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HOLD ON: AUSTRALIAN INNOVATIONS IN ACCESS AESTHETICS

MADELEINE LITTLE, SARAH AUSTIN AND EDDIE PATERSON

The aesthetic use of access technologies and processes in theatre and performance has emerged as a critical practice for artists, particularly as responsibility for making performance work accessible to both artists and audience shifts from being the domain of front-of-house and production staff to the realm of the creative team. Referred to as either 'access aesthetics' or 'integrated access', these innovations are part of a legacy of disability performance strategies that pay particular attention to the ways in which access provisions such as sign language, audio description, captioning and 'relaxed' viewings might be creatively embedded into the fabric of the production schedule and design, and the dramaturgy of the performance. In the words of Colette Conroy:

> Accessible theatre … [is] theatre that has fully integrated access for d/Deaf, blind, and disabled spectators and performers built into the artistic structure of the play.[1]

While Conroy notes that ideas of access are not always linked to disability, disabled artists, disability performance and disability culture has nonetheless historically engaged with different approaches to access and inclusion as a key part of the art-making process. Performance studies scholarship on access aesthetics expands particularly in the 1990s through the foundational work of theorists Petra Kuppers,[2] Carrie Sandahl[3] and Kanta Kochhar-Lindgren,[4] all of whom recognise disability culture and artistic practice as a creative space for experimentation and collaboration.

The integration of access into contemporary theatre and performance is further explored in important recent writings from Colette Conroy,[5] Bree Hadley[6] and Kirsty Johnson,[7] who foreground the challenges that disability aesthetics pose to mainstream and traditional theatre practices due to the complex interplay of communicative modes – the range of abilities, bodies, languages and cultures – operating within the broad category of 'accessible theatre'. Alongside these scholarly interventions, innovative approaches to access are integral to the practices of many longstanding disability-led companies such as the UK's Graeae Theatre[8] and Vital Xposure,[9] as well as Australia's Weave Movement Theatre.[10] UK artist, advocate and scholar Jo Verrent suggests that artists from within and outside the

field of Disability Arts have explored the creative potential of access in ways that enhance and augment the experience of a performance for all audience members. The resulting practice takes access beyond the basic social provisions for disabled artists and audience, and positions access as a creative catalyst for new theatre aesthetics.[11]

In this article, we investigate Australian innovations in access aesthetics in relation to two recent examples of contemporary Australian performance works that integrated access into the aesthetic fabric of the production process and public showings. Here, we draw on our own work as disabled and non-disabled practitioners, through the discussion and analysis of two recent Australian performances: Madeleine Little's *Hold* (2019) and *The Cabin!* from Joseph O'Farrell, directed by Sarah Austin (2019). We then position our insights as artist-makers in relation to Verrent's provocation and explore how performances might make visible the materiality of access, such as engaging performers, collaborators, access providers and access technologies in the process of designing the work. We pay particular attention to inclusive rehearsal processes, and draw on disability arts innovations that creatively engage with the presence of Auslan interpreters, captioning and other elements of access onstage as examples of integrated access in which multiple access tools operate simultaneously within the performance. This is in contrast to current industry practices (both independent and mainstream) that frequently treat access as a series of singular tools (one performance is audio described, another

signed, another offers relaxed viewing) rather than a more complex, embedded and interdependent mode of making. We argue that these recent works demonstrate how the introduction of multiple access systems enhance, expand and diversify the creative and aesthetic dimensions of performance. Further, these contemporary practices speak to what Sandahl imagined in her 2002 essay as the possibilities of disability arts practice to transform our rehearsal rooms and theatre spaces into ones which recognise the diversity of human communities.[12]

It is important to note at the outset that there are some key differences in how these two performances integrate accessibility and inclusion. In their use of inclusive rehearsal processes and practices – such as flexible scheduling, working visually and kinaesthetically, designing multiple and on-going opportunities for feedback, and other strategies designed to actively address perceived power imbalances in traditional performance-making models – both *Hold* and *The Cabin!* recall the concept of co-design, also referred to as 'participatory design':

> A process of investigating, understanding, reflecting upon, establishing, developing, and supporting mutual learning between multiple participants in collective 'reflection-in-action'. The participants typically undertake the two principal roles of users and designers where the designers strive to learn the realities of the users' situation while the users

> strive to articulate their desired aims and learn appropriate technological means to obtain them.[13]

These features of participatory design are already well established within devising and collaborative models of performance, particularly those used within contexts that can relate to fostering cultural agency among groups that may be marginalised from mainstream processes.

However, integration of access as a further aesthetic dimension to the works enhances these inclusive modes in different ways and with different points of emphasis within the overall design and dramaturgical process. As we will show, *Hold* arises from specific engagement with 'accessible theatre practice' as a mode or method of working, in which access is embedded into the aesthetic formation of the disabled-led work from its very beginning. This mode explicitly draws on the historical links within disability culture between community and performance, foregrounding collaborative and devising processes that actively engage with disability as a diverse lived experience that is both simultaneously collective and political, as well as being particular and embodied.[14] This creative process situates the disabled person as the leader of the entire process, as facilitator or director, with ultimate authority over the final production.[15] This is distinct to creative processes that employ disabled artists as co-creators/devisers, often working within a team led by non-disabled allies. Situated in this latter mode, *The Cabin!* is an example of 'inclusive theatre practice' designed around engaging young children, that then

employs 'access aesthetics' later in the performance process. As such, these performance works engage with notions of access at two very different points.

HOLD

Madeleine Little's performance work *Hold* premiered at Roundhouse Theatre, Brisbane, in April 2019.[16] *Hold* follows the character of 'Maddie' and her friends Rosie and Tonya, across a series of Girls' Nights as the trio discuss relationships, dating, and issues at work. However, in keeping with earlier examples of live art, pop songs and disability performances that highlight lived experience and complicate the boundaries between fictional characters and personal retellings, *Hold* also draws in autobiographical details, journal entries and poetry. The performance, which was developed through a work-in-progress showing in 2018,[17] integrated accessible theatre practice conventions, such as Auslan interpretation, open captioning, relaxed performance formats, and partial audio description, as a core feature of its dramaturgical framework. Little looked to work by Graeae Theatre (UK), Gaelle Mellis (*Take Up Thy Bed and Walk*, 2012) and access aesthetics theory to help inform the work. The creative process also adopted accessible methods of working, including the relaxation of typically rigid, full-time rehearsal schedule standards.

The onstage cast consisted of our co-author Madeleine Little, Myra Turner, Racheal Missingham and Adele Greedy-Vogel.

Missingham, a Deaf performer, signed and spoke all of her dialogue; Greedy-Vogel, a Child of Deaf Adults (CODA) whose first language is Auslan, joined the process as a shadow interpreter and cast member; and pre-recorded clips from a Narrator character (Voice actor Marcus Oborn) were also introduced as a means of partial audio description. The vision designer created and operated the open captioning for the entire performance, ensuring that every line of dialogue (and every song lyric) was captioned. As the Script Directions state:

> ABOUT THE SHOW:
>
> Show is to be Auslan-integrated. The rehearsal process will workshop the best way to do this.
>
> Show will be entirely captioned. Both performances will be Relaxed Performances (with the caveat that it is impossible to meet every single sensory need; all information will be made available at box-office).[18]

While the directions above clearly position the access features as a key element of the performance, the integration of multiple access technologies throughout *Hold* are also established at the outset as a playful layer within the script and onstage action. The Narrator's opening description of the characters, including physical descriptors and a record of how long it has been since they were last embraced, offers an early glimpse of this layering.

NARRATOR: The four people sitting on stage right now are friends. Close friends. The type of friends that gather often and share almost every detail of their lives together. They sit in front of a screen, where every word uttered in this space will appear. Even the swear words. Like poop.

I am the omnipotent voice that will guide you along this profound journey of wonder and …

[Clears throat.]

You know what? These friends just get together and talk shit. Let's be honest. I'm gonna introduce them and piss off. Maybe get a pale ale from the bar in the foyer. Who cares? I'm not driving.

[Spotlight appears on Adele.]

This is Adele. She's a beautiful young woman with dark hair, wearing a flowy dress. She's here to sign everything that everyone says. Everyone except Tonya, that is …

… This is Maddie. *[Spotlight on Maddie.]*

She is a short, curvy lil thing with long red hair that probably needs a bit of a trim.

> MADDIE: Hey!
>
> NARRATOR: She is white, as most main characters are, and she is wearing black leggings with an oversized shirt. She walks with an awkward gait that people sometimes refer to as 'penguin-esque'.
>
> It has been 1 year, 1 month, 16 days and 23 hours since she was last held.[19]

As reflected in this opening, *Hold* experiments with audio description as both a dramaturgical feature and an access tool. Where audio description might typically describe 'Maddie' as a short, curvy woman with long red hair, the Narrator adds humorous details as he appears to cast judgement on her appearance: '… with long red hair that probably needs a bit of a trim'. As such, this scene is designed not just to introduce the characters and the concept of audio description to the audience, but to expand the role of a Narrator as a means extending the aesthetic dimensions of the access technology. The Narrator introduces characters, relates stage actions and provides moments of repartee or self-reflexive commentary, including ridiculing the use of confessional poems as a way of marking out scenes through a long-running joke about Maddie's 'obnoxious poetry'. While the Narrator's role in the April 2019 iteration of *Hold* was presented as 'Partial Audio Description' (in recognition of the limited financial and technological resources that prohibited the team from a full integration of this convention), the partial audio

description suggests ways of exploring the aesthetic potential of the access technology.

In a similar way, the integration of Auslan through the casting of a Deaf performer (Missingham) and a CODA performer (Greedy-Vogel) challenges the industry norm of Auslan Interpreters being separate to the action on stage. Commonly, Auslan Interpreters are positioned side-stage for one-night-only interpreted performances. In direct contrast, as 'Tonya', Deaf performer Racheal Missingham spoke and signed all of her lines at the same time, while 'Adele' (Greedy-Vogel) interpreted for the 'Maddie', 'Rosie' and the 'Narrator' characters. Greedy-Vogel's blocking meant that she moved in relation to the other characters to ensure appropriate sightlines for d/Deaf audiences while also maintaining connection with other characters onstage.



FIGURE 1: ADELE GREEDY-VOGEL (LEFT), MYRA TURNER (CENTRE) AND RACHEAL MISSINGHAM (RIGHT) IN *HOLD*, 2019. PHOTO: NICK MORRISSEY.

The resulting dual-language performance saw all performers interact with Adele (Greedy-Vogel) as though she was another core member of the friendship group. Crucially, Tonya's narrative did not centre on deafness either; she was positioned as another of Maddie's group of confidantes. However, the dual-language performance also allowed for Adele and Tonya to share in-jokes in Auslan.



FIGURE 2: ADELE GREEDY-VOGEL (LEFT) AND RACHEAL MISSINGHAM (RIGHT) IN *HOLD*. BOTH PERFORMERS ARE SIGNING. PHOTO: NICK MORRISSEY.

The integration of Auslan in *Hold* was received very well by audiences, with feedback such as: 'Having the Auslan Integration made the interpreter act as an interesting almost-character who felt involved in the process, not just descriptive of it'.[20] Interestingly, Little credits the success of this element to Missingham and Greedy-Vogel's collaboration during the rehearsal process, particularly the work of translating the English text to Auslan.[21] Their resulting familiarity with the text/s and each other strengthened the capacity of *Hold* to implement this convention of access as a core feature of the work and its aesthetic fabric.

Indeed, an integral part of the process of making *Hold* was a part-time rehearsal schedule that was flexible to the changing access requirements of the team. Little emphasised an inclusive working environment, with multiple and ongoing opportunities for the entire team to 'check in' in order to offer feedback, engage in collaboration or seek support.[22] Missingham made particular mention of the power dynamics that are often present in other creative processes and how she felt they were not at play during *Hold*:

> [T[here was no power or rank in the group, none of that. We were all on the same page, so you did not feel like you were isolating one person because you had a disability or whatever. It did not exist in that space, we were aware of it, and that's what I enjoyed about working with this group. I did not even feel like I was left out or anything … It felt like it was the first time I could work with people who were actually aware of it, not just Deaf people.[23]

This feedback is particularly powerful as it suggests that the disabled-led process was an integral part of the inclusive design of the work. Indeed, the development of *Hold* can thus be situated specifically in the context of disabled-led practice. Such practice pays particular attention to the diversity of disability experience and the importance of disabled bodies and voices in complicating and reshaping aesthetic criteria, social norms and industry practices.[24]

Moreover, the ratio of 50:50 non-disabled to d/Deaf and disabled artists also clearly enhanced the disabled-led process, by foregrounding shared experiences of discrimination and oppression in rehearsal rooms.[25] Recognition of these shared experiences arguably reaffirmed the need for an inclusive working environment in which accessibility was paramount, and the use of the 'check-ins' and supportive collaborative processes was embedded in both the environment and the aesthetic frame of the work. This recognition allowed for the reduction of emotional labour often required of d/Deaf and disabled artists in the rehearsal room, which in turn 'removes the power dynamic that oppresses d/Deaf and disabled artists in rehearsal rooms under non-disabled or d/Deaf leaders'.[26] It is this very combination – 'practicing interdependency, sharing vulnerability and celebrating complexity' – that Bree Hadley et al. draw attention to in their recent reflections on the possible futures for the disability arts.[27]

However, *Hold* also contained moments when accessible theatre practices were placed in tension with the technological capacity of the production team in a way that undercut any enhancement of the performance aesthetics. One particular element was the use of open captioning to ensure that every line of dialogue was captioned for d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing audience members who may not know or use Auslan.

The innovative use of captioning in Australian disability arts performances is frequently associated with Geelong's Back to Back Theatre, whose performances such as *Food Court* (2008), *Ganesh Versus*

the Third Reich (2011) and *Lady Eats Apple* (2016) have often integrated new and playful uses of captioning as a key aesthetic element.[28] Back to Back's recent work *The Shadow Whose Prey the Hunter Becomes* (2019) drew explicitly on mistakes and errors in live captioning in a way that revealed fundamental anxieties about disability, identity and the role of Artificial Intelligence in future societies.

In *Hold*, a large projection screen resting just behind and slightly above the action was positioned to ensure that audiences could easily see the characters and the captions at all times, with the captions shifting from one side of the screen to another when the performers moved across the stage. The screen used illustrative borders and individual fonts to differentiate between one character and the next, and the vision designer operated the QLab[29] software to fire these cues.



FIGURE 3: MYRA TURNER (LEFT), ADELE GREEDY-VOGEL (CENTRE LEFT), MADELEINE LITTLE (CENTRE RIGHT) AND RACHEAL MISSINGHAM (RIGHT) IN *HOLD*, 2019. PHOTO: NICK MORRISSEY.

However, because each performer speaks with a different tone, pacing and rhythm – which all affect the delivery of the lines – the open captioning was not seamless. Ideally, perhaps, the lines would appear as the character delivers them. In the recent iteration of *Hold*, the way the captions were designed to operate (with each line fading in and out, one after the other) in the QLab software resulted in timing discrepancies between captions and characters. Along with some typographic errors, the captioning inadvertently revealed punch lines before they were delivered and lessened the impact of the jokes.

Yet, while such errors in technology and timing might be most easily discussed as a distraction or limitation of the work, the degree to which access technologies such as open captioning are made visible in *Hold* also reaffirms the multiple ways that the performance sought to test the possibilities of access aesthetics. Indeed, just as the disabled-led process of making *Hold* might lead to greater relational awareness of interdependency, vulnerability and complexity within the ensemble, so might the dramaturgical fabric of *Hold* – with its dual languages, partial audio description, integrated Auslan and inclusive practice – position access as a vital thread in the creation of new theatre aesthetics in Australia.

THE CABIN!

The Cabin! (2019) premiered at the Northcote Town Hall on 3 July 2019 as part of the Darebin Arts Speakeasy programme. The season ran for two weeks and, like all shows in the Speakeasy programme, offered an Auslan-interpreted show mid-season and a relaxed performance matinee. The concept, script and story for *The Cabin!* was developed over a two-year period as lead artist Joseph O'Farrell (hereafter known as JOF) worked with primary school students aged between six and twelve years from the UK and Australia. Our co-author, Sarah Austin, was employed as the Director of the 2019 season.

The material for the performance arose from workshops with children throughout 2017 and 2018, and it explored a range of

material connected to urban myths and horror stories. Gradually a narrative, some characters and some clear design directives emerged, which became the basis for a horror-comedy show known as *The Cabin!* The overarching structure was a kind of children's variety show, hosted by 'the worst theatre director ever', which escalated into a Zombie apocalypse. The rehearsal process for the 2019 season consisted of a week-long creative development intensive in the April school holiday period of that year, followed by a series of rehearsals after school and on weekends in the lead-up to the July premiere.

The key artists involved included JOF, the lead artist who had conceived and initiated the project and performs in it; Emily Tomlins, who developed the script and performs in the show; Steph O'Hara, the sound designer; Emily Barrie and Daryll Cordell, who were responsible for set and costume design; Jen Hector, the lighting designer; Rose Pidd, the Stage Manager; Kate Hancock and Jo Porter, who produced the project; and Ben Adams, the Assistant Director. There were eleven children overall in the cast, aged between ten and fourteen years. The cast consisted of two groups of five (known to us as 'Cast Blood' and 'Cast Gore'), and a teenage musician who featured in every show. The children came from a broad range of familial, religious, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, and lived between Balaclava in the south of Melbourne and Meadow Heights in the outer metropolitan north of the city. Some cast members presented with mild learning disabilities and one had English as a second language.

While the process for devising *The Cabin!* was collaborative, durational and frequently children-led, the use of strategic access strategies was not part of the two-year development process. In contrast to *Hold*, the use of access technologies such as Auslan interpretation were not initially part of the dramaturgical and technical design. However, at the start of the final rehearsal period, leading up to the Northcote premiere, the addition of access provisions became a major texture in the final work. Harriet Devlin-Dunbar, a Melbourne-based Auslan interpreter, was invited to see the work on its preview night and met with Sarah Austin and JOF after viewing the work. Together, they worked through a strategy for incorporating the interpreters into the dramaturgical fabric of the show and having them function as 'characters' within the world who responded to the spooky deterioration and goings-on around them. This involved having the interpreters conduct private conversations (only understood by D/deaf audience members) about the other characters onstage and, ultimately, having them killed off by Zombies during the apocalyptic finale. Harriet consulted with JOF and Sarah about what specific 'deaf' jokes the interpreters could make, and lines in the show were changed so that characters onstage continually acknowledged and incorporated the presence of the interpreters into the overall dramaturgy of the show. For example, when JOF first walks onstage in character he improvised an acknowledgement of the two interpreters and directly addressed the audience, saying:

> I would like to introduce you to these two lovely ladies, who are here just to interpret me. And tonight they will speak to you in the international language of … Auslan!

This nonsense introduction elicited a loud laugh from the D/deaf audience members and suppressed chuckles from the interpreters themselves.

A further example of the integration of the Auslan interpreters in the work was a moment toward the end of the show when they are left onstage alone as other characters have slowly been killed off and become Zombies. Crouched behind a desk onstage hiding from the Zombie children, the two interpreters sign furiously at each other, having this conversation:

> We should leave, I reckon. This place is creepy.
> But we are booked until 9.30 p.m.!
> Okay, but don't say I didn't warn you!
> Let's just give it ten more minutes, then we'll bail.

This moment demonstrates the potential of integrated interpretation to deepen the narrative potential of performance. The scene above functioned to increase the tension on stage for all audience members (not just Auslan users) as the interpreters performed their role within the overall dramaturgical frame of the performance. As Conroy notes, theatre requires an audience to consume multiple and simul-

taneous texts, of which they may only understand or comprehend some. In this case, not all audience members can understand Auslan, but the visual expressivity of the performers read through the bodies of the interpreters translates across languages.[30] However, the limited budget for interpretation on this project meant that the full potential of integrated interpreters was not explored. To achieve true integration, or a more seamless and central version – such as the one demonstrated in *Hold* – interpreters need to work as part of the fabric of the performance throughout the rehearsal process, and indeed function similarly, if not the same, as other cast members, as the *Hold* process demonstrates.

In addition to the integrated aesthetics of the Auslan interpreters, the rehearsal process for *The Cabin!* was co-designed with the child performers and incorporated a range of inclusive arts practices which worked to remove the barriers to participating in the process that may be experienced by cast members, and to address the power imbalances inherent in an adult–child collaboration. Some of these strategies suggest how notions of access drawn from disability arts may also enhance other inclusive methods. Indeed, a central idea within the embodied practice of inclusive arts is the notion 'of saying something, saying it again, and then saying it differently'.[31] This strategy of repeating information and returning to information in different ways is about ensuring that a diversity of individuals can encounter an idea, concept or piece of information in a way most suited to their needs. This idea extends to presenting information

in a range of formats – verbally, visually and kinaesthetically – as a strategy designed to ensure that collaborators have multiple points of connection and agency within the process of artistic decision-making.

One clear demonstration of non-verbal approaches employed within the rehearsal process of *The Cabin!* was the use of a visual map that pictorially depicts the planned activities of the rehearsal.[32] Our co-author Sarah utilised this process in *The Cabin!* rehearsals to develop a strategy for enabling the cast to collectively name the way the group approached things. For example, the child performers started to name scene work time as 'the making and the playing time', and the debrief at the end of each rehearsal period was 'the questions and the answers time'. This naming process arguably served to engender collective ownership of both the process and the rehearsal agenda for each day. It worked to shape the function of these activities and processes, as through naming them as part of an 'agenda' for the rehearsal for the day, the child performers were also identifying what might be required from these processes to serve their creativity and understanding of the material.

Throughout rehearsals, the group would cross off each activity on the map before moving on to the next one, and at the end of each rehearsal the artistic team and performers would gather around the map again, to collectively reflect on the activities undertaken. This was often an opportunity for performers to ask questions about how the material was shaping up, or how the material might end up being relevant or useful to the work. It also meant that power was diffused,

questioned or highlighted, and that (adult) decision-makers were not always steering the direction of each rehearsal.

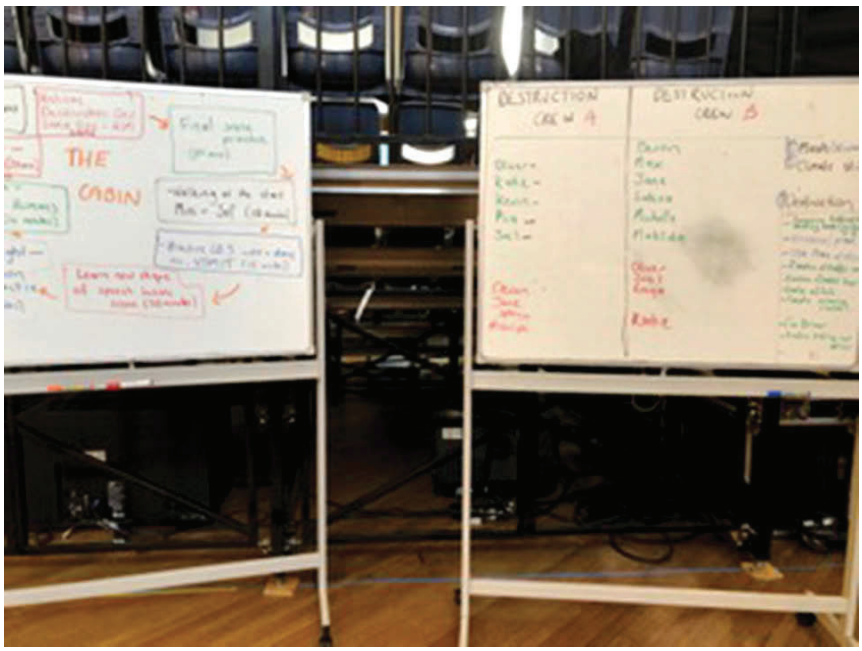


FIGURE 4: TWO WHITEBOARDS WITH VISUAL MAPS OF REHEARSAL ACTIVITIES FOR *THE CABIN!*, 2019. PHOTO: SARAH AUSTIN.

Another strategy employed to present information non-verbally was to create 'a movement map' to represent the characters' physical movement, gesture and expression in each scene. The map was presented as a grid which used pictures and arrows to depict the physical blocking of each scene. The map was placed on the wall of the rehearsal space and referred back to and adjusted as scenes developed.[33]

In this way, kinaesthetic information was rendered visually and this created a tool that enabled the performers to see the dramaturgical sequence of the show as a series of gestures, movements and moments. Different cast members had different relationships with the visual maps. The maps might be useful for providing an understanding of musical scores or how the performers might notate a feeling or rhythmic experience with symbols and patterns. Finding ways to connect to the existing knowledge of the child performers was an important strategy for the team –both to build equitable collaborative relationships and to empower the children as artists within the process. This process aligns or speaks to the inclusive working practice with an emphasis on care and agency utilised by Little during *Hold* rehearsals, but it is specifically tailored to meet the needs of a younger (child) cast. Both processes however are designed to address perceived power imbalances – in *The Cabin!* case between children and adult, and in *Hold* between the traditional authority of the Director and the cast. This desire to create equitable processes and practices is a central tenet in inclusive arts practice, and here it manifests both as an aesthetic and creative strategy.

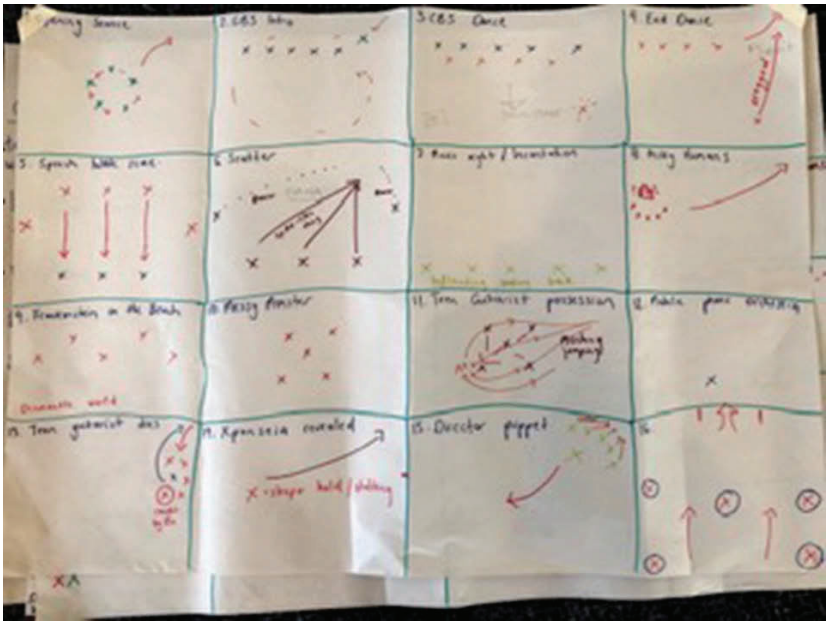


FIGURE 5: THE SCRIPT MOVEMENT MAP FOR *THE CABIN!*, 2019. PHOTO: SARAH AUSTIN.

The inclusive strategies used for the rehearsal and production processes of *The Cabin!* demonstrate the capacity of access aesthetics to dismantle the hierarchy of power and privilege usually afforded to the able-bodied. These strategies were designed to centre processes and aesthetics that are inclusive and to meet the challenge of providing access to both a creative process and a performance. In doing so, both access aesthetics and inclusive strategies work to enhance the overall experience for participant collaborators and audience members. In this way, it is possible to expand the idea of access aesthetics to more than just an outcome that happens onstage as part of the performance, and to consider how inclusive strategies

function within a rehearsal process as a critical part of creating an accessible aesthetic context.

CONCLUSION

Our investigation reveals new possibilities of innovation arising from the integration of multiple access tools into the production, rehearsal and performance process of two recent Australian works: the disabled-led performance *Hold* (2019) and a performance collaboration with children, *The Cabin!* (2019).

While analysis of both *The Cabin!* and *Hold* reveal some similarities in the inclusive processes and aesthetics that they employ, there are some key differences in how these shows have been set up to address accessibility and inclusion. *Hold* reflects an innovative, disabled-led process, with a majority of the (adult) cast of actors identifying with lived experience. As such, the processes within this performance work experimentally to engage with notions of access for both audience and artistic collaborators to forge new discoveries in aesthetic access. In contrast, *The Cabin!* is a work created by children with support from adult collaborators, for adult audience members, and the majority of the cast was aged under twelve years. Processes within this production align with both inclusive arts and also with established youth arts practices that seek to foster cultural agency and to platform and validate the voices and ideas of children.

However, emerging from our analysis of both of these works is that the integration of access can bring a further aesthetic dimension to performance work and, we suggest, can enhance the experience of spectating and participating for both audience and artistic collaborators. As these examples of Australian performance demonstrate, the attempt to creatively integrate multiple access tools, rather than singular systems, across the production, design and dramaturgy of a performance is a complex and difficult task. However, the promise and ambition of this work reaffirms that engaging access tools as core practical and aesthetic elements of the performance-making process – a system that is embedded, dynamic and, occasionally, contradictory – enhances, expands and diversifies the aesthetic and creative dimensions of the theatre.

NOTES

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19 *Ibid* 2–3.

20 *Ibid*, Survey response 19.

21 *Ibid*, Personal notes.

22 *Ibid*.

23 *Ibid*, Data collected through cast interviews for Little's Master of Arts (Creative Arts) research in accordance with Ethical Clearance approval, University of Southern Queensland.

24 Austin et al., *Beyond Access*; Hadley and McDonald, *The Routledge Handbook of Disability Arts, Culture, and Media*.

25 Little, 'Journal Notes and Audience Feedback Surveys on *Hold*': Personal notes.

26 Little, 'The Application of Accessible Theatre Practice Conventions and the Implications of the Disabled Body in a New Work, "Hold"'.

27 Hadley and McDonald, *The Routledge Handbook of Disability Arts, Culture, and Media*, 362–72.

28 Jo Verrent, *Aesthetics of Access: Creative Access in Theatre* (2020), Disability Arts Online, http://www.wearefreewheeling.co.uk/creativecase-aesthetics-of-access.

29 QLab is software used by theatre technicians, stage managers and designers for multimedia playback for live performance.

30 Conroy, 'How Can the Theatre Be Fully Accessible?' 55.

31 See http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/195717/Chapter-1-Inclusive-Arts-Practice-and-Research.pdf (last accessed November 2019).

32 The authors would like to acknowledge Melbourne-based Inclusive Arts Practitioner Katrine Gabb, who is responsible for introducing Sarah Austin to Visual Maps as a key strategy of performance-making with children.

33 Sarah Austin, 'Journal Notes on *The Cabin!*': Personal notes (2019).