now grown into a young boy and is cognisant and proud of his role in the research. Having had the opportunity to engage with him in this project honed my awareness that research can be both part of, and reflective of, life.

When reflecting back on the research, I would have liked to have spent more time in the field, working in collaboration with exemplar artists, to add another dimension to the research.

9.6 FUTURE RESEARCH

This explorative study has but scratched the surface of all there is to understand about engaging very young audiences in integrated arts experiences. The findings from this study were not designed to be replicable. Rather, the focus was on describing and analysing teacher-artist practices in order to better understand them (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Patton, 2002). However, the 8 practices summarised above (in section 9.3) lend themselves well to further study. In my future research, I aim to use these themes to guide the development of an integrated arts performance for very young children. I would also like to explore the ways in which they may or may not be relevant with children aged 18-months to three years, as well as in other informal learning contexts for very young children. Working in collaboration with exemplar artists in the field is the next logical step for this research. Doing so would create a shift away from

autoethnography and towards action, creating another dimension to the research and adding value to the findings.

9.7 ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

This research contributes new knowledge to a developing field. The literature review moved beyond discussions of engaging practice found in other texts by comparing and contrasting the ideas with specific reference to very young children. In doing so, questions were raised about the relevance and developmental appropriateness of some theories and practices, and new insights were revealed.

This research also complements and adds to a growing body of literature about artists working with children which, similarly, has focused predominantly on older children and teens. By choosing to focus on very young audiences, I have filled a gap and provided myself a new starting point as I continue to engage in research and practice in this field post thesis. As I identified right at the beginning of this thesis (in section 1.1.1), an understanding of teaching-artist practices that engage very young children is of high interest to teaching-artists and producers currently working in, or interested in working in, this area of the performing arts. The new knowledge created through this research, as summarised above (in Section 9.3), may provide them with the guidance they have been seeking.

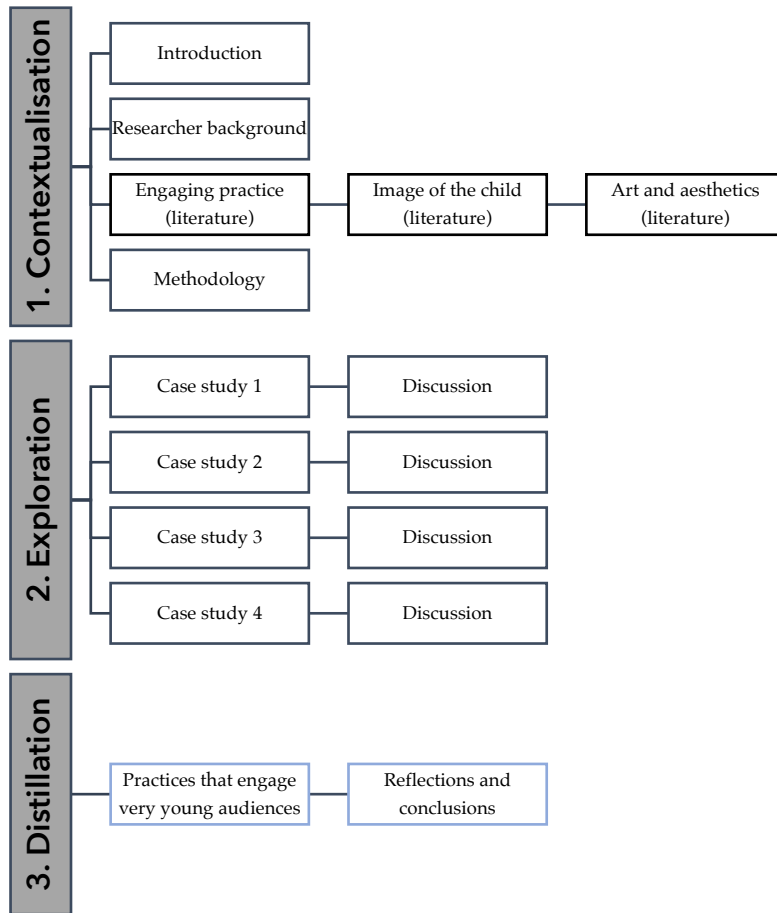


Figure 40. This chapter (highlighted in blue) shown in relation to the other chapters of this thesis.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Ethics approval

7 November 2011

Dr Neryl Jeanneret
Melbourne Graduate School of Education
The University of Melbourne



Dear **Dr Jeanneret**,

I am pleased to advise that the **Melbourne Graduate School of Education Human Ethics Advisory Group (MGSE HEAG)** has approved the following **Minimal Risk** application:

Project title: **Music education with children aged birth to three years: A multidimensional study of practices and perspectives.**
Researchers: **Neryl Jeanneret, Jennifer Stevens-Ballenger and Robert Brown.**
Ethics ID: **1136369**
MGSE HEAG ID: **124/11**

The project has been approved for the period: **7 November 2011 to 31 December 2012.**

It is your responsibility to ensure that all people associated with the Project are made aware of what has actually been approved.

Research projects are normally approved to 31 December of the year of approval. Projects may be renewed yearly for up to a total of five years upon receipt of a satisfactory annual report. If a project is to continue beyond five years a new application will normally need to be submitted.

Please note that the following conditions apply to your approval. Failure to abide by these conditions may result in suspension or discontinuation of approval and/or disciplinary action.

- (a) **Limit of Approval:** Approval is limited strictly to the research as submitted in your Project application.
- (b) **Amendments to Project:** Any subsequent variations or modifications you might wish to make to the Project must be notified formally to the Human Ethics Advisory Group for further consideration and approval before the revised Project can commence. If the Human Ethics Advisory Group considers that the proposed amendments are significant, you may be required to submit a new application for approval of the revised Project.
- (c) **Incidents or adverse effects:** Researchers must report immediately to the Advisory Group and the relevant Sub-Committee anything which might affect the ethical acceptance of the protocol including adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the Project. Failure to do so may result in suspension or cancellation of approval.
- (d) **Monitoring:** All projects are subject to monitoring at any time by the Human Research Ethics Committee.
- (e) **Annual Report:** Please be aware that the Human Research Ethics Committee requires that researchers submit an annual report on each of their projects at the end of the year, or at the conclusion of a project if it continues for less than this time. Failure to submit an annual report will mean that ethics approval will lapse.
- (f) **Auditing:** All projects may be subject to audit by members of the Sub-Committee.

Please quote the ethics registration number and the name of the Project in any future correspondence.

On behalf of the Ethics Committee I wish you well in your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Janet Scull
Deputy Chairperson, Melbourne Graduate School of Education Human Ethics Advisory Group
Phone: 83448348, Email: j.scull@unimelb.edu.au

cc: **Jennifer Stevens-Ballenger, Robert Brown and Human Research Ethics Committee, Melbourne Research Office.**

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