DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Considering the therapeutic potential of immersive theatres : a practice-led investigation incorporating audience research to explore sensory performances and their affect on personal well-being

Howson, Teri Rosel

Award date:
2016

Awarding institution:
Bangor University

Considering the therapeutic potential of immersive theatres:

A practice-led investigation incorporating audience research to explore sensory performances and their affect on personal well-being

By

Teri Rosel Howson

Presented to Bangor University in fulfilment

of the thesis requirement for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

School of Creative Studies and Media

College of Arts and Humanities

Bangor University

(April 2016)

‘In order to see, it is necessary to shut your eyes.
In order to listen, silence is mandatory.
In order to find yourself, it is necessary to get lost’.
(Teatro de los Sentidos, *Ariadne’s Thread*, 1994).

Summary

This thesis explores immersive theatres' affect on the audience through performances enacted largely on and through the senses. A combination of practical and written exploration is utilised to examine the affective power of immersive theatre performances. This is in view of assessing how immersive theatres might impact upon personal well-being. Furthermore, this thesis proposes their extended use in applied settings for particular groups of people who may benefit from their therapeutic potential.

The name 'immersive theatres' has come to suggest a complex array of performances that explore, play and experiment with the relationship between audience, performer and performance, challenging the concept of a singular interpretation or experience of the work. In particular, this thesis focusses on visceral forms of immersion which can be considered therapeutic, with emphasis on the audience's role and response to the performance. Practice from the North Wales area forms the context for the research, in particular, theatre practitioner Iwan Brioc's Sensory Labyrinth Theatre work with companies Theatr Cynefin and The Republic of the Imagination now continued locally by Theatr Dan y Coed. Further companies and performers with similar practice are referred to in order to recognise the geographical breadth of similar practices including Adrian Howells, Teatro de los Sentidos and Ontroerend Goed's *The Smile off Your Face* (first performed 2003).

The use of practice and audience research provides an innovative examination of audience responses to an immersive performance. Two original performances were created – *The College on the Hill* (2011) and *When Autumn Passed Me By* (2014) – to explore the relationship between immersion and the therapeutic. Audience responses were collected using qualitative methods in order to understand how the experience had affected them. The first performance also incorporated a well-being measurement tool with the intention of testing the application of the tool to this setting and whether a change in well-being could be determined.

The findings suggest that both performances positively impacted upon the majority of the audience. Use of the well-being tool in the first performance implied a positive enhancement of personal subjective well-being when comparing scores taken immediately before and after the performance. This was supported by the qualitative responses from the audience. The data also highlighted the way the audience's sense of risk can intervene with their reception of the work.

This work offers a provocation for future practice in extending the use of multi-methods research to further understand immersive theatres and audience experiences.

Contents

List of Figures

N.B. All images are taken by the author except figure 11, included with permission from Glyn Griffiths. Selected images from *When Autumn Passed Me By* (2014) were photographed by Nathan Moore, commissioned by the researcher.

List of Tables

List of Accompanying Materials

This thesis is accompanied by a DVD with recordings of two performances – *The College on the Hill* (2011) and *When Autumn Passed Me By* (2014) – that were created as part of the research.

The College on the Hill

Performed on 5th and 6th February 2011, Main Arts Building, Bangor University, Bangor.

The nature of the performance as 'sensory' and individually experienced results in the visual recording acting as a representation of the performance the experience. The recording features a volunteer as an audience member to prevent any conflict in confidentiality with the data collected from the audience who attended. A weather storm meant that it was not possible to capture audio and visuals for some of the outdoor performances which have influenced the design of the recording. However, the performance process and methodology are discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

Performers (in alphabetical order): Kitty Anthony, Lucy Bishop, Dan Carne, Amy Chambers, Nicola Churchman, Kathryn Cooke, Nicola Halliday, Juan Nicholls, Joshua Pink, Laura Smith, Dave Stanley and Tom Warlow.

Additional volunteers: Kevin Deyna-Jones, Rachel Gadd, Glyn Griffiths, Maggie Parke, Lyle Skains, and Angharad Thomas.

Filmed by: John Evans and Matthew Owens.

Editing by: Osian Williams.

When Autumn Passed Me By

Performed on 19th January 2014, John Phillips Hall, Bangor University, Bangor.

This performance was experienced blindfold by the audience. In order to capture the sense of the performance the filmed footage includes two perspectives: one which attempts to represent the experience from the audience's perspective, the second from an external viewpoint to show the type of encounters that were featured in the performance. The recording features volunteer performers who granted permission to be filmed. The footage was recorded during one of the rehearsal sessions where performers practiced guiding one another prior to the actual performance.

Performers/guides (in alphabetical order): Peter Boyd, Holly Evans, Glyn Griffiths, Sarah Homerstone, Roger Hughes, Nathan Moore, Damon Robinson, Jon Steele and Homan Yusefi.

Additional volunteers: Rosie Barratt, Ceri Rimmer, and Gwenllian Glyn Dafydd.

Filmed by: Nathan Moore.

Editing by: Glyn Griffiths.

List of Abbreviations

Sensory Labyrinth Theatre: s.l.t

The Drowned Man: A Hollywood Fable: The Drowned Man.

The Republic of the Imagination: TROTI.

You Me Bum Bum Train: YMBBT (The company's first work was self-titled but, for clarity, only the company name appears abbreviated whilst the performance title appears in full).

Acknowledgments

A great deal is owed to some wonderful people who have continued to inspire, trust and support me along the way. I am indebted and thankful to them all:

First and foremost to my *Super*visor Dr. Kate Taylor-Jones: thank you for scooping me up at the beginning and getting me on track, for keeping me going in the middle, and getting me to the end. Thank you for fighting my corner, finding opportunities, looking out for me and wrestling work out of me. This Ph.D. took ten rounds out of me but I would not have made it without you. You are a wonderful advisor and I'm very glad to have made the Ph.D. journey with you as my mentor.

With great admiration for Iwan Brioc: for your inspiring person and work, for cultivating and growing my appreciation of the world of theatre and sharing so generously of your knowledge and understanding, for which I am forever grateful. Thank you for *'taking a chance'* to show me into the labyrinth: it has been a life-changing experience.

To the staff of the School of Creative Studies and Media, a place I have enjoyed as an academic home for several years. Particular thanks go to Stephanie Marriott for support of my academic and personal development and to Kate Lawrence for particular guidance with my practice and invaluable advice throughout.

To my friends: the ones that knew me before, the ones I met along the way, the ones who got me through the worst of it and the ones who saw me to the end (you know who you are and I am truly thankful for you all). I am especially thankful for the friendship of my uni girls: Cat, Kathleen, Hannah, Jenna, Claire, Zoe and also to Amy, Jenny, Maggie, Tim, Phil and Laura. Special thanks go to Jen Yates for our 'Ph.D. chats' and for encouraging me along the way with her boundless enthusiasm and positivity. Thank you to Iola for respite visits to her beautiful sanctuary of a home, for lots of coffee and chats and for occasional lending of Georgia the cocker spaniel for much-needed snuggles and walks. Thanks also to the 'L.A.' ladies for many a piece of sound advice. Thanks also to my fellow Ph.D.ers, particularly the SCSM set and colleagues in the Dementia Services Development Centre: thank you for spurring me on and being a great soundboard.

To the wonderful people I have met on my theatre journeys particularly: Adrian (who 'once told me'), Lavinia (who I always believe in), Anca, Demir, Elisa, Jasmina and Sandra, to name but a few… I see you all far less than I wish I could, but you have left an everlasting impression on my heart. Thank you for some of the most inspirational and happiest memories of this life so far and in the hope of further times together…

With thanks to the many practice volunteers (there are so many of you I don't have space for personal thanks for each of you), but mentions must go to Kevin, Rachel and Jen for their help during the first performance; Roger, Jon, and Holly for invaluable assistance with the second performance. Additional thanks to Hefin Francis of the School of Psychology for permission to use the Brigantia building quad for the first performance. Special thanks go to the audience, without you the performance simply could not be.

Thanks also to: Jacey Gascoyne (for Spanish and Catalan translations of reviews from the Teatro de Los Sentidos website); Matthew Owen and John Evans (for filming the first performance); Osian Williams (for rescuing me in the editing process); Nathan Moore (for film and photography of the second study); Michelle Underwood for advice and problem solving, Helen Gethin at CPR for her assistance in tracing some hard to find materials and

sources; Dyfan Roberts for sharing his encounter with *Ariadne's Thread* and Catherine O'Donnell from the People's History Museum for sharing her story with s.l.t. Particular thanks are extended to the YLCE and the Baines Charitable Trust for financial support.

To Glyn Griffiths: I can't describe how much I am thankful to you, but I'll do my best! You've seen me through the worst and best of this journey, thank you for being my motivator, for kicking me up the backside and not letting me give in on the days I really wanted to; the continuous chocolate, cups of tea, helping with anything and everything to get me through… I couldn't have done it without you. PENGUIN!

Last but not least with thanks to my lovely family for sticking with this dream of mine and the seemingly never ending wait to finish: it finally arrived! Thank you for your encouragement of my enquiring nature for all these years, with much love and continued silliness.

Preface

(*Or a walk into the forest*)

The story of how this thesis came to fruition may help frame for the reader how I arrived at my research question. I first came across immersive theatres through the work of Theatr Cynefin and Iwan Brioc's Sensory Labyrinth Theatre in 2007. My Master's degree tutor, Gwen Ellis, told me about a performance she had been to in a local forest which she thought that I would enjoy. At the time as I was focussed on contemporary text-based theatre plays, in the grips of Sarah Kane, and had become interested in the context of contemporary theatre in Wales. Gwen arranged for members of the theatre company to come and deliver a workshop: it was a curious few hours spent being blindfolded, telling stories and experiencing through the senses. I began to research the company and sought out other theatres which were similar. It was then I heard my first murmurs of an 'interactive', 'participatory', 'intimate' and 'immersive theatre'.

In early 2009 I began contemplating this fascinating body of work as the potential focus for a Ph.D. Around this time I sent a chance email to Theatr Cynefin asking if they might be willing to speak with me a little about their work. The reply came from Iwan Brioc stating that he was leading a training event in Portugal in a few weeks' time and if I was interested, would I like to be one of the attendees? Quite out of character I made impromptu arrangements and found myself on an adventure. That week in Portugal opened me up to a world of sensory theatrical storytelling that I had never considered as we underwent a series of training activities: playing games, guiding one another on sensory journeys and learning to use the senses as theatre.

Two weeks later Iwan was in North Wales offering another training course which he kindly allowed me to attend. I had my first full labyrinth experience in the Gwydyr forest, near the village of Llanrwst, wandering in the pitch black and feeling my way through my feet. I got lost, scrambled through the forest and having been focussed on my fear of making my way to the end, had to take a pause to realise I needed to slow down, re-shift my focus and enjoy being in that space at that moment. It was both a profound and provoking experience: I was simultaneously happy to have had the chance to walk through a forest alone at night and sad that it was something that could never be completely re-experienced: my first sensory labyrinth performance.

In the summer that followed a fellow postgraduate student (Lisa Buckley, who had also attended the training) and I, made our first joint attempt at putting it into practice ourselves by leading a five-day workshop for a student amateur dramatics society. At the end of the workshop, the group delivered a performance to approximately 20 people. The comments we collected from the performance highlighted the strangeness, fun, and joy provided by the performance: 'mud on my feet, a smile on my face', commented one audience, whilst another wrote: 'delightful and thought provoking. If I could have had [sic] the experience for a first again I would'. Their comments offered a glimpse into the audience's encounter. It was here that I became interested in how theatre makers and researchers might gain further insight into the audience's experience.

A short time later I heard about another company – Ontroerend Goed – and attended their performance of *The Smile off Your Face* (2009) at the Salford Lowry in a mostly blindfold and bound experience. There were certainly similarities to the work of Theatr Cynefin I had experienced only a few months earlier, in their use of senses and blindfolding. Equally, there were several distinct differences in how the performance involved the

audience. From this point, I was absorbed by what these different companies were doing and how they were going about doing it. The affect of the performance on the audience struck me as a subject worth attention, particularly when I considered that it could be extrapolated to particular contexts where sensory stimulation might be effective. The two performances created as part of this thesis are therefore offered as a query, response and query again to some of my explorations of this field, trying to learn if there was therapeutic potential in certain forms of immersive theatres.

Since beginning this project, numerous literature have emerged on immersive theatres, although many of the questions around their formation continue. Whilst voices have arisen and begun to discuss immersive theatres, I hope this research will add to that discussion, presented through both the practical and written work which forms this thesis, by particularly giving voice to the audience.

Introduction

Exploring the potential for immersive theatres to enhance personal well-being

This research addresses issues relating to audience involvement in a specific form of participatory theatre practice: the immersive. The recent proliferation of interest in making performances that immerse an audience has led to a vast array of performative iterations varying in terms of form, scale, audience size, and interaction. It is a much-debated term that describes a complex array of theatres which are encountered through individual experience. Performances usually take place in three-dimensional, all-encompassing performance spaces, where both audience and performer simultaneously occupy the same physical space. These works are frequently playful, probing audience/performer agency and can involve visceral or virtual environments (or sometimes a combination) to be explored by the audience. Invariably, performances have utilised the senses as a form of engagement with the work: props become tangible objects to be held, the set is infused with scents which permeate the space and the audience's proximity to the performers are tantalisingly close.

In research, immersion has received a burgeoning of interest. Within this thesis I assert a definition of immersive theatres that invokes not only centrality of the experiential nature of these performances (Groot Nibblelink, 2012; Alston, 2013a) – one of the principal articulations of their make-up – but that also captures the importance of the senses to creating this heuristic form of theatre that is executed through dynamic iterations between performer, audience and performance space. This composition leads to performances that take place in unconventional locations where the spectacle of the performance is not only visual but also aural, tactile and aromatic.

Josephine Machon's (2013) seminal work identified the multiple ways in which these theatres are re-imagining theatrical interaction, employing within her title the plural term *immersive theatres* to describe the variety of approaches to immersion that have been adopted, some of which have become synonymous with individual companies or practitioners. This thesis is primarily concerned with performances which employ a gentle and salutary approach to theatrical interaction and submersion. In this way, it is intended towards a deeper understanding of one form of immersive encounter which I term the *therapeutic*.

In order to further understand the potential of immersive theatres to positively transform individuals (White, 2013), the research is informed by the development of two original performances, complemented by attendance at immersive theatre performances and training activities in particular methods of immersion. My own performance research particularly explores the audience responses to the work, providing a source of new knowledge with which to understand and interpret immersive theatres. Whilst it has been said that the: 'ephemerality of the performing arts poses particular challenges to their inclusion in an already contested site of knowledge production', it provides a 'new conceptual map' through which to understand this practice (Nelson, 2013: 3–4). In creating original material it removes the difficulty of gaining detailed insight into the processes of existing theatre companies, who closely guard the essentials of their practice.

The inclusion of data collection from audience attendees provides a unique opportunity to link the intention of the performance with its reception: two devised performances: *The College on the Hill* (2011) and *When Autumn Passed Me By* (2014), explore different elements of immersive performance to offer new insight into the creation and response to each work. At a remove from the industry, practice research offers a space to explore the variety of responses to the work in depth: audience responses provide a comparison with the intended affect of the work balanced against an understanding of where the performance succeeded or wrought a different response. It therefore offers an innovative approach to the field in considering immersive theatres through original audience research, where current literature has provided insight into the innovations of particular theatre companies and/or practitioners (for example Alston, 2012 and 2013; Machon, 2013; Radosavljević, 2013a and 2013b; White; 2013) or a singular critical reading of the performance (see Teschke, 2000; Worthen, 2012)[1]. Where the audience have been discussed it has centred on an understanding of the negotiation of the proximal relationship between performer and audience within an intimate performance setting (Iball, 2012; Hill and Paris, 2014).

This thesis considers the potential for specific immersive theatre practices to enhance individual well-being. Anecdotal evidence from several theatre companies and practitioners suggests that a subset of immersive theatres affect the audience in a particular way that could be considered therapeutic (see audience comments from *Play your Party* (2014) and several

[1] With the exception of Heddon, Iball and Zerihan (2012) who offer three perspectives on a series of one-to-one performances.

sensory labyrinth theatre (hereafter s.l.t) productions in Chapter 2). Appraisals, usually left in comment books or feedback forms, denote a theatre that is enacting upon its audience through a process of revealing, transforming and restoring the audience through direct encounter. Having personally experienced the ways in which some immersive theatres provide a curative or beneficial element, I was interested in understanding this affect further, as a first step towards considering the potential and expediency to develop this form with particular participant groups as a form of therapeutic theatre. In doing so I propose that this application may be helpful for a range of conditions that might benefit from sensory, immersed and gentle engagement and may augment the existing variety of creative devices in the flourishing field of arts and health.

Arts and health and well-being

In the past few years, calls have been made for approaches to health to look toward psychosocial rather than medicinal treatments (Kinderman, 2014). This body of work proposes that our everyday experiences affect us in deep and moving ways. One way of developing a psychosocial approach to health is through the arts. There has been an expansion of arts and health research with a number of small-scale projects looking at ways of evidencing the positive effect of the arts with particular groups of people. One area that has received growing attention is dementia.

Current estimates suggest that in 2015 there are 850'000 people in the UK living with dementia and that this will increase to one million by 2025 (Alzheimer's Society, 2015). In addition, figures suggest that there are 670'000 people in the UK caring for a person who has a form of dementia (Ibid). It has been suggested that theatre may be able to reduce the stigma of ageing and dementia (Bernard and Munro, 2015). In the past year productions dealing with the subject of dementia have been performed across the UK: Nicola Wilson's *Plaques and Tangles* (2015) played at the Royal Court Theatre in London, touring productions have included Skimstone Arts *Jack and Jill and the Red Postbox* (2015) and Meeting Ground's *Inside Out of Mind* (2015), to name only a few. Whilst viewing theatre may contribute to reducing the stigma of dementia, there is evidence that participatory approaches to the theatre may be of benefit to people living with dementia. Anne Davies Basting has emerged as a prominent figure, using storytelling in her *Timeslips* (2001) project as a method of communication with people living with dementia. Her project, *Finding Penelope* (2012) took

place in a care home in Milwaukee and featured residents performing in this site-specific performance. The project has been described as showing that people living with dementia can actively contribute and participate in the arts as well as learn new skills (Mello and Voights, 2012).

This thesis looks to question whether immersive theatres might be applied within similar contexts. However, as an initial study into this field, I focussed on working with a general audience who self-selected to attend two immersive performances designed for this research, as a first step in understanding the potential for immersive theatres to positively impact on personal well-being.

In recent years, well-being has become a popular term to describe both individual and collective feelings of wellness. Well-being has been described as 'optimal psychological functioning' by Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci (2001: 142). The term is complex and bound up with how people view their ideal of what wellness ensues. Although sometimes used interchangeably with the term 'quality of life', well-being has been asserted as a less medical term, allowing for thinking about wellness outside of medical domains (Stratham and Chase, 2010). More recently, focus has come to rest on defining well-being as a state of 'equilibrium' based upon maintaining one's personal sense of what is 'normal' and using one's personal resources' to overcome 'challenges' when this state is disrupted:

> In essence, stable well-being is when individuals have the psychological, social and physical resources they need to meet a particular psychological, social and/or physical challenge. When individuals have more challenges than resources, the see-saw dips, along with their well-being, and vice-versa (Ibid: 230).

Equally, Rachel Dodge et al. (2012) assert that periods of monotony can also affect one's well-being, arguing for a construction of well-being that is fluid and constantly changing, rather than stable. Similarly, John T. Cacioppo and Gary G. Bernston (1999) stated that wellness is not the absence of harmful or negative affect, rather that it indicates one's capacity of dealing with these type experiences. It is through this lens that it is possible to describe people as 'living well' when they have a condition or disease because, it has been asserted, that quality of life is only one aspect of well-being, where it should also include the role of social, economic and psychological influences (Dodge et al., 2012)[2].

[2] For example, the Department of Health for England's National Dementia Strategy focuses on 'living well' with Dementia through three key areas of: 'improved awareness, earlier diagnosis and intervention, and a higher quality of care' (2009: 9).

Other research into this area has looked at categories of well-being. Ryan and Deci distinguish between two forms of well-being: the 'hedonic', centred on 'pleasure and happiness' and the 'eudaimonic', focussed on 'what is worth doing' whilst aspiring to be one's 'true self' (2001: 143–146). This second concept has been related back to Aristotle and his notion of 'eudaimonia' (see Ryan and Deci, 2001 and Dodge et al., 2012). The eudaimonic is further explored in 'Self-determination theory' (SDT) (Ryan and Deci, 2000), that focuses on 3 areas: 'autonomy, competence, and relatedness' (Ryan and Deci, 2000: 146). More recently the two concepts have been considered together as research has led to acceptance that 'wellbeing is a multi-dimensional construct' (Dodge et al., 2012: 223). Within this study, the use of the ICECAP–A score (Al-Janabi and Coast, 2010), used in the first performance, incorporates both the hedonic and eudaimonic in the five domains outlined across the tool: 1) 'Feeling settled and secure', 2) 'Love, friendship and support', 3)'Being independent', 4) 'Achievement and progress' and 5) 'Enjoyment and pleasure' (Al-Janabi and Coast, 2010: n.p.).

Tools to measure well-being can include both objective and subjective approaches to wellness. For example, observational tools score an individual based on exhibiting particular behaviours. These have become increasingly popular and recognised as a way to gain additional evidence that cannot be determined through existing methods (see Dreyer et al., 2010). I have chosen to focus on subjective well-being as my thesis emphasises how the audience feel about and interpret the performance and how they consider the performance to have affected them. This is substantiated through the use of qualitative questioning to determine individual audience responses to the work. The well-being measure used in the first performance complements this data in asking the audience to rate their own sense of well-being according to the five domains. This approach corresponds with the emphasis on personal experience within this thesis. Additionally, it provides a way of bringing together transdisciplinary approaches in order to better understand audience responses to immersive theatres.

My Practice

Within this thesis, I have approached the research from the position of 'artist researcher' (see Roshem, 2014: n.p.)[3]. This is pertinent to a thesis where, as a practitioner, I have sought to understand audience perceptions to the two performances I created through collating audience responses through rigorous methods of data collection (which I outline below) to generate new understanding on immersive theatres.

My fascination with immersive theatres began following attendance at a workshop in s.l.t with members from Theatre Cynefin in Bangor in 2008 which was followed by two training events; one in Portugal and a second in North Wales, in 2009. Since then I have performed in several immersive and participatory events in North Wales and also experienced numerous productions across the UK as a member of the audience. These encounters have both shaped and informed my research and thinking.

Within my practice, I have sought to query the relationship between performance and its affect on the audience by exploring the relationship between the audience and the performance material. The first performance *The College on the Hill* (2011) focussed on replicating s.l.t with the adjunct of making an exploration of the relationship between place and person the subject of the performance. The second performance *When Autumn Passed Me By* (2014) focussed more intimately on audience affect considering the dynamics of blindfolded performance and exploring alternative formations than the labyrinth model employed in s.l.t. In this performance, I utilised a theme (autumn) as the subject of the performance and avoided the use of what I term confessional modes of speaking (influenced by Heddon and Howells, 2011). In contrast to the first performance this work was almost entirely non-verbal and blindfold, instead it emphasised the senses of touch, taste and smell. It was through the two performances and audience responses to each work that I was able to authenticate the possibility of immersive performances producing particular affects. In addition, the responses revealed aspects relating to the audience's own perceptions of risk and how this influences their response to the performance. In this way, the performances were integral to the findings explored in Chapter 4 of this thesis in revealing aspects of the relationship between performance and audience in immersive theatres.

[3] I have highlighted across the thesis some of the key reflections and interactions made between my practice and the research process and the way the one has informed the other. An accompanying chronology in the appendices provides a record of the various performances I was involved in as either performer or audience as well as training events which informed the research.

The particularity of s.l.t to North Wales within the UK provided me with an opportunity to engage with immersive practice. S.l.t has stemmed from the work of Columbian theatre practitioner Enrique Vargas who brought his work on the 'poetics of the senses' (Teatro de los Sentidos, n.d.) to Wales in the 1990s. As a practice s.l.t has been shared widely through training a network of European theatre companies supporting and engaging young people through theatre instigated by Iwan Brioc and his work with Theatr Cynefin and The Republic of the Imagination (TROTI). Whilst this work has evolved in the last twenty years or more through practice it has received little inclusion within the critical discussion of immersive theatres. Their emergence at the end of the 20th Century demonstrates a continually developing interest in participation since the 1960s that has continually evolved to today's resurgence of interest in participatory art forms (for more detailed discussion of this transition see the section on Influences and Similarities in Chapter 1).

It is through the lens of my experience and engagement with this work that s.l.t is presented in this thesis alongside more familiar immersive theatre practices. However, the thesis is not designed as an exhaustive account of all the current theatre companies and practitioners exploring immersive practices in particular ways (too many to be included here), but presents a variety of both renowned and less celebrated performances to reflect the diversity and variation occurring across immersive theatres practices and giving space to the marginal practices performed in North Wales. I particularly consider the work of Enrique Vargas with both Taller de Investigación del Imagen Teatral and Teatro de los Sentidos who inspired the work of Iwan Brioc and his companies Theatr Cynefin and TROTI (which has since further cultivated Theatr Dan y Coed to continue this style of performance in North Wales), are influential to my discussion. Both practitioners have established themselves outside of the critical mainstream within alternative local, regional and international networks. It is within this frame that this thesis contributes to a representation of immersive theatres that is simultaneously global but also local in its sensitivities and appeal which is possible because of the responsive nature of the work to a place that is fundamental in much of this practice.

Additionally, during the course of the thesis I refer to well-known theatre companies and practitioners, predominantly Ontroerend Goed and the late Adrian Howells, who I argue have both intended some or all of their works to be therapeutic and are both established names in the field. I also make reference to the work of Punchdrunk Theatre, You Me Bum

Bum Train (hereafter YMBBT) and other immersive events. Punchdrunk, in particular – who were founded in 2000 – have established themselves both nationally and internationally as strongholds of the form and are often cited as one of the first immersive theatres companies (White, 2012). Reference is also made to popular entertainment forms which share many of the conceits of immersion produced by the theatre companies mentioned above. In this way theatre and the theatrical are considered in the broadest sense using Richard Schechner's proposal of theatre as an 'event' (1998: 71), moving beyond quarrels of the aesthetical and value status often used in defining art (see Abell, 2012). These companies, practitioners and their works provide a contextualising frame to the research, predominantly in Chapter 1 where I consider the diversity and history of immersive practice.

Research question

I have chosen to focus on immersive theatres as a subcategory of participatory theatres that submerge audience members within the performance environment, removing familiar markers of auditorium and stage. It is within the precinct of an all-encompassing and sensory theatre that my discussion of therapeutic immersive theatres is positioned. Recognition of the duality of immersive theatre experiences to be influenced by both audience *and* performer demands an awareness of active (rather than passive) perception (see Frieze, 1999): not only on the part of the audience member as an integrated part of the spectacle, but also on the part of the performer as the instigator of participatory acts within the theatrical space that requires a particular awareness of the audience.

The primary question this thesis explores is: '*Can immersive theatres be used to improve individual well-being?*' To explore this, the thesis investigates audience responses to two performances specifically created for the thesis. Several sub-questions are explored as part of this topic:

a) What potential do immersive theatres provide beyond their initial appeal as theatrical entertainment?
b) Is it possible to determine certain responses to an immersive performance, particularly one that is intended to be therapeutic?
c) What might we infer from this research for the future of immersive theatre practices?

These topics are investigated as part of a line of questioning which aims to deepen understanding and awareness of immersive performances that principally endeavour to

achieve a therapeutic response. It has been noted that contemporary society places a high degree of interest on emotion considering 'everyday disappointments 'as 'risks to our self-esteem' (Füredi, 2004: 1). With this statement in mind, I have sought to approach immersive theatres by way of considering how they may potentially influence and affect the audience through the type of experience they encounter.

This thesis also recognises an emerging tension in immersive theatres that emerged from the performance findings relating to the audience's response to risk taking (see Alston, 2013b). Here I hasten to add a confession that may seem strange in light of the subject of my thesis: I detest audience participation. Whilst many queries now spring to mind I shall hasten to elaborate: I dislike participation where the playing field is not level or where interaction is enforced unwillingly upon the audience. In many works the apparent loss of autonomy, when more closely inspected, may in actuality require the audience to be 'docile bodies' (Foucault, 1979: 135) or to invariably be coerced or persuaded to act in particular ways. However, my first experiences with s.l.t demonstrated that whilst there is often a limit to one's autonomy, not all participation was forcibly imposed. I was challenged by an alternative performance mode as I walked through the dark, not knowing the way forward. Nevertheless, the performers I encountered were always supportive and encouraging throughout the journey and the invitation to participate was always just that: a non-threatening solicitation. The interactions I encountered along the route of the labyrinth were gratifying, enjoyable and fun. At the end of my first labyrinth, I did not want to leave: I had been encouraged to play and explore and in doing so felt my senses awaken. Embedded within my own practice has been a constant questioning of the motives for audience participation, how it is enabled and for what reason. During the research, this dialectic concern became evident as I encountered distinctive practices and these observations emerge in the discussion presented in Chapter 5.

Research Approach

This thesis provides an original contribution to knowledge in several ways. The research builds upon recent examinations of immersive theatres as experiential encounters, offering several further potential factors for consideration across the variety of practices defined as immersive (see Chapter 1). In using practice research and collating audience responses to the performances I explore both the intention and reception of the work, with the intention of understanding the potential of immersive theatres to offer a therapeutic form of performance.

I shall briefly outline the methodologies used to consider audience well-being in immersive theatre performances for this research.

Phenomenology

As an experiential practice, the phenomenological nature of immersive theatres has been discussed critically in terms of the importance of both the senses and the performances site in informing an encounter which is felt through the bodies sensory apparatus of: touch, sound and smell but also taste and sight (see Pearson, 2010; Newman, 2013). As Chapter 1 describes, the relational aspect of audience to the work has been a primary mode of describing these practices, although often their voice has been absent. Similarly, within psychological research phenomenology has emerged as an approach to studying 'human experience' through attention to 'people's perceptions of the world' (Langdridge, 2007: 10–11). This method complements the sensory theatres investigated within this research. Darren Langdridge's reference to phenomenology as a process of research and discovery is close to the meaning of therapeutic immersive theatres I identify in this thesis. He writes: 'It is only when we return to the things themselves that we recognize how the world is *a lived experience* rather than an object to be studied' (Ibid: 12, emphasis as in original). If I may return to the quote from *Ariadne's Thread* (2014) which opens this thesis, the use of the senses in these select immersive theatres are taking the audience back to the roots of experience, by providing a space where they can become the focus of one's attention.

Rather than seeking a single truth, phenomenology allows for emphasis on 'lived experience' (Ibid: 4), that seems pertinent to a study of performances which involve and relate to the individual. This was evident in both performances, for example in *When Autumn Passed Me By* (2014) where one audience member expressed having difficulty with smell because of having used a hand soap prior to the performance. In his post-performance recording, this person commented that the soap interfered with his appreciation of the scents and smells within the performance and became a hindrance to some of his sensory appreciation of the performance. In *The College on the Hill* (2011) performance, one audience member expressed being distracted by the inclement weather whilst another referred to a physical ailment which affected their movement through the performance space. It was through these responses that I identified the importance of the audience's perception of risk to their experience. Although I argue in this thesis that the performances produced are therapeutic in nature, it is important to acknowledge from the phenomenological standpoint

how this manifests and to reveal the variety of experiences that differ from person to person. This is of importance for the future potential of tailoring sensory performances in applied settings to provide a truly (to borrow Tom Kitwood's (1993:66) phrase) 'person-centred approach', in creating personalised and responsive immersive performance environments, not only for people living with dementia, but in any applied context.

Whilst within this thesis I recognise the dialectical relationship between performer and audience within the immersive experience, it is the audience's perspective which takes precedence within the research. Although this is in part due to a shortage of space to consider both performer *and* audience positions in any great detail, practice-led work has extensively given voice to the artist as practitioner and researcher (Hamilton and Jaaniste, 2010) and my background, experiences and learnings inform and provide situate the work within the following chapters.

A recent blog post commenting on television studies stated that 'if we [researchers] ignore the audience's perception – well, we ignore the audience' (Weissmann, 2015: n.p.). The thesis examines the audience's experiences by studying the affect the performance has upon individual audience members, opening up an understanding of works experienced in a singular manner. This is achieved through data collected from audience attendees at the two performances created during the research. The importance of audience research is drawn upon to show how imperative considerations of audience experience are, particularly in works that communicate the performance experience sensorially. In particular this hermeneutic approach (see Pavis, 1998) has allowed for consideration of the ways in which the performance can be interpreted that acknowledges the multiplicity of the audience experience. In the context of this thesis data collected from audience participants act as an independent review of the performances with the aim of providing a counterpoint to my experience as a practitioner. This two-fold approach to the study of immersive theatres has been largely absent from previous studies in this area.

Practice and audience research

The practice developed within the thesis, answers some of the concerns Graeme Sullivan addresses regarding preliminary responses to practice in research: that the artwork itself cannot stand alone and be proclaimed 'research' (2009: 46). Within this thesis practice is incorporated as an integral part of the investigation into audience experience. This is in line

with Henk Borgdorff's view whereby 'art is itself a fundamental part of the research process, and [...] partly the result of research' (2012: 31). The research has evolved as a process of study and reflection that includes the performances (not only as autonomous theatrical entities but), integrated into the inquiry. In addition, the thesis uses social science methods for audience data collection. Methods have included maintaining condition 'states' in the delivery of the performance through advertising them as performance study's. Furthermore, data has been collected from audience participants in controlled settings in order to provide particular comment on the impact of the performance on individual audience members. The practice aims to both complement and challenge several aspects raised through the discussion in Chapter's 1 and 2, emerging out of several of the concepts, issues and observations made of current practices. As a new approach to practice research in theatre, the employment of social science methods in collecting qualitative data seeks to understand the human experiences of those that partake in these theatres and how the audience themselves find ways to articulate their experience. This seems particularly pertinent to a theatre that aims to foster individual experience and an enquiry interested in diverse responses to the performances.

It has been suggested that a social science research model – which requires the researcher to be distanced – would be at odds with a practice-led research approach – where the researcher is embedded in the process (Haseman and Mafe, 2009) and others have raised concerns of adopting mixed methods approaches without fully considering the complexities of both disciplines (Schrøder et al., 2012). This thesis has sought to use both methods through careful balancing, not only to avoid researcher bias but to incorporate both disciplines successfully into the research, a process which I will now outline.

To date, audience responses have received little attention within this emerging field of research. There are examples of researchers accounts of their own experience (see Teschke, 2000; Iball, Heddon and Zerihan, 2012; Worthen, 2012). Whilst in the past the theatre critic has generally been considered as an authority on evaluating performance, it is fitting that the nature of immersive theatres as offering individual and differentiable experiences, presents the necessity to be aware of the multiplication of audience experience which has become prevalent across popular criticism. Furthermore the use of comment books and 'comment box' films (which record people's reaction to performance, as shown on YMBBT's

homepage (YMBBT, n.d.)[4], provide only a limited and immediate response to the performance that lacks the consistency of employing data collection techniques.

Other fields such as games studies have recognised the value of user-centred design engaging with 'corporeal activity and experience' and 'how gameplay is bodily manifested' (Lankoski et al., 2011: 177). Similarly, film studies have used qualitative analysis to understand audience responses and reactions to particular films and genres, such as horror (Stokes and Maltby, 1999). Adopting such an approach to theatre allows for recognition of the audience as central to the performance encounter and for their performance experience to be recognised for its central role in the constitution of the dramatic action.

This approach is pertinent to the motivation for employing data analysis in the context of performance, stemming from an absence in the field to relate to a specific, rather than general or abstract concept of 'audience'. Audience response has often been inferred in generalised terms, (Blackstone and Louis, 1995; Schenker, 1999) or in consideration of an ideal spectator (Elam, 1980). Some inferred documentation of the audience in theatre has been acquired through archival material of letters and correspondence (Blackstone and Louis, 1995; Friedman-Rommell, 1995) that provides individual responses to particular performances. The audience has also been considered through the historical and textual analysis of play-texts inferring statements about the audience's reception of a play (Revermann, 2006). There are examples of specific audiences being used for research; a case in point is Bob Dickinson's (1983) interviews with audience members of North-West England music hall performances. More recently, where audience research has been done, it has been linked to marketing strategies rather than creating an understanding of audience responses to explicit performance material and experience. One of the earliest accounts of audience research by P.H. Mann (1967) was conducted in order to better understand audience demographics for the Sheffield Playhouse based on attendances at two productions. This approach rarely impacts upon the development of the work in terms of content but serves to justify (financial) support of the production in itself. More recently, Sharon Ammen (1996) surveyed 246 audience members through random sampling to look at responses to character and plot in Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls.* In addition, data analysis has been used to understand the impact of a theatre in education project (Gallagher and Service, 2010) and to determine

[4] The film box video presented a series of audience's immediate reaction to the performance. Audience were filmed in a private booth where they could then record their response to the performance. YMBBT's video of responses have since been removed but joint artistic director Morgan Lloyd has referred to passing 'passenger testimonials' to the cast during intermissions between performances (Lloyd in *Total Theatre*, 2010: 29).

short and long term impacts of the theatre on audiences (Walmsley, 2013). Within the context of this thesis, audience response is used to directly inform critical thinking on the development of future immersive performances in particular settings. This is achieved through specific questions which engage with the audience's response to certain aspects of the performance (for copies of the questions used see appendices section).

It has been suggested that audience research should include more refined methods that open up discussion of a multifarious audience experience. George Gunkle determined some time ago that research into the audience required an understanding of what he calls 'audience variables' (1967: 277–278). He further stated that there has been a lack of research into the '*dependent variables*' of a performance which he defined as 'what *do we want to have happen* in the audience when a production is taking place?' (Ibid: 280, emphasis as in original). This thesis can be seen to address Gunkle's comments by considering the ways in which the performance has been designed to elicit a particular kind of response, and considering how this is borne out by directly questioning the audience about their personal experience.

In collecting audience responses, comparable questions provide a means to compare and contrast individual audience encounters to the same performances. This provides an original approach to the subject of immersive theatres. Furthermore, the study promotes the value of audience research not only for marketing purposes but to develop future performance practices. I consider this as a vital element for works with participation at their core, a view shared by Iball (2012) who also endorses the use of alternative research methods in order to understand the experience of direct encounter in theatre.

Analysis methods

Whilst my own research background does not derive from social sciences, I have endeavoured to assimilate social science research methods in the data collection and analysis process as much as possible. The empirical nature of this study, in collecting audience responses from the two performances created for the research, results in a going beyond a 'history of thinking' (Peer, Hakemulder and Zyngier, 2012: 18) on audience responses to performance towards a disentanglement of their responses. Baz Kershaw and Helen Nicholson have commented how theatre research often emerges from the unknown which can be a rewarding process (2011: 9). This position lends itself to the hermeneutic approach used

within the thesis, allowing for an understanding of the audience's interpretation of the performance based on their personal responses to each performance.

The analysis of audience data used a combination of content and thematic analysis (see Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Questions were designed to provide a broad range of responses to the performances to allow the audience's multifarious experiences to emerge from the data itself. Whilst I have explored immersive theatres through performance and designed the questions for the audience research, to maintain distance I trained volunteer assistants to conduct the actual audience interviews or questionnaires. This approach encourages the use of diverse methodologies from both the arts and social sciences in order to understand and reflect on the audience experience of immersive theatres as well as the intended experience created for the performance whilst still maintaining good standards of research 'hygiene' (Peer, Hakemulder and Zyngier, 2012: 212). It is anticipated that the research highlights the value of audience research within performance studies as a way of considering the audience experience which may then inform how the performance can be, understood, framed and further developed. More broadly, the thesis presents qualitative data as a way of directing research in theatre towards an analysis of performance experiments specifically created for the purpose of investigation and exploration.

Confines of the research

It is undoubtedly helpful to frame the limitations of this thesis and what is not covered within the space of this work. Foremost, this thesis does not aim to offer a comprehensive summary of all immersive practices in the UK. Its surging popularity has seen a number of companies offering immersive experiences to audience members and a diverse range of existing companies' borrowing from the immersive form in response to the upsurge of interest in this type of performance. One example can be seen in NoFitState Circus's *Bianco* (2013) which the company described as 'immersive' (NoFitState, 2014). The performance enveloped the audience within the performance space, requiring the audience to vary their spectator position in response to the adaptation and manipulation of a movable metal framework which shifts position and shape for each of the different segments of the performance. Whilst still contained within the familiar trope of a 'big top' circus tent, the whole of the performance space is used with the audience no longer seated around the sidelines of the tent. Yet this is as far as the change in viewing position is extended. Interactions between performers and audience were often one way in terms of performers speaking at, rather than with, an

audience member. This is just one example of the current popularity and employment of immersive techniques and the appellation of 'immersive' within contemporary performances.

The thesis is focussed on the audience's experience of the performance and how they encounter the fictional world of the performance. Recently, affect has been given a great deal of attention within academia, as a way of considering the relationship between, mind, body and emotions and 'both our power to affect the world around us and our power to be affected by it' (Hardt in Clough and Halley, 2007: ix). Whilst this research does consider affect, it is not intended as a theory of affect in immersive theatres. I have explored the audience experience of immersive theatres which is inherently tied into the performance's affect upon them. It is important to consider, however, the way affect has been framed as taking the individual from one state to another (Gregg and Seigworth, 2010), an essential requirement (or hope) of immersive theatres and certainly an important consideration for applied settings where any transformation (see White, 2013) will take place through nuanced methods.

This thesis particularly focuses on theatres that are physically embodied and experienced by the audience member, rather than virtual practices. The term immersive has been used to describe both visceral and virtual interactive performance environments and those which synthesise the two. The absence of virtual practice from this thesis is not intended to undervalue or deny the import of the similarities between each form, but there is simply not space to consider the effects of both virtual and physical practice. In addition, there have been several works that have explored the mechanics of virtual performances in terms of technology, interaction and liminality (e.g. Giannachi, 1994; Broadhurst, 1999; Dixon, 2007 and 2011; Broadhurst and Machon, 2010 and 2012). It is therefore accepted that virtual immersive theatres adhere to similar principles of the form laid out and explored within this thesis in relation to visceral immersive theatres, albeit through simulated or non-physical means. All these practices (which I term broadly as *immersive arts*)[5] intend to submerge the audience within the art form to engage in an embodied experience of the performance. One such example is Blast Theory's *Desert Rain* (1999) which placed groups of six audience members in a variety of mixed physical and virtual environments by integrating both corporeal and computer generated spaces into the performance, requiring the audience to participate in a 30-minute mission. Its description is similar to Punchdrunk's *...when*

[5] I use this term to encapsulate the broad range of immersive practice including: film, performance art, theatre, dance and games, to recognise the inherent connection of these works to submerge the audience within the dramatic frame.

darkness descended (2011) which directs the audience on a mission to send a message to the protagonist of the game, albeit using less of the technological apparatus Blast Theory incorporate into their performances.

The term 'immersive' has also been used to describe a growing body of participatory and sensory practices in museums, film and gaming (Blascovich, 2002; Griffiths, 2008; Kocurek, 2013). However, there is no space within the parameters of this thesis to undertake a comparative analysis of the multifarious practices of immersion. Nonetheless, it is important to recognise the homogenisation across and between virtual and embodied practices, theatre and other forms of entertainment. This position allows for recognition of their combined significance as prevalent forms of art and entertainment in contemporary culture in terms of growing interest in generating active participants within a variety of art forms and furthermore, the development of an *immersive culture* that is discernible across disciplines and practices.

As part of the emerging discussion on immersive theatre practices, this thesis aims to delve deeper into the processes and mechanisms at work within the performance. I present a multi-faceted discussion of the topic informed by an amalgam of personal experience, critical theatre reviews and audience data. The nature of performance is essentially temporal and fleeting and therefore resists documentation. This is particularly challenging for a theatre that is explicitly sensory in nature. Nevertheless, I have endeavoured to capture the essence of the performance experience as a representation of the experience (Pavis, 1998) through a multi-media approach. Using a combination of photography and sketches (Gray and Malins, 2004), narrative description; notes and diagrams from the development of the performances (see appendices) and film (see accompanying DVD footage), the practice is evidenced throughout the thesis.

Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 provides an overview of contemporary immersive theatre practices explored through some of the preliminary theoretical responses to this work. I contextualise immersive theatres within interconnected theatrical practices giving a sense of the evolution of immersive theatres from previous theatrical forms including considerations of the performance site, the senses, and participation. From contextualising the field, Chapter 2

focuses on practices local to North Wales, in particular, the import of s.l.t to the creation of immersive theatre performances within the area.

In the remainder of the thesis, I concentrate on the performances created for this research. Chapter 3 presents the methodology for the performances within the context of the research. The methods for each performance are presented alongside the training, preparation and rehearsal process. The research instruments, which included questionnaires and interviews, are also discussed.

Chapter 4 presents the findings from the audience responses collected via the two performances. This is compared with my own intentions and reflections to discern how the work affected the audience and whether this differentiated from my intentions in creating the performances.

Chapter 5 presents the discussion of the performance findings to understand the impact of the two performances on the audience. In particular, the audience responses provided an insight into how the audience's own perception of risk is critical to their engagement within the performance. I consider how the audience's perception of risk may determine their response to the work and inhibit their reaction to the type of experience on offer, before offering a solution in the form of an algorithm. In addition, this chapter refers to ways of developing the findings of this research and continuing to build an evidence base for this practice. I suggest extended use of the research tools and instruments used in this thesis and discuss the potential use of additional methods to further enhance and explore this area.

Summary

This thesis offers a unique approach in using audience responses to two performances to articulate an original understanding of audience experience in immersive theatres. This is achieved through specific reference to therapeutic forms of immersive theatres with the intention of developing this practice within applied settings for specific populations.

The findings illustrated in this thesis present a significant impact on the way immersive theatres are understood and valued. In recognising both the variety and similarities within audience experiences there is the potential to not only appreciate, but also enhance the practice of these performances in more nuanced ways. The outcomes of the thesis provide ways in which theatre audiences might be more readily identified for particular types of immersive performance. Furthermore, in improving our understanding of the audience it may

be possible to improve the capacity for immersive theatre performance to more readily meet the needs of a specified audience. This may result in immersive performances that can better provide for the audience by way of a suitably chosen, appropriate, pertinent and relevant experience matched to the audience's sense of risk, and individual state of being (both physical and mental). This would extend the current assertions for immersive theatres ability to offer personalised experiences and may enrich these practices within the field.

Chapter 1.

Background: Contextualising therapeutic practices within the milieu of immersive theatres

Theatre has primarily been discussed in terms of its staging of the visual, oral and textual qualities which make up the theatre and play-text. In more recent years the discussion has expanded to include the range of ways in which theatre can and does act on and through the body via the senses[6]. Smell, touch, and taste, as well as the more familiar use of sight and sound, are being stimulated in order to create sensorial performances that encompass an embodied experience. Many of these works submerge the audience in three-dimensional theatrical worlds, requiring input from the audience by interacting with the performance space or with the performers. A variety of labels and descriptions have been given to describe discrete practices. One such label of 'immersive theatres' has emerged as a predominant name to collectively describe a range of interactive, playful, submerging, and spatially all-encompassing performances.

The position of the audience as active or passive (as laid out by Jacques Rancière, 2009) has emerged as a point of contention in describing and evaluating participation in performance. Similarly, Bruce McConachie (2007) has described immersion as the very act of suspending disbelief: all theatre could be considered 'immersive' because it suspends the audience's disbelief and concentrates the audience's mind by surrounding the audience within the theatre spectacle. However, I argue that immersive theatres involve particular levels of interaction between the audience, performer, and space that makes them linked to, but distinct from, other theatre practices.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the various naming and problems of describing immersive theatres. I contextualise and define immersive theatres within the parameters of contemporary western performance and make evident some of the potential influences and resemblances to other historical practices. I also frame some of the considerations that have arisen in the immediate and formative dialogues on immersive theatres. As an emerging area of study, this chapter provides an overview of immersive theatres through some of its core components and emerging criticism to date. Before

[6] For example, Jon Whitmore has discussed the way the audience uses their sensory 'receptive powers' to 'read' the theatrical spectacle (1994:51).

commencing the performative explorations that inform this research, I extensively researched other forms of theatre that were being described as 'immersive' and began questioning what qualities might be needed in order to describe a performance under this term. This involved tracing the heritage and roots of where this practice may have evolved from as well as mapping immersive theatres within the larger context of performance. Consequently, this chapter includes literature on the immersive, intimate, participatory, sensory and site-specific, in order to discuss the key characteristics of immersive theatres, as well as discussion of selected performances and companies working through this practice. The thesis is not intended as an exhaustive account of all immersive theatres or companies currently utilising immersive techniques. However, it is appropriate to highlight the variances between practices that are exploring audience participation, performance space and notions of experience using the senses, before moving on to discuss the therapeutic approach which is the focus of this research, in detail.

Terminology

The term 'immersive' has been employed to collate and describe a range of performances that combine sensory interaction through audience participation and a changing dynamic between performance space and the audience[7]. They are generally conceived as involving levels of interaction over and above the considered norm for the theatre. Their spatial arrangements involve three-dimensional, all-encompassing environments both in virtual and physically materialised spaces. In some works these place the audience at the centre of the experience in terms of constructing the story, such as Punchdrunk's *The Drowned Man* (2013–2014). Other works create a story which places them as the central character, where the performance is centred in their reactions and involvement (such as YMBBT's (2010) self-titled work).

As a live medium, the theatre provides the opportunity to explore proximity through the bodies' entire sensory spectrum, including both verbal and physical interaction with performer(s) and performance space. This change in the way audience members interact with the performance has brought about a distinct shift in the audience's relationship to performer,

[7] James Frieze has commented on the 'obsession of naming in recent theatrical performances and texts' (2009: 1). He argues that the identification of a word provides only a fragment of the remembrances, accounts and personal connections which can never be fully encapsulated in its meaning. In this context, words provide only a potted trajectory of our histories, events and encounters. In relation to immersive theatres, this desire to label practices might correspond to anxieties relating to the unknowable nature of many of these performances. Naming may provide a sense of 'relief' (Ibid: 2) that these practices can be in some way pin pointed, rooted and understood.

space and narrative. Different names have been used in attempts to described discrete, smaller clusters of related practices, through their relationship to the audience, their design or the form the encounter takes. Whilst the term 'immersive' has emerged as the popular naming for this collective of theatres, there has been some discussion of its suitability to capture the range of performances that are currently being proclaimed as 'immersive'. Critic Lyn Gardner (2014a) has been critical of its overuse suggesting that some companies attribute the term to productions that are less immersive that they declare.

It is difficult to determine who first used this title, but the term has been popularised in recent years as a by-word to designate a diverse collection of participatory and sensory theatres that are directly encountered in some way. It has been suggested that the term is rooted in 1990's sound performance, before being increasingly used in relation to the theatre (Brown, 2010: 1). Others have suggested that immersive theatres have 'borrowed conventions' from gaming (McMullan, 2014: n.p.). Tracing the etymology of immersive theatres, one of the earliest uses of the term immersive theatre can be found in Kershaw's discussion of radical performance where he refers to 'immersive participation' (1999: 24)[8]. The following section considers the emergence of our current understanding of immersive theatres within the tradition of theatre.

Many companies have utilised their own descriptions as a way to define their practice. For example Enrique Vargas describes his works as exploring the 'poetics of the senses' (Teatro de los Sentidos, n.d.), linked to childhood playfulness and curiosity. Iwan Brioc's chosen name of s.l.t encapsulates a complex relationship which takes the symbol of the labyrinth and extends it – not only into the physical performance structure – but also into its metaphysical connotations informing the position and effect of the installations within the performance (see Jones, 2010). Both practices could be described as 'one-to-one' or 'one-on-one' performances (Groot Nibbelink, 2012: 413; Heddon, Iball and Zerihan, 2012: 120; Newman, 2013: 49), a name given to works such as those produced by the late Adrian Howells. Kershaw has also used the term 'one-to-one' to describe intimate conversations between one spectator and one performer in relation to Living Theatre's *Paradise Now!*

[8] Kershaw also refers to 'immersive experience' noting the work of Enrique Vargas and also linking to the Happenings of Allan Kaprow and Bruce Lacey (2007: 317–318). Interestingly, since this time Vargas's name has been left adrift of more recent discussion of immersive theatres. I suspect he must have had an impact as someone who toured internationally in the 1990s and 2000s. Iwan Brioc has regularly cited Vargas's influence in his beginning to work in the field of theatre and senses, but has adopted the practice in different ways, such as through introducing mindfulness practices and developing links to other forms of 'context orientated theatre' practices (Jones, 2010: 13).

(1999: 195). In scholarly terms, Rachel Zerihan has given consideration to the sensual nature of the one-to-one theatrical encounter (Zerihan, 2010), where enactment on and through the senses leads to potential arousal or eroticism whilst others have explored and reflected upon the performer's practice in depth (see Heddon and Howells, 2011).

Some s.l.t performances have also involved micro audiences of five to six traversing the space and encountering singular (or pairs) of performers, such as in the third iteration of *Cerebellium* (2014) and in Theatr Cynefin's *Eco Panto* (2011) where the audience toured the performance in small groups. Ontroerend Goed's performance *The Smile off Your Face* (first performed 2003), is the only work in their immersive trilogy to be performed wholly with an audience of one for the entire duration of the work[9]. The term one-to-one excludes performances where the audience moves together;r oscillate between collective and singular moments of travel within the performance. In placing the audience and performer in such close proximity one-to-one theatres require a different kind of performance to avoid seeming inauthentic. It is an approach similar to that described by Lib Taylor in referring to 'fact-based performance' which asks that: 'the audience look at and *through* the performer in order to see beyond him or her to the real person who preceded the representation' (2013: 371, emphasis as in original). Howells often appeared as himself in his performances, conversing openly with his audience and sharing the experience with them. This could be seen as creating a symbiotic relationship between performer and audience where both audience and performer are in a position of vulnerability. Similarly, Brioc has tended to work with communities and non-actors in much the same way as Augusto Boal did with forum theatre, the idea being that non-actors would be less inhibited by the systems of rehearsal and preparation of the professional actor acquired through their training. In theatres which require a 'real' character, connecting character with real persona brings a synergy and effortlessness to the role, because the person embodies the character in their very being.

Whilst one-to-one performance describes a specific type of solo performance/ audience dynamic, it shares characteristics inherent to other immersive practices in both its use of the senses and site to deliver the performance in a three-dimensional theatre world where audience and performer share the performance space with one another. Charlotte Smith's use of the term 'intimate' theatre (2010a: n.p.), acts as an alternative way of describing the proximal, trusting and personal relationship that is fostered between audience

[9] For instance, Ontroerend Goed's *Internal* (first performed 2008) begins as one-to-one performances before bringing together a small audience group with the performers.

and performer in some performances. Smith defines intimate theatre as one that 'rethinks the traditional dynamic of spectator and performer [utilising] physical contact, trust, even romance' (Ibid). This naming refers to the opportunity for the audience to come into close contact with both actors and performance environment, often being expected to actively participate and interact with the performers creating a sense of intimacy between them. It also stresses the particularly personal nature of the work which often involves what I term 'confessional modes of speaking'[10] on the part of the audience and/or the performer. Central to the premise of intimacy is the notion of trust (in creating such close proximity between audience and performer). Several immersive works have explored the boundaries of pleasurable experience, but there have been performances which have directly challenged the audience's sense of comfort and trust. In Ontroerend Goed's *Internal* (first performed 2008) and *A Game of You* (first performed 2010), the company posit questions relating to trust within an immersive frame. In *A Game of You* the performance uses a one-way mirror to allow the audience to watch another person, having first been (unknowingly) watched by others. *Internal* places small groups of audience within a pseudo date scenario, before the conversation is shared back amongst a larger audience group, often sharing conversation divulged in the one-to-one exchanges and seemingly making judgements that are openly shared with the group that are based on the actions and words of the audience member divulged in the separate conversations. Whilst some audience's left the theatre elated, others were less enthralled by the performance and its handling of the audience. As Matt Trueman commented on *Internal*, 'this is theatre that is not afraid to be nasty [...] it manipulates, it betrays your trust, it seduces, it rejects' (2009: n.p.) Whilst Smith suggests that intimate theatres impress a notion of 'romance' (2010a: 14) the two performances above seem to exploit this very notion, yet both works are equally intimate with their audience. Smith's term literally romanticises the intentions of such performances, implying a theatre which is (metaphorically) making love to its audience, when clearly not all the immersive theatre's work in this same way. Her discussion of the work does foreground that the frequent use of 'tealights [...] and a darkened room' (Ibid), present the potential of the form to become pigeonholed for its use of staple items to evoke a particular response, thus becoming stagnant. Indeed, part of the thrill of the immersive is its sense of challenging the audience and offering new and different experiences on each encounter, a difficult task to achieve in keeping novice audience members from being deterred by performances that seek to further push the

[10] This term is informed by Howells who, in relation to his own practice, referred to this aspect as 'confessional exchanges' (Heddon and Howells, 2011: 97).

boundaries of the more experienced immersive theatre goer. This concern has been raised by some theatre critics, apprehensive with the use of gimmicks and the failure of later works to impress in the same way earlier performances did (see Gardner, 2014a; Gillinson, 2012; Billington, 2009). It was with this in mind and from my own experiences of immersive theatres that I began to think upon the longevity of immersive theatres and how they might prove fruitful and be sustained beyond the initial thrill of the encounter.

Immersive theatres have also been described as akin to 'promenade performance' (Lavender, 2012: 307). The term promenade has been used to describe works where the audience move from scene to scene along a series of locations, implying a linear movement through the performance, travelling from A to B to C. Punchdrunk's style of performance (which often utilises vast spaces to create a whole fictional world which can be traversed by the audience), do not necessarily invite a linear process of moving logically from one location to another. Equally other works are performed in singular locations (like Adrian Howell's *Foot Washing for the Sole,* first performed 2008). Furthermore, not all promenade performances include direct audience interaction or allow the audience to interact with the performance space. Trueman distinguishes 'promenade' and 'immersive theatre' on the basis that the latter is: 'more about exploration than ambulation' (Trueman, 2014: n.p.). For Trueman, the immersive suggests an interactive and less passive relationship to the performance; one that is fast paced in delivering the audience from scene to scene. This is compared to promenade theatre which Trueman suggests offers a more perambulatory pace.

Alternative ways of exploring immersive theatres have also been offered. Lavender also divides immersive theatres into two categories of 'game-based events' or 'immersive installations' (Lavender, 2012: 307). His two categories refer to the audience's relationship to the performance and whether they are active collaborators and meaning makers (in the game-play form) or in a more typical spectator viewing position, distanced from the performers but in a physically integral position within the set design. This distinction begins to address the division between different types of spectatorship within immersive theatres: those where an audience member is required to act (in order to accomplish something), and those where they observe the actions of others. By placing the audience within the same space as the onstage action it draws attention to the act of viewing itself, actively acknowledging the performativity of viewing and spectatorship from within the performance. This is a mixing of what Erika Fischer-Lichte describes as the two separate spheres of 'immediate intervention' (2008: 12): wherein we recognise that action is required within the everyday compared to

when witnessing tragedy on the stage (and being aware that it is fictional). Within immersive theatres the audience can be both spectator and actor in being required in some instances to perform an action; they can also become the spectated by being integrated into another audience member (or performer's) viewing experience, and often the two acts occur simultaneously.

A further description has referred to immersive theatres as 'meta-theatre' (Bauche, 2009: 56), alluding to the audience's involvement through participation[11]. Here, the immersive is presented 'as event' (Ibid: 57), because of its social and participatory nature, noting it as a significant point in one's everyday experience. However, this may depend on the audience's choosing to become involved in the event, such as within flash mob performances: where some may watch from a distance and spectate, whilst others may choose to join in and become part of the spectacle.

The inconsistency in the naming and forms of immersive theatres demonstrates the disjuncture between several of the descriptive terms and their inability to capture the distinctions between similarly connected practices. Descriptions often account for specific arrangements but do not allow for disparities in their theatrical engagement with audience involvement, spatial dynamics, content (and their subsequent impact), within the theatrical frame. This problem has been recognised by Heddon, Iball and Zerihan which they summarise in relation to their description of one-to-one performance:

> The generic term One to One risks erasing the diversity of the ways in which and degrees to which this work actively constructs participant-spectators, engendering different participant-spectator roles and the experiences that arise from playing them (2012: 121).

We can see this in some of the discussion about immersive theatres: for instance, Spyros Papaioannou's (2014) discussion of Punchdrunk, concentrates on the main body of their work that is text based but excludes performances such as *It felt like a Kiss* (2009) and *...and darkness descended* (2011). These performances do not use existing texts as their source and include the audience in the spectacle differently to works like *The Drowned Man* (2013–2014). Furthermore, Papaioannou suggests that some performances offer a way to lose oneself in the work and, whilst this disorientation seems key to immersive works, I would add that some works guide the audience to a re-orientated position *after* the performance, having encountered one's self through the theatre, whilst other's purposefully do not. It is this

[11] In the article Bauche is specifically referring to a performance by Metta Theatre and their re-working of Garcia Lorca's *Blood Wedding*.

re-orientation that is part of the self-reflectiveness that is built into the performance that we see in varied works from Ontroerend Goed's trilogy, to Adrian Howell's intimate works, to the rambling labyrinths of Enrique Vargas and Iwan Brioc, where the audience are invited to reflect during or shortly after the performance, sometimes in a murky 'between' position simultaneously within but at a remove from the performance[12].

Certainly in relation to Punchdrunk, we can understand that the fragmentation of the storytelling is disruptive and the physical arrangement of performance space as a maze feeds into this feeling of disorientation[13]. This captures the way many of these performances seek to destabilise the familiar confines of performance, for instance, by re-creating the audience's relationship to the work through recognition of their individual (as opposed to collective) identity[14]. In the same way, Frieze applies Michel Foucault's use of 'ecriture' to other modes of theatre, we can also relate this concept to immersive theatres which frequently: 'unfold[...] like a game (*jeu*) that invariably goes beyond its own rules and transgresses its limits' (Foucault quoted in Frieze, 1999: 31). In immersive theatres, the very theatrical act is constantly in a state of flux and has the potential to be subverted as the audience interact with the performance space and/or performers. The playfulness of immersive practices is essential to the form through the way these works invite the audience into a ludic relationship through their interaction. This may provide the best reasoning for why the term immersive has emerged as the most prominent.

The audience encounter in immersive theatres

Immersive theatres offer multiple performance experiences dependant not only on the audience's route through the performance space or their interactions but also the audience's personal preferences, knowledge, and experience. This can make the encounter problematic to articulate as one person's experience can vary wildly from another. For instance, interactions with the site have been identified as one way that the performance can 'trigger an experiential mode' (Öztürk, 2012: 296). Immersive theatres phenomenological power lies in

[12] Here I think in particular of the Decompression Room in *Cerebellium* (2012 – 2014) which is still contained within the performance space but provide a point for a small number of audience member's to begin to reflect (and if they choose to) to share about their experience.
[13] This can be contrasted with the labyrinth arrangement of s.l.t which is discussed in more depth in Chapter 2.
[14] . By comparison Heddon, Iball and Zerihan (2012) remark that sharing of one's experience post-performance counteracts the individual nature of the work as the audience seek to collectively create, shape and interpret the performance, something that they were aware of as they shared their own encounters.

the way they offer an encounter with not only site but objects, props, and performers that are all encountered through the body's senses. As the individual perception of the audience is privileged, this can make them difficult to quantify. This section outlines some of the ways immersive encounters have been articulated and framed.

The interplay between performer and audience in immersive theatres has received attention in relation to individual company or performer practices (for example Teschke, 2000; Zerihan, 2010; Alston, 2013a and 2013b). Emphasis has also tended towards giving voice to performers through discussion of their practice. In order to encapsulate this performance trend, notable companies and/or performances have received the most attention. Machon's (2013) seminal text on immersive theatres features interviews with several directors and performers identified within the volume as immersive companies or practitioners, including Punchdrunk, dreamthinkspeak, WildWorks, Artangel, Coney and Adrian Howells. Two recent volumes by Duška Radosavljević on *The Contemporary Ensemble* (2013a) and *Theatre-Making* (2013b) both feature interviews with founding members of Ontroerend Goed that in part explore how the company has encountered, responded to, and considered the audience in their work. Both texts emphasise the company's use of audience interplay and collaborative production that characterises Hans-Thies Lehmann's (2006) conceptualisation of the post-dramatic theatre, where the play-text is made all but redundant. Notably absent from these discussions is the voice of a multiple and complex audience giving voice to their own experiences (although as I have already stated, Heddon, Iball and Zerihan, 2012, provide one notable exception). This is one aspect which this thesis seeks to address through the audience's own statements about the performance (see Chapter 2 for practice methodology and Chapter 4 for findings from the performance practice).

Immersive theatres have also been described as transformative (White, 2012), describing the ways in which these performances invariably affect the audience in some way: whether through a deeply personal and meaningful experience or through a whirlwind of play and franticness that leaves the audience energised or animated. This, I would assert, is due to their status as significant 'event' (see discussion of experience, below). Within Rancière's (2009) considerations of the spectator, he argues that it is not possible to predict the effect of a performance on the audience. However, when we look at a variety of immersive theatres, we notice that not all performance experiences are the same within a company's own chronology of works, let alone when compared with the repertoire of others. For example,

Punchdrunk's *The Drowned Man* (2013–2014) offers a wildly different encounter to *It Felt like a Kiss* (2009). The first is an extrapolation of an existing story where the audience must pursue the story, in whichever direction they choose to follow. The audience are able to walk through the different areas of the town encountering sand underfoot on the uppermost floor, twigs, leaves and fallen bracken on another, and smooth underfloor surfaces in the 'studio', whilst finding full sized saloons, shops and cinema linked by festive bunting overhead and surrounding a working fountain in the 'town' setting. The second was an original story where the company worked with filmmaker Adam Curtis and musician Damon Albarn to create a nightmarish dystopia that in its final act sees the audience being pursued. Within this thesis, I hypothesised whether it might, therefore, be possible to determine the way a performance affects the audience and whether it is possible to account for different responses to the same work.

Critical thinking has tried to find ways of accounting more entirely for what immersive theatres are and how they can be defined. This has allowed for collecting together a variety of these works by their nature as an experiential and transformational encounter. One of the central concepts has been to describe the way immersive theatres create 'an [audience] experience' (Alston, 2013: 123) or a 'theatre of experience' (Groot Nibbelink, 2001: 413). This is supported by the companies and the way they also define their work. For example, Ontroerend Goed have written that their work focuses on creating 'intimate, individual performances' (2010: n.p.). Writing about *The Smile off Your Face,* the company states that: 'it's not about viewing [...] it's about experiencing' (Ibid). According to John Dewey, '*an* experience' occurs when an event 'is so rounded out that its close is a consummation and not a cessation' (1934: 205, emphasis as in original). Immersive theatres become definite events or points in time that are marked by the feeling and happenings involved as significant moments. This may account for their ability to provide a place of transformation as, in comparison to everyday experience, the encounter within the theatre world gains meaning for the audience that can be located in relation to a specific moment in time.

In Punchdrunk's work the experience is directed by the audience's route through the performance and the version of events as they witness them. This description of experiential-ness equally accounts for Teatro de los Sentidos's *Oráculos* (2000) or *Ariadne's Thread* (1994), where the audience's experience centres on a personal journey that is related through a series of sensory impressions within the performance, moving in turn from place to place,

albeit in the same order as one another. The phenomenological encounter is also found in YMBBT's *You Me Bum Bum Train* (2010) where the audience is speedily taken from one scenario to the next: one moment in a dentist's chair, the next in a boxing ring facing an opponent. The incorporation of the audience into the performance challenges the boundary between the real and the imaginary, by both 'replac[ing] and accentuat[ing] the live(d) existence of the everyday world' (Machon, 2013: 25).

A key feature of many reviews is a short description of the performance that attempts to capture the sensory essence of the experience, all the while acknowledging that the description reveals only their own experience of the performance (see Teschke, 2000; Worthen, 2012). Donald Hutera's review (2007) of Ontroerend Goed's *The Smile off Your Face* comments on the individual nature of the production for each audience member and highlights the difficulty in speaking about and analysing this type of performance. As the performance is different for each individual – even if only subtly – what each person takes away from the performance will depend very much on each person and his or her experiences (Ibid). Hutera writes that, for him, the performance is about 'trust, intimacy and loss' (Ibid, n.p.). In my experience of this performance, trust became focussed on a questioning of trust by the choices that were presented: the words 'left or right?' whispered into my ear, left me to wonder what the implication of this decision was for my experience[15]. Another female voice asked if I would like to sit on their lap, (hopefully) drawing upon childhood memories of Santa Claus, but in this adult context, the question seems to gain a perversity. After replying that I could if she wished but that, perhaps I was too old the reply, 'it's not possible!' accompanied by a small laugh made me feel both self-conscious and unsure of my response. This experience seems to marry with Zerhian's seeming to invoke the position of 'ideal audience-participant' in subjecting herself to the tasting of strawberries, she declares that she does not like (Heddon, Iball and Zerihan, 2012: 124). The difficulty for me in *The Smile off Your Face* was that it left doubt in my mind as to the choices I had taken, removing a sense of security in owning that choice in a safe space. This certainly did not feel comfortable, and with vision and movement impaired, at this point, I questioned whether there was a joke being made at my expense. However, the tender exchange at the end of the performance has become the focus of my memory and feeling about the performance even several years later and the challenge presented within this performance, embraced.

---

[15] *The Smile off Your Face* was first performed 2003. The performance I attended was during a UK tour in 2009 at the Salford Lowry.

A review of Enrique Vargas's production *Oráculos* raises the problem of describing the event to another. Calling Vargas's work 'theatrical poetics and provocation', Holger Teschke's attempt to recount *Oráculos* is based on his personal encounter which wrestles with evoking a sensory language to review the performance and describing the physical movements through the performance (Teschke, 2000: 150-152). The company had sought out a venue in Berlin, an old granary building that is similar to the one the company have used for the performance when based in Barcelona. The performance utilised the history of the building incorporating milling flour, moving the corn, kneading and tasting bread into the performance, as well as the many leftovers of mechanical equipment which remained as a testament to the building's previous use. Taking on from this past use, Vargas introduced other mythical elements creating a new history of the building, opening up its larger significance: 'Its stonelike memory marks the point of departure and inspiration for telling of its history and participates in the transformation of the architecture of the oracle' (Ibid: 150).

Teschke describes the way the actors inhabit the space so convincingly and without the 'attitude of a fairy-tale figure or teasing gesture' that it is easy to believe that the characters have always inhabited their roles and been located in the places in which they are discovered within the performance (Ibid: 152). Whilst seeming to give little in detail, he attempts to capture the ineffability of the performance whilst also trying to give enough description to portray the enchantment and benefit he felt the performance gave:

> The labyrinth of *Oráculos* is richer than its memory and I realize after taking the sixty-to seventy-minute journey that I went too fast [...] When I step out into the light at the end of the journey, I want to go back in [...] Many linger near the shore of the Spree after the journey, as if they don't want to return to the loud, noisy city, which suddenly seems like another planet (Ibid: 155).

The performance is able to reignite memories from Teschke's own history: it is a stimulating environment that is difficult to capture linguistically, designed to invigorate sensory recognition and to awaken suppressed creative impulses of the mind. We can view these theatres as that of the 'theatre of estrangement' identified by Silvija Jestrovic, as a way of undermining a predictable response to the theatre (2006: 3). It is through the variety of immersive theatres currently being offered to audiences, that we can see the difficulty in categorising them. Yet to avoid becoming habitual or autonomised (two features Jestrovic argues that estrangement works against (Ibid: 4)), they must continually alter and push the boundaries of the form. Once established or experienced it is almost (if not impossible) to return to how one felt before it was experienced.

The quote with which this thesis begins is here, most poignant: in the therapeutic immersive practices I identify, whilst the works disorientate the audience there is the potential to uncover a new encounter with one's own sense of self, where through losing oneself in the performance there is the possibility to find oneself anew (see also Vargas's description of his work in Christie and Gough, 2003). Immersive theatres have been discussed in several ways since their inception into critical thought, mostly through considerations of specific performances or performance groups. The variety of immersive theatre practice strikes at the heart of the diverse affects that immersive performances have on the audience and establishes the necessity to articulate this variation in order to consider new audience's and applications for this practice.

Influences and similarities

Immersive theatres are not principally a new concept within the theatre, with many aspects of the performances having been practiced in previous contexts. Immersion denotes a performance that experiments with audience participation, the use of senses, investigations of spatial dynamics, in a variety of contexts and styles that have been considered in some way in predecessors of the form. This section will describe the different performance threads that have directly or inadvertently lead to the development of the recent fixation with immersing the audience. It is worth noting that many of the companies who create immersive theatres rarely relate their work to previous performances, directors or companies who have informed their practice. This makes an understanding of the influences that have guided their particular practice difficult to chart.

Several writers have attempted to evidence the general influences from which immersive theatres have developed. Machon identifies immersive performances globally across a variety of religious practices, ceremonies and performance genres in what she describes as an 'immersive inheritance' that has made its way into today's popularised forms (Machon, 2013: 28). Furthermore, she describes the rich history of works from the beginning of the 20th Century which saw a growing inclination to remove the boundaries between different art practices, the every day and the remarkable. She draws upon the influence of carnival which populates this practice in terms of play and exuberance. In particular, Machon asserts the import of Antonin Artaud for a diverse range of theatre practice from Alan Kaprow's 'Happenings' through to Joan Littlewood's 'Fun Palaces' (Ibid: 29-28) where current interests in elements of the senses, site and participation begin to emerge. Kaprow

was one of the most notable artists of the 1960's exploring the boundaries between art and the everyday. In his work *Fluids* (1967), he explored duration and audience participation by inviting people to move ice blocks which had been placed in a rectangular construction. His work involved the seemingly mundane but through participation in his work he sought to channel and focus concentration on small acts or moments. It has been said that in participatory theatres 'the reliance [is] on others to complete the artwork' (Stern, 2014: 7) and this is evident in immersive theatres when we consider the way the audience become integral to the performance, whether as part of the visual spectacle – as in the collective discomfort of the Punchdrunk masked audience who are witnesses, or in the necessary insistence of the audience to act as in YMBBT's works.

Similarly, James Roose-Evans (1984) describes practices across the globe, which can be seen to share characteristics with immersive theatres. He includes Luca Ronconi's work in Italy where the audience would see only one chapter of the complete performance, requiring the collective audiences to share their encounter with one another to render the experience whole or to be entirely understood (Ibid: 81). This process is reminiscent of the many hours of the performance that cannot be seen in one outing to Punchdrunk's work, such as the thirteen hours of performance that collectively makes up the 'whole' performance of *The Drowned Man* (2013–2014). The difference between some of these earlier incarnations lies (in part) in their overt politicisation of particular issues that provide controversial or passing commentary of concerns of the time. Both Ronconi's *XX* and Fernando Arrabal's play *The Labyrinth*, involved a great variety of experimentation, not only with the audience interacting within the performance but also challenging the dynamics of the theatre space and the audience's place within it.

Another example cited by Roose-Evans is French director Jerome Savary, whose use of both professional and non-professional performers placed in non-conventional (but equally dramatic) spaces, can be seen as an influence on immersive practices. This was done by Savary in an effort to counteract the 'increasingly mechanical and organised' ways of society, where he imagined theatre as a place 'to get people to communicate with each other' (Savary quoted in Roose-Evans, 1984: 85). Further influences can be seen in Jerzy Grotowski's work with performer training which has been described as using the actor 'as a trampoline, an instrument with which to study what is hidden behind our day mask – the innermost core personality – in order to sacrifice it, expose it' (Ibid: 147). Grotowski's work was deeply concerned with creating total integration between audience and performance (Innes, 1993),

for the purpose of allowing the audience to be confronted with their own self (Roose-Evans, 1984). His 'rejection of everything associated with stage performance' and a turn towards 'self-discovery' (Innes, 1993: 164 and 166) through performance makes for similarities with some immersive theatres which also use ritualised action. In particular this can be related to s.l.t where the pace of the performance and frequent use of games provides a space for ritual to emerge.

Savary also spoke of a desire to create an experiential and playful theatre, submerging the audience within the totality of the theatrical spectacle (Savary quoted in Roose-Evans, 1984: 86-87). These same concerns emerge in immersive theatres which offer a spirited and playful escapism that is coupled with an exploration of one's own fears, uncertainties and pleasures. Some companies have managed to produce performances requiring large numbers of volunteers to sustain the work (as in YMBBT's work), blurring the lines between professional and non-professional performers[16]. This influence can be seen from the 1960's 'Happenings' and Living Theatre movements and Artaud's own work in the earlier part of the century, which sought to combine art and theatre, inviting a variety of influences into the performance itself (Shepherd and Wallis, 2004: 83).

Similarly, Andrew Davies cites the 1960's as an emergent point in community theatre where the beginnings of theatres which investigated the non-conventional performance site became prominent. In addition, he identified the creation of events that happened around the theatre itself, offering examples such as Ed Berman's 'Interaction' work (Davies, 1987: 175). Of interest is Davies reference to 'popular entertainment' which he asserts has a tendency to remove the 'fourth wall' allowing for acknowledgement of both the performer's and audience's presence (Ibid). In doing so, immersive theatres seek to place the audience in a state of presence in and before the theatre work itself. The result sees the audience placed in a position of *thinking through* and *thinking within* the performance, as opposed to a more distanced perspective of *thinking on* the work. In this respect, the performances aid a coming together of mind and body as both are required to negotiate the performance, providing a way to homogenise the fissure Artaud sought to remake between: 'mind and body, intellect and feeling' (Roose-Evans, 1984: 77).

[16] Recent reports have suggested that for YMBBT's latest show they are looking to recruit approximately 10'000 volunteers (see: Jury, 2014). Punchdrunk's *The Drowned Man* (2013–2014) seems conservative by comparison with a cast of 40, although in addition a large number of volunteers supported the running of the production by acting as room guides or assisting with front of house.

Even within the more familiar theatre venue, Peter Brook began creating works that took place in multiple parts of the theatre at the same time, finding ways to affect the audience physically, such as through altering temperature (Innes, 1993: 127). This, Ross Brown argues, has developed from a growing interest in the sound landscape to incorporate a variety of natural, accidental and intentional aural material into the musical composition (Ibid: 2–3). Renewed interest can be found across the sensory spectrum, a developing interest since the 1960's explosion of participatory artwork. Traced through these avant-garde practitioners (from Artaud - to Grotowski - to Brook - to the present) interest in immersion can be seen as a deep-rooted attentiveness to making the audience truly *feel* and in some way *matter* in a way that moves them beyond societal control, towards recognition of the individual through theatre. There is the potential in these theatres to empower the audience *through* the body in the act of becoming part of the theatrical action[17].

In the few decades between Kaprow's *Happenings* – and the current fashion for immersion in performance – experimentation with the site, the senses, and audience participation have continued. ORLAN's body practices have evolved since her first performance in the 1960's. She has since utilised surgical procedures to alter her own appearance, presenting a series of performance operations from the 1990's onwards (ORLAN, 2005). Other artists such as Maria Abramović in her *Rhythm* series (1973–1974) explored the limits of one's body through administering pain or experimenting with drugs. Her work has continually challenged the relationship between artwork and spectator, usually involving them in her work in some way. Other examples such as Andreas Heinecke's *Dialogue in the Dark* (first performed 1998 in Germany), have explored the relationship between the body and performance. *Dialogue in the Dark* took place in the dark in an attempt to make evident the bodies' sensory apparatus through direct experience and as a counterpoint to the dominance of visual interaction (Wright, 1995). Since this time, Heinecke's work has been continually toured as an exhibition aiming to challenge the dominance of the visual in contemporary culture. There has also been a discussion of the

[17] Nick Watson and Sarah Cunningham-Burley (2001) refer to the way that dress can empower the wearer by communicating a particular image. Interestingly they also refer to consideration of the mind affecting the body and using reverse techniques for the body to affect the mind (Ibid: pp.37–39). This is important if we consider not only the therapeutic potential of some immersive theatres (see chapter 4 on 'Findings') but also the potential for negativity which could be caused by some immersive theatres. If we accept Watson and Cunningham-Burley's assertions and view them in theatrical terms, then enacting a scene with positive results can result in feelings of positivity. Even if the experience is not 'real', the physical enacting of it may potentially affect the mind. This may potentially mean that negative non-real experiences have the same results, and may give cause for being mindful of the potential harm to audience depending on how the experience is read, interpreted and understood.

senses, particularly taste and smell, in the context of Indian Rasic performance (Schechner, 2001) and in relation to other rituals and everyday observances which might be considered performative (Schechner and Schuman, 1976).

Many of the works referred to in this section share some elements with immersive theatre performances or can be seen to have inspired some of the developments that have been made, leading to this contemporary theatre practice. Whilst the 1960's is best known for the use of participation and experimentation with the emergence of performance art, some of the ideas utilised can be traced to the earlier practices of Artaud and even further back to some of the earliest theatres before a specific theatre venue became the norm (see Arnott, 1989). It must also be acknowledged that the relative hush of the theatre is a fairly recent development, with indications that the Greek theatre audience were lively and involved, often calling out and responding the action on stage and quick to denounce and declare their outrage verbally and physically when offended by a production (see Arnott, 1959). Further poignant links can be made to Greek theatre, where the theatre operated as a celebratory act of worship, providing a way of encountering religion through the performance (see Ibid: 30; Arnott: 1989: 6–7). This makes for an interesting comparison to the contemporary practice of immersive theatres, where it would seem we have turned towards a new conviction of finding one's *self* through the performance.

The senses, site, and participation

Whilst critical thought on immersive theatres is in its relative infancy, several notable works have been written addressing specific aspects of immersive theatres. I have previously stated that the three main components of immersive theatres involve: participation, senses and considerations of the site, albeit in multifaceted arrangements. Each of these fields (participation, senses and site) has received expanded interest in the past few decades. This section considers each of these domains, in turn, looking at just some of the ways that participation, senses and site have been deliberated.

The Senses

The senses have been given due consideration within both performance and cultural theory. This body of work refers to the ways that the senses can be stimulated and affected (see: Schmidt, 1999; Gough and Christie, 2003; Howes, 2005; Banes and Lepecki, 2007; Serres,

2008[18], Di Benedetto, 2010). Several volumes have also provided consideration of particular senses: Laura Marks (2002) has focussed on touch, considering both the haptic and sensual nature of this sense. Meanwhile, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2003) has discussed the relationship between touch and affect. Smell (Drobnik, 2006) and taste (Korsmeyer, 2005) have also been separately deliberated in investigations of the non-visual senses. Sound has not been excluded from this interest, particularly within the realms of music and growing interest in 'sound' or 'sonic' art (see: Wishart, 1996; Brown, 2010). Equally the rise in visual analysis cannot be ignored and many of the volumes on the senses declare that the intensification of interest in the visual and its place within contemporary culture as the most dominantly employed and influenced sense, provide strong reasoning for exploring smell, touch and taste and sound.

The concept of the immersive experience has been placed in opposition to the visual, being described as a wholly individual experience (Brown, 2010). Each of the works described above has focussed on renewed attention to each individual sense. This interest goes hand in hand with raised preoccupations with the immersive which is intimately entwined with notions of the experience: to 'Experience' suggests a far more intimate physical connection achieved through touch, taste, and/or smell, giving a sense of being in the midst of it all (being *immersed*) in a way that is marked as standing apart from one's everyday experience. Brown himself suggests that our everyday experience is immersive because of the way our lives have become 'saturated with noise' (Ibid: 1)[19]. Whilst Brown speaks of music, sound and noise, I would also add that there is little that is now self-containing about lived experience, as this aspect of our lives becomes increasingly complex; overlapping disciplines and forms. Facilitated by technology, it is conceivable to bring alternative and oppositional components together within the same space: one can adhere to the rules of one space (a café, library or workspace), whilst engaging with another: seeing and conversing with people across time and space.

Whilst Brown refers to the way sound perpetuates throughout our everyday experience, Punchdrunk's use of the immersive form inundates the audience's senses within a theatrical world that are presented within a realistic frame. There are others that use a process

[18] The work was initially published in 1985 and received a new translation into English in 2008, which is concomitant with the resurgent interest in the senses around this time.

[19] Whilst typing this I became aware of the particular tapping noise created as my fingers move from keystroke to keystroke, the hum of my laptop a constant a barely audible noise and the steady tick of the clock hanging on my wall, nonetheless filling the silence.

of simplification, giving attention to individual sensorial stimulations (for instance the work of Adrian Howells, Teatro de los Sentidos, and Iwan Brioc). The implications of these differences in style are profound in terms of their effect on the audience. Saturation in a sensory environment removes some of the suspension of disbelief because the environment affirms the theatrical narrative. Here I refer to Guy Debord (1984) who was troubled by the associations he saw between spectacle and consumerist consumption. When we consider the vast scale and detail of the spaces that Punchdrunk utilise, as well as their collaborations with particular brands (see Alston, 2012), we can perhaps understand his fears. The performance becomes an experience of the hyper-real: mingling fictional and the real world as the audience occupies both realms simultaneously. The outcome is a hybrid space as the audience's awareness is in flux between that of their own body (and therefore own reality) and the fictional reality which encompasses the performance. Furthermore, objects operate simultaneously in a fusion as part of the audience's understanding of their own reality as well as being part of the performance fiction. This is made clear where objects fail to interact on an expected level: the audience becomes aware of the performance as a fictional construct and their own reality gains control (if only temporally) over the environment[20]. Where sensory deprivation occurs the experience turns the audience's sense of self inward: instead of relating the sensory engagements to external stimuli they provide a source of personal meaning. Where links have already been made between smell and memory (Banes, 2001), we find a similar relationship across the sensory range as the mind interprets and attempts to make associations. This usually involves an initial categorisation of either 'good' or 'bad', depending on whether the stimuli is considered as pleasant or unpleasant by the individual. This begins a process of internalisation which is usually re-enforced through the removal of spoken language as a way to configure, arrange, organise and make coherent the performance processes that are occurring. This may be why we have yet to discover therapeutic performances which overload the senses: the therapeutic requires inward reflection allowing attention to shift toward one's experience of the self, whereas sensory overloading perhaps necessitates the self to focus outwards in recognising the impression of the sensory spectacle.

[20] For example, I was disappointed in *The Drowned Man* (2013–2014) when, on picking up a phone in a booth in the saloon that there was no dial tone. The fiction of the various phone numbers on business cards and leaflets which littered the booth became suddenly evident, and the play I had sought to engage with, denied. Another aspect related to the stairways which had not been decorated and remnants of the buildings previous function as a post office sorting office were in evidence. The staircases provided a transition between the different performance levels of the building. They became an odd space, incongruent to the rest of the performance and, for me, pulling me out of my immersion in the performance every time I entered them.

Site

The audience/ stage arrangement of the proscenium arch theatre is one familiar to most: the theatrical space has become synonymous with an auditorium which is positioned directly in front of and facing the stage space[21]. The stage area is generally thought of as the container of fictional space, occupied by the actors and scenery during a performance, confined within a well-known invisible fourth wall. In the last century, performances have experimented with forms that return to the practice of early theatres, where audience and performer spaces were less obviously delineated and marked from one another.

The concept of space within performance has received a great deal of attention in the last few years, particularly in the context of site-specific performance. Within my practice, *The College on the Hill* (2011) focussed on how a location (the performance site) could directly impinge upon, or influence the performance. Within site-specific practice, works of art are created with the explicit intention of being performed in a particular location, through an intimate and essential connection to the site (Kaye, 2000; Kwon, 2004; Pearson, 2010). In interrogating site, these works often require the audience to be placed directly within the performance space in order to directly respond to or interact with the site through the performance. By having the audience occupy the site it allows them to inhabit and re-interpret the site for themselves through their own experience with the site. It is from this initial understanding of the link between the site and the changed dynamic that this presents for audience interaction within the work, that the consideration of site in relationship to immersive theatres was first approached within my practice.

Phoebe von Held has described site-specific practices as having 'a definite relation with an environment, be it found or created' (2002: 22). One of the factors von Held cited as crucial to site-specific work was the 'psychological atmosphere' brought about by the performance site, which should in some way enhance the performance in terms of dramatic tension and feeling that could not be achieved if the performance was held elsewhere (Ibid: 22). When space is fully articulated (being completely transformed), immersive theatres can create a believable and evocative space by utilising aromas and odours (both pleasant and unpleasant) which stimulate olfactory senses and enhance the believability and realness of the theatrical space. Site-specific theatre and immersive theatres are certainly very closely linked

[21] I avoid using the term 'traditional' here, as there are examples of many theatres which have not used the auditorium for their presentation but have been dominated by the view that typically theatre occurs in an auditorium, which has become the established convention. The theatre has become increasingly contained only in relatively recent times, when we think on the open air stages of both the Greeks' and Shakespeare's theatres.

practices, in that they each focus on articulating particular aspects of the theatre that are usually part of the overall mise-en-scène, making them central to the performance.

In the articulation of the performance site, many performances which are categorised as site-specific have used the senses and sensory stimulation as a means to link with notions of memory (of the site) and in connecting and opening up the site for spectators (whether new to the site or familiar with it). Dorinda Hultona's *One Square Foot* project (2007) included the creation of a performance journey where the audience travelled between different performance locations, inhabiting and being fully immersed in the performance space.

Some site-specific performances have identified ways of utilising the site in a way which incorporates its physicality through touch or smell. Immersive theatres may use a particular site as central to its narrative, but it is not the sole component. Whilst in site-specific performance the site is used to create the theatre, immersive theatres can also impose a theatrical world on the site. Punchdrunk's use of warehouses for their performances provides a way of housing a large fully articulate theatrical world within a closed space: an old post-office warehouse became the fictional Hollywood world of *The Drowned Man* (2013–2014), reimagined across each of the building's floors; Macbeth has been relocated to a disused hotel (*Sleep No More*, 2003); and a series of underground tunnels provided the setting for the post-apocalyptic world of *and Darkness Descended....* (2011).

Within performances that consider site, there is often an element of movement or walking, either where the audience, performer, or both, must travel a distance to complete the performance. This has become of interest as scholars consider durational works or performances with a physical endurance element (Whelan, 2012). Many immersive theatre performances require the audience to cover a great deal of physical distance, often on foot. Research on walking has gathered pace in recent years, both in terms of promoting physical and mental health benefits (see Morris, 2003) as well as for its creative and exploratory possibilities (Solnit, 2006). Apart from immersive theatres, several other performances have also involved walking as a central component of the work or as a means of travelling moving through the performance. Janet Cardiff's extended consideration of walking has been described as an attempt to find a way of using the calming effect of walking to create a presence within the performance that makes this ordinary act, transformative (Nedelkopoulou, 2011). Hultona's *One Square Foot Project* (2007) often required the audience to accompany the performer on an exploration of one or more sites, walking between locations, sometimes transgressing the politicised spaces between nations.

Furthermore, site-specific group Wrights and Sites began using 'exploratory' walking in their earliest practices, which they then connected with French Situationalist movement of the 1950's and 1960's (Darby, 2013: 48). Other companies such as U Theatre Company have explored specific forms of walking practice such as pilgrimage, integrating their work into actual events. This has encompassed communal walking intertwined with the personal act of devotional worship that is linked to the rituals of pilgrimage itself (Quintero, 2002). Attention has equally been paid to the journey to and arrival at the theatre space and the effect this has on one's reception of a performance (Pilkington and Nachbar, 2012). Whilst it has been suggested that 'theatre and walking have been largely separated' (Ibid: 34), the variety of works described above would suggest the contrary.

Each of the walking practices described above emphasises a particular frame of mind that arises from the walk or is required for the type of walk involved. This is pertinent to immersive theatres since many of these performances require the audience to: follow, walk, run, chase and be chased, for (sometimes) considerable durations of time. Equally, the relationship to the type of movement required to negotiate through the performance is important in terms of its affect: whether raising the heartbeat or creating a relaxed and controlled experience. In general, the requirement to negotiate difficult spaces or to move quickly through narrow and dark spaces limits these performances to the physically privileged. This is important when thinking about future developments for immersive theatres which may include less able members of the population and may influence the design and creation of performances developed for specific settings and participant groups.

Participation

Participation has its roots firmly embedded in the earliest theatres, for example, in Greek theatre a play would often have a connection with the city in which the performance was taking place (see Arnott, 1959 and 1989). Other theatres such as pantomime and puppetry frequently invite the audience to call out and respond to the performance, often within a set of repeated or familiar verbal markers. Gareth White declares that:

> The nascent genre of 'immersive theatre' amounts to only a small corner of audience participatory theatre, and an overlapping category rather than a sub-set; not all immersive theatre is audience participatory (in my terms), and not all audience participation is immersive theatre' (2013: 169).

Participation provides the understanding that the audience is expected to interact with the performance directly. Whilst I agree with White that not all participatory theatre is

immersive, I would advocate that all immersive theatres are in some way participatory, by involving different levels of interaction with the performer and/or performer space. In this view, I consider participation in a broad context that includes any interaction that takes place within the theatrical frame that might include sensory stimuli from objects as well as performers.

Participatory works have brought about a changed dynamic between on stage and off stage areas, blurring and mingling the two and making a new relationship between audience and performer, creating a new set of rules in terms of power, control and communication within the performance frame. In some performances, a direct response from the audience is required in order for the performance to continue and without this communication, the performance world would fail. Direct audience response has the result that the performer relies upon the audience in order for the action to continue. This is recognisable from Boal's forum theatre, where the audience must participate to change the story portrayed on the stage; they become 'spectactors' (Boal, 2008: xxi). This is facilitated by the role of the Joker, who assists in bringing the audience onto the stage and in facilitating their input into the performance (although it is the audience member who carries out any actions they wish to introduce into the performance).

Punchdrunk's works include only a few moments of direct response required from the audience in terms of continuing the narrative, but it is one of the main examples held up as being 'immersive'. Analogous to arguments levelled at the stage/auditorium theatre, the performance can (largely) continue without the audience directly engaging, mainly because they are, in the most part, not required to verbally speak with the performers[22]. The audience can, however, illuminate their experience of the performance by physically interacting with the surrounding environment. In this way, Alston's terming of these theatres as experiential (2013b), comes to be decisive in considering both space and action: it is the audience's curiosity (which Alston terms 'entrepreneurial participation' (Ibid: 138), which will lead them to explore the performance space as much or as little as they wish. Equally, the audience's interest will guide the length, depth and direction of participatory conversations: if they respond minimally the conversation moves along very little; if the audience respond in a substantial way, then the conversation develops and the character with which they are

[22] There are some exceptions to this within their back catalogues of performances and some audience members may be selected for an elusive one-to-one encounter with one of the performers (in some cases guaranteeing this by paying a surplus on the ticket price).

conversing with are required to correspondingly engage with them. It is this larger consideration of participation (with performance space as well as performer) which allows for a broader array of immersive theatre practices that might be collectively described by this term.

Other discourses on participation have focussed on notions of public spectacle. Claire Bishop's work on participation in art draws attention to three factors that she sees as central to participatory works: 'Activation' addresses the audience of participatory works as 'active subject' who are 'empowered' by their participation within the art event; 'Authorship' relates to the integration of audience into the artwork and as such share this status with the creator of the work; 'community' meanwhile is related to a response to a crises in 'collective responsibility' (2006: 12). Bishop further positions participation in opposition to 'spectacle' (see Debord, 1984), as one which seeks to act against the induced 'passivity and subjugation' created by arbitrated images (Bishop, 2006: 12-13). Bishop's consideration of participation occurs through a collective view of the audience through looking at the artefact as the social experience created, (Ibid: 10). However, Helen Freshwater has commented that participatory experiences are frequently limited to offering a set of designated or implied options rather than total agency, giving merely the 'illusion' of self-authorship on the part of the audience (2011: 407–408). This is particularly important in light of Henry Jenkins et al's comments on 'participatory culture' (2009: xi), where the audience are co-creators or simultaneously participating and consuming the work.

It has been suggested that: 'Human beings, relieved of representation by their representations themselves, are at last free to be what they are without going through anyone else' (Baudrillard, 2001: 121). However, some participatory practices (immersive theatres included), do not necessarily create the conditions for the removal of representation or co-creation within the performance but hover somewhere between old-style modes of spectating and the new. Jenkins et al. proposed that the current participatory phenomenon is strongly linked to a changing and more technologically skilled youth culture (2009: xi– xii), at least for those who are financially mobile. It might, therefore, be expected that younger audiences attending immersive theatre performances would be better equipped and skilled in operating and working within these participatory performance environments. It is beyond the scope of the audience research created for this performance to identify any difference related to age and participation, but this may be one aspect for consideration within future research on immersive theatres.

Summary

This chapter has considered some of the key concepts and debates within immersive theatre practice and proposed ways by which they might be collectively understood, whilst also allowing for differences between and within performances, to be resolved. Immersive theatres have emerged from an evident history of theatres that have used the senses and explored audience participation in theatre. It has been made apparent that the term immersive theatres can be used to describe a diverse range of practice that playfully manipulate the relationship between the performance space, audience, and the performer in varying ways to provide an experience where the audience is submerged within the performance world.

The importance of experiential-ness, because the performance is lived through first hand, creates an egocentric theatre since it places the audience at the centre of their own theatrical encounter that promotes an individual interpretation of the performance. The experiential nature of the performance necessarily makes the performance unique to the individual, sometimes through quite subtle mechanisms. Coupled with the ephemeral nature of theatre and the particularly intangible nature of many immersive performances it can be difficult for audiences to encapsulate the experience in linguistic terms and to explain it. This may result in the experience of one audience member may have little bearing on that of another.

Whilst this chapter has sought to provide an overview of immersive theatres, the following chapter explores immersive practices local to North Wales. I also go on to explore the rationale for the potential for creating a therapeutic immersive theatre practice that has been influenced by the work of particular practitioners.

Chapter 2.

The potential for applied immersive practice

This chapter builds upon the discussion in Chapter 1 to contextualise and understand the role of the therapeutic in immersive theatres, with particular references to immersive practices in North Wales. My encounter with s.l.t in Portugal was linked to a European funded Youth in Action programme; the second chance school[23] in Porto, which hosted the first part of the training, had utilised s.l.t with its young people. Several of the school's attendees were part of the audience in Piodão where a performance developed from the training was held. The performance brought together the learning, experience, and knowledge acquired from the training and created an understanding of the methodology through practice. Many of the companies and practitioners from across Europe at the training were using or looking to use s.l.t in similar contexts, specifically to enhance relationships within communities as well as individual personhood in post-conflict areas or deprived municipalities. It was from this experience that I began to ruminate on other contexts where this work might have an application.

I began to consider notions of well-being and the potential for immersive practices to potentially involve, affect and improve one's sense of self. This seems evident in some of the comments which audience have shared after the performance. For example, one participant in an s.l.t performance in Bulgaria commented:

> I felt as it I was in a fairy tale – you walk through some path and some things happen all around you. When I entered I did not know where I was ... I felt really strange. I don't think I fully realize [sic] what exactly happened to me that night. I know only that it changed me (participant from Bulgarian labyrinth, 2005)[24].

The sense of transformation, highlighted in this participant's response, has been identified as a component of immersive theatres (White, 2012); however, I believe this can be expounded further. I argue that the type of transformation can vary depending on the performance. This seems evident in the variety of terms used to describe immersive experiences such as: 'intimate', 'dream-like' (Ibid: 221) or shocking (Billington, 2009). In particular, I argue that the therapeutic qualities that seem evident in some performances may be able to enhance a

[23] The second chance school uses alternative modes of learning through subjects studied and teaching, to provide education to young people excluded from mainstream schools.
[24] With thanks to Iwan Brioc for sharing excerpts from participants who attended this workshop and performance.

person's well-being. Within this thesis, I focus on ways in which immersive theatres create a therapeutic affect. I shall first outline the recent emergence of the term well-being and make links to applied theatre practices, before moving on to discuss the potential of immersive theatres within this domain.

Well-being and applied theatres

In 2010, the Marmot Review stated that there was a link between health, social, and economic status. The report referred to the need for 'empowering individuals and local communities' in order to improve inequalities in health and life expectancy, particular for those who are most disadvantaged (Marmot, 2010: 9). More recently there have been calls for further development and expansion of 'arts on prescription' programmes. Arts on Prescription have been defined as programmes where 'the overarching aim is to provide access to the arts in the belief that active participation in a creative activity can promote health and well-being' (Hillary Bungay and Stephen Clift, 2010: 277). Within their review of this work, Bungay and Clift describe that evidence of this work is limited within scholarship; however, they suggest that grey literature emerging from practice offers some evidence, based on individual projects that have been carried out. They conclude that the arts can offer an 'adjunct to conventional therapies' and the importance of the social element of participation may have benefits to both the individual and the community (Ibid: 280).

The longstanding links between theatre and therapy have been noted: 'theatre, like therapy, can prompt us to reflect on our own thoughts, feelings, and behaviours in the presence of others' (Walsh, 2013:1). The term 'well-being' has been recently popularised as a way to determine and evaluate lived experience, that has been defined as achieving a 'state of equilibrium' (Dodge, et al., 2012: 222). It is often described through valuing one's relationships with others as well as an individual's feelings of self-worth and independence. Referring to the work of Wilmott and Nelson (2005), Phil Hanlon et al. write:

> In addition to the globalization of consumer culture and the loosening of social ties and traditions, there has been an explosion of innovation in technology worldwide which has led to what sociologists call the compression of time and space. In this globalized world, as the speed of transport and our power of communication increase, people paradoxically find less time for themselves and their families (2012: 73).

There has been an upsurge of interest in notions centring on well-being from a variety of standpoints including both healthcare and environment. Richard Ryan and Edward Deci's (2001) survey of concepts of well-being reveals several approaches that include both

eudaimonic and hedonistic methodologies. They conclude in line with Emory L Cowen (1991) that well-being is a complex relationship between: 'attainment of strong attachment relationships, acquisition of age-appropriate cognitive, interpersonal and coping skills, and exposure to environments that empower the person' (2001: 161). In relation to immersive theatres, I argue that therapeutic forms may provide an additional tool to the arts and health tool box, through which improved states of personal well-being may be achieved.

It should be noted that there is some cynicism surrounding these recent developments, with some scholars considering recent interest in well-being as part of a neoliberal agenda that is turning happiness into a commodity (see Davies, 2015). Despite these arguments, I maintain that the work of applied artists and practitioners retains a valuable place in supporting individuals to live well. Indeed, a quick scope of texts on applied theatre practice asserts the possibilities for theatre as a tool to transform and empower across the globe in an array of contexts (see for examples Taylor, 2003; Prentki and Preston, 2009). According to Helen Nicholson, immersive theatres are readily aligned to applied theatre practice:

> 'Socially engaged theatre takes place both inside and outside theatre buildings, and there is a neat reciprocity between contemporary theatre-makers' interest in creating interactive art or immersive theatre in found spaces – discussed factories, empty swimming pools, vacated shops, and so on – and the institutional spaces such as prisons, schools and hospitals that are often the settings for applied theatre' (2014: 3).

Within immersive theatres, there have already been some connections made to therapeutic aspects of the performance. The approach used in this thesis looks to demonstrate the potential to create performances designed to particularly affect the audience in this way. Brioc's collected practice of 'Context Orientated Theatre' (Jones, 2010: 13–18), which incorporates Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed arsenal and an adaptation of Enrique Vargas's sensory theatre which Brioc names s.l.t, can be seen to positively impact personal well-being. Brioc's model creates a direct relationship between performance, performer and audience member as they experience the theatrical story through their own first person narrative perspective. This takes place in a safe performance environment where the audience are often called upon to act and make choices, changing their bodily status to a 'proprioceptive' one (Ibid). Brioc also includes mindfulness (see Crane, 2009) within his practice which places the audience in consideration of 'the here and now' (Jones, 2010). The sense of exchange between performer and audience is crucial in these practices, created through the intention in which the actions are performed: in controlled environments, with attentiveness given to the presence and body language of the audience (usually one-to-one). The introduction of mindfulness to the theatre and to the audience allows for a situation

where the audience members become a considered part of the production on an individual basis and where exchange takes place within a state of presence that is 'in the moment'.

Immersive theatres and therapeutic potential – examples in contemporary practice

A recent collaborative performance between Brioc's company The Republic of the Imagination (TROTI) and the School of Psychology, Bangor University (*Cerebellium*, March 2012) used the premise that technological advances had created consciousness in a stimulated 'brain in a vat'. The audience were placed in the role of being part of an ethical consultation who had been brought in to decide on three possible outcomes for the project:

1) That the stimulated conscience (Kevin) should not be told that he is a brain in a vat and the experiment continue.
2) That the experiment should be immediately terminated (thus ending Kevin's existence).
3) That Kevin should be informed of his physical status (and the consequences be allowed to unfold).

In order to come to a decision, audience members are taken on an individual tour of the laboratory, meeting some of the fictional scientists working on the experiment as well as having an encounter with Kevin directly. Explored through sensory stimuli, the performance negotiates several sub-textual issue, such as contemporary society's reliance on technology, which takes us 'out' of our bodies, toward a new non-physical existence where communication is non-literal.

Developed from the previous year, a revival of the performance in 2013 continued the storyline revealing that last years' audience chose by a narrow margin that the stimulated conscience (Kevin), should not be told that he is a brain in a vat and that the experiment should be allowed to continue. The continuing narrative unfolds beginning in a tent outside the main laboratory building. The audience are informed by one of the research team that the ethics committee had since decided that Kevin (Project K), as a brain in a vat, does not meet the criteria of our own existence; therefore, he could not be counted as having free will and was, in their eyes, not human. The audience in the 2013 performance were therefore told that they were assembled in the role of 'witnesses' to the termination of the experiment, that would result in the ending of Kevin's existence.

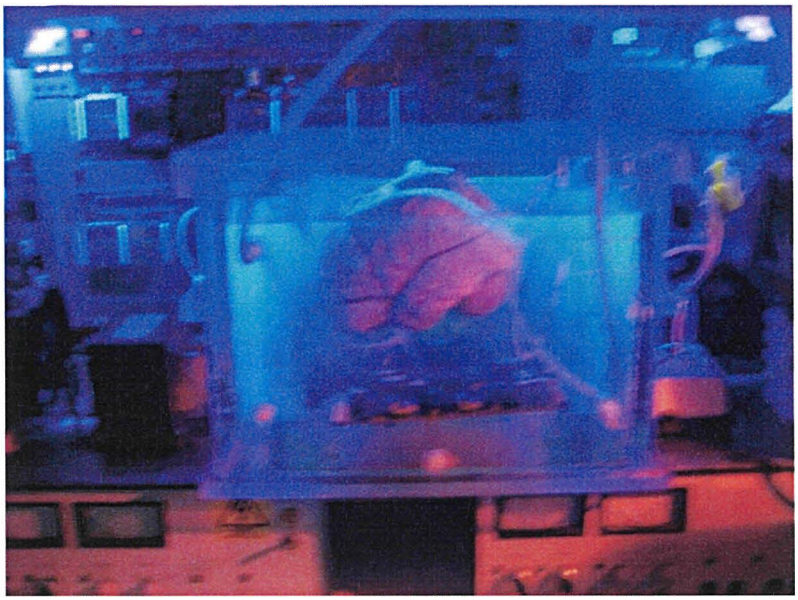


Figure 1: *Cerebellium* **(2012-2013). Audience members encounter 'Project K' later named as 'Kevin' throughout the performance.**

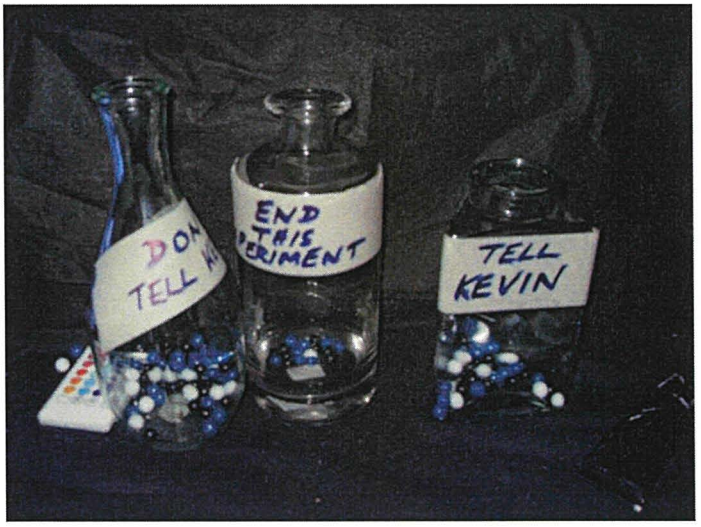


Figure 2: *Cerebellium* **(2012) Decision making: audience members place a bead in a jar expressing their opinion after experiencing the performance.**

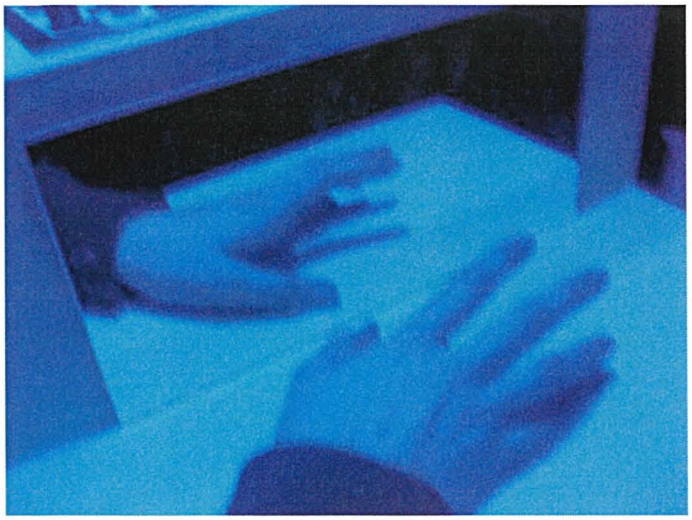


Figure 3: *Cerebellium* (2012-2013): Phantom hands: physical sensations on the hand are viewed through the mirror which tricks the mind into believing that it is affecting both hands.

A further iteration in 2014 took the performance into a studio space and explored the potential of evolving the work into a touring production, changing the audience/performer dynamic to involve less one-to-one encounter. In this most recent version, the performance took place within two circular structures that essentially mapped onto an image of the brain. The audience were still given the chance to experience several perceptual alteration games, but they also witnessed other audience members experiencing the sensations, moving around the performance within the small group.

Whilst this thesis does not seek to explore what is an on-going argument with technology and its use within our lives, it is curious that interactive forms are being utilised for both pro and anti arguments toward the inclusion and use of technology within our lives: one which argues for a need to embrace this technology within the theatrical frame and an opposing argument towards a re-connection with our own physical body and (therefore) self. Through experiencing a series of sensory illusions, the audience of *Cerebellium* had their sense of perception questioned. Whilst the story of Kevin provided a frame for the performance, it is ultimately centred on the audience in asking them to respond to the ethical crisis of the performance through their experience and interpretation of the performance that is inherently bound with their personal ethics and lived experience.

Another example I identify as therapeutic is the work of the late Adrian Howells, who created acts of benevolence through his one-to-one performances. *Foot Washing for the Sole* (first performed 2008) and *The Pleasure of Being: Washing, Feeding, Holding* (first performed 2010) were a reduction of performative gesture to simple acts which endeavoured

to fill a void in physical contact between individuals (Ramaswamy, 2011). Feelings of being 'purged', resonating experience, an evocation of deep-seated memories, feelings of wholeness otherwise unfelt for some time and self-discovery; this is the language used to describe the experience of Brioc's labyrinth and Howells' performances (Theatr Cynefin, n.d. and Howells in *The Scotsman* 2010). Howells himself recognised the healing potential of his work, particularly identifying the conversational aspect of his practice as delivering a therapeutic reaction (Heddon and Howells, 2011). A similar therapeutic frame is also present in Ontroerend Goed's *The Smile off Your Face* (first performed 2003) and it is also prevalent within Enrique Vargas's practice.

The effect of these practices is wildly different to criticism levelled at other immersive works, such as comments by Michael Coveney (2010) relating to YMBBT's eponymous work[25]. The main difference seems to stem from questions of audience agency where, rather than the performance seeming to operate as a conveyor belt of audience bodies, space is given to allow a sense of genuine personal interaction, where one's individual presence truly matters; a point which Howells raised regarding direct interaction and allowing the audience to act (Howells quoted in *The Scotsman*, 2010). Within a closed performance environment, instilling the audience with a sense of agency can create a process of considered decision making and potentially bring awareness to their own actions and state of being.

Theatre and therapy

Theatre has already been used to promote wellness, through health and social care interventions. Dramatherapy, in particular, has been developed as a medium for the expression of difficult emotions or feelings, and as a way of articulating conflict through dramatic action, supported by a therapist (Jennings, 1992). This can include the use of poetry, play texts or improvisation through a slow and gradual process, with the aim of working towards very particular resolutions for the participant (Ibid). The term 'therapeutic' has been used within the context of dramatherapy (Snow, 2009: 118) as a way of describing the therapy process for the participant. This process, writes Stephen Snow, is a 'rite of passage', where a shift 'in the perception of self' occurs: 'Fears must be overcome, obstacles

[25] Coveney denounced the performance as 'smack[ing] of triviality as well as a low-level fascism in their treatment of the "up for it" audience. Nor is there any underpinning philosophy: it's just about party time and you'd better join in... Of course, everything I hated about the show You Me Bum Bum Train – the bullying, the coerciveness, the physical rough- house, the illusion of "empowerment" – is everything many people and some critics loved' (2010, n.p).

surmounted, and the threshold towards a new self-concept, potentially crossed' (Ibid; 125–126). It is hoped that the participant will move from crisis to resolution through their work with a dramatherapist.

Within this thesis I argue that the stimulating and intimate nature of immersive theatres may offer similar therapeutic possibilities. In selecting three words from a list to describe *Cerebellium* (2012) several participants referred to the 'challenging' (receiving four selections) and 'thought-provoking' (19 selections) nature of the work[26]. It was through my own encounter as performer with one participant at a performance in Portugal that the potential for immersive theatres to similarly challenge and move the audience to a place of resolution, was first intimated[27].

Immersive theatres and dementia

One of the intentions of this thesis is to offer an extended use of therapeutic immersive theatres beyond this initial investigation, in particular for people living with dementia. There has been a growing interest in creating theatre with and for older audiences (Basting, 1995 and 2009). Theatre works such as the STOP-GAP programme in America have sought to give a voice to older people through involving them in the creation and performance of theatre (Laffoon and Kenny, 2009: 308– 329; Laffoon, Bryan and Diamond, 2001: 99–111). It has been suggested that smell, in particular, has the ability to reignite 'memory and imagination' (Gough and Christie, 2003: 1). The benefits of sensory work have also been inferred through the use of art with older populations, with the tactile nature of the work being recognised as an important and affecting aspect of the work (see Shaughnessy, 2012). By creating visceral

[26] With thanks to Iwan Brioc for providing access to the collated feedback from the performance.

[27] In the performance I was working with another person as part of the blindfold section of the performance. The audience had their feet washed and were then guided along a path through the village where they were eventually left to be guided by a flautist, using the music instead of a hand, to guide them. I was part of the next section where we would begin to dance with the person to the music before guiding them through an arrangement of objects strung on a washing line, introducing smells and placing a stone in their hands, before leading them to the next installation. A young woman from the second chance school removed her blindfold after she became frightened moving up the slope following the sound of the music. I approached her slowly, smiled and held out my hand. Neither of us spoke one another's language, but through gesture I held her hand and after a short while offered her a hug. We stood there for a short time, before I asked her if she wanted to continue. I squeezed her hand and walked with her up the path. She proceeded to walk through our part of the performance without wearing the blindfold and before long continued up the path. After the performance she approached me with a friend who translated between us. She said that she was thankful to have met me in that space as she had been frightened. From the experience she felt it had taught her to face her fears and whilst she had found the performance difficult, the way in which I had responded to her in that moment had given her comfort to meet with the challenge and know the performers were on her side.

responses immersive theatres have the potential to engender action through the process of transformation that can be created in moments of contact and stimulation.

Each performance created for this thesis was able to challenge the audience's relationship to the world around them and to their sense of self, in the much the same way that Walsh describes (see page 64). The potential of immersive theatres relies on its placing of the audience within the theatrical frame in much the same way as role-play does in dramatherapy (Jones, 1996). The use of play provides a space for trial and error without consequences, although, as I have identified in Chapter 5, this will depend upon the audience's sense of risk and their ability to overcome the challenge(s) presented within the performance. The use of role-playing within the performance frame affords the audience the potential to co-create the drama and the possibility for assimilation from fiction into reality (Ibid: 208). In this way, I argue that particular forms of immersive theatres could provide an additional technique for older adults, in particular, people with dementia, to current dramatherapy and applied theatre practices.

Extending this consideration, there may also be possibilities for these performances to challenge conceptions of knowledge, contest beliefs and reframe knowledge and experience. One theatre company, Spare Tyre, has begun to use sensory explorations with people with dementia by focussing on in the moment responses that offers an alternative to reminiscence approaches. The use of the senses in this way can be 'potentially transportive' (Shaughnessy, 2012: 75), providing alternative ways of communication other than verbal cognisance, which may deteriorate with time for people living with dementia. Other research has sought to find links between theatre and improved well-being for people with dementia (van Dijk, Weert and Dröes, 2011) but the senses have not been the sole focus of the research. Further exploration and development of immersive practices within this field could lead to particular benefits for people living with dementia as well as helping families, loved ones and carers with alternative communication strategies that engage the person through non-verbal means. The immersive encounter could also offer audience's a different understanding of a person with dementia, encountering the person's perception of the world through the performance experience.

Dementia is particularly topical at present with concerns for a growing older population and the subsequent increase of people living with dementia. In the absence of a cure, strategies focussing on improving well-being can, in the meantime, improve the quality of life for those with a diagnosis. However, it will be important to demarcate how a

therapeutic theatre is not necessarily a therapy in itself, in the same way that Boal disputed this difference within his Theatre of the Oppressed arsenal (Boal, 1994, 1996, 1998 and 2008). This will be particularly pertinent if this work is to avoid the longstanding disagreements that have occurred between art therapy and arts in health practices (Edwards, 1976), promoting instead the benefits of both in the moment and reminiscence approaches for different people and/or different circumstances, or as a combination of approaches to benefit the individual (Tsiris, Pavlicevic and Farrant, 2014).

Local immersive practices in North Wales

Discussion of immersive theatres to date has largely focussed on select theatre companies who have acquired national and international reputations as the forerunners in the field of immersive theatres. Punchdrunk, Ontroerend Goed, Adrian Howells and dreamthinkspeak are amongst those that have received the greatest critical attention to date. My first experience of immersive theatres came from my encounter with s.l.t practice in North Wales which has been of major inspiration within my practice. This work has been shared through Brioc's work with theatre companies internationally, yet has been absent from critical discussion of immersive theatres to date[28]. Some discussion of one of its key influences – the work of Enrique Vargas with Taller de Investigación del Imagen Teatral and Teatro de los Sentidos – has been discussed prior to the current proliferation of research on immersive theatres that has occurred in the past few years (see Christie and Gough, 2003; Christie, Watt and Gough, 2006; Kershaw, 2007). The discussion of s.l.t in this thesis marks one of the primary considerations of this work within the context of scholarship on immersive theatres. I begin with an introduction to Vargas's work before focusing on the development of s.l.t practice, particularly in the context of North Wales.

Enrique Vargas has termed his sensory arsenal in the theatre as 'poetics of the senses' (Teatro de los Sentidos, n.d.). The essence of Vargas's 'poetics' is that the sensory elements stimulate an internal response which provokes inward reflection. The performances re-connect with the body's sensory apparatus that is normally dominated by our visual sense. Both practices invite the audience to pause and reflect through an encounter with the senses. This is often accompanied by a slow and ritualistic pace that allows time for reaction, thought, and provocation to occur. The performance evokes awareness of one's self in

[28] My recent article 'Zombies, time machines and brains: science fiction and immersive theatres' (2015) offered the first discussion of s.l.t alongside Punchdrunk and other popular cultural forms of immersive practices.

relation to the world: how the internal (ego) is positioned in relation to the external (world). In s.l.t there is an element of reacting to a situation, similar to other immersive performances such as YMBBT's eponymous work where the audience move from one scenario to the next. The sensory interactions presented in s.l.t are offered to the audience as invitations to participate in an exchange. In this way, participation is dependent on the audience's willingness and ability to interact on a level of their choosing. Vargas has written that his work offers a theatrical experience like no other an audience are likely to have experienced: 'The trip takes place in a space where curiosity, amazement, and chance meet in the midst of silence, smells, darkness, solitude, sounds and tactile sensations that help the wanderer along his/her path' (Teatro de los Sentidos, n.d.). Terming his audience members 'wanderers' (Ibid), Vargas crafts an all-encompassing theatre environment transporting his audience into the centre of the theatre landscapes that he and his team creates. The performance is intended to offer a chance for the audience to reflect and rediscover their self through unlocking their sensory memory. As such, the performances employ sensory deprivation to give focus to particular senses. This allows for attention to be given to touch, taste, smell, sound and sight in turn.

Vargas's work is linked to notions of play and a return to a childlike exploration of the world: 'As an adult, he [Enrique Vargas] set his sights in recovering the spirit of those "forbidden" [childhood] games and into developing a poetic of the senses that would endow them with meaning' (Teatro de los Sentidos, n.d.). The unlocking of memories and the creative exploration of childhood is central to Vargas's practice. The performances often explore simple situations or moments through the senses and utilise the ideas of games and exploration within the performance dialogue. Alfred Seegert defines the difference between 'immersion' and 'presence' where immersion refers to a 'being in' in the performance and presence as a 'being before' (2009: 24). Although writing about virtual interaction, Seegert asserts that the ability to act within space creates a 'doing' mode meaning that: 'presence is thus performed' (Ibid). When skills are not actively engaged with our ability to use a set of skills does not disappear, but recedes. In a similar way, our attention to our body's senses requires exercising and it is this which both Vargas and Brioc's work looks to enrich. One of the difficulties for the audience is their unfamiliarity with using non-verbal communication because of our reliance on the visual[29]. We can see Seegert's 'doing' mode enacted in various

[29] Lib Taylor refers to the way sign-language is used to 'convey messages' which excludes those unfamiliar with its 'gestic corporeal signs' (1999: 17). I would argue that it is the same in immersive theatres where reliance on

ways in immersive theatres through the audience choosing their performance trajectory, or the way they interact within the performance, although different performances approach interaction with the work in different ways.

Vargas initially developed his work in Columbia with his company Taller de Investigación del Imagen Teatral before moving to Spain to form Teatro de los Sentidos. When he visited Wales in 1994, it was with his original company (as documented by the Centre for Performance Research's (CPR) performance archive (Christie, Gough and Watt, 2006: 305), although Teatro de los Sentidos's website lists this event under their companies work. The performance of *Ariadne's Thread* (1994) used the story of the labyrinth as the subject of the work. A theatre building was totally transformed into a series of installation, where the audience would move from one to the next in turn. Dyfan Roberts[30], describing the work some 20 years later wrote that the performance replicated: 'the life-journey it symbolised, from darkness to light and back again', describing it as one of the most influential theatre experiences he has, to date, encountered (see appendices for Roberts' full account). Vargas returned again to Wales in 2001, this time with Teatro de los Sentidos. The company was also part of the London LIFT festival around this time (although their website does not provide an exact date). Having toured widely during the 1990's and first decade of the 21st Century, it is possible that they have had a wider influence on other practitioners than has otherwise been acknowledged, in this field.

Attending one of the workshops in Wales, Brioc was inspired and from this practice developed s.l.t. His company, Theatr Cynefin, hosted several performances in a specially built labyrinth in North Wales that came about as the result of a collaboration with Golygfa Gwydyr, who manage the forest of Gwydyr in North Wales. Theatr Cynefin were involved in the construction of the Caerdroia (a Welsh word for labyrinth that roughly translates to mean a 'circular fort') in Gwydyr forest, specifically intended as a space for creating outdoor s.l.t performance.

The Caerdroia path is one mile in length constructed in the forest landscape using the trees to create the 'walls' of the labyrinth. This path also has a separate entrance and exit point so the walker never retraces their steps (some labyrinths require the walker to follow the same path out). The start of the path is marked by a plinth so that it can be found amongst

---

sensory interpretation makes experiencing the work problematic for some who are less familiar with this vocabulary. This could account for the way those who have been to previous similar performances cannot access their original experience level, because they have now activated their use of sense memory.

[30] With thanks to Dyfan for sharing his personal account with me.

the trees and other paths of the forest. Since its construction some ten years ago it has been used for performance and training events by Theatr Cynefin. More recently this has been taken over by a community voluntary theatre project, Theatr Dan-y-Coed who have since held three performances in the forest. In 2012, Brioc returned to North Wales with his company TROTI to co-create *Cerebellium*, this time taking his sensory work into a disused science laboratory in Bangor. The North Wales area has also been resident to other interactive and sensory performances (*Wet Sounds*, 2011 and 2013; *Digital Tea Dance*, 2011; The Weather Factory, 2010, to name but a few) in recent years, demonstrating a curiosity within the area for these types of performances.

The labyrinth: its meaning and relationship to s.l.t

The structure of the Caerdroia replicates the shape of the classic seven turn labyrinth (see Pennick, 1990; Lonegren, 2007). This particular labyrinth design has also been linked with meditative walking practices (see Curry, 2000; Buchanan, 2007), where people walk the labyrinth in prayer or as an act of pilgrimage[31]. As the path circumnavigates backwards and forth, the audience member is initially taken out from the centre to the furthest point, before meandering towards the centre. If an audience member chooses to leave the performance for whatever reason, the design allows the performer to cut through the performance space in order to promptly take the audience member back to the start without them having to walk the entirety of the performance route. This format can also aid quick communication through the labyrinth as performers have contact with performers either side on the next ring of the circle, not just the performers immediately preceding and succeeding them. In daylight the well-trodden earth is a clear marker of the path, however at night the audience must utilise their senses, recognising the feel of the path underfoot. The trees themselves can prevent the audience from venturing off the path with trunks and branches indicating that the audience is straying close to the walls of the path.

[31] There is a history, particularly in Christian literature, of people walking labyrinths in acts of pilgrimage (Curry, 2000; Martineau, 2005; Pennick, 1990). The 12 circuit labyrinth on the floor of Chartes cathedral in France is the most well-known example.

Figure 4: A stone engraved with a seven circuit labyrinth found in a cottage garden in North Wales.

As the audiences sensory awareness increases the environment becomes easier to navigate and the path is walked with more confidence as they gain assuredness in their steps: in this way the awakening of the sensory stimulus is achieved not only through the context of the performance but in relation to the location. With darkness impairing full vision, the body is forced to use other sensory stimuli other than the visual to negotiate the way forward through the labyrinth. If the audience is observant they may notice that the tree canopy reveals a small gap where the path cuts through the forest, offering an easy way to navigate the space. Rebecca Solnit (2006) identifies this reading of the land as a way to reconnect a person with the landscape (a skill she believes has become lost from lack of use).

Figure 5: The tree canopy in Caerdroia, Llanrwst

Figure 6: The plinth marking the entrance to the Caerdroia in Gwydyr forest.

Whilst the Caerdroia has been the dominant setting for s.l.t, other spaces have been used within the area, by creating a one-way route without imitating particular labyrinth designs. In the first two iterations of *Cerebellium* (2012-2013), the audience were guided through an old laboratory where the route incorporated the design and structure of the building. In the third iteration, the performance space mapped onto the shape of a brain with the audience moving back and forth between two central pods where the interactions took place. In another work entitled *Food for the Gods* (2009), Theatr Cynefin used the walls of Conwy castle and the streets of the town to house a performance that was integrated into a food festival. For this performance, the audience were given an item of clothing to mark them out to the performers as an audience member. In other works, such as my experience in Portugal, signs were placed along the route for the audience to follow as an alternative way of marking out the route. In each case, the environment still informs the sensory impressions of the performance. This is often due to the fact that the theme of the performance and the site of the performance connect in some way. For example, in Teatro de los Sentidos's initial production of *Oráculos* (first performed 2000), the performance utilised the location of the mill and its existing features by baking bread in the old ovens for the audience to taste and created temperature through the heat generated by the baking. At other points, the audience were given corn and invited to place it in a grinder where it was milled into flour. Throughout the performance chutes and pipe works directed the audience along their way. When the performance has toured, the company have re-created these spaces in locations that offer the best fit to that of its original home (such as in a production as part of the Perth festival, Australia in 2012). As Teatro de los Sentidos frequently use buildings or structures for their performances they are less inhibited by environmental conditions such as seasonal and weather changes and are able to construct grand set designs within which to place their audience.

As I have outlined above, of importance to both the naming and practice of s.l.t is the utilisation of the labyrinth metaphor, which is often connected with the language of the maze. A maze is commonly referred to as a path which offers alternative and even false paths which the walker must decipher in order to attain the goal of reaching the centre of the maze or its exit. The term labyrinth is often understood to mean a pathway where there is no alternative route offered; the participant has but two options: to keep walking forwards (in order to attain the centre of the path), or to retrace the pathway and return to the start. This distinction provides a clear indication to the walker of the maze or labyrinth what lies ahead. Within the realm of the theatrical, the maze and labyrinth both disorientate the audience member but I

would suggest they offer different modes of experiencing the performance[32]. The labyrinth format usually implies that the audiences travel through a one-way route on a solo journey through the performance. The labyrinth provides a set route through the performance which (should) be easily trackable, allowing each audience to experience the same set of installations or performative moments in the same order, albeit, encountered alone[33]. In contrast, the maze offers a choice in terms of which path the audience will take through the performance space, meaning that each audience will in theory experience the performance in a different order and is unlikely to encounter the work in the same exact sequence as other audience members. This is crucial to the affect the performance creates, for example, Punchdrunk's work tends towards maze-like space where the audience must choose their direction of travel through the performance. As pioneers of the large roaming immersive theatre space, their work sometimes enforces the audience's direction through the work (such as in selecting their exit point from the lift in *The Drowned Man* (2013–2014) and in separating the audience to direct them to particular floors in *Beneath these streets: lost and found* (2015). Other mechanisms involve the audience choosing to follow a particular character's story or remaining in particular areas of the performance space, seeing segments of the performance that are played out in the one location. There is no comfort in knowing that there is a 'right' way through the work and the audience must ultimately choose it for themselves. This sense of unknowing I propose, adds to creating a tense atmosphere within the work, playing upon fears of being lost that would work against instilling a calming effect upon the audience. This does not prevent the labyrinth from disorientating the audience, however, with the choice of route removed it potentially allows for concentration on other aspects of the performance.

Within literature a great deal has been written on maze and labyrinths. Whilst the two terms have in the last hundred or so years been separated out by some scholars (see Matthews, 1922; Curry, 2000; Bloos and O' Connor, 2002), others have used the terms interchangeably as synonyms for one another (see Pennick, 1990; von Held; 2002: 22;

---

[32] Not all immersive theatres use the labyrinth or maze formats. In static performances, such as in Adrian Howell's *Foot Washing for the Sole* (first performed 2008) or Ontroerend Goed's *Internal* (first performed 2008), movement through the performance is largely restricted and minimal. These works will also remove the sense of disorientation which can occur in both maze and labyrinth format and are therefore likely to provide a coherent exchange, engaging more with aspects of performer/ audience interaction than the spatial dynamics of the performance.

[33] However in my second performance I played with this format by making several routes possible through the space, but the one experienced by the audience would be interpreted as the definitive route through the performance, based on their own encounter. The audience would remain unaware of the multiple possibilities because they remained blindfold for most of the work.

Papaioannou, 2014). This has applied not only to the philosophical discussion: the gardens at the Schönbrunn Palace in Vienna feature several mazes and labyrinths which are distinguished from one another by the same instruction used by Matthews[34]. It was whilst visiting the Schönbrunn Palace, experiencing maze and labyrinth in quick succession that I realised the difference between each form and their relation to the design of immersive theatre performances. In the maze, the walker is presented with the challenge of selecting the correct route through the space often to achieve a goal of reaching the centre or the exit. Many of the mazes in the Schönbrunn also included additional games and puzzles that could be played. By contrast, the labyrinths were largely peaceful and whilst there might still be the urge to hurry to the centre, the walker can trust in knowing the path will take them on the route to the centre. Once this is realised it is possible to enjoy the twists and turns in relative peace. One particular labyrinth had a tree at its centre and benches, marking a place of rest and contemplation. It was on reflection that I realised that immersive theatres could be grouped in terms of their spatial design into mazes and labyrinths: one's which question the audience's decision to take a particular route through the space, and others which allow the audience to be in the moment of the experience, by not having to concern them with which direction to choose in order to continue their journey.

Further examples of labyrinths and mazes can be found across the globe and in the UK such as in Saffron Walden which is famed for the turf labyrinth impressed upon the village green. Several other structures have since been built in the town and a festival is now held every three years in the village celebrating maze and labyrinth culture.

The labyrinth is perhaps best known and understood through its use in the Cretan myth of Theseus where he kills the Minotaur in the labyrinth, using a thread given to him by Ariadne to retrace his steps and emerge from the labyrinth unharmed. This myth provides a metaphor of the labyrinth as an obstacle to be solved or overcome. The labyrinth is often utilised in this way as a metaphor for other difficulties within a person's life (Karkou, Fullarton and Scarth, 2010). Fernando Arrabal's play *The Labyrinth* (1967) shares this context, placing his characters in a web-like construction that is an inescapable prison. It can, therefore, be seen as an appropriate tool to be used in applied practice where practitioners

[34] He writes: 'Some writers seem to prefer to apply the word "maze" to hedge-mazes only, using the word "labyrinth" to denote the structures described by the writers of antiquity, or as a general term for any confusing arrangement of paths. Others, again, show a tendency to restrict the application of the term "maze" to cases in which the idea of a puzzle is involved' (Matthews, 1922: 3).

explore challenges with their participants through theatre.

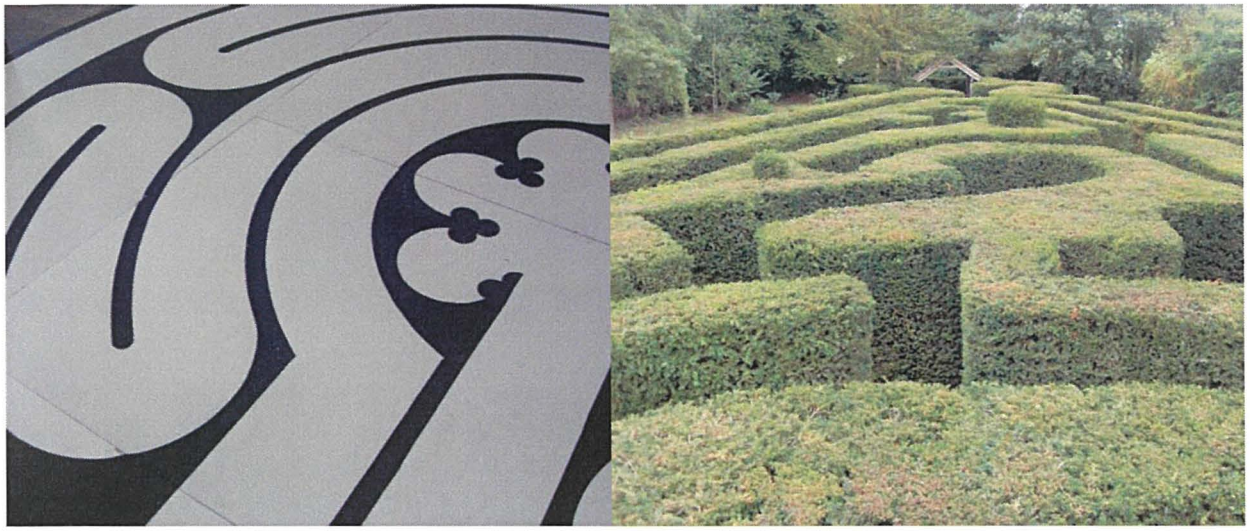


Figure 7: A floor labyrinth in a church and a hedge maze in Saffron Walden, Essex.

Figure 8: A plinth marking the various labyrinths and mazes at Schönbrunn Palace, Vienna.

S.l.t beyond North Wales

Whilst this thesis gives primary focus to immersive theatre practices in North Wales, it seems prudent to acknowledge their use globally within a discrete network of companies and practitioners. After my first workshop in North Wales, I attended a training session Portugal that included at least ten countries from across Europe; ranging from Iceland across to Bulgaria and Romania. The programme was funded by the European Youth in Action scheme, and many of the groups were looking to explore the practice with disadvantaged young people from their home regions.

Whilst in the UK, North Wales has been the principal location for this work, a European Union scheme funded by the Grundtvig programme, saw museum and heritage staff from across the EU, including the People's History Museum in Manchester, part of a pilot course held at Manchester Museum in 2012, led by members of organisations previously trained by Brioc[35]. This was followed by a week-long training in Bucharest[36]. The focus of the workshop was on how s.l.t could be used within heritage institutions and education benefits. As part of the training, participants were guided on a city wide labyrinth through Bucharest about the city and its people. Following this experience, Catherine O'Donnell, created a Christmas themed labyrinth with Emily Capstick, a freelance creative practitioner. In April 2013, the People's History Museum was funded by the Arts Council England for a project called *Play your Part*. The project sought to make museums relevant as a way of inspiring 'activists of the future' (quoted from conversation with O'Donnell, 2015). As part of the event a labyrinth performance was created with four members of the public with the performance themed around the 1880s and linking to the Fabian society's connections to the place. The group spent half a day taking part in archival research to link the performance to the museum and a further day exploring s.l.t methodology and sensory games that the trainers had been taught at the workshop in Bucharest. O'Donnell also created *Play Your Party* (2014), where the audience explored the galleries whilst being led blindfolded. It was experienced by 14 visitors and received a number of positive responses (O'Donnell, 2014). The majority of responses from the visitors after the performance were positive commenting:

---

[35] With thanks to Catherine O'Donnell for sharing her experience with s.l.t in Manchester and sharing the audience evaluations from *Play your Party* (2014). A link to the project is provided here: <https://erasmusplus.org.uk/grundtvig-projects>.

[36] The training was held in a number of EU cities – more information can be found via the following links: <https://www.facebook.com/Labyrintheme/>; <http://issuu.com/lucianbranea/docs/labyrintheme_handbook_for_trainers_56f1b56ccb557d>; <http://issuu.com/lucianbranea/docs/labyrintheme_handbook_for_trainees_58aa0908800d17>. With thanks to Catherine O'Donnell for sharing this information.

'such a vivid experience', 'it really made you think', 'letting go of yourself', '[I enjoyed] the drama and sense of choice'. Only one visitor commented that it 'wasn't for me'.

Summary

This chapter has given primary focus to the rationale for creating applied immersive theatres. The variety of performances grouped under the term immersive theatres offer a personal experience to the audience, but I would argue that the type of experience and how it is achieved varies. It is within this context that the performance practice has been created for this thesis, with the intention of exploring particular elements of immersive theatres to further knowledge and understanding of these practices. *The College on the Hill* (2011) and *When Autumn Passed Me By* (2014) were both original works created by myself as the researcher to respond to and investigate the potential for immersive theatres as a therapeutic tool. Chapter 3 moves on to describe the methodology for each of the two performances.

Chapter 3.

Methodology of the performance practice for *The College on the Hill* and *When Autumn Passed Me By*

This chapter focuses on the methodologies employed within the practice developed for this thesis. I also detail the methods for data collection during both studies from audience participants attending the performances. The findings are then discussed at length in chapter four.

I begin this chapter by providing an explanation of the decision to incorporate both hermeneutic and practice-led approaches in the thesis, in particular, the reasons for choosing to look at the affect of the performance on audience participant's well-being. Following this, I present an overview of the development process for the two performances and their influences. I discuss the approaches which have informed the two performances through a variety of training practices, workshops, and readings. Additionally, I outline two performance experiments which informed the development of the two performance studies.

Practice-led research

Practice-led research provides an alternative or complementary exploration of research other than a purely theoretical approach. Whilst a variety of methods have been taken in developing practice-led research, I considered this method as comparable to an applied scientific approach: by testing theories and creating performance experiments to inform the development of new concepts relating to understanding the structure of immersive theatres. In this way, I was able to complement the practice with collecting data from audience attendees in order to understand their experience of each performance. By taking this approach I intended to apply the method suggested by Sullivan in taking on roles of 'practitioner, researcher and theorist', using the performances to engage with 'issues and ideas [...] revealed through the process of reflexive and reflective inquiry reflexive and reflective inquiry' (2009: 42). It was from this perspective that I choose to explore the audience experience of immersive theatres through creating original performances. I was interested to see whether it was possible to intentionally design a particular type of audience experience: specifically one which would be therapeutic in some way. Whilst the performances were designed to be therapeutic, I also explored particular elements of the performance that I perceived to influence the effect on the audience. I was specifically

interested in performance design and ways in which this might influence the audience's experience. The practice work aimed to both complement and challenge several aspects raised through observations relating to contemporary immersive practices[37]. The performances created for this research were also designed to explore the best possible ethical practice for creating an immersive piece of theatre and were intended to consider how this might be achieved.

Within the practice work, I experimented with some of the current formats that are being utilised within immersive theatres, such as utilising blindfolds; creating both site-specific and non-site specific work and the use and non-use of confessional modes of speaking. This is explored in detail in the methods section (below). The performances themselves have evolved as a process of study and reflection not only as autonomous theatrical entities but expanded upon and informed the development of new concepts which are presented in Chapters 4 and 5. By taking this approach I intended to offer new insight into immersive theatres through the development and construction of original performance material and by collecting audience responses to each performance.

As the performances were also being developed with data collection from audience participant in mind, they were conducted in the context of research condition 'states', through advertising them not as theatre performance events but as research performances. Audience members were therefore recruited as study participants and received information sheets and consent forms prior to entering the performance. This was in line with ethical approval which was granted from the College of Arts and Humanities ethics board at Bangor University. This also extended to collecting data from audience participants in controlled settings to avoid data contamination between audience participants, which is outlined in the methods section (below).

Hermeneutics

A second methodology used within the thesis was a hermeneutical approach. In focussing on the ways of interpreting meaning (Pavis, 1998) through both audience and personal perspectives borne out through the performances, complemented with evaluations on the practice of others, it has been possible to assess the intended experience alongside the ways in

[37] Whilst in Chapter 1 I have identified the gaps in knowledge and background from which this thesis is positioned within, additional performance reviews and summaries which were considered within the research are provided in the appendices.

which the audience are affected by the performance. This approach is also demonstrated through the contextualising of immersive theatres in Chapter 1, but also through considering the dynamic between the intended experience of the performance and its interpretation by a numerous audience. This allows for recognition of the multiplicity of audience experience through theatrical encounter and considers the ways in which the performance might intentionally attempt to direct the experience through its construction. I have used this approach to complement a semiotic analysis of performances (see Chapter 5), without attempting to reduce the performances to a set of perfunctory signs (Ibid).

Whilst there is no space within this thesis to discuss in detail the process of documenting the two performances, the recorded footage offer a representation of the two performances, intending to communicate a sense of or the essence of the performance to the reader/viewer[38]:

> A hermeneutic view of performance documentation sees it not as a tool of positivist inquiry that will help us discover the truth of what happened historically but as texts from which we can imaginatively reactivate historical performances in the present, allowing us to understand experientially both the past and our present as they are disclosed in and through an ongoing dialogue with one another (Auslander, 2009: 95).

This was considered a pertinent approach to performances experienced on and through the senses, often dimly lit or blacked out entirely. Hermeneutics also acknowledges the fact that each audience member encounters the work differently. In the case of the two performances developed for the research this can be evidenced in the difference between individual audience's route through the performance space (in *When Autumn Passed Me By*), or their interactions with performers and/or the performance space (in both performances). In this way, it is possible to acknowledge individual experiences of the performance, but also accept that the way the performance is designed will generally seek to elicit a particular kind of response.

---

[38] Another thesis could be written entirely on the process of documenting immersive theatres. I will briefly highlight here that the accompanying DVD footage provides a representation of the practice as smell, touch and taste cannot be communicated through this visual medium. The recording of the first performance features a performance volunteer who agreed for his journey through the performance to be recorded. The second performance is taken from one of the practice sessions and features performers practicing guiding one another through the space. As such, some of the elements featured in the recording changed in the final performance. For example, the audience put on their own blindfolds and so never saw the performer guiding them. The final version of events is detailed in this chapter.
The discussion of the practice is supplemented by descriptions of the performative elements in this chapter and documents and materials included in the appendices. This provides a sense of the experience of the audience and captures elements such as the pace of the performance and the way in which interaction occurred between audience and performer and audience and sensory installation.

Research Process

The two performances were developed from questions which emerged from the research, principally in considering the way the performance affects the audience and how its design might be implicit. This evolved throughout the practice by querying particular aspects of the performance in order to understand the audience's experience. In addition to consider the potential to enhance personal well-being for a general audience that might indicate its use with particular sub-sets of the population. This section of the thesis will outline the research process (see the timeline below in Table 1), before discussing each performance in turn and the ways in which they were developed to examine particular aspects of immersive theatres.

Table 1: Chronology of practice and research undertaken. (Full details in appendices).

Date	Title
February 2009	*Take a chance into the Labyrinth*
March 2009	*The Lost Child*
March 2009	*Art included: on the use of applied participative arts and labyrinth theatre methodology*
June 2009	*DreamEscape*
October 2009	*Gothic Theme Night*
March 2010	*Joker Training: aesthetics of the Oppressed*
March 2010	'Interdisciplinarity in environment and well-being research: Early Career workshop'
May 2010	*Come the Dawn*
July 2010	*Arts trail*
February 2011	*The College on the Hill*
March 2011	Earthfall: *The Factory*
May 2011	*Digital Tea Dance*
July 2011	'"Don't pick me!" Interactions, ethics and facilitating the audience in participatory and immersive theatre forms'
December 2011	'"Where do we go from here?" Framing and coding performance in sensory labyrinth and immersive practice'
March 2012	*Cerebellium I*
May 2012	*Invalliden Strausse*
June 2012	*Rainbow of Desire*
June 2012	'Opposing use of games and gameplay in immersive and sensory performances'
July 2012	'Project X and The Republic of the Imagination: Applied theatre in social arts practice'
October 2012	*Carnival*
March 2013	*Cerebellium II*
April 2013	Mr. and Mrs. Clark: *Nine*
April 2013	'Becoming Nomad: Hybrid spaces, liquid architectures and online domains'
July 2013	'Wellbeing and sensory performance
September 2013	Sensory, Sensual and questionable interactions: Distinguishing theatrical and aesthetic forms in immersive theatre'
January 2014	*When Autumn Passed Me By*

The practical research process began with attendance at a series of training workshops and the creation of a short trial performance (with a gothic theme) a, before developing the first performance, *The College on the Hill* (2011). This performance was originally conceived as a pilot study for the data collection as I had wanted to test different types if data collection (interviews or self-reporting questionnaires) against one another[39]. The performance itself was developed to experiment with the relationship between site-specific and immersive theatres, focussing on site as the subject of the performance. It was designed to consider how focusing on a place would affect the experience of the performance for the audience.

Following a second trial performance (a carnival theme), the second performance, *When Autumn Passed Me By* (2014), was created. This work was developed from further considerations which emerged from the first performance and from further research. In order to draw a parallel to the first study, I decided to use a non-site specific performance. I chose to use a theme which would illicit sensory reactions from the audience but without asking them to divulge personal information. By removing confessional modes of speaking (Heddon and Howells, 2011) I wanted to find out whether the performance would still create a therapeutic response or if some other response would occur. Throughout this iterative process, the theoretical and practical elements informed one another developing through each stage of the research.

Each performance is described in detail below. First, I provide an overview of the development of the practice through workshops and training and how these experiences informed the development of the research.

Training, Workshops and Performance Trials

Prior to creating the first performance, a series of small-scale performances were conducted and delivered within the department. These were delivered to approximately 15 audience members per performance consisting of staff, students, and their associates. The trial performances experimented with creating a therapeutic performance without relying on the

[39] As a result of the development of the practical work, the second study utilised a different approach to collecting data where the audience were given a series of questions to answer in private that were recorded by the participant using a Dictaphone. This arose from concerns from the first performance study that having a researcher present led to feelings of discomfort for audience participants in trying to describe such a personal and strange theatrical encounter. Whilst this has limited the ability to pursue some of the comments raised by the audience participants, it has also produced some rich comments that might not otherwise have been vocalised in the presence of a researcher. This latter approach allows for the audience participants to describe the performance uninterrupted and in their own terms.

audience to provide intimate details through confessional modes of speaking as well as with different ways of arranging the audience (using one-on-one and group experiences and a mixed approach). No data was collected during these trials; however, anecdotal feedback received from the first trial suggested that participants felt calmer and more relaxed. One participant described feeling particularly moved by the experience. This contrasted to the second trial which created feelings of exhilaration and excitement. This seemed to relate to the contrasting speed and style of each of the performances.

Two different themes were used for each of the two trial performances. For the first trial, I used a gothic influenced theme and the second used ideas from carnival for its inspiration. Each trial performance used the theme to stimulate the audience's senses, utilising particular frames of reference which could be typified as being part of either a gothic or carnival framework.

The two trial performances also tested blindfolding the audience for the entirety of the performance or offering 'reveals' (my term for moments where the blindfold is briefly lifted to allow for a visual sensory element). Audience members entered the performance in small groups with two formats being trialled: the first involved groups of five audience members blindfolded and guided individually by a performer. All the audience were then given the same experience simultaneously. In the second trial, the audience entered as a group of five. The performance oscillated between experiences delivered collectively, simultaneously but with a single performer and moments where the performance diverted to moments of separation, where the performer guided the audience member to explore different sensory offerings within the performance space.

The first trial used a gothic motif as part of a themed Halloween event. I had been approached about contributing to this event and felt that a theme might be a way of shaping the content for a performance, allowing the audience to explore through their own imaginings and sensory impressions. A musical score was incorporated using recognised elements of the gothic form including rain and thunder and a piano score. The performance began with a poem read out to the audience who were seated within the performance space blindfolded. At the same time, the performers enacted the poem through the senses such as lightly brushing the audience's cheek with a feather and gently dropping water across the fingertips. The audience were then guided individually by their designated performer through the performance space where each sensory element was met with in turn, for instance: for one section the blindfold was removed for the audience to walk alone along a darkly lit tunnel,

where they were met by a cloaked stranger at the other side who then held the audience in a tender embrace. The slow and gentle enacting of each sensory element provided a decelerated pace permitting the audience to appreciate each aspect and created an emotive and affecting experience. This allowed the audience time to move comfortably whilst blindfolded and for each action to be performed with a definite intention, giving time for each sensory action to be felt and received by the audience.

The second trial performance offered an alternative theme influenced by notions of carnival, which on observing the audience after the performance seemed to promote a more joyful and less emotive experience. I have already mentioned that Machon has identified connections between immersive theatres and carnival through an erosion between every day and arts practices, with the use of carnivalesque rudiments such as play, exuberance, performance and art (2013: 29-30). It has been suggested that carnival, in 21st Century thinking through the meaninglessness of postmodernism suggests a playfulness that promotes 'a free play of the self' (Hiebert, 2003; 113). This seems fitting not only with immersive theatres playful use of audience participation and inclusiveness but also in the way that the audience is made central to the unfolding of the story: either as protagonist or through individual interpretation of a fragmentary series of events. In both cases there is the potential for audience autonomy within the confines of the theatrical space: '*not as a license to be free, but rather now as a free license to become*' (Ibid, emphasis in original). At the time of the second trial performance (in 2012) I had also considered that a carnival theme would complement an immersive performance for these same reasons.

Immersive theatre draws upon similar notions to that of carnival as a: 'performative strategy for the unlimited reinvention of reality and the self' (Ibid: 124). The sensory actions in the performance were therefore designed to free the audience of their everyday representations of self and engage in free play with gentle encouragement from the performers. The sensory actions included: being spun on a chair as though on a waltzer and being offered candy floss to taste whilst a brief story of a child's first palatable experience of the substance was whispered in the audience's ear. The pace of this performance did not allow for a relaxing performance experience and although the audience were elated afterward the pace had promoted a sense of excitement, as opposed to calm[40]. These experiments made

[40] It was from this particular experiment that the notion of the *situational* form developed. In the performance the audience responded to each action in the moment making instantaneous decisions rather than having the space to consider and reflect. The performance did not require the audience to divulge personal information or

evident the relationship between pace and audience affect. This was then incorporated into the two performances to try and create a relaxed and calming affect on the audience. In both performances audience feedback supported the importance of pacing the performance to allow for the sensory experiences to be noticed and felt.

For the two performances developed for the thesis, the themes were decided upon independently. The first performance used the university buildings as inspiration and the second used the theme of autumn as its starting point. Each narrative was chosen to allow the audience to easily engage and connect with the performance subject. For the first performance, it was anticipated that that those local to the area would have some (if little) knowledge of the region, its history, and pre-conceptions and assumptions about the university (whether connected to it through study or employment or through its geography as a central feature of the city). For the second performance, a general theme of autumn was used within the concept of the seasons within the Northern hemisphere. It was designed to create feelings, sensations and memories linked to this season. It was expected that each of the themes would allow for general access to the performance and would not be particularly emotive or controversial in terms of their content, providing ways to explore how the performance affects the audience and how its narrative and spatial design might impact upon the audience's encounter.

The practical process was complemented by training, workshops and other performance experiences which also informed the performances and the research process. I shall now outline of some of the key learnings from these events and the ways in which they informed the development of the performance practice.

'Take a Chance into the Labyrinth' workshop and 'The Lost Child Performance', February-March 2009.

I attended a sensory labyrinth theatre workshop in Portugal (AE20 and Theatre Cynefin, 2009). The process of learning about the s.l.t method of practice was delivered through some group activities and games and also through making a performance. I was placed in a blindfold section of the performance with another workshop participant. We transformed the

---

to complete a particular mission, making it a less risky endeavour. Where possible, sensory elements were offered as an invitation to participate and not enforced. Fast paced elements such as the waltzer began slowly and built up speed, with the performers responding to the audience. The affect seemed similar to those I had identified in YMBBT's eponymous work and Punchdrunk's *It felt like a Kiss,* but the delivery was intended to avoid frightening or forcing the audience to respond or participate.

space using existing features (a washing line) to create a passageway for audience members to be guided through. It was created largely with found objects but we used some additional materials to extend the passageway. In footage of the performance, our section could not be captured because it was experienced in darkness[41]. It was also not an aesthetically pleasing space to look at because we had focussed on the non-visual senses which were dominant within the sensory installation. The only way for us (as performers) to anticipate the performance experience was through trialling leading someone through the performance space, which we did with one another and also guiding other performers through the space.

Figure 9: *Take a chance into the Labyrinth*, and *The Lost Child* (2009). Construction of a tunnel where audience members were blindfolded and feel different textures against their skin.

The devising process happened organically: those new to s.l.t were paired with at least one other person who had previous experience of s.l.t performance. The start/ end point for the performance had already been decided in a location central to town and that allowed the performance route to take the audience full circle. Beyond this, we were encouraged to explore possible locations for our installation thinking of ways to use 'found' objects and features inherent to a location The director and trainer for the workshop and performance (Brioc) plotted each person's or group's location on a map of the village. With each person or group, he then helped to carefully shape the performance keeping the seeds of ideas which participants had envisaged. Each installation was then shaped to incorporate them into a careful journey for the audience that would start with very gentle engagement, before moving

[41] This was something I explored further in the two performances through a short blindfold section in *The College on the Hill* and as a fully blindfold experience in *When Autumn Passed Me By*.

them on to more complex elements (such as being blindfolded). We were unable to experience the performance individually; however the entire group walked the route of the performance following a volunteer who enacted the role of the audience. This was done to help the performers understand where each small part of the performance fitted within the whole route and to make performers aware of the audience's journey up to and following their part of the performance. A dress rehearsal also took place for performers to experience the flow of the performance and to practice their role in repetition.

Figure 10: *The Lost Child* (2009). Signs indicating the route of the performance through the village.

'Joker Training: aesthetics of the Oppressed', Media Artes, March 2010 and 'Rainbow of Desire', Epsilon III, June 2012

Up to this point, I was largely unfamiliar with Augusto Boal and his forum theatre work. Two workshops (one in Macedonia in 2010 and another in Romania in 2012) helped to clarify the connections and dissimilarities between participatory and immersive theatres. Forum theatre involves audience participation and Boal's training methods share some similarities with immersive theatre practices such as through awakening the senses to be able to utilise the body for creating images and gesture within a forum piece. Like in a conventional theatre performance, a forum theatre audience is generally seated within an auditorium (albeit that the performance may not take place in a theatre). The forum presents the audience with a definitive problem and aims to seek solutions to improve the given situation. The problem connects to the very community who are taking part in the forum often instigated by the community (or some members) who wish to initiate a change. The Joker facilitates the

interaction between stage and auditorium in specific ways, by inviting the audience to try and offer suggestions to improve the scene which has been played out onstage. Whilst the performance is often vocal, many of Boal's training techniques use the body and the senses by way of the participant understanding his own bodily instrument.

Immersive theatres also include notions of overcoming or meeting with challenges albeit in a different way: usually one of negotiating the space, but it can include negotiations with a performer as well. It is this crux which makes the performances theatre: as all theatre essentially seeks to work through a problem, or presents a difficult situation. The fundamental difference lies in that it is the audience who must endure the experience and find a resolution or way of moving through it [the problem]. In this way the theatrical spectacle includes the audience directly, often enacting upon and within the audience's mind and body. It is from this perspective that we can consider that immersive theatres are also participatory, but not all participatory theatre is necessarily immersive.

Theater Der Unterdrückten (TDU) - Wien and DanceAbility, Vienna, Invalliden Strausse. Vienna, May 2012

In May 2012, I attended a workshop in *DanceAbility* that helped me to determine the sensory/ therapeutic form within immersive theatres. Somatic dance or somatic movement can be used to explore improvised movement within the body (Brodie and Lobel, 2012).The workshop guided participants to respond in the moment through movement (and non-movement). The opportunity to move was always an invitation, in the same way that in mindfulness practice it is always an invitation to try out a particular meditation. Here, I found connections and similarities (albeit through a different performance medium) to exploring presence, the urge to act or not act and to respond or not respond at one's own will.

Figure 11: ***Invalidden Strausse*** **(2012). Vienna, Austria. The road name translates as 'Invalid Street'.**

Figure 12: ***Invalidden Strausse*** **(2012). Performers and participants interact to wave a sheet to represent water passing over the bridge.**

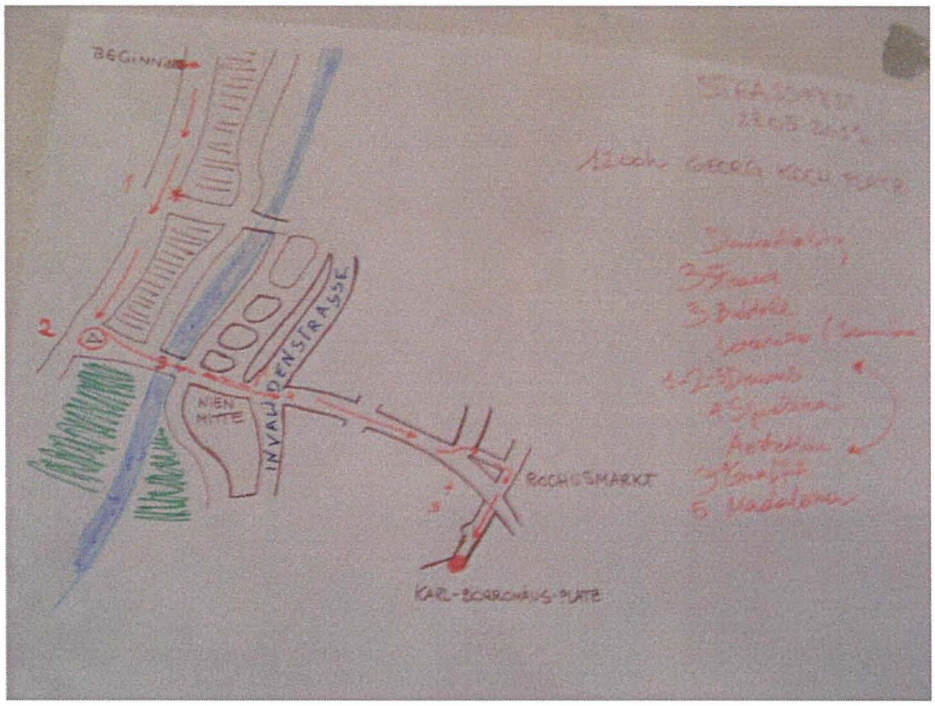


Figure 13*: Invalidden Strausse* (2012). Sketch of the one-mile performance route.

The Performance Studies and Practice Development

Whilst some aspects of the performance and subsequent data collection follow a more typical evolutional approach, the development of the performance attempted to also use an action research approach (O'Leary, 2010: 147-152), in applying the structural method to the creation and organisation of a sensory performance into practice. This was then assessed through the recorded audience responses to the performance. As the researcher, I directed both performances and trained performance participants. I hypothesised that if the performers were trained in guiding and leading the audience and if the performance was well-designed, the audience should feel safe and secure within the performance itself (see methods sections below for details on the process through which this was embedded). Through this process, it was possible to compare the intention of the practice to the recipient's experience. The second performance built on a 'reflexive' approach (Sullivan, 2009: 51), that allowed for learning from previous performance experiments to inform the new material. This process, therefore, does not end with the final performance created for this piece of research but opens up further possibilities for development (see Chapter 5). It is effectively an adaptation of the 'participatory visual method' offered up by Richard Chalfen (2011: 186) to one of

'participatory sensory method' as the means of creating an investigation into the experience of audience participants within an immersive theatre performance.

The following section details the two performance explorations revealing some of the discoveries that occurred through the process. Each of the following sections discusses each performance in the following format: the first section explores the concept behind the creation of the performance and the particular elements that each performance sought to examine. This is followed by a synopsis of the action through the series of installations created and the reasons behind them.

The challenges of communicating a sensory performance experience through image and text is another thesis in itself entirely, however, the accompanying descriptions should provide a sense of the experience the audience were taken through and their accompanying responses in the questionnaires and interviews provided as a way of further illustrating the performance to the reader.

The third section (performance process) details the method by which the performance was created from workshops and experimentation. The findings are discussed later in chapter four presenting some of the key matters relating to structure and audience affect which the performances revealed. This is linked to the exploration of another issue which the performances sought to explore: whether sensory performances have the possibility to affect an individual's sense of well-being. This was also addressed through the performances in particular ways and opens up several potential future developments which are then discussed in Chapter 5.

The table in Chapter 4 outlines the different uses of space which fundamentally affect the structure of the performance (and in turn, the experience the audience is offered). The table below presents the different use of space which occurred within the two performances.

Table 2: Differences in performance design between *The College on the Hill* (2011) and *When Autumn Passed Me By* (2014).

	The College on the Hill	*When Autumn Passed Me By*
Design	vast space	intimate space
Structure	labyrinth	labyrinth
Use of senses	deprivation	deprivation
Audience	part guided	guided
Sighted/ blindfold	sighted with blindfold section	blindfolded for the duration of the performance
Location	site-specific	black box
Space	outdoor	indoor
Intended affect	therapeutic	therapeutic

The first area of discussion will introduce the practical aspects of analysing *therapeutic* affects in immersive theatres such as format, training methods, and purposes as well as concepts behind the creation of a *therapeutic* immersive theatre. The term *therapeutic* is used to refer not only to feeling refreshed and uplifted but to a range of emotions encompassed in human experience that include a state of reflectiveness, sadness, and contemplation as well as rejuvenation. It allows for the indulgence of introspection and solipsism: where one becomes aware of one's own (fragmentary) self.

The practical work created as part of this thesis aimed to further push the boundaries of the immersive theatre form. Whilst this thesis argues that all the performances identified are transformational to a greater or lesser extent (see Chapter 1), I hypothesised that the type of affect varied. Transformation proposes a change from one state to another, in the case of immersive theatres, this is achieved through the nature of the experience provided by the

performance. In some cases, the experience allows for a distinct change to take place through gaining some form of personal insight from the performance that might be thought of as revelatory.

Revelatory aspects in immersive theatres affect the audience member based on their own personal experiences and create a strong connection between self and performance. Where this occurs, the calming or relaxing affect generated by the performance is accompanied by other feelings and emotions as past experiences are reflected on. Adrian Howells commented on the experience of one female audience member who reportedly said: 'I've had more intimacy in the last hour than I have with my own husband in the last 15 years' (Howells in *The Scotsman*, 2010:n.p.). Whilst clearly a positive experience in one way (in that Howells had provided a space for personal intimacy), it is through the performance that loss of intimacy with another was also recognised. Framed within the therapeutic, this potentially negative experience (in recognising a lack of intimacy in personal relations) is coupled with the construction of a positive experience (experiencing intimacy with another individual). It reveals something that is particular to that audience member.

As part of the performance studies, audiences were interviewed or given questionnaires in order to evaluate and better understand the audience experience of an immersive theatre performance, particularly one that is designed to be a therapeutic performance. As this was the first research in this field, the analysis was driven by the experiences recorded by the audience participants. This created an iterative process between the first and second performance study and lead to several suggestions for further developing and considering the role of the audience within immersive theatres and the affect of the performance material on their person.

Through the two performances, I was able to explore the relationship of the performance to the audience member. The first performance asked the audience to respond and discuss their relationship to the university and how they felt about the place. In the second performance, I intentionally removed confessional modes of speaking to see how this affected the performance. The use of confessional modes of speaking (see Heddon and Howells, 2011) elicits personal responses from the audience. For *When Autumn Passed Me By*, I wanted to find out how important these modes of speaking were within the performance and whether it was possible to create a therapeutic performance without eliciting personal information from the audience.

Performer training

Therapeutic immersive theatre forms have further potential beyond pure theatre entertainment, towards a use in therapeutic arts and healthcare settings, in increasing everyday awareness of the body and the senses, providing a space for personal reflection and insight. The practical aspect of the thesis focuses on performer training and audience response. This was set up through a series of workshops in training a group of performers in utilising and responding to the bodies' senses. The performer's then applied these techniques to a live performance.

The use of the actor's body has been largely discussed in terms of trying to define a scheme by which the actor's art can be achieved (such as in Brecht and Stanislavski's much-documented work). The difficulty of achieving the dual state of the actor between presenting their 'self' and 'character' has been frequently considered:

> The actor must be well aware that this is a method to find a reality and be ready to adapt this reality to the demands of the theatre space. [...] The actor must always be conscious of the illusion involved. He will need to modify his physical "truth", if he is to control the theatre space. But, he must begin by reproducing the physical feeling as closely as possible and make use of it to create something believable and sustainable (Anne Dennis, 2002: 37).

The argument has been made that for actors to replicate emotion and action on stage, they must understand the workings of their own body (as well as mind) completely (Stanislavsky, 1988). It is this, I argue, which helps to create believable characters in what are largely wordless performances: by the performers fully embodying the characters they inhabit through focused study of the body, senses and awareness. Similar working methods in training performers in order to achieve this particular relationship between them and the audience can be identified in the work of several practitioners. The training process effectively replicates the audience experience: through a series of exercises the performer undergoes a similar process to the one experienced by the audience from within the performance.

Several performer training schemes have looked to create an attentive state whereby performers' become aware of their bodily apparatus is achieved through breathing exercises and in meditative practices which draw awareness to individual aspects of the body, often achieved through states of relaxation (Pisk, 1998; Boal, 2002; Min Tanaka in Cordone, 2002; Tufnell and Crickmay, 1993; Jones, 2010). In becoming in-tuned to one's own body, this process can be extended into recognising and responding to the audience's body language.

In a theatre where words are often secondary to sensory action (or excluded completely), focus on physical and nonverbal communication within training prepares the performer for the performance environment. The performer who understands his or her senses and his or her own body can be sympathetic to the body of the audience's and can learn how to initiate action and to respond to the other body which enters the performance space. This process seems to start from within, focussing narrowly on particular aspects of the body or particular senses, then moves outward towards an awareness of the whole body and a state of presence, viewed as essential for developing practice (Tuffnell and Crickmay, 1993; Pisk, 1998; Cordone, 2002; Boal, 2006; Jones, 2010) with the aim of de-mechanising everyday movement and sees participants move away from their typified experience of their body and toward different and creative bodily movement. De-mechanisation guides the participant towards an understanding of embodiment and a sentient awareness, by turning one's awareness inward. An intimate understanding of one's own sensory apparatus aides in the performance in working with another body: that of the audience.

The first session introduces close focus; paying attention to singular aspects of the sensory experience rather than our familiar visual scanning techniques. A closed eye relaxation technique is used to introduce bringing awareness to individual senses. By attending to each sense in turn the body is able to re-relate to its sensory mechanisms, a process used in mindfulness practice (Crane, 2009: 50) and by theatre practitioners (Jones, 2010). Within mindfulness, this is described as something which is generally forgotten and has to be re-learnt (Crane, 2009: 50). One example from Boal's (2006) embodied experiments involved tasting contrasting foods such as honey and salt. This is similar to well-known mindfulness practices which use focused attention on foods such as raisin and grapes (moving from sight to touch, smell and finally taste), as a way to bring about an attentive state of mind. This process changes the relationship between self and object in allowing for a detailed exploration of it.

The second phase explores concepts of play. Several individuals and companies have explored the concept of creativity and ways of unlocking this through games and improvisation. Improvisation is viewed as a tool to unlock imaginative possibilities which begin with the body and extends outward towards the landscape (Tuffnell and Crickmay, 1993). Similarly, Stephen Hodge et al. (2006) explore concepts of re-associating with the landscape through playful and imaginative journeys, which alter the perception of space and

induce new ways of thinking and encountering it; the use of games and play helps to achieve this state.

In Theatr Cynefin's *Food for the Gods* (2009), the audience were drawn into playful interaction as three characters play hand clapping games with the audience member and move on to play a game of 'tag', which acts as a gentle lead into the audience member being 'chosen' to be blindfolded. *Come the Dawn* (2010) drew the audience in through a traditional game of 'tag' as a gentle method of bringing the audience into the performance environment and it acts as a way of signalling to the audience the form that the performance will take. These games do not challenge the audience in trying to make them feel vulnerable but equalise the status between the performer's character and the audience through mutual interaction. As they are generally well-known and common to all, using games within the performance facilitates interaction. Well-known or popular games allow for quick familiarity with the rules of engagement. Similarly, easy to learn games provide quick assimilation into interacting with characters.

This can be further extended to other performance aspects which create this level of engagement in terms of recollection. This process begins the turning inward of thought toward the self, as body and mind and reminded of the physical exhilaration of these games recalling past associations with a child-like state. Hodge et al.'s 'mis-guide' walking practices include creative explorations facilitated by following children as a way of unlocking forgotten ways of thinking about place and space (2006: 82–83). Within training games provide an extension to the de-mechanisation process (Boal, 2006) and a way of echoing the experience that the audience will encounter within the performance. Games are part of a long-established common practice within the theatre to assist in warming up the body and as a way of concentrating performers ready for rehearsal and training (Barker, 1977).

The third phase focused on non-sight, whereby removing or diminishing the dominant sense of sight allows for the other senses to be concentrated upon or amplified. Performer participants must experience sightlessness in order to understand the audience's vulnerability when blindfolded or with diminished sight, to allow the experience of the other senses when sight is removed and to assist in teaching good guiding practice, by having undergone the process themselves. Experiencing a loss of control over one's body places the performer in a sympathetic relationship to the experience (during a performance) of the audience. Touring a space blindfolded offers the opportunity to experience the space through the other senses, identifying through touch, smell, and sound.

The fourth phase moved toward exploration and creation that is; how to interpret a space using the senses as opposed to creating a conventionally verbal heavy theatre. Using techniques similar to those explored in the games and playful practices (outlined above), performers begin to explore how theatre can be created non-verbally and how to show a space or create an impression using sensory stimuli. The use of a theme to focus the performance concentrates how the sensory experience will be created and provides a starting point from which to develop the performance. This acts as an alternative to where the site is the central element to be drawn out of the performance (where the site is the thematic element of the performance). This phase transposes the sensory learning techniques to the performance space, providing an opportunity for exploration and the creation of a story in relation to the performance space.

The final phase involved trialling the space allowing for the performers to anticipate different audience responses and to improve the performance through experiencing what works successfully or otherwise within the context of the performance. All performers are given the experience of going through the performance, acting as the trial audience for one another and allowing them to sympathise with the audience position, understanding the affect the performance has by directly experiencing it themselves.

This process is effectively mirrored for the audience within the performance, albeit through different techniques that are performative or actioned through the performance. The performance is similarly designed in order for the audience to experience a process-led and deepening awareness of the senses and therefore of their self. Beginning with games and play, (as in the first de-mechanisation session for performers) instigates the audiences progression by first releasing their body and mind through engagement with the game and slowly opening them up toward receiving the performance through the senses. From there, the audience is slowly introduced to an increasingly non-verbal performance environment where the narrative is told through the environment and sensory stimuli. Blindfolding generally occurs in the mid-to-latter stage, as in the performer's workshops, as to do so immediately would be to potentially move too quickly into this intimate and trusting state. Where the blindfolding is done for the whole performance (as in the second performance *When Autumn Passed Me By*) careful reassurance is required and a slow development into blindfolding that replicates the initial levels of the performance, albeit more rapidly. This is generally considered the most sensory part of the performance and the most abstract and, from here; the audience is moved back toward more familiar territory. In effect, the audience

undergoes a miniature and more performative version of the training. This is similar to Boal's process for training actors for forum theatre (2006). The performer, having undergone the experience themselves is best placed to support the audience in their attempts at resolution during a forum piece. In a sensory immersive theatre performance, this is the same. The order may also vary dependent on the form the performance takes. The audience is slowly brought into an awareness of their bodily senses through being introduced to sensory stimuli in isolation before being encouraged to explore the sensory elements through play, games, and movement.

Methodology for *The College on the Hill*

This section presents the first of two performances designed to explore particular elements of the structure of an immersive theatre performance. The following evidences the way the research has been explored through practice (Gray in Haseman and Mafe, 2009) through questioning particular elements of the performance and exploring these through the performance design.

Concept

The performance *The College on the Hill* (2011) was created as an exploration of the relationship between site and immersion. I wanted to understand how the one related to the other and decided to make the site the central theme of the performance. Contemporary immersive theatre practices are using the performance space in numerous ways which affect the outcome of the performance for the audience. There are examples of immersive performances using the location to inform the performance. Theatr Cynefin's *Eco Panto* (2011) where the premise centred on the audience being trapped in the forest by a spell, requiring them to enter the labyrinth and negotiate its path in order to remove it. The performance interwove the location into the narrative and relating it to the performance setting. Punchdrunk's performances utilise space to invoke atmosphere. Their production of Macbeth in *Sleep No More* (2003 and 2011) used hotel structures, unifying the performance setting with a physical location. This surrounding space informs the performance as the audience become physically encircled by the performance.

Figure 14: ***Eco Panto*** **(2011). Meeting Snow White's Wicked Stepmother in the forest.**

Figure 15: ***The College on the Hill*** **poem by Gwyn Thomas (here painted on the wall in Main Arts Library, Bangor University), inspired the first performance.**

The College on the Hill interrogated the relationship between immersive theatres and space, by making the setting (Bangor University's Main Arts building) the subject of the performance. Around the time of the performance, the university had just celebrated its 125th anniversary year since opening. Taking a historical narrative as its theme, the performance sought to explore the history of the university and also the city with which the university holds an intimate relationship. The university building was constructed due to local slate miners giving a portion of their wages toward the construction of what is now known as the 'old arts' section of the main university site (Roberts, 2009): a structure which now dominates the city landscape from the hilltop on which it rests.

Performance Process

I began with a period of research looking into the history of the university and the city (for example: Cowell, 1990 and 1994; Roberts, 2009) as a way of learning more about the space and as a way of guiding the stories which would eventually emerge and inform the installations along the route of the performance[42]. The story was shaped to take the audience from present day slowly submerging them within a series of scenes. The characters spanned the period of the history of the university from the end of the 19th Century moving forwards towards the 1940's. This allowed for several events in the history of the university and city to be highlighted. The performance was loosely scripted to allow for certain information to be communicated to the audience, whilst allowing for places where the audience would be able to speak with the performers within their character.

I recruited performers inexperienced with this form of theatre through email calls within the university to focus on student volunteers. This created some difficulty in maintaining a commitment to the project and several roles had to be recast at short notice. As each scene within the performance was only short, these scenes were worked on intensely and individually. The performers were shown the performance as a group so that they could get a sense of the overall performance and where their roles fell within it. A series of rehearsals were held prior to the performance with a dress rehearsal prior to the public performance. This provided an opportunity for feedback from test audience members to further develop characters prior to the actual performance.

[42] See accompanying work book which contains some notes from the research period of the performance.

The College on the Hill took the audience on a journey approximately 40 minutes in length. The audience would all take the same route through the performance, with each audience member walking in turn one at a time from location to location at five-minute intervals. *The College on the Hill* particularly related to questioning the spatial structure of the performance by making the site the subject of the narrative directly. It was through the performance that the similarities to site-specific performance became apparent (as discussed in Chapter 4). Rather than being closed to the outside world by being performed in a contained space (like in Punchdrunk's use of the warehouse) the performance could be seen visibly linking into the everyday landscape. Although performed in the evening, the performance space remained open for the duration of the performance. In this way, the performance was part of the evening landscape, being unobtrusive through the use of the landscape as the set and minimal props being introduced through the characters appearing within the spaces.

The audience were only blindfolded for a small proportion of the performance in a corridor space within the university building. This led to an awareness of the buildings situation in relation to its routine use and in using the terrace which overlooks the city below opened out awareness to the city within its everyday use as well. This resulted in the whole area feeding into the audience's experience of the performance through passing noises or people. *The College on the Hill* guided the audience through a set route along the performance, albeit one that is less clearly demarcated than that of a formal labyrinth (like the Caerdroia in Llanrwst). The performance was designed to give some space for the audience to walk unaided and alone, but always being carefully directed toward the next performance space.

To do this the route was designed to ensure that the audience would be met at places where there might be several choices of direction by placing characters stationed at set points along the path. Initially, the audience were met by a performer who walks them to the first stage of the journey gently pulling their thoughts towards a particular mindset for the performance: considering the university, its relationship to the city and its physical characteristics. A distinctive red and black check scarf was placed around the audience's neck by the first performer as a way to clearly mark out the audience to the other performer's along the route, making them distinguishable from passers-by.

Performance Synopsis

The performance took place on the 5th and 6th February 2011. The performance contained nine installations across the route. Three additional guides were placed at points along the route where the audience might encounter difficulties with which direction to continue. The audience were guided one at a time through the performance collected by the first performer at five-minute intervals. The breaks between audience entering the performance were intended to allow time for each audience member to travel through the performance with a minimal chance of arriving at an installation at the same time as another audience member (although there is inevitably some chance of this happening if an audience member walks more quickly or slowly than those before or after them). The performance route circumnavigated the college building which is built into the top of a hill, overlooking the lower part of the city. The audience were first directed towards the lowest point of the structure before meandering slowly upward towards the start. The performance was ordered as follows:

1. Audience member greeted in the new area of the Main Arts building of the university. The performer leads them downstairs, places a scarf around their neck before leading them outside and around the corner of the building. She directs them down a set of steps and points them toward the second installation. The performer begins by generally asking '*what does a place mean?*' suggesting its history, memories evoked and its physical components as starting points. As the audience member is walking with the performer, she points out the slate wall hidden beneath the concrete of the building above and brushes fingers against a small bush, beginning to gesture towards aspects of the building that go otherwise unnoticed.

2. The audience member walks up to an entrance into an outdoor quadrangle contained within a relatively new and contemporary structure. Within they meet the second character, the psychiatrist, who, laying them on a bench next to a running water feature, asks them questions about their relationship to the university: how well do they know its walls? What stories do they have? At the close of their session, the psychiatrist hands the audience a penny with the words: "you'll know when and what to do with it", before directing them out and toward the back of the main building.

Figure 16: *The College on the Hill* (2011). Audience members receive a coin for use later in the performance.

3. The audience walks alone for a slightly longer duration of time. Coming through an old iron gateway, they are met by a young woman (the third character in the performance) in turn of the century dress. She gestures up the side of the building marvelling as she gazes upwards along an ornately finished drain pipe, covered in a coat of arms. She does not seem to know where this place is. She then walks the audience round to the terrace which overlooks the city. Here she points out features in the landscape, seemingly confused by some of the buildings. She finally gestures toward the clock tower and recalls the day it was opened, the crowds that gathered for the event. Trapped in her reveries for a time, she finally motions for the audience to continue without her.

Figure 17: *The College on the Hill* (2011). A young woman shares the marvels of the change in the landscape of Bangor over the years with an audience member.

4. The audience continues along the terrace, before being guided into the building at the side entrance, at the lowest point of the building. They enter and are directed up a staircase. On the first level, a lady washes the audience's hands in warm water, soothing from the cold outside. She performs this task methodically and with great care. She dries the hands in the same way, before directing the audience member up the staircase.

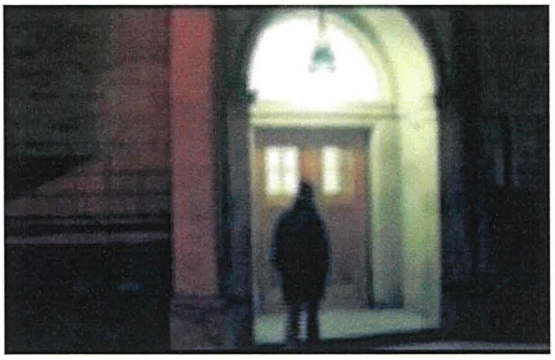


Figure 18: ***The College on the Hill (2011).*** **After walking on their own along the terrace the audience re-enters the building and continue with the performance.**

5. Circling a further level up the stairs, a quarryman crouches on the floor, sorting through slate sheets. He draws on a piece of slate using chalk, encouraging the audience to participate in this game. After a short time, he pulls out a small container filled with pennies with a sign reading 'all contributions toward rectifying a new university building'. The audience is given the choice to contribute from the penny passed to them earlier in the performance.

Figure 19: ***The College on the Hill*** **(2011). Sitting with the quarryman and drawing with chalk and slate.**

6. Directed up a final flight of stairs, the audience is met by a performer who guides them to a chair. Their shoes are removed and a blindfold in placed lightly to cover their eyes. From this seated position books are smelt and felt, harp music is played and a short poem is read aloud. The audience is then guided to their feet before being walked (still blindfolded) along a long corridor, where they are invited to touch objects and artefacts along the way, including the intricately designed window handles of the single glazed leaded glass. They hear the sound of an old wooden door being opened and a gentle breeze is felt as it closes. At the end of the corridor, the blindfold is removed, opening out to the sight of the universities glass cased ceramic and special collections opposite.

Figure 20: ***The College on the Hill*** **(2011). An audience member being led blindfold through a portion of the performance.**

Figure 21*: The College on the Hill* **(2011). The audience is led through a door where their blindfold is removed to the sight of the universities special antiquities collection.**

7. A guide directs the audience downstairs before they are met by an eccentric man (the seventh performer) who wildly waves at paintings as they race down a corridor, giving a potted history of each. All of a sudden he stops before a favourite and shushes the audience. They must not tell anyone such expensive works have been placed here from London in the universities care. It is, he declares, an honour to have seen Rembrandt's work up close before he hurriedly motions the audience onwards through a small doorway.

8. A haunting folk song is heard echoing through the bell tower as the audience sit to listen. The singers face is never seen.

9. The door in front opens and the audience leave through it. Outside someone is waiting to greet them. The audience walk with them, gently linking arms. They are offered a sweet from a paper bag that they are told have been saved for with their coupons. Eventually, they sit together on a bench overlooking the inner quadrangle of the old

building. Their companion tells them that they have heard bad news, *'another who has passed from us in this horrid war'.* They tell the audience that sometimes they feel so far away from what is going on in the world, and other times it seems as if it will encroach on them all. They fear for this beautiful place being bombed, and ask the audience '*what would you miss, should ill fate mean the planes find these walls*?' They talk some more before their acquaintance tells them they must depart, 'but perhaps they will see them again soon?' The audience leaves through a different door, finding themselves by the entrance to the main hall. A guide removes the scarf from their neck and directs them back to the starting point.

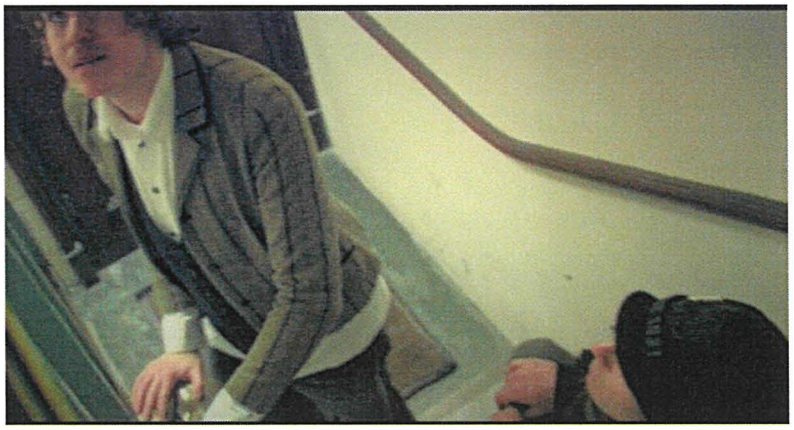


Figure 22: *The College on the Hill* (2011). An eccentric man takes the audience on a rapid recollection of artworks featured along the halls and describes others stored at the university during the second world war.

The use of space as the subject of the performance could place *The College on the Hill* as a site-specific performance. Several of the installations were intimately tied to their location and could not be transported to another location, such as the ghostly woman overlooking the city below. Other scenes within the work responded to the site but would have the potential to be moved to a similar type of location elsewhere, because the scene did not hinge on a direct connection to particular elements of the performance space. For example, the blindfold section could have been re-created in another space using other items, whilst the scene on the terrace overlooking the lower part of the city engaged directly with the setting, through the pointing out of particular landmarks and features of the building and city. Others were even less intimately tied to their location, for instance, the slate miner could have been moved to a different location without it altering his performance.

The performance was set out to take in a perambulatory pace, allowing the audience time to absorb each of the scenes and the locations as they travelled through them. This was identified as an important element in affecting the audience's experience. Actions such as the hand washing by the old woman were performed methodically and slowly creating a sense of

ritual[43]. These practices create a sense of habitualness as if the characters embody the space whilst avoiding becoming mechanised and passively carried out.

Considering narrative in structuring an immersive performance: exploration through performance *When Autumn Passes Me By*

This section presents the second performance which differed in focus to that of *The College on the Hill. When Autumn Passed Me By* focussed on a different aspect of the performance in considering narrative and its role within the theatrical frame. This performance sought to question what would happen if the narrative was paired back in the performance to focus on a theme. The audience were blindfolded for the duration of the work to see how this affected this experience. The performers are never seen by the audience and this was done to investigate the interaction between the performer and audience.

Concept

For the second performance, attention was changed to consider narrative as the focus of the performance. I decided to strip the narrative for this second performance to a theme in order to see how this would affect the audience's experience. I looked to choose a theme that would create simple but effective sensory moments and would be easily accessible as a concept. I initially conceived of creating a performance around the four seasons but decided this would require a lengthy production, a large performance space and a considerable number of volunteers. In order to simplify this, I chose a retrospective consideration of autumn (hence the title) to try and ask the audience to reflect what may have passed them by from the previous autumnal season. In response to the first performance, I decided to co-design the performance with volunteers as a way of connecting them to the performance. The performance was limited to 20 minutes in length as I was interested to see whether it was possible to create a therapeutic response to the work within a shorter time frame.

[43] This is an important aspect identified in Adrian Howells *Foot Washing for the Sole* (first performed 2008), where a sense of rhythm and repetition is made apparent in the way Howells readied himself for the act of foot washing before the audience and in the careful way he performs the action of foot washing itself (see Iball, 2012: 46). In s.l.t performance this sense of ritual is played out as audience see other participants led into the performance one at a time at regular intervals, creating a pace for the performance. Communion arises from measured actions as the performers carry out their actions in a state of presence in the moment with the audience member.

In contrast to the first performance where the site fed into the visual aspect of the work, holding this performance indoors and working with a natural theme required a different approach. My first concern was that the performance would seem artificial if the audience could see the space and realise that it is a mechanical production. Whilst this set up suited Ontroerend Goed's *The Smile off Your Face* (where the performance space was revealed to the audience at the end of the performance) I felt that this would be counter-productive for this performance[44]. *When Autumn Passed Me By* used a contained space and effectively sought to bring the outdoors, in. This raised a challenge in replicating the experiences indoors. Blindfolding the audience resolved this aspect, as it would mean that the performance would not necessarily look aesthetically pleasing, but would focus on the stimulating of the senses. This would allow the focus to be on the senses other than the visual and would mean that attention would be placed on how the installations worked in relation to their touch, taste, smell and feel. This meant that for much of the performance that the audience would need a guide to assist them in moving through the performance space.

There were fundamental differences in how space was negotiated compared with (not only my previous practice but also) other contemporary performances. The performance was designed so that four audience members could be guided through it simultaneously with the result that the guide would take the audience to visit different areas of the space in a non-sequential order. The result was that, although the four audience members started and finished at the same point, the experience between these two points would be different from person to person (although with a finite number of combinations possible from the eight installations created). This introduced an arbitrary element to the performance design and how it would be experienced by the audience.

Performance Synopsis

Eight installations were created for the performance on the theme of autumn. Some ideas emerged early on but their place within the performance was cemented through discussion with the performers who were part of the process of creating the piece. The performance area

[44] In *The Smile off Your Face* (first performed 2003) removing the audience from the performance allowed for recognition of the work as theatre, making evident its artificiality. As the audience would not be divulging personal information, I felt this would not be needed for *When Autumn Passed Me By*. However, other mechanisms such as the putting on and taking off the blindfold acted as a marker for the start and end of the performance, as well as using the musical score to contribute to marking the performance.

was divided into eight spaces which could be experienced in any order. The eight spaces created were as follows:

1. A tunnel along the back of the stage area was used to create a path of leaves that would be walked through. On reaching the end of the tunnel, a fan had been placed to create a gentle breeze against the audience's skin and the possibility for leaves to be gently blown onto the audience's body. The performance space was designed to be walked alone with performer's gently signalling the audience onwards through the space and then coming round to meet them at the other side. However, there was the option if the audience seemed reluctant to continue, there was space for the performer to accompany the audience through.

Figure 23: *When Autumn Passed Me By* (2014). A blindfolded audience member walks through leaves.

2. A table was placed with containers of moss, mud, pine cones and leaves to be handled, smelt and touched whilst blindfolded. A container of water allowed for the guide to gently wash the audience member's hands and dry them afterwards.

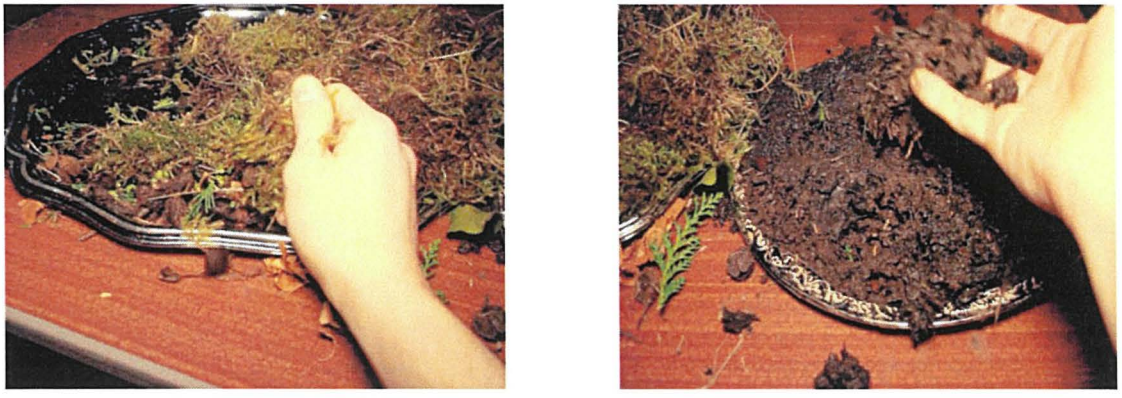


Figure 24: *When Autumn Passed Me By* (2014). An audience member is given the opportunity to feel various objects at a table.

3. A singular outdoor space made use of a side exit which was sheltered from the weather. The audience would be dressed in wellington boots and a coat, before being guided outside to stand and hold an umbrella. A static performer was in place to gently pour water from a watering can and onto the audience standing below. This created a sprinkling sound that intimated soft rainfall. Afterwards, the process of taking off the boots and coat were done in a methodical manner.

Figure 25: ***When Autumn Passed Me By*** **(2014). Audience members are dressed in Wellingtons and a thick coat to wear before going 'into the rain'.**

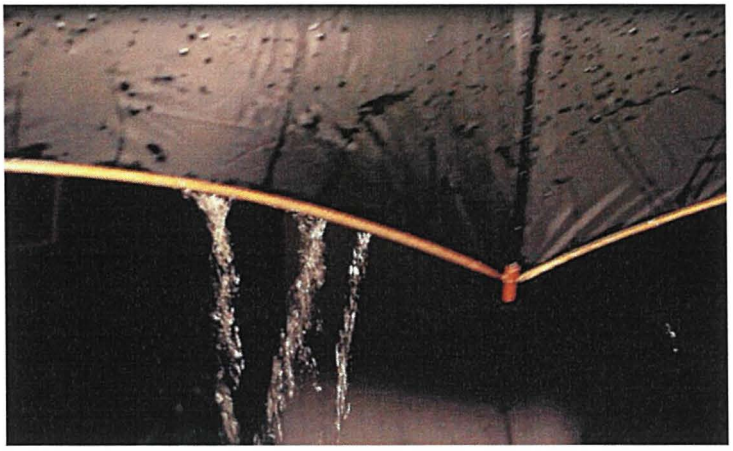


Figure 26: ***When Autumn Passed Me By*** **(2014). Audience members encounter a rain shower under an umbrella whilst blindfolded.**

4. Using an eave, some fabric sheets were used to create an enclosed space that could be gently heated to represent a hearth. Natural log stumps were used as places for the audience to be seated on. The audience were able to feel a gentle heat and hear crackling sounds that were suggestive of a fire, being played at a low level. Guides

could offer the audience warm drink of chai tea and apple chunks to be eaten if desired. Poems developed during the workshop process were placed in this space with the invitation for them to be read by the guide to the audience member.

Figure 27: ***When Autumn Passed Me By*** **(2014). After being out in the rain, audience members were brought into the fire to experience the contrast in temperature.**

5. A temporarily constructed greenhouse created an olfactory room within the performance space. Various leaves and plants were hung from the structure for the audience to smell and feel.

Figure 28: ***When Autumn Passed Me By*** **(2014). An enclosed greenhouse space to experience smells similar to a walk in the woods.**

6. A chute was constructed of fabric which allowed for the audience's blindfold to be (very briefly) lifted. The audience would be gently led down on a soft rug, their blindfold carefully removed and leaves and petals would gently fall towards them

from a static performer positioned at the top of the chute. This space allowed for some use of the visual senses to be used in a concentrated way.

Figure 29: ***When Autumn Passed Me By*** **(2014). Audience members were laid down under a chute, and their blindfold temporarily removed. A performer then dropped soft leaves and petals from above so that the audience could see them spiral down towards them.**

7. A second partially enclosed space was used to create a cave where the audience would be invited to lie down, covered with soft blankets and a hot water bottle. Several playful elements were used in the space in response to the audience, either through the 'bear' character gently engaging the audience verbally or through motion only. Some audience were encouraged to 'peek out' at a twinkling sky created on the ceiling. A tunnel was created from this space allowing for the audience to crawl blindfolded.

Figure 30: *When Autumn Passed Me By* (2014). Enter the den: a meeting with a bear and the only space with possible verbal communication.

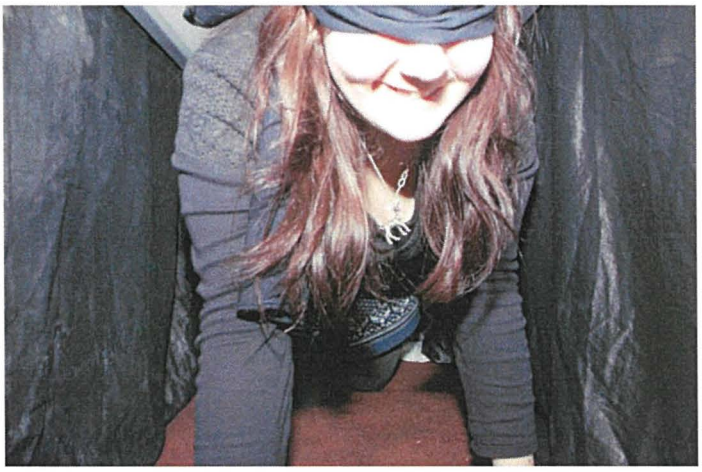


Figure 31: *When Autumn Passed Me By* (2014). After leaving the bear audience members were encouraged to crawl on all fours down a passageway made to feel like a burrow.

8. To create a space where the audience could get used to being guided and walking blindfold and as a tool to disorientate the audience's sense of direction, a path was drawn in the central floor space. It also allowed for an area where movement and sound were experimented with, depending on the confidence of the audience member.

Figure 32: *When Autumn Passed Me By* (2014). A labyrinth path was temporarily taped to the floor around which performers could guide the blindfold audience members, disorientating them and creating a feeling of a larger space.

Each of the performances began and ended in the same way. The audience gathered in a foyer space before being led in at their designated time to the performance area. The stage curtains remained closed so that the audience would not see the space. Instructions were given to aid the audience should they wish to leave the performance.

The performance began with the audience being invited into the theatre space where chairs were laid out facing the stage area (curtained off from view). The audience participants were invited to remove shoes, coats and other items, before being asked to walk onto the stage where four further chairs were laid out on the apron of the stage facing forwards. Blindfolds had been placed on the back of each chair. The audience were then invited to place their own blindfold on in a comfortable manner. Once this was done a pause allowed the audience to settle before audible sounds began to be played on the sound system. The performers then came from behind the curtain to begin the sensory interactions.

The performance was designed to be done in a slow and careful manner, similar to the approach for the first performance. The audience were slowly immersed into the performance by being introduced to several items by the performers (whilst still seated), that could be heard, touched or smelt in isolation. The sensory items included: seeds, cones, leaves, and branches. One at a time the audience were guided into the performance space. From this point onwards their journey altered from one to another as the performer would take them to a different location to begin their movement through the performance.

Figure 33: *When Autumn Passed Me By* (2014). Other objects that were placed on the table for audience members to feel included various seeds, pine cones, and leaves.

Prior to the performance the team had discussed the individual installations, taking into account those which might push the audience's boundaries further than others. The idea was that this would inform the audience's route through the performance, based on the performer's reading the audience's body language. The audience who appeared to be more tentative were guided to 'softer' elements of the performance (spaces 2, 5 and 8) before being encouraged onto the most stimulating spaces (1, 3, 4 and 7). The audience did not necessarily experience all the spaces as the performers were instructed to follow the pace of the audience member allowing them to sense the audience's interest and spend as long as the audience wished to in each of the spaces. Actions were carried out at a measured pace being deliberately unhurried to allow time for each element to be experienced.

At the end of the performance, the audience were guided to the chairs at the front of the stage area before being asked to remove their blindfolds in their own time. The individual performer-guides, after guiding the audience to their seat, removed themselves behind the curtain. The static performers also remained hidden from view. The same individual who greeted the audience invited the audience to remove their blindfolds and directed them to their belongings. This allowed time for a gentle removal from the performance, taking gradual steps towards emerging into 'reality' once more. As the performance was being conducted as a study, the audience were then guided to a series of rooms for interviews to be conducted (see below for more details of the data collection and analysis). This space

effectively replaced the decompression space offered up in works such as *Cerebellium* (2012, 2013 and 2014) and allowed the audience the opportunity to reflect on the performance[45]. However, audience members were asked not to communicate at this point, as I had wanted to collect their individual rather than collective responses to the performance.

Performance Process

The performance was held on the 19th January 2014 in John Philips Hall, Bangor. The performance was advertised using a poster which was placed on noticeboards around the university and the local area. An event page was set up on a social media platform and an advert placed on the university website page. The event was advertised bilingually in line with the universities language policy. Participants registered for a time slot via email or using a QR code linked to an online registration form. In the online registration, an information sheet was included which had to be actively agreed to before they could continue to the registration page (for additional information on the protocol for data collection see below). Those who registered via email were sent the information sheet and once they had confirmed they wished to continue were signed up to the study. All participants were also given the opportunity to read the information sheet once they arrived at the performance venue, before signing participant consent forms.

A series of workshops were held in the two months prior to the performance led by myself as the lead researcher. Seven student volunteers were recruited during the workshop phase. Due to study commitments in January, the student volunteers were not able to participate in the performance rehearsals. A further four performer-participants were then recruited for the performance. A total of ten volunteers participated in the performance, (excluding the lead researcher). One volunteer experienced in theatre front of house co-ordinated the pre-performance area and one volunteer experienced in data collection gathered the interview responses to avoid contamination from the lead researcher. Eight performers then coordinated the performance space: four performers acted as guides during any one performance, two performers were in 'static' locations for the duration of a performance (these were the bear cave and the top of the leaf chute), two volunteers helped coordinate the practical aspects between performances (re-filling the water containers and replenishing the

[45] Refreshments were also made available; this is featured in Iwan Brioc's practice and offers a sense of security and comfort as the audience process the encounter.

hearth space) and co-ordinated the 'rain' space during performances. This left one additional performer per performance to assist if any issues arose[46].

Most of the performer-participants had some experience with local s.l.t productions held in the nearby Caerdroia in Llanrwst, or had been involved with the *Cerebellium* 2012 and 2013) project. Of the eight performer volunteers, four had prior training in sensory labyrinth theatre practices, one had extensive knowledge of creating sensory labyrinth theatre performances and three had participated as performers in local sensory labyrinth theatre performances. Four of the performers had no prior training in similar practices but had previous experience in theatre. Of these four with no sensory theatre experience, three had attended a variety of participatory theatre performances as audience members. All the performers went through the performance as a training exercise in order to understand the experience being created for audience and training was given to all participants, regardless of experience, in leading another person who is blindfolded. Several practice performances were arranged to try out the performance with volunteers as well as testing the space on one another[47].

Some elements of the performance were pre-determined by the lead researcher whilst others were developed through exploration work carried out in the performance space. This was intended as a way for performer-participants to become invested and increase commitment to the project (spaces 2, 5, 7 and 8 were created or developed through this process). All performer-participants went through the performance as a way to initiate practice in guiding audience members through the performance space and to anticipate and understand the intended experience from the audience's perspective.

Due to the level of experience of the participants, the rehearsal process focussed on creating and learning through trialling out the sensory installations with all performer-participants being guided through the performance at least once and trialling leading several times to practice and to understand the performance from the audience perspective. Additional sessions were held for those with little to no experience to allow for additional

[46] Initially the intention had been to guide five participants at any one time through the space. This had been trialled in one of the prior performance experiments where five performers had guided around five audience members with myself as an additional aide. Whilst making preparations for this performance I felt the space might be too crowded given the size of some of the installations in the space and decided to take a cautious approach to the group size.

[47] Using a neutral audience helps with the performance design as they are unfamiliar with the space and do not have an inherent knowledge of the sensory installations, unlike the performers who are more aware of the performance.

training in guiding a person and interacting with sensory stimuli. For those with previous experience, I focussed on several aspects not included in s.l.t that included: moving through the space simultaneously to other performer-participants and audience members, creating a sustained experience with one audience member (rather than performing a small segment in repetition) and guiding a person blindfold for the duration of the performance. This process also allowed the sensory installations to be developed in view of feedback and responses from the practice sessions.

The performance aimed to push the current boundaries of the form adopting a mixture of existing methods to new approaches. Using the one-on-one form utilised by Brioc, Howells, and Ontroerend Goed (used in *The Smile off Your Face* only), the performance retains its intimacy. Unlike this work, the guides remained largely anonymous as an unseen physical presence, reconstructed and reimagined in the mind of the audience as they experience the performance. The largely blindfolded experience is influenced by Ontroerend Goed's *The Smile off Your Face*, which is performed mostly unseen except for a brief reveal during the performance and is taken off completely for an intimate exchange with one performer at the end. Once the blindfold is removed, the audience encountered the whole space as a realised entity. In *When Autumn Passed Me By*, the entire space was never revealed to the audience, leaving their imagination to envisage the space for themselves.

Two sections of the performance provided an opportunity for the blindfold to be briefly lifted in order for the audience to receive a visual sensory experience: this took place at the leaf chute space (6), and a brief glimpse of a starry sky in the cave (7). A distinct difference was created in the route travelled being selected by the performer in negotiation with the audience. I felt it was important to include the visual in some way and, having removed sight for the majority of the performance it would be possible to draw attention and give a heightened awareness of this sense. It is this aspect which sees the largest shift from current forms of practice. The performance was a contrast to *The College on the Hill* in the use of space and site. Whilst in some ways the performance used features of the performance space (the eaves on each side of the stage becoming the cave and hearth spaces, the leaf tunnel formed by the curtain at the back of the stage); the stage space was not specifically referred to in the performance theme or narrative. The performance could be easily adapted to allow for transferal to other black box performance spaces. The performance did not seek to draw out the function, history or memory of the location in any way. As such, it was much like Punchdrunk's use of the warehouse space in providing a canvas for the performance,

unlike performances that have sought to articulate or make sense of the site within the theatrical narrative.

Identifying changes to well-being in performance: data collection from audience participants in *The College on the Hill* and *When Autumn Passed Me By*

As part of the research, I collected data from audience participants who attended the two performances. The following section details the methodology for using audience data and how this was carried out in each of the two performances.

My interest in well-being extended from my own experiences of immersive theatres and having read about how other performances had affected the audience in particular ways by generating certain types of emotion or feeling, dependent on the performance they had attended. Having identified similarities in performance design (see Chapter 3) to particular affects, I looked to explore through my practice whether certain affects could be created and how.

The performances were intended to examine particular aspects of structure in immersive theatres, with audience research designed to try and understand what affect the performance had had on the audience. The first performance conducted interviews or questionnaires with the audience before and after, allowing for an understanding of the changes to feelings or emotions as a result of going through the performance. It also used a well-being questionnaire as a way of ascertaining changes in well-being between pre and post-performance. The second study used self-conducted interviews post-performance looking to understand how the audience were able to convey their personal experience. This chapter will explore the audience responses in relation to changes in well-being.

Several factors were kept the same across both studies, and these are discussed in the general methods and general analysis sections. The two performances are discussed in turn, detailing the methods, analysis and results specific to each performance before a combined discussion is used to draw together the findings together. As a preliminary study using qualitative data in the context of immersive theatres, this chapter also makes several proposals for the further development of this work, particularly linked to its potential for use as part of an expanding programme of theatre work being conducted with the sphere of arts and health.

General Methods

In both performance studies, there was no intention to recruit from particular sections of the local community. Both studies used volunteer sampling methods for recruitment and may not represent the consensus of a normally distributed population, although a range of ages across both genders attended both performances. Review this is discussed in the general analysis, below. The responses may be affected by the research study aspect of the performance and whether they wished to take part in this form of enquiry, thus also potentially making it a self-exclusion criterion. This means that the results can be understood as a theoretical sample based on those who chose to attend this event. Self-exclusion was set up through the posters and advertising and information leaflets advising that the study was unsuitable for those of nervous dispositions or who were sensitive to sensory stimuli, and it was stipulated that participants must be aged 18 years old or over. Through using qualitative methods, both performances sought to engage with a rich set of data that would benefit the understanding of the interactions and experiences of the audience who attended, particularly in relation to personal well-being.

From the collected audience responses from the first performance study, further observations were made and informed the potential refinement of the second performance to increase effectivity. I was involved as director and co-creator with the performer-participants in building and developing the performance and also in training for working within the performance space. To remove researcher bias in the data collection, both first and second studies employed individuals experienced in data collection and interviews to conduct the interviews, with training provided by myself prior to the commencement of the performance.

In line with the universities bilingual policy, all advertisements were made through the mediums of Welsh and English. It was made clear in advertising material that the study would be conducted through the medium of English. Participants were asked if they had any allergies prior to entering the performance which was then communicated to the performers. It was made clear that the audience did not have to participate in any activities they did not wish to, and that any substances would be presented to them in such a way as to offer them a choice in whether to share in them. Assessments of capability were made individually and where allowances could be made (for instance one audience member for the second study was unable to crawl), the performers were instructed in areas that may not be suitable for the participant. The participants were given a code word which they could use to exit the performance at any time should they wish to do so.

General Analysis

The data for both studies were analysed using a combination of thematic and content analysis (see Denzin and Lincoln, 1994) as a way of drawing meaning from the participants accounts. The first performance (*The College on the Hill*) also used an ICECAP-A (Investigating Choice Experiments CAPability measure for Adults) analysis tool (Al-Janabi and Coast, 2010) as an assessment of well-being. The only classificatory data taken for both performances was gender. This data showed that for the first performance 57% were female and 43% were male. Although both performances used small sample sizes, the gender split is largely consistent with findings from Mann (1967) and Ammen (1996) with regards attendance at theatre performances as well as more recent findings on attendance ratios for men and women attending between 1997 and 2010 (Sedghi, 2012). The second study included a higher proportion of female participants (10) than male participants (five). However, due to the smaller number of participants, it is difficult to assume a propensity towards female attendants. By including the practice volunteers, the totals suggest a more evenly balanced total of 13 females to nine male participants. Overall, this suggests that the sample included here can be seen as typical of the gender categorisation in theatre going activities. Although age was collected for the first study, the sample size was too small to draw any conclusions relating to age. As such, age was not collected for the second study which had a smaller audience size. For both performances, the audience were required to indicate that they were over 18 years of age and therefore eligible to participate in the research.

The College on the Hill - Methods

Initially designed as a pilot study, the first performance used a combination of interviews and questionnaires, with half of the audience being interviewed before and after the performance and half completing questionnaires before and after the performance. In order to make this data comparable, the same questions were used for both formats. It was intended that this first performance would test whether questionnaires or individual interview produced more detailed and the ability to articulate a response to the performance in one format when compared to the other. This was done on the basis of evidence from critic and anecdotal audience responses to performances, which suggested a difficulty in describing the experience after the performance.

34 spaces were available for the first performance. 32 were filled prior to the performance with two participants unable to attend on the performance day. No participants withdrew after completing the study. Results for the qualitative analysis are given based on 30 audience participants (n=30). This includes 17 females (average age ± stdev: 29±14), and 13 males (34±11) who were recruited from the Bangor, North Wales, area, who responded to the advertisements about the performance.

This study involved collecting data pre and post-performance to allow for a comparative approach in evaluating the change in audience responses immediately before and after the performance. Pre-performance data acted as a baseline in order for any change in individual responses to be determined in relation to having gone through the performance. Audience members were interviewed in separate rooms to avoid influencing other participant's data. Those who were filling in questionnaires were led to specific chairs in a pre-designed seating arrangement to avoid contact with one another's answers.

Attendees were given an information sheet prior to signing a consent form (see appendices) agreeing to be involved in the performance and research. They were then asked to complete the ICECAP-A form and either a short questionnaire or were taken for an interview. They were informed that at any time they wanted to leave the performance, they could inform a performer who would call a steward and they would be led out of the performance and taken back to the briefing room. Following completion of the performance, the participants filled in the ICECAP-A again and a second questionnaire/ interview designed specifically for the study (see appendices). By completing the ICECAP-A before and after the performance it would be possible to account for differences in scores in relation to the performance.

Audience members were randomly assigned to completing the questionnaire or an interview. 15 of the participants were given paper questionnaires to complete before and after the performance, with the remaining 15 being interviewed by two volunteer assistants both pre and post-performance[48]. Whilst one of the main purposes of this study was to test the effectiveness of questionnaires versus interviews for collating responses to the performance, the questions were also designed to provide some feedback on the performance itself.

[48] Interviewers were used in order to maintain objectivity within the study in maintaining distance between the researcher (who had also created the performance), in order that the participants would feel more comfortable giving their responses to a person uninvolved with the making of the performance.

Audience participants were asked six questions prior to entering the performance and fourteen post-performance questions (see appendices for question sheet).

The performance was held in the main University buildings at Bangor University on the 5th and 6th February 2011. Audience participants were pre-assigned arrival times in 30-minute intervals to complete the pre-performance questionnaires or interviews. The participants then entered the performance at five-minute intervals.

The College on the Hill - Analysis

The ICECAP-A questionnaire[49] was used in order to see if there were any subjective changes in general well-being between pre and post-performance. The same questionnaire was filled out by participants immediately before and after going through the performance. This allowed for comparison to be made between the pre and post scores for participants see if any change could be attributed, having been through the performance.

The ICECAP-A was chosen for use in this study as it is a general measure of well-being in the adult population rather than a health-related assessment (Al-Janabi et al., 2012; Keeley et al, 2013:4). The tool has been assessed for its use in this context and also for its suitability as a well-being measure to delineate quality of life (Al-Janabi et al., 2012; Keeley et al., 2013). The measure has been tested on the general public for its phrasing and the relatable-ness of each of the five concepts for assessing well-being (Al-Janabi et al., 2013; Flynn et al, 2013). The measure uses a four-point scale across five questions which refer to aspects relating to: 'Stability, Attachment, Autonomy, Achievement and Enjoyment' (Keeley et al., 2013: 1) understood to be determinants for quality of life.

Results for the ICECAP-A questionnaire were inputted into SPSS 20 (IBM Corp, 2011) and then analysed. As the data was not normally distributed, a Wilcoxon test (1945) was used in order to account for this distribution of the data (see also Field, 2013). Due to the number of participants, it was not possible to calculate significance in relation to the general population. For those who participated in the study, the results did show significance in the improvement of well-being when comparing their scores before and after the performance (see Chapter 4 for findings).

[49] With thanks to Hareth Al-Janabi and the team at University of Birmingham for granting permission to use the ICECAP-A form for this study.

The interviews and questionnaires were initially appraised for their clarity and length of response separately. The analysis was then conducted collectively on both the interview and handwritten questionnaire responses. Content analysis was used for a specific question related to feelings pre and post-performance to provide a point of comparison with the ICECAP-A results.

When Autumn Passed Me By-Methods

When Autumn Passed Me By was a smaller scale performance in terms of its length and also the number of audience participants. For the second study, I created a short performance (approximately 20-25 minutes in length) and tested the relationship to narrative and plot in influencing the performance experience. The performance was advertised through posters, university forum pages and the creation of a social media page. 15 spaces were available for the performance, which were all filled prior to the performance. Two trial groups were used to test the staging prior to the performance and also to trial the interview spaces below the stage area for sound quality.

Participant numbers were randomly assigned to the trial and performance groups to provide anonymity. The performance was held on the 19th January 2014 in John Phillips Hall, Bangor University. Audience participants were pre-assigned arrival times at 30-minute intervals, arriving in groups of three or four. No participants withdrew after completing the study. Results given are based on 15 audience participants (n=15).

The second study did not use the ICE-CAP-A scoring measure for two reasons: 1) due to the smaller number of participants it would be difficult to reliably determine any significance and 2) it was felt that the performance length would be too short to discount audience recalling their initial reporting in the pre-performance questionnaire.

In addition, this study aimed to test whether a therapeutic response could be generated in a short performance (lasting no more than 15-20 minutes) that is not necessarily deeply transformative (as in the work of Brioc and Howells), but would offer a calming and meditative opportunity to re-encounter the body through the senses, as opposed to an external site (through the senses).

Participants were provided with instruction and question sheets to guide them through the interview process. A total of eight questions were asked for this study. An assistant was near to hand if any technical issues arose. The second performance was designed to act as

both a performative response to some of the questions raised by the thesis and to create an analysis of a sensory therapeutic immersive performance. This study reduced the pressure on the audience to respond verbally to a performer by making the experience largely non-verbal (in contrast to the first study which oscillated between verbal and non-verbal modes). The audience were largely guided through the performance space and invited to interact with sensory objects and to weave their own narrative from their experience.

Participants were asked after the performance not to speak until they had recorded their interview in order not to influence each other's responses. Once interviews were conducted the participants were asked not to return to the entrance foyer where they might speak with audience participants yet to go through, or their conversations could be overheard. It was explained that this was to avoid contamination of data. In order to avoid this, a volunteer was placed in the front of house area to instruct and direct participants. This volunteer was also assisting in delivering the pre-performance checks; including the reading of the information sheet and signing the consent forms. The researcher also reviewed the completion of all consent forms with each participant before they entered the performance space.

Similar to the first performance, as the audience volunteered to participate in the performance study, it is unlikely to contain the views of those who are deterred from attending the performance from the outset.

When Autumn Passed Me By - Analysis

Audience responses were collected together and analysed for themes emerging from the data. A content analysis was used to record particular references to their preferences from the installations within the performance. The questions were particularly concerned with safety and it was with this focus that the responses were analysed.

The ICECAP-A was not used in this study, as the number of participants was too small to be able to determine significance. I also felt that as the performance was short in length that the audience might remember their pre scores post-performance. This might have inhibited the reliability of the scores.

Summary

This chapter has sought to outline the methodology for the performances created as part of the research in this thesis, explaining the particular decisions and processes incorporated into the practice. I have provided a brief overview of some of the key training experiences which informed the development of the research alongside the performances created. Moreover, I have outlined the method for each performance in order to try and understand the way performance structure alters or impacts upon the audience's experience of the work. In addition to the performance practice, this chapter has also detailed the data collection methods used for the audience responses to the performance.

From focussing on methodology and process, the subsequent chapter turns towards the problem of participation, which has formed the central query of this thesis. I explore issues centring on participation in immersive theatres and discuss how the performance structure affects the audience encounter. This chapter explains the thinking behind the practice in terms of creating particular audience affect and relates back to the practice discussed in this chapter, before moving on to exploring the findings of the research in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4.

Performance findings: Considering changes in well-being in *The College on the Hill* and *When Autumn Passed Me By*

This chapter presents the findings from the data collected from the two performances, considered alongside critical reflection on the development of each performance. In Chapter 2, I suggested that to create a therapeutic affect in immersive theatre relies upon the way the performance is structured. I hypothesised that the degree to which the audience invests personal information or emotion into the performance dictates the power of the therapeutic affect on the audience (whether it is transformational or extends to a revelatory encounter). This section will discuss how, through the practice, I was able to identify a therapeutic affect from audience responses to the performance. I detail the findings explicit to each of the performances and consider the outcomes of each performance in relation to improving a sense of personal well-being.

Performance findings: *The College on the Hill*

Several findings emerged from the first performance; elucidating on the relationship between immersive theatres and site-specific theatre, as well as findings relating to changes in well-being for audience participants. The performance is contrasted against observations of other performances and critical responses. I also consider my observations and reflections on the performance and refer to the audience responses to the performance, particularly in relation to well-being.

The outdoor spaces were affected by inclement weather with unusually high winds affecting the terrace section of the performance in particular. This affected the decision to locate the second performance indoors. The first performance was developed and loosely scripted from the research I conducted into the history of the university and the local area. However, some of the audience noted in their feedback that they had felt unable to verbally participate in the performance as much as they had expected to and had wanted further responses from the performers to some of their questions. Whilst each audience may spend approximately five minutes with each performer, responses from the audience highlight the need for performers to have a whole host of material at their immediate disposal in order for the character to inhabit the fictional world for each audience member. This supports the

devolved process of theatre making for performances which involve direct participation, where each performer can create an intimate understanding of their character.

In *Oráculos*, the use of an old mill in Barcelona informs the story-telling through the sensory actions which take place. The site often acts as the best way of articulating the narrative. Often it is a re-imagining of the site within a specific performance context. Although separate performance fields, the inter-connectivity between immersive theatre and site-specific theatre exists because of their association with non-typical theatre spaces and the use of the senses in imagining the performance. Site-specific works generally explore the site through corporeal means in relation to the human body (what it feels, smells, tastes, looks and sounds like) and articulates it through theatrical means; often immersive theatres will do the same. Site-specific works rely on a far more intimate connection to site: one where the work explicitly seeks to draw out aspects of the space and make it known as the central narrative of the performance. The result is that both immersive and site-specific works retain some degree of difference, meaning that they cannot be fully incorporated together as genres, but are inextricably linked.

The College on the Hill is a prime example of this: the performance was intended as a sensory performance, experimenting with the relationship between performance and site. The performance focussed directly on the site itself rather than using a theme or story, as its subject. Immersive theatres often use the site to help articulate the sensory aspects of the installation and to create a three-dimensional world which can be traversed by the audience. Site-specific performances use the sensory aspects of the site as a way of communicating something of it to the audience. In this way, the site became the primary focus of the performance, not a secondary consideration, as in the works of Punchdrunk and Teatro de los Sentidos. The result was that the performance displayed a close relationship to site-specific practices, evidencing their inter-connectedness. Interactions with the audience probed their relationship to the site and what it meant to them. Audience referred to feeling: an increased sense of awareness and feeling 'introspective'; anticipating that future performances would offer 'different', 'new' or 'fresh' experiences. Comments also referred to a feeling of having learnt something about the place that they did not know before, in some cases changing their perception of the site.

Using a site within its designated purpose adds to the seeming reality created by these performances and can mean that the audience does not work as hard to imagine the space or to suspend disbelief. This is crucial when we consider the ethical implications of these

environments. The audience member walks through the performance and is aware that they see it through their own visual means without assistance and they are able to physically touch and interact with the space. There is not necessarily a requirement to suspend disbelief as the environment is set up in such a way as to appear 'real'; that is within the visual reality of the audience (being present in the here and now). The removal of distance and separation between performance space and audience creates a process where the theatrical is real, or rather, difficult to distinguish. As such, all aspects of space become read as part of the performance, whether incidental or intentional.

Other immersive theatres do not require a particular site as essential to their creation. Touring immersive performances tend to operate in such a way that the performance does not require specific items which are part of the architecture of the building. These performances can be built and re-built creating the sensory devices at work within this structure. Here I think specifically of works such as Ontroerend Goed's *The Smile off Your Face* (first performed 2003), which has been mostly performed in studio and black box theatre venues where the performance can be easily reconstructed. Rarely are they exclusively tied to site and can only be performed in that singular location. Whilst the space may provide the dramatic backdrop to the performance, enhancing atmosphere or being specifically incorporated into the performance's narrative, as in *Cerebellium* (2012 and 2013), the building's prior use as laboratory was interwoven through the narrative, its shape, and integral sensory elements being utilised within the performance, it could not impossibly be re-imagined or re-created somewhere else.

The College on the Hill was able to transform through shifting the audience's understanding and feelings toward the university through a new experience of the site. Many of the participants expressed that the performance created a consideration of the building in ways previously un-thought of. Some of these responses related to their personal relationship to place: 'I feel a little nostalgic of [sic] Bangor, which is strange because I live here. I had a new love of the place' and: 'I always looked at it [the university building] as a clumsy – an imitation of an old medieval 'castle' to which ugly extensions got added. Now I see it is not a sham, but [pause] it was built by real, passionate, caring people'. For others, the performance situated the place in relation to the local community, or if they were unfamiliar with the building it gave them a new way of seeing and appreciating, providing a sense of recognition of the particular value of doing so for institutional buildings like the university:

> You get so closed off to the world, you don't pay attention to everything and then stuff like this, especially being in university [sic] where I am every day anyway, so I will certainly be paying more attention to stuff.

This participant went on to say that they were also aware that, the performance acts as a temporal way of shifting perception going on to say:

> I imagine I will fall back into my old habit of 'I must do this', 'I must do that'. In a busy world and nothing else can come in. So I think a performance like this is very good to just kind of awaken (pause) just take off your blinkers I guess and actually have a look at the world.

Whilst the first performance questioned the audience's relationship to site, the subject was unlikely to be personally emotive, although it created a strong response re-imagining the university, for many of the audience members. Initially, I conceived that this was due to the removal of confessional modes of speaking. When I later volunteered on the *Cerebellium* 2012 and 2013 productions I noted that there were few (if any) opportunities for confessional modes of speaking within this work and yet they often appeared to have a revelatory impact in audience feedback:

> Because as it has, I think, has touched the brain, it's also touched the soul, this something else and has been able to do something I'm sure that every dramatist after in the end, to be able to go ... touching ... soul again, the heart of anyone who looks at [the] theatre. You weren't feeling the space or the empty space there between the performance and the viewer: the thing was one. And that is something that every playwright looks for and that with reason, these have been successful. (Interview, Aled Jones-Williams, *Pethe*, 2013, translated by Glyn Griffiths).

I was able to conclude that this response came from the way the performance required the audience to complete a particularly emotive task: switching off the machine that keeps Project K 'alive'. From my own experience with this performance, knowing the storyline I was fully determined not to press the button and switch off Project K. Yet the pressure the fictional laboratory staff put upon the audience (without being forceful) demonstrated the easy manipulation of the human mind. This powerful act was tied into a performance that constantly queried one's perception of reality. It was through this personal storyline, causing the audience to question their own perception of reality that offers the potential for deeply personal transformation.

When Autumn Passed Me By was centred on experiencing sensory stimulus and did not relate to an emotive plotline, therefore removing the emotive aspect of the performance, leading to feelings of relaxation and calm. In *The College on the Hill,* the performance made evident that where the performance focuses on the site as the subject for performance it creates the potential for transformation (in one's relationship to the site). However, it

removes the possibility of revelation where the performance does not personally involve the audience either through partaking of their own personal narrative within the performance or by asking them to in some way make a personal decision through the performance. This suggests that some immersive theatre may be site specific and some site-specific performances may be immersive, but that each remains a distinct field by the fact that not all immersive theatres are site specific and not all site specific works are immersive.

The performance highlighted that the way actions are performed through a ritualised approach allows for the possibility of creating a therapeutic response because it inherently relaxes the audience and creates feelings of composure. It is the fast paced, high energy approach to YMBBT's work that makes it situational in asking for an 'of the moment' response from the audience. This is similar to the findings from the second trial performance, where the audience expressed feelings of exhilaration post-performance. The fast pace leaves little room for the audience to contemplate and consider as the performance takes place and little time to focus on sensory stimuli.

In the case of immersive works which utilise an existing play text, the response is unlikely to be therapeutic because it takes the audience through a (series of) high emotion event(s) as part of the dramatic score and does not offer a positive resolution. The pace of the performance leaves little room for a calm or relaxed state of being to emerge. As I moved through *The Drowned Man* (2013) my attention was drawn from the spectacle of the performers to the spectacle of the space and back into my own body as I became conscious of trying not to interrupt the performer's movements. Whilst Papaioannou sees this as evidence of a 'positively and productively mobile' (2014: 167) audience, I question the extent to which this is on the audience's own terms. There is an uneasy sense in all this that the power is still with the performers in a 'fiction over which we ultimately have no control' (Koumarianos and Silver, 2013: 168). Additionally, the non-naturalistic style of some of the performance in incorporating dance also creates an awareness of the fictitious nature of the performance that for me, created a distancing (rather than immersing), effect.

One of the primary objectives for the first performance was to assess the value of interviews versus questionnaires, in terms of the quality and length of response to questions. This was in order to determine if one format produced superior responses to the other. The questionnaires tended to produce short and direct responses. In comparison, the interviews produced lengthier responses, but interviewees often had word finding issues expressing difficulty in verbalising their experience. It was felt that this could be due to the presence of

an interviewer, with participants feeling self-conscious in describing their experience to another person. This was something that I had encountered from my own encounters with various immersive works[50]. On the basis of this, I decided that in the second performance the audience participants would record their responses privately on a Dictaphone in anticipation of producing lengthy responses without the need to verbalise the encounter to another person.

The final pre-performance questionnaire centred on providing a one-word response to the participants' current feelings in that moment. This question was also asked post-performance to provide a point of comparison for each participant between their responses before and after the performance.

From the 30 participants that were originally registered two participants only recorded responses to this question in the pre-questionnaire. Subsequently, their data was removed reducing the data available for analysis to 28. Statements were categorised at a semantic level into positive, neutral or negative statements. Positive statements were further split into two subcategories of 'active' statements (referring to animated terms) or 'passive' statements (referring to calm or relaxing statements). Where clarification was needed as to the mood or feeling of a statement, I considered the entire set of answers from the participant to determine into which category the statement fell.

From the pre-performance statements, if was possible to determine the audience's feeling prior to the performance and notice any changes to their description after the performance. In the pre-performance statements, the audience were relatively evenly split between the three states[51]. Nine participants recorded negative statements using words such as 'anxious', 'worried', 'apprehensive' and 'impatient'. 10 participants used neutral expressions such as: 'curious', 'intrigued' and 'bemused' to describe their feelings. Nine participants used positive statements with 6 active statements using words such as: 'excitement', 'looking forward' and 'good' and 3 passive statements using words such as: 'relaxed', 'calm' and 'content'.

In the post-performance responses, there were changes to the number of statements in each category. Two participants recorded negative statements after the performance stating

[50] My experience of *The Smile off Your Face* (2009) was particularly difficult given the intimate nature of much of the performance. In describing it the performance was reduced to 'being tied to a chair and blindfolded, rushed at and photographed against a wall and lying on a bed conversing in whispers with a stranger' are just some snippets of the way I could describe the work. This fails to capture the feeling of the experience and the cumulative impact of each segment of the performance and the way they interweave to complete the narrative.
[51] I took a cautious approach to the recording of statements to avoid overstating the claims of the responses. For example, words such as 'ok' and 'fine were classified under neutral scores.

they were 'confused' and 'in pain' (this related to the numbers of stairs negotiated during the performance, however, the audience member did not use their right to withdraw during the performance). Six participants recorded neutral statements using words such as feeling: 'intrigued', 'bemused', 'ok', 'fine'. 20 participants recorded positive statements following the performance with nine 'active' statements where the audience described feeling: 'happy', 'awake', 'excited', and 11 passive responses where the audience recorded feeling: calm', 'peaceful[ness]', feeling 'relaxed' and 'satisfied'. The results suggest a general shift towards positive language when comparing audience responses after the performance to those recorded before.

Having recorded pre and post-performance statements it was possible to find out how many audience participants had moved from one category to another. No participants expressed a downward trend in their feelings. Nine participants had no change in pre and post feelings, either using similar or like words to describe their current state. Both participants who recorded negative statements post-performance had also recorded negative pre-performance statements, although their reasons had altered. Three participants who recorded neutral pre-performance statements recorded similar post statements. Four participants who recorded positive pre-performance expressed positive statements post-performance, however, two of those participants changed from passive to active statements. This shows a general trend towards improved 'in the moment' positive feelings post-performance. These results also support the findings of the ICECAP-A scores for the same performance.

In addition to the one-word pre and post statements, the ICECAP-A questionnaire sought to determine if a change in well-being could be identified in relation to audience participants having gone through the performance. The results below detail responses to the ICECAP-A questionnaire. A Wilcoxon test (see Field, 2013) was conducted due to the data being non-normally distributed[52]. Total post-performance ICECAP scores were significantly lower than the pre-performance ICECAP score (T=16.5, p=.001, r=-.61), which implies that generally participants well-being improved.

[52] Higher scores on the ICECAP indicate lower well-being, lower scores = higher well-being. In order to conduct a T-test the data must be normally distributed. In the case of data collected for this study, most of the participants were within the normal range resulting in non-normally distributed data (or kurtosis). An appropriate non-parametric alternative was therefore used.

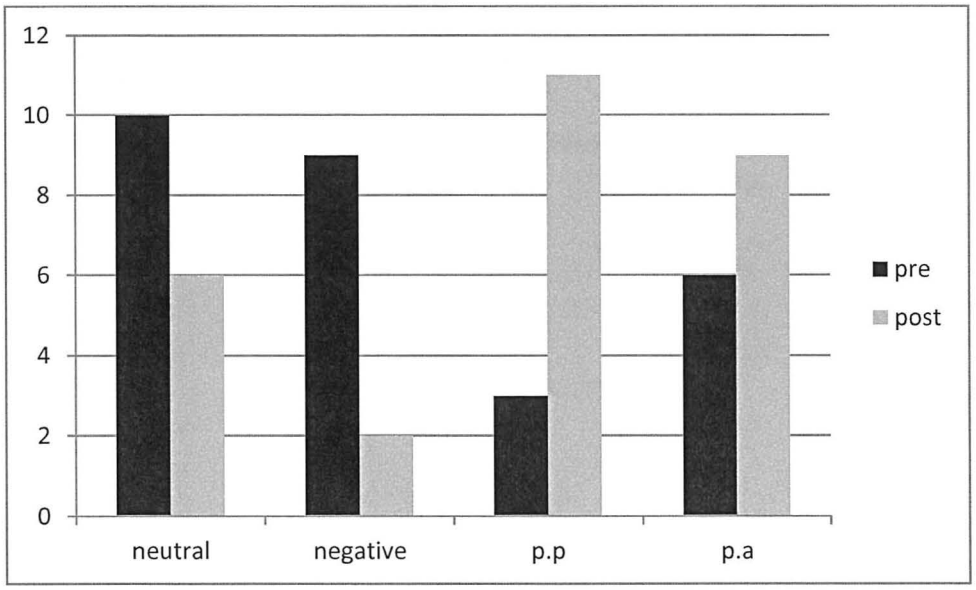


Figure 34: Grouped pre and post responses of 'in the moment' feelings for *The College on the Hill* (2011).

Key: p.p = positive passive p.a = positive active

Whilst the main focus of the participant data was on improvements in well-being, several other points of interest emerged. It was made clear by audience responses to the performance that there was a shifting process between being engrossed and distracted, moving in and out of immersion. Mindfulness practice teaches the difficulty of staying within the present moment (Crane, 2009; Williams and Penman, 2011), and so this is not a surprising feature of immersive theatres in the way the audience find themselves drifting in and out of the performative moment. Whilst initially I had expected that the installations would be moments of immersion and the spaces in between would allow for thoughtful regression, levels of immersion appeared to fluctuate throughout the experience, even when in contact with performers.

Other points of interest were identified across the participant's responses relating to narrative, environment, experiencing (through the senses). One participant commented that the lack of distinct narrative became a stumbling block to their enjoyment of the performance: 'I thought it would be more straight [sic] forward. I didn't think it would be so strange [...] definitely not my thing'. Other participants expressed feeling confused but felt this was irrelevant: '[I was] confused at first, but I relaxed eventually. Probably still confused now, but it doesn't matter'. This was related to recurrent comments with feeling self-conscious or hyper aware of the audience's own person. Some audience members referred to 'cycles' of feelings, moving between apprehension, enjoyment, confusion and sadness within

the performance. The importance of experiencing the performance through the senses was highlighted by several participants. One participant reflected that: 'I think that getting back to the roots of experience is something that should be done again and again'. This comment is reminiscent of a critics response to *Cerebellium* (2013): 'one part of me knows that, yes it's a performance, it's an experiment, whatever it is, but then another part says no, no, no, itself something really deep'. (Interview, Jones-Williams, *Pethe*, 2013, translated by Griffiths).

The participant comments suggest that some audience members (in the positive range of expressions) felt a sense of transformation as the performance changed their feelings or attitude towards the site. Furthermore, feedback suggests that the performance was able to positively impact upon participant's well-being in relation to attending the performance.

Performance findings: *When Autumn Passed Me By*

In response to the findings of the first performance, the second performance sought to remove confessional modes of speaking in order to see what affect this had on audience participants. Additionally, the performance focussed on a theme for the central storyline. The following section details the findings from the second performance including responses from participants and also some reflections on the work.

The performance was developed using the performers as 'tester' subjects, trialling the performance at several intervals during the development process in order to build on and enhance the identified methods. This led to an interesting predicament that is created by the work itself. The performers in knowing what is expected of their movements through the space cannot fully replicate the audience's experience and predict all of the potential injury points to the audience. This was identified by the 'tunnel' and how, during the rehearsal process, test subjects went through and identified potential points for injury; at which point further padding was added to protect the audience from potential injury when crawling through the space.

A set of volunteer subjects went through the performance prior to the actual performance. The fabric had been placed as a liner for the tunnel on both sides (as a way of allowing the performers easy access should a member of the audience dislike the confined space). The stage curtains on one side were intended to act as a weight barrier to the audience moving through them. When one audience member did manage to start crawling through they were re-directed by the performers who were observing progress at all times. Although it was

felt that the performer could do this if it occurred during the performance, I decided that this would interfere with the audience's experience, communicating a sense of error that would affect their experience. This was affirmed by the volunteer after the performance who commented that the performer's actions made them aware they had strayed from the 'proper' route. The decision was then taken to create a firmer barrier to prevent this happening during the performance. However, I would put forward that even with the best preparations the performers will still need to continuously adapt and respond during the performance. In the same way that many performances might have a review prior to their full release, this process is equally important in immersive theatres. To 'observe', 'reflect' 'plan' and 'act' as O'Leary identifies (2010: 150), allows for the development of the performance to respond to the experiences and occurrences that happen within the performance space.

One of the challenges this performance presented was in creating external spaces convincingly indoors, without seeming artificial. All the audience referred to different preferences for particular installations often referring to particular smells or textures which had appealed to them. Although re-creating spaces indoors were on the whole successfully achieved, one audience member did comment that the 'bear cave' had felt artificial to them because of the type of padding used to cushion the wooden floor. On reflection, an alternative natural material would have provided a soft floor cushioning, congruent with the performance. I would be particularly interested to compare the same performance in both outdoor and indoor locations to understand how this might affect the performance experience.

The rain on the umbrella, although performed in a small outdoor area was planned as an imitation due to the unpredictability of the weather. In some of the rehearsals, the participant pouring the water was not needed. For the performance two student volunteers were recruited to manage this area, refilling the watering cans and assisting in guiding the audience participant out of the indoor space. Both of the volunteers went through the performance prior to taking part in order to help them understand their role in the context of the whole performance as well as experiencing the feeling of their particular installation directly.

Several audience members commented that the performance space had seemed larger than they knew it to be, or expressed a wish to have seen the space in its entirety, whilst accepting that the performance had obviously not been designed with this notion in mind. As the audience were blindfolded throughout the spaces did not need to visually appeal, but provide a stimulating sensory impression. This is also particularly of interest in exploring the

aspects of well-being in relation to these works, whether walking through the performance space and encountering each part visually creates a stronger response, and may be worth further investigation by way of comparison with a blindfolded experience.

In the second performance, I looked to test whether a performance theme could still create a sense of transformation. The first performance study considered the spatial relationship to an immersive performance by making the site the focus of the performance narrative. From this process, it was possible to determine the way this affected the audience's response to the performance through audience feedback. This exploration also made evident the link between some immersive theatres and site-specific performance demonstrating an overlap between the two forms. It also became clear that some performances use the site in a responsive way or look for a type of space to perform in, whilst others utilise non-specific structures where the focus is on the size of space suitable to contain the performance. The first performance provided a transformation to a way of seeing the world (i.e. the audience's relationship to the university building). This is a change to an external relationship. However, the performance did not cause an internal change (the revelatory) because the performance did not call the audience to question their sense of self.

Whilst the audience responses (below) provide some insight into the success of these elements, the audience data collection has also been used as part of a secondary element of the performance studies to analyse the audience responses and interactions within the performance. Responses to the second performance suggest that it is possible to create a therapeutic affect that does not necessarily rely on confessional modes of speaking that is transformational (like other immersive theatres) but not necessarily revelatory. This may be an innocuous option for audience members who are new to this form of theatre by offering a temperate level of experience, leaving situational forms of immersion to those more experienced or desirous to participate.

In the second performance, several points of interest came out of the data collected. Smell was a prominent part of responses across the participants, which seems concurrent with the discussion in Chapter 1 on the import of smell within our bodily experiences. It is difficult to rate the responses to each of the sensory installations within the performance, in terms of what was least popular and most preferred, as all the participants experienced the installations in a different order to their co-audience within the same run of the performance and did not necessarily experience all of the individual segments of the performance. However, the difference in responses between participants who did experience the same

segments demonstrates the practical impossibility of creating an experiential theatre where the audience will appreciate all or the same elements of it.

Several audience members mentioned their own particular ideas of what represented 'autumn' to them, including mentions of birdsong, conkers, children, dance and festivals, particular tastes and smells (including marshmallow, the scent of smoke from a fire and cinnamon). I had considered the possibility to include fire, but it was felt that this could not be achieved indoors. This does raise an interesting consideration for future performances, relating to indoor and outdoor space. The performance was done indoors as it was felt that it would be difficult to perform outdoors in terms of health and safety concerns because of the time of year. However, if the performance was held later in the year, it would be interesting to test whether an outdoor performance elicited different responses from an audience because many of the installations would appear within a natural context, rather than being transferred to an indoor location.

It also emerged that spontaneous moments that occur within the performance can resonate strongly with the audience. One participant had enjoyed a playful exchange in the tent using its surface to make sounds, something that occurred in the moment and only for that one particular participant. Whilst several participants expressed a wish for dance and movement, several participants did engage with this is the central space, by chance of several participants being guided to that space at the same moment within the performance.

Whilst the performers had been instructed to encourage the audience to drink the tea by placing the mug in their hands and lifting it close to the nose (resulting in smelling the cinnamon), it was difficult to enact as participants were often hesitant as to whether they were permitted to taste it, even though they had been informed in the information sheet about the types of senses used in the performance. In a non-blindfold performance, it would be easier for the audience to determine whether to eat or drink substances. It might be that this particular element was too complex for a blindfold performance to utilise as the audience might be more risk adverse when blindfolded. This would, however, require further comparison.

The questions for the second performance were particularly interested in the audience's feelings around safety and enjoyment in the performance. As such, the responses have been analysed with these concerns in mind. Several key themes were identified from the data (see table 3 below) around ethical considerations including the senses, narrative, knowing/unknowing, safety and feeling safe and rules of engagement. The table below

provides a brief description for each of the identified themes and the central nucleus of each theme that was identified:

The last three themes were often connected; feelings of unknowing being related negatively to not understanding rules of engagement or feeling unsafe. By contrast, some participants enjoyed the sense of unknowing and the negotiation within the space of how to engage. One participant commented:

> I really enjoyed it. It was quite different from the sensory stuff I've done before in the sense that it was all done in the dark and pretty much blindfolded, which I really liked actually because it made me relax a little more. And it was less of a performance and more of a sensory experience really, and a journey.

This is in contrast to the view of another participant who said:

> I didn't like being left to walk on my own. I didn't mind it against the wall because I felt like I had guidance, but sometimes I wasn't sure what I was supposed to be doing. I also didn't like the speaking to the bear and feeling there were people around me that I couldn't see. I could hear them moving and it made me feel slightly uncomfortable to feel that other people were watching me. Also, round what felt like a fire when I was given the cup and the... I'm not sure what it was, I wasn't sure if I was supposed to eat and drink it or not so uncomfortable, not sure how to react to things and what to do.

Reading the variation in responses and how the audience describe their feelings indicated a link between how the participant perceived 'risky' elements of the performance and the affect on their response to the work. This is discussed in more depth in Chapter 5.

Participants who enjoyed the experience described feeling 'relaxed' and 'calm', compared to other participants who felt 'apprehensive' and 'self-conscious'. The more hesitant participants appeared inhibited their ability to relax into the performance. Although intended as a softer alternative to performances which ask the audience to vocally contribute to the performance, the responses led me to question whether blindfolding the audience combined with a lack of speaking during the performance was a barrier for some audience participants, perhaps because of their unfamiliarity and discomfort with non-visual and non-verbal communication modes.

Themes	Description
Senses	Specifically relating to particular aspects of the performance which were favoured or unflavoured by the audience
Narrative/ theme (of performance)	Often relating to a lack of narrative, wanting a story built in to guide or direct the experience. Lots of comments around feeling a sense of autumn through the stimuli provided.
Knowing/unknowing	Comments regarding not knowing what to expect from and during the performance. This also related frequently to the performance space and not knowing where one was or feeling that the space was larger than it was.
Safety	Related to participants feelings of being safe or degrees of apprehension about falling, being hurt or hurting themselves on other objects and also related to how they were guided through the performance.
Rules of engagement	Restricting inner desires to act, sensing what is wanted/ required from the audience by performers, unsure of what is possible with materials provided to explore.

Table 3. Thematic responses to *When Autumn Passed Me By* (2014).

As the participants were not assigned specific performer guides prior to the performances commencing, it is impossible to assess who the participants were guided by and whether certain performers were less successful in their guiding than others. This may, however, be an area for future consideration in order to more closely assess this area through a combination of observation of how performer's lead and what instances of 'unsafe' actions occur. This could also be combined with a reflection by both audience and performer on this aspect.

The nature of the performance as a blindfolded experience caused two distinct responses from audience participants: those who were unsettled by being blindfolded throughout and those who found it helped them to relax into the experience. Some of the audience expressed that they wanted to be able to see their guide or felt conscious of who might be watching them. There were also several statements around the necessity to need to be guided by someone which resulted in a sense of a loss of control which some participants

enjoyed and others did not. Some audience members expressed enjoying being left on their own to explore either in the walking through the leaves space, the tunnel or in the larger space, whereas others expressed a contrast of feelings of not wanting to be left alone. There were also some expressions of wanting to explore more on their own and feeling resistant to the nature of the performance as a guided experience, which some participants found limiting. The responses were generally positive across the participants, but there was no connection between their prior experience of immersive theatres and feeling more at ease with the performance than someone new to this kind of theatre. It became clear in participant responses that for those participants who expressed feeling nervous or cautious during the performance counteracted with the ability to be immersed in the performance. Many of the participants discomfort related to personal preferences, such as feeling that the music was not in synchronicity to their experience of the performance.

It was difficult to determine if any particular installations were more successful than others as not all the audience experienced the performance in the same order or went through all the installations created. All participants identified with the sensory nature of the performance, referring to particular instances that they had enjoyed the most:

> I liked the fact that there were [sic] lots of different smells and sounds. I think one of my favourite bits was when you put the wellies on and went outside and had the umbrella. I really loved that because it was just... it was just really, a lovely experience, and to go from like being quite warm inside to having like the cold air on you outside and just the noise, you're really focusing on the fact that it was raining, and the noise of the rain.

Other prominent areas referred to the bear cave space and the table of moss and water, although one participant was deterred from using his smell because of soap on his hands from the public bathrooms outside.

Although motives for attending were not a specific focus of this study, it is interesting to note that several audience members said that they had attended to accompany a relative, partner or friend or someone in the cast. It would suggest that this relates to a desire to share such as experience with another person, perhaps providing a sense of security in attending a performance which one knows little about and which may require degrees of participation.

In articulating the performance experience, there were a variety of responses with several keywords emerging as prominent: four participants provided vague descriptors of the performance as 'interesting and 'different' but were unable to further identify and describe the performance. Most of the participants made links to the word 'sensory' which was

included in the publicity material, with five making specific references to the way the performance was 'exploring' or 'challenging' the senses.

Summary

This chapter has focussed on the analysis used to examine the findings of the research and details the results of the audience responses to the performance. There was a positive increase in well-being reported on the scores of the ICECAP-A tool used for the first performance. This was supported by responses from the questionnaire or interviews both pre and post-performance. Similarly, feedback from the audience for the second performance also suggested that the performance had created a comparable affect.

Comments around people's perception of safety and risk created some diverse responses and affected some people's experience of the performance. As such it would be useful to develop some way of measuring or knowing the audience's perception of risk before the performance, to aid understanding of people's experiences or to tailor the performance to someone's risk-perception level. A solution is offered as a provocation to the discussion around this area in Chapter 5 in the form of an algorithm. Chapter 5 moves on to consider the implications of the findings. I also reflect on the use of data collection tools and explore future avenues that would develop the concepts and outcomes from this research.

Chapter 5.

Discussion: implications of the research and future developments

This chapter reflects on the findings of the performances as described in Chapter 4 and considers future possibilities for continuing and furthering the research. Particular attention is given to notions of risk and agency which emerged from respondents comments to the performance. Reflect and discussion on *The College on the Hill* and *When Autumn Passed Me By* is framed within current theory on risk in immersive theatres that has been discussed by Alston (2013b) and considers broader conceptualisation of risks within the arts through reference to John Adam's 'risk thermostat' (1995: 7).

There is only limited space within this research to address the many interesting facets of immersive theatre experiences. Whilst the performances have been able to show the effects of the work on individual well-being, further exploration is needed to compare this to other types of performance and theatrical events. The latter half of the chapter broadens out to consider future developments of the research. This is mediated through discourse on alternative methods for measuring audience response that might further enhance our understanding of the audience's role and involvement in immersive theatres.

Reflections on *The College on the Hill* and *When Autumn Passed Me By*

The responses from the audience demonstrated different levels of therapeutic encounter based on using a confessional mode of speaking (employed in the first study) or its absence. Use of a theme in the second performance provided a way of linking the sensory installations together within the performance allowing for a self-directed experience. This created a simplistic performance structure which was less emotive than a narrative led performance as in the first study, however, the use of site as the subject of the narrative meant the performance did not connect to the interior relationship to one's self (which I identify in Chapter 3) but to an exterior relationship with the world. Each performance demonstrated the difference between levels of transformation and revelation within immersive theatres.

Several factors were determined from the first performance study: apart from the ICECAP-A being able to show significant improvements in well-being when comparing pre and post-performance scores, it demonstrated the potential to use the tool in a non-medical context to assess changes in well-being. It would be beneficial to conduct the ICECAP-A on

audiences at other types of theatre events as well as different immersive theatre performance for comparison and to further enlighten the results recorded here. Whilst the majority of participant scores were in the normative ranges for well-being, one participant's pre scores were markedly lower than those of other participants. Their post data showed a significant improvement above average between the two time points. This singular case does not provide strong evidence, but it would be perhaps worth looking at people with lower well-being scores in order to see whether similar performances improve their well-being scores more than a normative population. Whilst this is only a suggestion based on one data set, further investigation might be able to affirm (combined with an ICECAP assessment at other theatre events) whether this type of theatre or theatre, in general, is able to improve well-being.

Several issues were taken forward from the first performance study to the next study to develop the audience's experience. However, not all the issues raised could be addressed (based on the decisions taken forward for the next study) and would require further exploration elsewhere. One refers to comments on narrative, whereby some audience felt it was 'too scripted' or were unclear of where they could and could not interact. In the second study, the narrative was further paired back to an overriding theme, with conversational elements largely removed. This was done in order to eliminate creating an intentionally personal and emotive effect on the audience. The second performance was therefore designed to allow the narrative to be self-driven and directed within the body of the audience as they experienced each element of the performance. Further exploration of narrative content and interaction could, therefore, be investigated in future practice work.

One of the reasons for creating original performance material was to design a performance study to compare the intended performance design with audience responses. In the first study, it was found that audience participants were reluctant to describe their experience to an interviewer, even though they were independent of the researcher and from the creation of the performance. For the second performance, the issues identified above were negated by having audience participants record themselves privately in individual rooms. In the second study, interviews were conducted using a Dictaphone device, with participants being led to individual rooms to record their responses in private.

It is clear from the two performances that to create a personal and emotive response the performance material needed to be strongly anchored toward the audience's 'self'. The use of the performance site for the narrative in the first performance and a theme for the second performance allowed for transformation but did not extend towards a revelatory

experience. We can see this in some existing performances, for instance, *Cerebellium* (2013 and 2014) which created a storyline that initially seemed to centre on the fictional character of Kevin, but actually acts as a mirror for the audience to question their own thoughts, feelings and responses to the notion of (their own) consciousness. The audience becomes involved in being asked to act as part of the experiment which causes them to consider and think about their own behaviours and actions. Adrian Howell's one-on-one works utilised an experience that most of us have had (a bath or foot wash) but made it into a sensorial personal experience as the audience's body and sense of self are placed centrally within the performance narrative. In relation to the questions proposed by the second performance, it has been possible to answer, or partially resolve some of the queries posed. It would appear that a theme can provide sensory stimuli that can create a self-directed experience but limits the performance experience to a simple structure that is less emotive than one that is guided by a narrative. The use of a story-line can provide a structure and guide to the experience, potentially focusing the expectations of the experience through the plot. Blindfolding for the whole performance is possible but does require performers who are confident and well-prepared for audience's movements within the space. This could be improved by performers inhabiting single locations to gain familiarity with a small area, rather than trying to remember the whole performance space. It was possible to re-create a theme associated with outdoor spaces in an internal space, however, particular attention needs to be paid to the materials used and it may limit the possibilities of what can be created.

A performance can be created with the best intentions, however, the performer must also prepare for individual audience members perception of risk and willingness to play. It is also crucial to test the performance with people external to creating the performance, in order to reveal aspects that may be overlooked by those more familiar with the performance location.

The challenge of perceptions of risk

From the research, it became clear that several elements combined to create a therapeutic affect, but that it was not possible to provide the same affect for all audience members, due to the highly subjective nature of these performances. Some audience members enjoyed the sense of unknowing and power play in being led through the performance whilst for others, it became a barrier to relaxing and being able to immerse themselves into the performance. This seems to stem partly from feeling unable to 'switch off' the mind from identifying objects

and surroundings. This may be due to the short duration of the performance where a longer work would have allowed for this process to emerge. However, it is an inherent problem for immersive theatres as at its very core is a sense of the unknown or unknowing. Some audience members referred to either opening themselves to whatever the experience involved and felt trusting to know that they would not be harmed, compared to others who felt unable to do so from the outset. It was from these responses that I connected to the 'audience's perception of risk' (Alston, 2013: 128), as determining their experience of the performance. Although there was one specific question related to safety, this subject occurred across other questions and responses. Feelings of being safe were referred to in several ways by the participants: how they were led during the performance (by the performer), whether they had difficulties in movement or came into contact with objects which they felt was unintended and their own concerns and fears for what might happen during the performance. This last form was particularly referenced through feelings of unknowing or concern for the unknown. This seemed to be an important consideration, in that it identified differences in the perception of harm and safety that seem to be indeterminably related to a person's sense of risk. The responses from audience members seem to evidence suggestions that perceptions of risk will alter one's responses to a given situation (Adam, 1995).

This supports Heddon, Iball and Zerihan's (2012) analyses of three different one-on-one performances to which they all had varied responses to each of the three performances. This, I determine, stems from a complex relationship between how the performance is delivered (in terms of the interaction with the audience), the ability of the audience to enact their own agency and their perception of risk.

In both *The College on the Hill* and *When Autumn Passed Me By* some participants cited feeling unsure of what was expected in terms of their involvement in the performance. In the first performance, the scenes were a mixture of direct conversation and non-verbal scenes. Audience participants expressed apprehension as to whether they should speak to characters and to what extent they could (or should respond). In the second performance which was largely non-verbal, some participants cited feeling unsure of whether they could taste food and drink that they felt they had been offered. This was in spite of the fact that in both performances the participants were informed prior to the performance that it would involve the senses and that any objects would be offered for the audience to touch, taste or smell at their own choosing. This, I speculate, may result from the audience's own ability to test out 'risky' behaviour, in trying and experimenting within the performance regardless of

failure or success. In this way, the practice demonstrates Adam's 'risk thermostat' and individual perceptions of risk (1995: 7 and 15).

Traditionally, 'operations of fear are largely confined to those theatrical moments where it remains external, attached to events representing reality and hypothetical characters' (Öztür, 2010: 298). In placing the audience within the theatrical frame, the distance usually afforded the audience is removed and they become sympathetic as protagonist directly encountering the work through their own body. This change to an 'immediate' rather than 'mediated' experience (Ibid), alters the audience experience by their very corporeality within the performance.

Within my own practice, the first performance used the structure of s.l.t, whilst the second in being blindfold, the route was not visually discernible by the audience. The blindfold aspect of this second performance created an unexpected reaction for some audience, in making it difficult to relax or trust in the performance because they had not seen them. Papaioannou (2014) refers to Freud's theory of scopophilia linked to concepts of the gaze. He refers to Eric Bentley's argument that without the voyeuristic aspect of gazing, theatre 'would lose its appeal' (quoted in Papaioannou, 2014: 169). This did not seem to be the case within my own performance, however, the importance of the gaze to establish trust between performer and audience was recognised by several audience members: 'I would have liked to have met the person that was taking me through to see if they were nice and they weren't going to hurt me'. In contrast, other audience felt that the way they were guided created enough connection to make them feel safe: 'I think the way she held my hand, very tenderly, made me feel extremely safe during the whole performance. I knew there was nothing to worry about. And if there was a step, or I had to kneel down or whatever, the way that I was guided made it feel extremely safe. It was from these comments that I began to consider not only how the performers deliver the performance, but also came to reflect on the audience's own perception of risk. It was this finding within my own research that led to the development of the algorithm (discussed below); in a future provocation to test whether there might be a way to match an audience to the type of immersive encounter, based upon their own response to participation.

Supporting the audience

Arnott, writing in the 1950's, wrote that: 'Our own time is largely dominated by the theatre of illusion. This presents an imitation of life. It makes only one demand of its audience, that

they should imagine themselves invisible spectators of events involving another group of people.' (1959: 6). Although writing some years ago, Arnott's comments make for interesting comparison with recent immersive theatre practices. Including the audience within the theatrical frame necessitates the need to create detailed and convincing scenes in order to submerge the audience in the drama. Yet the act of creating these detailed sets means that the audience is no longer required to suspend disbelief: immersion makes belief palpable. This section opens out the discussion to the broader conceptualisation of immersive theatre practices and relates the importance of the findings of this research on agency and risk to this larger body of work. I discuss some of the issues of theatrical immersion and audience participation and how it may affect audience receivership of the work.

Participatory arts practices seem at odds with more recent concerns relating to safeguarding, yet participatory arts remain a popular form of entertainment across a variety of platforms. Participation marks the breakdown of theatre's fourth wall, involving the audience in some way in the performance. This results in familiar conceits of the theatre being altered or removed completely. The effect of this removal or alteration means that it can be difficult to discern what forms part of the theatrical frame, and equally, what does not. The viewing process is made more demanding and requires a degree of extra effort for the audience. Indeed many immersive performances are often shrouded in mystery, with companies reluctant to reveal too much about the performance prior to the audience's experience of it. YMBBT's website encourages potential audience members not to read up on their work prior to the event declaring: 'for the show to have maximum effect, the less you know the better. If you want tickets do not research You Me Bum Bum Train' (YMBBT, n.d.). Critics are equally coy in describing immersive theatres, often stressing that the performance description centres on their own experience of the work. Teschke's (2000) account of *Oráculos* provides one of the more unusual (and most descriptive) accounts, but he emphasises his uncertainty in offering up his own account as a model for everyone's experience. Whilst some critics have questioned whether the audience is suited to the task to being included in the performance (Warhurst, 2014), others have stressed that the act of participation is more rigid than might be acknowledged, with degrees of conformity in the direction the performers take the audience (Gardner, 2014b). Whilst I agree to some extent with these comments, a reluctance to share information about immersive theatre events prior to the performance makes it difficult for the audience to decide what kind of experience they can expect and whether to attend the performance. Although it is inevitably difficult to predict the reaction of an audience to any performance (Iball, 2012), there are certain ways that the performance manipulates or

attempts to harness particular responses. As a naming immersive theatre fails to guide the audience in kind of performance they might expect and this has implications for the receivership of the work.

I have previously cited examples of participatory theatre such as forum theatre that have developed mechanisms to facilitate audience interaction within the performance. Specific mention has been given to Boal's use of a facilitator (termed 'Joker'), who acts as an enabler for his audience members (the 'spect-actor') to pause, join and/or stop the action on stage (Boal, 2008 xxi). The Joker can actively intervene in the theatrical spectacle if the 'spect-actor' is struggling to enact a resolution in the performance. In immersive theatres, there is often no one to intervene on the audience's behalf. Some performances explicitly utilise audience information and re-frame it in a way that has the potential to negatively affect the audience (Ontroerend Goed's playing with the audience in *Internal* (first performed 2008) is one such example). In involving personal material (through questioning the audience or asking the audience to respond as themselves in particular scenarios), the performance has the potential to take the audience's narrative and make it part of the story. This may possibly provoke negative responses depending on how the information is then used. Frieze uses the phrase the 'intrusive hypothetical' to refer to the problematic relationship employed within some participatory performances by their use of 'contradictory signs' (2012: 8). This he argues, makes for a 'crisis' in the participatory act (Ibid: 21), by the way that the performances demand and cajole the audience and within the proximity of the interaction play upon the artifice of character. Within my own performances, it became clear from the audience responses that they are often loathe to interrupt the suspension of disbelief required to inhabit the performance world, but are often distracted by creeping thoughts which interrupt their complete engagement with the performance. For example, one audience member of *When Autumn Passed Me By* described feeling self-conscious whilst blindfolded. This, the respondent stated, interrupted their ability to become fully immersed in the performance. This certainly resonates with some of my own experiences of immersive theatre performances. When I attended Ontroerend Goed's *The Smile off Your Face* (2009), my mind kept trying to identify features that I couldn't distinguish easily whilst blindfolded: from the gender of the performer and their age to identifying a particular smell or sound. As a result, the mind was constantly seeking to interject into the experience. In another instance attending Punchdrunk's *The Drowned Man* (2013), whilst running between floors chasing one character I was intensely aware of my own body moving through the space with a herd of other audience members breathing heavily with their efforts as we ran in pursuit of one of the

characters. I noticed other audience members and stories we encountered whilst in pursuit, which all reminded me of the fabrication of the environment, enhanced at feeling metal girder stairs beneath my feet and catching sight of both fire exit signs and old Post Office signage in the stairwells. This difficult relationship between enacting personal agency and inhabiting the performance as well as staying immersed within the theatrical world cannot be easily resolved.

Within the thesis, I have been unable to find a resolution to this issue. The only consolation I am able to make at this stage is to make connections with mindfulness practices that suggest it is the nature of the mind to wander (Williams and Penman, 2011). In light of this it may be best to appreciate that the audience cannot be fully immersed for the full duration of the work, but will shift in and out of this state of being. S.l.t seems to offer a format which guides the audience in when to be attentive to the performer and in providing moments of respite walking between installations. Nevertheless, responses to my own practice suggest that this is not a perfect system, with interaction being affected by distractions, such as the weather, the physical limits of the audience's body and their perception of risk. However, in terms of readying the audience for the type of experience on offer, it might be possible to prepare them for certain elements of the experience, without giving away the performance entirely.

From personal experience, some of the most difficult experiences within performances that I have attended, are (in retrospective) the most potent part of the experience, similar to when the body is put through rigorous physical or mental challenges, within the moment these are perceived quite differently than in retrospect. The difference between these instances and immersive theatres is that the participant goes into the physical/ mental challenge with some degree of knowledge of what is in front of them and therefore can choose to participate with as much knowledge as they have *within that moment*. It would, therefore, seem reasonable to provide the audience with a similar level of knowledge prior to a performance, giving them the ability to enter based on their understanding of their character, whilst accepting that within the experience their sense of self may be challenged. However, I urge a note of caution in adding that one of the delights of these theatres, for me, has been in finding hidden depths of resilience, being challenged but also supported in the process. Nevertheless, it seems appropriate to find alternative ways to the performance synopsis of conventional theatre, which gives a sense of the performance and to aid the audience in making an informed decision to attend.

Below is a proposed algorithm which could be developed to guide the audience's decision to attend immersive theatre performances. I have developed this in response to my own practice and in combination with considerations of risk. It is additionally supported by considerations of the Arts Council England's *Audience Insight* (2011) document. Their report identifies behaviour, interest and impetus for attending arts events based on classifying spectators into 13 types of audience with three levels of participation from 'highly engaged' to 'not currently engaged', divided into further subcategories of types of audience engagement in the arts (Ibid: 3). Taking into account from this document the descriptions for each category of audience, I determined that this might predict their interest in attending different types of immersive theatre event, depending on whether they are open to experimental performance or prefer traditional forms of entertainment.

The algorithm is divided into three levels, each informed by particular elements of the research. The first stage seeks to understand the person's current level of engagement (based on the arts council's categories discussed above) by determining how often they attend theatre events and what kind of event they would attend or be open to attending. The second stage explores their comfort levels in attending one-on-one, intimate or participatory events. This seeks to identify their perceived levels of 'risk' and whether they are willing to engage openly or in limited ways within a performance. The third level is adaptable based on specific elements of the performance that the person is looking to attend. This stage can be used to explore allergies and physical limitations that might inhibit a person's ability to attend or enjoy the performance. This directs the person to a final box where examples of the sort of activities involved in the performance are presented, allowing the audience to choose whether they still wish to attend.

This algorithm (figure 35) is proposed as a way forward based on issues identified within this research. This would need to be tested for its suitability on a variety of performances to see whether it affects people's understanding of the performance and their willingness to attend. Additionally, by collecting audience responses post-performance it would be possible to determine whether any further negative responses were received. It may provide a way of removing some of the mystery in terms of the way immersive theatres are described with the potential of making the experience more open and clear but without undermining or revealing the details of the performance.

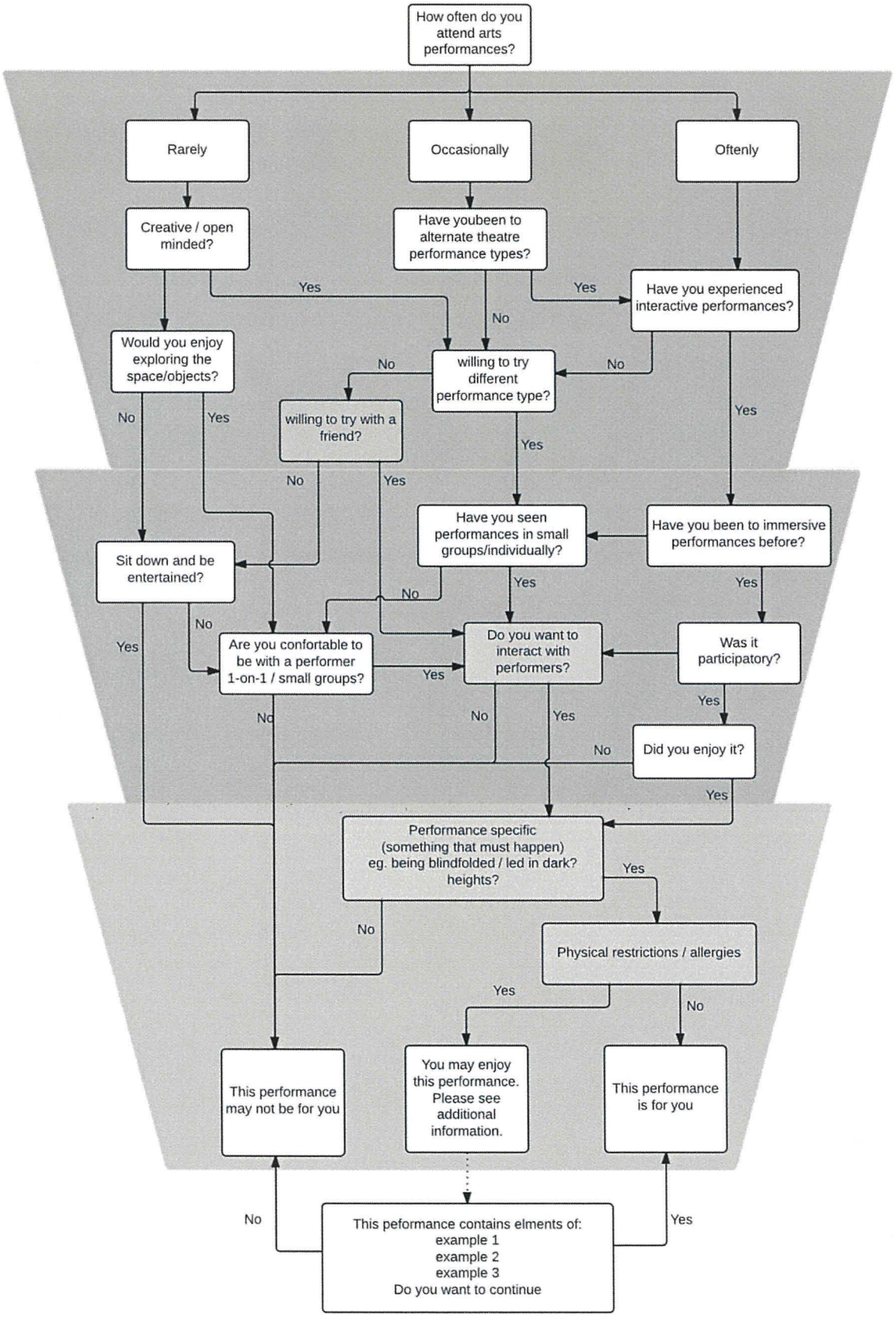


Figure 35: An algorithm for audience's sense of risk determining the suitability of a performance for a potential audience.

Taking the research forward

This section considers some of the ways in which the concepts and methodologies utilised in this research may be extended to further research into theatre practice utilising audience research. I begin by looking at other methods of data collection than those used in this thesis which may complement or extend the work of this study, before moving on to consider future areas of potential investigation to help interpret the complexities of immersive theatres.

Developments in audience research methods within theatre practice

Whilst academic models of research support substantiating visual and practical work through written enquiry, (Chalfen, 2011: 193), the ephemerality of the theatrical experience resists not only documentation but the interpretation of the meaning and value of the theatrical event itself. Whilst the qualitative responses collected here establish some sense of the immersive theatre experience created, alternative methods may be effective in helping to further illuminate on what is happening in the viewing of and participating in these performances, and its subsequent effect on the audience participant. Several other projects have utilised innovate approaches to data collection. A recent collaborative project titled *Brain of a Dancer* (2012) between a contemporary dancer and neuroscientist utilised neuro- imaging to monitor changes in brain activity to monitor perceptions of dancer's movements (Cross and Watts, 2012). The use of dance in neuroimaging has also been studied to demonstrate its potential wider implications and purposes in furthering understanding of both motor and cognition functions of the brain (Bläsing et al, 2012). Such innovative work could be extended to an immersive theatre performance in monitoring brain activity to see if the effects of the performance can be perceived through brain imaging. This could be used within the wider context of immersive theatres to see if the different affects can be identified and mapped within the brain. This may be a very pertinent line of enquiry considering the recent interest in combined science and theatre studies (e.g. Shaughnessey, 2013).

Due to the size and scope of this research project, the performance studies present the initial use and development of audience research within the context of immersive theatres, contained by the timeframe and larger parameters of the thesis. There is the potential to further continue and enhance this work through further research and development (see O'Leary's 'Cycles in Action Research' model, 2010: 150) in utilising additional measures to capture data. The use of alternative empirical approaches would create a triangulation of

results (Woods, 1999: 4) by using multiple data collection methods, such as observation and interviews, which would strengthen the research gathered in this study.

This study captured immediate responses to the performances as well as collecting pre-performance data to compare and contrast comments made by audience participants. The results show a general trend towards feeling in a relaxed and calming state and having been positively affected by the performance. Two participants contacted the researcher after the performance commenting that they had since remembered more about the experience which they had initially forgotten immediately after to the performance. This raises a potentially fruitful consideration to enhance understanding of the immersive experience, in considering longitudinal changes and remembering in people's responses to a performance over a period of time. I can certainly relate to the participants experience through my own experiences of immersive performances. My encounter with Punchdrunk required a period of time after the performance for me to try and cohere the story of *The Drowned Man*, particularly the odd characters and moments that I witnessed which seemed to have no bearing to the narrative that I had stayed with for the larger part of the performance. Whilst capturing this change was beyond the scope of this study, I would highlight its potential to assess change in responses in the short, mid and long-term to the performance. This is particularly pertinent to considerations of participant's sense of risk and whether their feelings towards the encounter improve, deteriorate or remain constant over time. It could also provide the opportunity to trace audience's attendance at different performances, to see if they continue attending similar or riskier performances, or whether they are deterred altogether. This would enhance current understanding of audience response and the ways in which they are affected in the long term by a performance.

In addition to these observations on audience response beyond the scope of the study, alternative strategies to the survey approach could help to further unpack audience's perspectives in response to the performance. The second performance allowed the audience participant to record themselves with a Dictaphone as it was felt that some people were uncomfortable with trying to express their thoughts with an interviewer in the first study. Once interviews were conducted the audience were asked not to return to the entrance foyer where they might speak with audience participants who had not been through the performance. It was explained that this was to avoid contamination of data. One of the observations noted during this process was how eager the audience were to share their experience. For instance, one participant, in particular, expressed a wish to compare his

encounter with his partner's to help shape his response to the work. The private interview strategy meant that without an interlocutor there was no possibility to investigate audience's immediate responses. However, this research intended to draw upon individual audience's articulation of their encounter as they were able to express it. A group interview in a less formal setting as part of a post-performance decompression space might facilitate the development of an in-depth discussion. This was not used for this study as there were concerns about audience members influencing each other's interpretation of the experience within the context of trying to collect and understand people's responses to the performance, but should not be excluded from future consideration.

The second study did not use the ICE-CAP-A scoring as it was felt the performance length was too short to discount participants remembering their initial reporting in the pre-performance questionnaire. Furthermore, the smaller participant numbers of 15 for the data set would be too small to reliably determine any statistical significance. However, future use of the scale with larger cohorts of participants would produce results with the potential to generalise results for the whole population and determine the affect of future performances on well-being, allowing for an accumulation of scores for comparison across a range of performances. The use of an established tool also provides comparison into other art forms and activities used to improve well-being, not only with the general population but for specific study cohorts such as the young and elderly.

The general trend towards positive responses in both studies could be due to the audience; whereby those who would not like (or suspect they would not like) this type of performance self-select not to attend based on information provided in the publicity material. This may be an area for future study in trying to ascertain people's response to the publicity material to determine why people might choose to attend or not attend. One of the limitations of data is that it only produces information the participants wish to share and cannot account for how participants might self-sensor their own comments. The use of observations during the performance would permit the use of a process evaluation to be made in order to compare audience's self-evaluation after the performance within the moment reactions recorded by a researcher. This would be less difficult to achieve in the blindfolded performance because the audience would not be aware of being observed (although some audience expressed feeling conscious of being watched when blindfolded). This might require the development or adaptation of an observational tool specific to use in a performance setting. However, it could include statements similar to existing tools (e.g. the Greater Cincinnati Observation Tool, see

Kinney and Rentz, 2005) that considers aspects such as expressing negative or positive affect either verbally or non-verbally.

This section has suggested several possibilities for the progression of using audience data in response to the understanding and interpretation of audience experiences in immersive theatres. This has included the use of additional research tools such as focus groups and observation tools, as well as considering a longitudinal approach to monitor changes over the time. The next session considers further use of immersive theatres as performance to improve well-being in specific contexts or to challenge and discuss contemporary issues.

Performer/audience relationship

This thesis has considered the audience's relationship to the performance in immersive theatres. It has not been possible to capture the performer's responses to the experience of working in direct relation to the audience; however, it seems appropriate at this juncture to consider their relationship to the practice discussed within this thesis. Whilst there have been interviews conducted with prominent figures and well-known authorities within this form of theatre (see Radosavljević, 2013a; 2013b and Machon, 2013), there is little known of the audience experience. The interconnectedness between audience and performer is one area for further consideration, particularly if it would be possible to compare audience and performer experiences of the same performance to see where their interpretations meet and differ. Within my own research, it would have been beneficial to relate the audience and performer experience's together, in order to understand which performer's had guided which audience and whether there were particular performers who were more sensitised to the audience than others and to understand why his might be and whether anything could be done to improve this aspect of the performance.

Summary

This chapter has focussed on discussion stemming from *The College on the Hill* and *When Autumn Passed Me By*. This has included consideration of the audience responses to the performance, particularly in relation to risk and agency. This has encompassed the proposal of an algorithm to enhance audience awareness of performance content and to facilitate their decision to attend. In addition, I have proposed several developments for the research conducted in this thesis such as through extending the types of data collection employed. I

have suggested that alternative tools such as observations, focus groups, extended interviews and longitudinal studies of the audience may further benefit our understanding of the potential for immersive theatres to affect personal well-being.

I think it is important to recognise and highlight here Frank Füredi's (2004) comments with regards *Therapy Culture*. Equally, I support Tom Stern's comments that theatre relies on an understanding of the event as theatre on both the part of performer and audience that is: 'a simultaneous and mutual conditioning of the act of playing (2014: 5). I stated in both the introduction and this chapter that there is a strong desire to negate negative experiences within our everyday lived experience. Many immersive theatres challenge the audience through their offer of dramatic, high energy, or even disquieting experiences. From my own experience of immersive theatres, our feelings can change over time in response to a particular event or incident: sometimes being challenged at the time but providing a sense of accomplishment in retrospect. I would not wish to argue for the exclusion of particular forms of immersive theatre experience based on how they affect the audience. However, I would propose that practitioners and theatre-makers should support the audience in identifying immersive theatrical events that match their levels of familiarity and acuity with particular types of experience, much in the same way that other forms of theatre try to appeal to the audience. This may avoid deterring attendance at immersive theatre performances because of the way they have been presented to a prospective audience. This requires greater acknowledgement by the makers of the individuality of the audience and how this is reckoned with within the performance. By supporting the audience through a variety of theatrical encounters that – where they do shock or frighten the audience – provide a space after the work to contemplate on their experience and transition from the theatrical to real world frame. This would allow for all varieties of immersive encounters to provide a space for transformation by more firmly acknowledging the learning from the experience; whether it has been a quest for survival or something more profound.

Conclusion

This thesis has considered how certain forms of immersive theatres may be considered as therapeutic, through their affect on the audience. In addition to their collective grouping as experiential, immersive theatres can also be seen as offering playful explorations where the performers and performance site can be encountered through the senses. Furthermore, immersive theatres can be seen as ego-centric in the way that they locate the audience at the centre of the performance as the protagonist. These theatres promote subjective accounts of the event through the direction the audience take and/or differences in the experience of the performance. The nature of the immersive form is one which pushes audience, performer, and spatial boundaries creating continuously evolving performance iterations. Ontroerend Goed's variance of practice across their immersive trilogy provides one such example of companies testing, developing and changing their work in order to play and experiment with audience interaction through immersion in the performance. The innovative nature of immersive theatres promotes a continually expanding and explorative practice that persist in stimulating and enthralling the audience in newly imaged ways through re-imaging the audience/performer/space dynamic.

This work is a first step in considering the applied potential of immersive theatres. It has sought to explore the potential to develop this form in order to be able to consider its ability as a therapeutic performance tool. The positive responses recorded from the majority of audience responses to *The College on the Hill* and *When Autumn Passed Me By* implies that this work may have an application with particular participant groups for a range of conditions beyond a self-selecting or general population audience that requires further exploration in the future.

Several future outlets for research are proposed in this thesis that includes using alternate evaluation tools to further enhance understanding of the performance in more nuanced ways: observation, brain wave monitoring and focus groups are provided as potential examples for exploration. Using mixed-methods to assess and evaluate the audience's encounter with the performance may expand upon the findings from audience data within this study and provide the potential to correlate results from the audience's subjective perception with an objective examination.

Potential uses of therapeutic forms of immersive theatres are suggested through the potential to enhance personal well-being. This is evidenced in audience responses to both *The*

College on the Hill and *When Autumn Passed Me By*. The use of the ICECAP-A well-being tool (Al-Janabi and Coast, 2010) demonstrated its potential application to a theatre setting, as well as determining an improvement in well-being from the participant scores when comparing before and after the performance. Whilst the audience of the two performances created for this thesis have provided some explanation on their reasons for attending, additional research into this area may provide a further understanding of why people attend immersive events and equally why they do not attend. There is also the possibility of monitoring engagement longitudinally, to see if there are long-term implications for the performances, or across a series of performances to see whether the affect is re-instilled by engagement with a new performance or if it lessens over time.

The assortment of concepts and viewpoints identified across this thesis, including literature on walking, mindfulness and somatic dance (to name but a few), demonstrates the influencing and connection between these fields of interest that are looking to resolve some of the concerns for well-being and social concerns in contemporary living. Collectively, these practices and philosophies demonstrate an ever increasing interest in individual and societal interaction, inclusion and involvement that is achieved on and through the body. This may be in response to increasing anxiety in our relationships to technology. In this respect, live theatre practice currently has the advantage in being able to seamlessly integrate direct interaction and sensory stimuli within the performance through direct sensory experience.

The performances discussed in this thesis highlight one particular strand of affect that immersive theatres may have on the audience. The experiential nature of this work provides a space to encounter not only what is pleasurable within our own frame of reference, but also what is difficult, unpleasant or uncomfortable and also, may provide a sense of healing, calm or rejuvenation for the audience. There is the possibility of duality in these experiences: I think again of the female audience member at one of Adrian Howell's performances, who through intimacy and touch in the performance, realised that there was a lack of physical closeness in her everyday experience with loved ones. There have been immersive theatre works that have been given mixed critical responses; in part by the way they have included the audience within the theatrical frame. These works are often exploring the boundaries of interaction, and whilst it may seem proper to avoid the audience feeling ill-used or manipulated (unless aware that the work is doing so), works which challenge one's sense of agency and instinct can reveal something of one's inner nature.

Whilst the negative is often undermined within the totality of human experience it is, nevertheless, an important part of human experience. Immersive theatres have the potential to counteract fears for 'the sense of powerlessness assigned to the contemporary self' (Füredi, 2004: 127), yet some immersive theatres may foster traumatic experience, depending on how interaction is facilitated and also dependant on the audience's perception of risk. In order for immersive theatres to be able to resolve such issues, performance's need find alternative strategies and mechanisms to communicate what type of experience is being offered. The audience must be appropriately supported with devices in place to facilitate these exchanges, both for the audience and performer, which might fall outside the parameters of the performance. This can include offering space for pause and reflection in order to assimilate the experience. This was certainly borne out in my own performance work, where audience members responded in a variety of ways in their reflections on the performance. Immersive theatres rely on the individuality of the audience to add to the performance through their presence in the work, a position that needs careful thought in order to try and create a suitable performance for a suitable audience. This requires performers and theatre makers to consider the intended effect of the work as much as possible and to try and understand the consequences of the ways in which they choose to involve the audience. In doing so, it may be possible to create a range of immersive theatres for a variety of audiences who are by degrees adept or less familiar with the form, and who enjoy or dislike particular types of encounter. In response to this, the algorithm offered in Chapter 5 could be tested to see whether it is able to provide the audience with some idea of the performance content that they might encounter within a particular performance. This may support the audience's expectations of the performance whilst also avoiding revealing too much about the performance content that might detract from the experience of the work.

Of particular importance in this thesis has been the inclusion of original performances. In the first instance, it has been possible to connect the intended audience experience with their subjective experience in order to understand the relationship between anticipated and actual performance experience. Second, from the audience responses, it was possible to compare individual audience experiences relative to a specific performance. This offered an insight into the ways audience members respond differently to the same performance and provided particular evidence on the audience's sense of personal risk. In addition, this novel approach to immersive theatre research has allowed for the consideration of immersive theatres from multiple viewpoints, appropriate to an audience-centric theatrical encounter. It seems vital to bring this to the fore – in analysing performances created as part

of this research – to give precedence to the audience as experiencer and meaning maker of the performance material. As inhabitants of an involved and integral position within the performance and when performances they rely on the audience's presence and willingness to engage and be a part of the spectacle, their role should be acknowledged, understood and valued.

Immersive theatres can enact upon raw, visceral feelings and emotions, in direct contact with the audience that provide proximal feelings relating to one's sense of self. Different performances have placed the audience within the work in newly imagined ways and for different means. The potential of these works for applied practice is in their ground for the discovery of a re-experience or a *re*-membering of sensations and experiences *within* the body. To close, I will turn to one of the first critics of immersion in performance. In a description of Vargas's work, Kershaw (1999) captures the sense of disorientation of the audience moving through darkly lit spaces, switching to using all one's senses to negotiate the performance space. In immersive theatres, one may find oneself:

> [...] In the maze as both metaphor and reality exploits the central paradox of performance with extraordinary forces: one is, often simultaneously subject and object, active and passive, performer and spectator (191).

The variety, intricacy, and complexity prevalent across immersive theatre practices will provide plentiful opportunities for further critical reflection. I would offer that practice-led and audience research may be one method as an adjunct to theoretical discussions, to trial and experiment with elements of the performance to begin to reveal the perplexity of the immersive in the theatre.

References

Abell, C., 2012. Art: what it is and why it matters. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 85(3), pp. 671–691.

Abramović, M., 1973-1974. *Rhythm series.* Maria Abramović, dir. First performance: 1973.

Adams, J., 1995. *Risk.* London: UCL Press.

AE20 and Theatr Cynefin., 2009. *Take a chance into the Labyrinth.* Piodão, Portugal.

Al-Janabi, H. and Coast, J., 2010. *ICECAP-A measure: version 2.* Available at: <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-mds/haps/projects/icecap/questionnaires/ICECAP-Aquestionnaire.pdf?> [Accessed 24 January 2011].

Al-Janabi, H., Keeley, T., Mitchell, P. & Coast, J., 2013. Can capabilities be self-reported? A think aloud study. *Social science and medicine*, 87(100), pp.116–122.

Al-Janabi, H., Peters, T.J., Brazier, J., Bryan, S., Flynn, T.N., Clemens, S., et al., 2013. An investigation of the construct validity of the ICECAP-A capability measure. *Quality of Life Research journal*, 22, pp.1831–1840.

Alston, A., 2012. Funding, product placement and drunkenness in Punchdrunk's *The Black Diamond. Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 32(2), pp.193–208.

Alston, A., 2013a. Reflections on Intimacy and Narcissism in Ontroerend Goed's Personal Trilogy. *Performing Ethos: an international journal of ethics in theatre and performance*. 4(1), pp.107–119.

Alston, A., 2013b. Audience participation and neoliberal value: risk, agency and responsibility in immersive theatre. *Performance Research,* 18(2), pp.128–138.

Alzheimer's Society., 2015. *Statistics*. Available at: <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/statistics> [Accessed 7 July 2015].

Ammen, S., 1996. Feminist Vision and Audience response: tracing the Absent Utopia in Caryl Churchill's Top Girls. *Utopian Studies*, 7(1), pp.86–102. Available at: <http://0-www.jstor.org.unicat.bangor.ac.uk/stable/20719476> [Accessed 5 March 2014].

Arrabal, F., 1967. *The Labyrinth.* In: F. Arrabal., *Plays*. Translated by Barbara Wright. London: Calder & Boyars.

Arnott, P.D., 1959. *An introduction to the Greek theatre*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Arnott, P.D., 1989. *Public and Performance in Greek theatre*. London; New York: Routledge.

Arts Council England., 2011. *Arts Audiences: insight*, [online], 14 September 2011. Available at: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/pdf/arts_audience_insight_2011.pdf> [Accessed 18 November 2012].

Auslander, P., 2009. Towards a hermeneutics of performance art documentation. In: J. Ekeberg, ed. *Lessons in the art of falling: photographs of Norwegian performance and process art 1966–2009*. Horten, Norway: Preus Museum.

Banes, S., 2001. Olfactory Performances. *TDR: The Drama Review*. 45(1), pp.68–76.

Banes, S. and Lepecki, A. eds., 2007. *The Senses in Performance*. London; New York: Routledge.

Barker, C., 1977. *Theatre Games*. London: Eyre Methuen.

Basting, A., 1995. The stages of age: the growth of senior theatre. *TDR: The Drama Review*, 39(3), pp.112–130.

Basting, A., 2009. *Forget memory: creating better lives for people living with dementia*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University press.

Bauche, P., 2009. Immersive Theatre Now. *Aesthetica Magazine*, 30, [online]. <www.aestheticamagazine.com/immersive-theatre-now> [Accessed 1 August 2010]

Baudrillard, J., 2001. *Impossible Exchange*. Translated by C. Turner. London: Verso.

Bernard, M. and Munro, L., 2015. Theatre and Ageing. In: J. Twigg and W. Martin, *Routledge Handbook of Cultural Gerontology*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Billington, M., 2009. Punchdrunk *It felt like a Kiss*, review. *The Guardian*. [online]. Published 3 July 2009. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2009/jul/03/manchester-international-festival> [Accessed 1 August 2009].

Bishop, C. ed., 2006. *Participation*. London: Whitechapel; Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Blackstone, M.A. and Louis, C., 1995. Towards 'A Full and Understanding Auditory': New Evidence of Playgoers at the First Globe Theatre. *The Modern Language Review*, 90(3), pp.556–571. Available at: <http://0-www.jstor.org.unicat.bangor.ac.uk/stable/3734315> [5 March 2014].

Blascovich, J., 2002. Social Influences within immersive virtual environments. In: R. Schroeder, ed. *The Social Life of Avatars*. London: Springer, pp.127–145.

Bläsing, B., Calvo-Merino, B., Cross, E. S., Honisch, J., Jola, C., and Stevens, C., 2012. Neurocognitive control in dance perception and performance. *Acta Psychologica*, 139(2), pp.300–308.

Blast Theory., 1999. *Dessert Rain*. Blast Theory and University of Nottingham Mixed reality Lab, dir. Nottingham: Now 99 Festival. First performed: 18 October 1999.

Bloos, I.D. and O'Connor. T.St.J., 2002. Ancient and medieval labyrinth and contemporary narrative therapy: how do they fit? *Pastoral Psychology*, 50(4), 219–230.

Boal, A., 2008. *Theatre of the Oppressed*, 3rd ed. Translated by C.A. and M-O. Leal McBride and E. Fryer. London: Pluto Press.

Boal, A., 2006. *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, 2nd ed. Translated by A. Jackson. New York: Routledge.

Boal, A., 1998. *Aesthetics of the Oppressed*. Translated by A. Jackson. London; New York: Routledge.

Boal, A., 1994. *The Rainbow of Desire*. London; New York: Routledge.

Borgdorff, H., (2012). *The Conflict of the faculties, perspectives on artistic research and academia*. Leiden: Leiden University Press.

Broadhurst, S., 1999. *Liminal Acts, a critical overview of contemporary performance and theory*. London; New York: Continuum International Publishing.

Broadhurst, S. and Machon, J. eds., 2012. *Identity, Performance and technology: practices of empowerment, embodiment and technicity*. Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Broadhurst, S. and Machon, J. eds., 2010. *Sensualities/ textualities and technologies: writing the body in 21st Century performance*. Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan

Brodie, E.E. and Lobel, J., 2012. *Dance and somatics: mind-body principles of teaching and performing*. Jefferson, NC: Mcfarland & Co.

Brown, R., 2010. *Sound: a Reader in Theater Practice*. Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Buchanan, J., 2007. *Labyrinths for the spirit: how to create your own labyrinths for meditation and enlightenment*. London: Gaia Books.

Bungay, H. and Clift, S., 2010. Arts on prescription: a review of practice in the UK. *Perspectives in Public Health*, 130(6), pp. 277–281.

Cacioppo JT. and Berntson GG., 1999. The affect system: architecture and operating characteristics. *Curr. Dir. Psychol. Sci.* 8:133–37.

Chalfen, R., 2011. Differentiating practices of visual participatory visual media production. In: E. Margolis and L. Powells, eds. *The SAGE handbook of visual research methods*. London: Sage Publication, pp.186–200.

Christie, J. and Gough, R., 2003. Finding oneself through the perfumes of memory: an interview with Enrique Vargas. *Performance Research*, 8(3), pp.94–103.

Christie, J., Gough, R, and Watt, D., 2006. *Performance Cosmology*. London; New York: Routledge.

Clough, P.T. and Halley, J. eds., 2007. *The affective turn: theorizing the social*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Cordone, A., 2002. Killing the body-ego: dance research with Min Tanaka at Body weather farm, Japan. *Contact Quarterly*, 227(1), pp.15–22.

Cowell, J., 1990. *Bangor, a portrait in old picture postcards*. Loggerheads: S.B. Publications.

Cowell, J., 1994. *Bangor, a pictorial history*. Llangefni: W.O. Jones.

Cowen, E.L., 1991. In pursuit of wellness. *American Psychologist*, 46(4), pp.404–408.

Crane, R., 2009. *Mindfulness-based Cognitive therapy: distinctive features*. London; New York: Routledge.

Cross, E. and Watts, R., 2012. *Brain of a dancer*. Reichel Hall, Bangor. First performance: 21 November 2012.

Curry, H., 2000. *The way of the labyrinth, a powerful meditation for everyday life.* Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin.

Darby, K., 2013. Framing the drift and drifting the frame: walking with Wrights & Sites. *New theatre Quarterly*, 29(1), pp.48–60.

Davies, A., 1987. *Other theatres: the development of alternative and experimental theatre in Britain*. London: Macmillan Education.

Davies, W., 2015. *The happiness industry: how the government and big nosiness sold us well-being.* London; New York: Verso.

Debord, G., 1984. *Society of the spectacle*. Detroit, MI: Black & Red Books.

Dennis, A., 2002. *The Articulate Body: the physical training of the actor*. London: Nick Hern Books.

Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. eds., 1994. *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Department of Health., 2009. *Living Well with Dementia: a national dementia strategy*, 1st edition. <https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/168220/dh_094051.pdf> [accessed 5 August 2014].

Dewey, J., 1934. Art as experience. In: S.D. Ross. ed. *Art and its significance, an anthology of aesthetic theory*, 3rd ed. New York: State University of New York Press.

Dickinson, B., 1983. In the Audience. *Oral History*, 11(1), pp.52–61. Available at: <http://0-www.jstor.org.unicat.bangor.ac.uk/stable/40178745> [Accessed 5 March 2013].

Dixon, S., 2011. Researching Digital Performance: Virtual Practices. In: K. Kershaw and H. Nicholson. eds. *Research Methods in Theatre and Performance*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 41–62.

Dixon, S., 2007. *Digital performance: a history of new media in theatre, dance, performance art, and installation*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Dodge, R., Daly, A.P, Huyton, J., and Sanders, L., 2012. The Challenge of Defining Wellbeing. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 2(3), pp.222–235. [online]. Available at: <http://www.internationaljournalofwellbeing.org/index.php/ijow/article/view/89/238> [Accessed 1 February 2014].

Drobnik, J., ed. 2006. *The Smell Culture Reader*, Oxford; New York: Berg.

Edwards, M., 1976. Art therapy and art education: Towards a reconciliation. *Studies in Art Education*, 17(2), pp.63–66.

Elam, K., 1980. *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*. London: Methuen.

Epsilon III., 2012. *Joker Training 2: Rainbow of desire*. Bucharest: Romania.

Field, A., 2013. *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics*. London; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Fischer-Lichte, E., 2008. *The transformative power of performance, a new aesthetics*. Translated by S.I. Jain. New York: Routledge.

Flynn, T.N., Huynh, E., Peters, T.J., Al-Janabi, H., Clemens, S., Moody, A. and Coast, J., 2013. Scoring the ICECAP-A capability instrument. Estimation of a UK general population tariff. *Health Economics*, DOI: 10.1002/hec.3014., [online]. Available at: < http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/hec.v24.3/issuetoc> [Accessed 3 November 2014].

Foucault, M. 1977. Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Freshwater, H., 2011. 'You Say Something': audience participation and *The Author*. *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 21(4), pp.401–409.

Friedman-Romell. B.H., 1995. Breaking the Code: Toward a Reception Theory of Theatrical Cross-Dressing in Eighteenth-Century London. *Theatre Journal*, 47(4), pp.459–479. Accessed at: <http://0-www.jstor.org.unicat.bangor.ac.uk/stable/3208987> [5 March 2014].

Frieze, J., 1999. Layers of Perception. *Journal of dramatic theory and criticism*, 2, pp.157–163.

Frieze, J., 2009. *Naming theatre: demonstrative diagnosis in performance*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Frieze, J., 2012. Actualizing a spectator like you: the ethics of the intrusive-hypothetical. *Performing Ethos*, 3(1), pp. 7–21.

Füredi, F., 2004. *Therapy Culture: cultivating vulnerability in an uncertain age*. London; New York: Routledge.

Gallagher, K. and Service, I., 2010. Applied theatre at the heart of educational reform: an impact and sustainability analysis. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance,* 15(2), pp.235–253.

Gardner, L., (2014a). Immersive theatre: living up to its name, or just an overused gimmick? *The Guardian theatre blog* [online]. Published 14 September 2014. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2014/sep/19/immersive-theatre-overused-marketing-gimmick> [Accessed 20 September 2014).

Gardner, L., (2014b). Should immersive theatre audience's accept greater responsibility? *The Guardian theatre blog* [online]. Published 12 November 2014. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2014/nov/12/immersive-theatre-audiences-take-responsibility-bordergame-the-privileged> [Accessed 1 December 2014].

Giannachi, G., 1994. *Virtual theatres: an introduction*. London; New York: Routledge.

Gillinson, M., 2012. Punchdrunk's *Sleep No More*: is this a sell-out which I see before me? *The Guardian theatre blog* [online]. First published 6 February 2012. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2012/feb/06/punchdrunk-sleep-no-more-commercial> [Accessed 13 May 2013].

Gough, R. and Christie, J., 2003. On Smell, editorial. *Performance Research,* 8(3), pp.1–2.

Gray, C. and Malins, J., 2004. *Visualizing Research*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Gregg, M. and Seigworth G.J., 2010. *The affect theory reader*: Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Griffiths., A., 2008. *Shivers down your spine: cinemas, museums and the immersive view.* New York; Chichester: Columbia University Press.

Groot Nibbelink, L., 2012. Radical Intimacy: Ontroerend Goed Meets *The Emancipated Spectator*. *Contemporary Theatre Review* 22(3), pp.412–420.

Gunkle, G., 1967. Possibilities for Experimental Research in Theatre. *Educational Theatre Journal*, 19(2), pp.277–280. Available at: < http://0-www.jstor.org.unicat.bangor.ac.uk/stable/pdfplus/3205337.pdf?acceptTC=true> [Accessed 1 April 2012].

Hamilton, J. and Jaaniste, L., 2010. A connective model for the practice-led research exegesis: an analysis of content and structure. *Journal of writing and creative practice*, 3(1), pp. 31–44.

Hanlon, P., Carlisle, S., Hannah, M. and Lyon, A., 2012. *The Future Public Health*. Maidenhead: McGraw- Hill Education.

Haseman, B.C. and Mafe, D.J., 2009. Acquiring know-how: research training for practice-led researchers. In: R.T. Dean, and H. Smith. eds. *Practice- led research, research- led practice in the Creative Arts*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Heddon, D. and Howells, A., 2011. From Talking to Silence, a confessional journey. *PAJ, A Journal of Performance and Art,* 33(1), pp.1–12.

Heddon, D., Iball, H. and Zerihan, R., 2012. Come closer: confessions of intimate spectators in One to One performance. *Contemporary theatre Review*, 22(1), pp.120–133.

Heinecke. A., 1995. *Dialogue in the Dark*, London: Queen Elizabeth Hall. First Performance: 1988.

Hiebert, T., 2003. Becoming Carnival: performing a postmodern identity. *Performance Research*, 8(3), pp.113–125.

Hill, L. and Paris, H., 2014. *Performing Proximity, curious intimacies*. Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hodge, S., Persighetti, S., Smith, P. and Turner, C., 2006. *A mis-guide to anywhere*. Exeter: Wrights and Sites.

Howes, D. ed., 2005. *Empire of the Senses, the sensual culture reader*. Oxford; New York: Berg.

Howells, A., 2008. *Foot Washing for the Sole.* Edinburgh: First performed 2008.

Howells, A., 2010. *The Pleasure of Being: Washing, Feeding, Holding.* Edinburgh: The Point Hotel. First performed: 2010.

Hultona, D., 2007. The One Square Foot Project, *Studies in Theatre and Performance.* 27(2). Bristol: Intellect.

Hutera, D., 2007. *The Smile off Your Face*, review. *Times Online*. 17 August 2007. <http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/stage/theatre/article2273384.ece> [Accessed 25 January 2010].

Iball, H., 2012. Towards an ethics of intimate audience. *Performing Ethos*, 3(1), pp. 42–57.

IBM Corp., 2011. *IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 20.0*. Armonk, NY: IBM Corp.

Innes, C., 1993. *Avant Garde Theatre 1892-1992*. London; New York: Routledge.

Jenkins, H., Purushotma, R., Weigel, M., Clinton, K. and Robison, A.J., 2009. *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture, media education for the 21st Century*. Cambridge, MA; London: The MIT Press.

Jennings, S., 1992. *Dramatherapy: theory and practice 2.* London; New York: Tavistock. Routledge.

Jestrovic, S., 2006. *Theatre of Estrangement: Theory, Practice and Ideology*. Toronto; London: University of Toronto Press.

Jones, I.S., 2010. *Context orientated theatre: a theatre-based approach to mindfulness; a mindfulness-based approach to theatre*. MA thesis, Bangor University.

Jones, P., 1996. *Drama as therapy, theatre as living*. London; New York: Routledge.

Jury, L., 2014. Interactive theatre show You Me Bum Bum Train set to return to service. *London Evening Standard,* [online]. First published 18 November 2014. Available at: <http://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/interactive-theatre-show-you-me-bum-bum-train-set-for-return-to-service-9868043.html> [Accessed 1 December 2014].

Karkou,V., Fullarton,A. and Scarth,S., 2010. Finding a way out of the labyrinth through dance movement and psychotherapy. In: V. Karkou. ed. *Art therapies in schools, research and practice*. London: Jessica Kinglsey Publishers.

Kaye. N. ed., 2000. *Site-specific art: performance, place and documentation*. London; New York: Routledge.

Keeley, T., Al-Janabi, H., Lorgelly, P. and Coast, J., 2013. A qualitative assessment of the content validity of the ICECAP-A and EQ-5D-5L and their appropriateness for use in health research. *PLoS ONE*, [e-journal], 8(12), pp.1–7. Available at: <http://pure-oai.bham.ac.uk/ws/files/14790716/journal.pone.0085287.pdf> [Accessed 2 January 2014].

Kershaw, B., 1999. *The Radical in Performance: between Brecht and Baudrillard*. London; New York: Routledge.

Kershaw, B., 2007. *Theatre Ecology: environment and performance events*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kershaw, B. and Nicholson, H. eds., 2011. *Research methods in theatre and performance*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Kinderman, P., 2014. *A prescription for psychiatry: why we need a whole new approach to mental health and wellbeing*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kinney, J.M. and Rentz, C.M., 2005. Observed well-being among individuals with dementia: memories in the making©, an art program, versus other structured activity. *American Journal of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias*, 20(4), pp.220–227.

Kitwood, T., 1993. Towards a theory of dementia care. *Ageing and Society*, 13(1), pp.51–67.

Korsmeyer, C., ed. 2005. *The Taste Culture Reader: experiencing food and drink*. Oxford; New York: Berg.

Kosofsky Sedgwick, E., 2003. *Touching, feeling: affect, pedagogy, performativity*. Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press.

Koumarianos, M. and Silver, C., 2013. Dashing at a nightmare: haunting Macbeth in *Sleep No More*. *TDR: The Drama Review*, 57(1), pp.167–175.

Kwon. M., 2004. *One place after another: site-specific art and locational identity*. Cambridge MA: The MIT Press.

Kocurek, C., 2013. The treachery of pixels: reconsidering feelies in an era of digital play. *Journal of Gaming and Virtual Worlds*, 5(3), pp. 295–306.

Laffoon, D.R., Bryan, V. and Diamond, S., 2001. Life journeys; The STOP-GAP method with elders. In: N. Weisberg and R. Wilder. eds. *Expressive arts with elders*, 2nd ed. London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Laffoon, D. and Kenny, F., 2009. The STOP-GAP approach to dramatherapy. In: D.R. Johnson and R. Emunah, eds. *Current Approaches in Dramatherapy*, 2nd ed. Springfield Il: Charles C Thomas Publishers, pp.308–329.

Lankoski, P., Waern, A., Mette Thorhauge, A. and Verhagen, H., 2011. Introduction to special issue: Experiencing games: Games, play and players *Journal of Gaming and Virtual Worlds*, 3(3), pp.175–180. [online]. Available at: <http://0-dx.doi.org.unicat.bangor.ac.uk/10.1386/jgvw.3.3.175_7> [Accessed: 11 September 2012].

Lavender, A., 2012. Viewing and Acting (and Points in Between): The Trouble with Spectating after Rancière. *Contemporary Theatre Review,* 22(3), pp.307–326.

Lehmann, H-T., 2006. *Postdramatic theatre*. London: Routledge.

Lonegren, S., 2007. *Labyrinths, ancient myths and modern uses,* 4th ed. Glastonbury: Gothic Image Publications.

Machon, J., 2013. *Immersive Theatres*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Marks, L.U., 2002. *Touch: sensuous theory and multisensory medi*a. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Martineau, J., 2005. *Mazes and Labyrinths in Great Britain*. Glastonbury: Wooden Books.

Matthews, W.H., 1922. *Mazes and Labyrinths: a general account of history and development*. London: Longmans Green and Co.

Mann, P.H., 1967. Surveying a Theatre Audience: Findings. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 18, pp.75–90. <Available at: http://0-www.jstor.org.unicat.bangor.ac.uk/stable/588591> [Accessed 5 March 2014].

Marmot M., 2010. *The Marmot Review. Strategic Review of Health Inequalities in England post 2010*. London: UCL Institute of Health Equity. Available at: <file://fs-home-j/home-004/mhs405/Windows_Data/Downloads/fair-society-healthy-lives-executive-summary.pdf> [Accessed 6 November 2015].

McConachie, B., 2007. Falsifiable Theories for Theatre and Performance Studies. *Theatre Journal*, 59(4), pp.553–577. Available at: <http://0-www.jstor.org.unicat.bangor.ac.uk/stable/25070111> [Accessed 5 March 2014].

McMullan. T., 2014. The immersed audience: how theatre is taking its cue from video games. *The Guardian games blog* [online]. Published 20 May 2014. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/may/20/how-theatre-is-taking-its-cue-from-video-games?CMP=twt_gu> [Accessed 20 May 2014].

Media Artes., 2010. *Joker Training: Aesthetics of the Oppressed*. Ohrid, Macedonia.

Meeting Ground Theatre Company. *Inside out of mind*. Tanya Myers [dir]. Derby: Derby Theatre. First performed: 2015

Mello, R. and Voights, J., 2012. *The Penelope Project: Using the Power of Myth to Transform Long Term Care*. Available at: <http://www.thepenelopeproject.com/links/materials/penelope-program-evaluation> [Accessed 5 July 2014].

Morris, N., 2003. *Health, Well-being and Open Space, literature review*. Available at: <http://www.openspace.eca.ed.ac.uk/pdf/healthwellbeing.pdf> [Accessed 1 February 2011].

Nedelkopoulou, E., 2011. Walking out on our bodies, participation as *ecstasis* in Janet Cardiff's Walks. *Performance research*, 16(4), pp.117–123.

Newman, J., 2013. The phenomenology of non-theatre sites on audience. *Theatre Notebook*, 66(1), pp.49–60.

Nicholson, H., 2014. *Applied drama: the gift of theatre*, 2nd ed. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

NoFitState Circus., 2014. *Shows: 'Bianco'*. Available at: <http://www.nofitstate.org/bianco> [Accessed 2 December 2014].

NoFitState., 2013. *Bianco*. Firenza Guidi, dir. Bangor: Beach Road . First performed: 4 March 2013.

O'Donnell, C., 2014. *Play your part, engagement and events report*. Manchester: People History Museum.

O'Leary, Z., 2010. *The essential guide to doing your research project*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Ontroerend Goed., 2008. *Internal*. Alexander Devriendt, dir. First performed: 2008.

Ontroerend Goed., 2010., *A Game of You*. Alexander Deveriendt, dir. First performed: 2010.

Ontroerend Goed., 2009. *The Smile off Your Face*. Sophie. De Somere and Joeri. Smet, dir. Salford Quays: The Lowry. First performed: 2003.

Ontroerend Goed., 2011. *Audience*. Alexander Devriendt, dir. First performed: 2011.

Ontroerend Goed., 2010. *Projects*. Available at: <http://www.ontroerendgoed.be/projects.php> [Accessed 10 January 2011].

ORLAN., 1995. (On becoming ORLAN). I don't not want to look like... In: M. Fraser and M. Greco. eds. *The Body: a reader*. London; New York: Routledge.

Öztürk, M.N., 2010. An uncanny site/side: on exposure, dark space, and structures of fear in the context of performance. *Contemporary theatre review*, 20(3), pp.296–315.

Papaioannou, S., 2014. Immersion, 'smooth' space and critical voyeurism in the work of Punchdrunk. *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 34(2), pp.160–174.

Pavis, P., 1998. *Dictionary of the theatre: terms, concepts and analysis*. Toronto: Toronto University Press.

Pearson, M., 2010. *Site-specific Performance*. Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Pennick, N., 1990. *Mazes and Labyrinths*. London: Robert Hale.

Peer, W.v., Hakemulder, F. and Zyngier, S., 2012. *Scientific methods for the humanities*. Amsterdam: John Benjamin's Publishing Company.

Pethe., 2013, television programme. S4C, Bangor, 24 March 2012. Translated by Glyn Griffiths.

People's History Museum., 2014. *Play your Party*. Catherine O'Donnell, dir. Manchester: People's History Museum. First performed: 2014.

Pilkington, E. and Nacbar, M., 2012. We Always Arrive in the Theatre on Foot. *Performance Research, a Journal of the Performing Arts*. 17(2), pp.30–35.

Pisk, L., 1998. *The actor and his body*. London: Methuen Drama.

Pontio., 2011. *Digital Tea Dance*. Kully Thiarai, dir. Bangor: Penrhyn Hall. First performed: 13 May 2011.

Prentki, T. and Preston, S., 2009. *The applied theatre reader*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Punchdrunk., 2003. *Sleep No More*. Felix Barrett, dir. Beaufoy Building, London. First performed: December 2003.

Punchdrunk., 2009. *It felt like a Kiss*. Felix Barrett, dir. Quay House, Spinningfields, Manchester. First performed: 2 July 2009.

Punchdrunk., 2011. *Sleep No More*. Felix Barrett, dir. McKittrick Hotel, New York. First performed: December 2003.

Punchdrunk., 2011. *The Crash of the Elysium*. Felix Barrett, dir. First performance: Manchester: IpArt, Manchester International Festival. First performed: 1 July 2011.

Punchdrunk., 2013–2014. *The Drowned Man: a Hollywood fable*. Felix Barrett and Maxine Doyle, dir. Temple Studios, London. First performed: 20 June 2013.

Punchdrunk and English National Opera., 2010. *The Duchess of Malfi*. Felix Barrett, dir. Great Eastern Quay, London. First performed: 13 July 2010.

Punchdrunk and Hijinx., 2015. *Beneath these streets: lost and found*. Cardiff: Jacob's Market. First performed: 26 June 2015.

Punchdrunk and Sony Playstation., 2011 *...when darkness descended*. Felix Barrett, dir. London: Waterloo train Station. First performed: 1 September 2011.

Punchdrunk and Stella Artois., 2011. *The Black Diamond*. Felix Barrett dir. London. First performed: 3 July 2011.

Quintero, C., 2002. Pilgrimage as a pedagogical practice in contemporary Taiwanese theatre: U Theatre and the Baishatun Ma-tsu Pilgrimage. *TDR: The Drama Review*, 46(1), pp.131–148.

Radosavljević, D., ed. 2013a. *The Contemporary Ensemble*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Radosavljević, D., 2013b. *Theatre Making, interplay between text and performance in the 21st Century*. Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ramaswamy, C., 2011. *In the raw: One-on-one theatre with Adrian Howells,* [online]. Available at: <http://www.edinburgh-festivals.com/viewpreview.aspx?id=2488> [Accessed 1 March 2013].

Rancière, J., 2009. *The Emancipated Spectator*. London: Verso.

Revermann, M., 2006. The Competence of Theatre Audiences in Fifth- and Fourth- Century Athens. *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 126, pp.99–124. Available at: <http://0-www.jstor.org.unicat.bangor.ac.uk/stable/30033402> [Accessed 5 March 2014].

Roberts, D., 2009. *Bangor University, 1884-2009*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.

Roose-Evans. J., 1984. *Experimental theatre from Stanislavsky to Brook*. London: Routledge and Keegan Paul.

Ryan RM, Deci EL., 2000. Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *Am. Psychol.* 55:68–78.

Ryan RM and Deci EL., 2001. On happiness and human potentials: a review of research on hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. *Annu. Rev. Psychol*, 52:141–66.

Schechner, R., 1998. *Performance Theory*. London: Routledge

Schechner, R., 2001. Rasaesthetics. *TDR: The Drama Review*, 45(3), pp.27–50.

Schechner, R. and Schuman, M. eds., 1976. *Ritual, play and performance: readings in the social sciences/ theatre*. New York: Seabury Press.

Schenker, D.J., 2009. Dissolving Differences: Character Overlap and Audience Response. *Mnemosyne*, 52(6), pp.641–657. Available at: <http://0-www.jstor.org.unicat.bangor.ac.uk/stable/4433044> [5 March 2014].

Schrøder, K.C., Hasebrink, Hölig, S. and Barker, M., 2012. Special Section Introduction: exploring the methodological synergies of multimethod audience research. *Participations, journal of audience & reception studies* [online], 9(2), pp.643–647.

Available at: <http://www.participations.org/Volume%209/Issue%202/34%20Introduction%20Methods.pdf> [Accessed 14 March 2013].

Schmidt, B.U., 1999. What sense do the senses make? In: A. Jones and A. Stephenson. eds. *Performing the Body, Performing the text*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Sedghi, A., 2012. Women in Theatre: How the 2:1 problem breaks down. *The Guardian*, [online], 10 December 2012. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2012/dec/10/women-in-theatre-research-full-results> [Accessed 5 March 2014].

Seegert, A., 2009. 'Doing there' vs. 'being there': performing presence in interactive fiction, *Journal of Gaming and Virtual Worlds* 1(1), pp. 23–37.

Serres, M. (1985). *The Five Senses.* Translated by P.Cowley and M.Sankey., 2008. London; New York: Continuum.

Shaughnessy, N., 2012. *Applying performance: live art, socially engaged theatre and affective practice*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Shepherd, S. and Wallis, M., 2004. *Drama /theatre/ performance*. London; New York: Routledge.

Skimstone Arts., 2015. *Jack and Jill and the Red Postbox*. Claire Webster Saarements, dir. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Fringe festival. First performed: 2013.

Smith, C., 2010a. I'll be Your Mirror. *Total theatre Magazine*, 22(2), pp.14–16.

Snow, S., 2009. Ritual/ Theatre/ Therapy. In: D.R. Johnson and R. Emunah. eds. *Current Approaches in Dramatherapy,* 2nd ed. Springfield Il: Charles C Thomas Publishers, pp.117–144.

Solnit, R., 2006. *A field guide to getting lost*. Edinburgh: Canongate.

Stanislavsky, C., 1988. *An actor prepares*. Translated by E. Reynolds Hapgood. London: Methuen Drama.

Stern, T., 2014. *Philosophy and theatre: an introduction*. Abingdon; New York: Routledge.

Stokes, M. and Maltby, R. eds., 1999. *Identifying Hollywood's audiences: cultural identity and the movies*. London: British Film Institute.

Stratham, J. and Chase, E., 2010. *Childhood wellbeing – a brief overview*. Loughborough: Childhood Wellbeing Research centre.

Sullivan, G., 2009. Making space: the purpose and place of practice-led research. In: R.T. Dean and H. Smith. eds. *Practice-led research, research-led practice in the Creative Arts*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Taller de Investigación del Imagen Teatral., 1994. *Ariadne's Thread*. Enrique Vargas, Bangor University, Bangor. First performed: unknown

Taylor, L., 1999. Deaf sign language as a language for the stage. *Studies in Theatre Production*, 12, pp.65–81.

Taylor, L., 2011. The experience of immediacy: emotion and enlistment in fact-based theatre. Studies in Theatre and Performance, 31(2), pp.223–237.

Taylor, L., 2013. Voice, body and the transmission of the real in documentary theatre. *Contemporary theatre review*, 23(3), pp.368–379,

Taylor, P., 2003. *Applied theatre: creating transformative encounters in the community*. Westport; CA: Greenwood Publishing Group.

Teatro de los Sentidos., 2000. *Oráculos*. Enrique Vargas, dir. Festival theatre der Welt, Berlin, Germany. First performed: unknown.

Teatro de los Sentidos., n.d. *Who are Teatro de los Sentidos?* [online]. Available at: <http://www.teatrodelossentidos.com/eo/apartatwebdetall.php?idsec=81&idp=19> [Accessed 5 May 2010].

Teschke, H., 2000. The Oracle of the Senses: Enrique Vargas and Teatro de los Sentidos in Berlin. Translated by K. Remmler. *Theater* [online], 30(2), pp.150–155. Available at: < http://0-muse.jhu.edu.unicat.bangor.ac.uk/journals/theater/v030/30.2teschke.pdf> [Accessed 5 May 2010].

Theatr Cynefin., n.d. *About Us: What Audiences Say.* [online]. Available at: <http://www.cynefin.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=41&Item id=7> [Accessed 01/05/2010].

Theatr Cynefin., 2009. *The Lost Child.* Iwan Brioc, dir. Piodão, Portugal. First performed: 28 February 2009.

Theatr Cynefin., 2009. *Food for the Gods*. Iwan Brioc, dir. Conwy: Conwy Food Festival. First performed: 24 October 2009.

Theatr Cynefin., 2010. *Come the Dawn*. Megan Broadmeadow, Jacqui Banks and Ceri Rimmer, dir. Conwy Falls, Conwy. First performed: 15 May 2010.

Theatre Cynefin., 2011. *Eco Panto*. Megan Broadmeadow and Jacqui Banks, dir. Llanrwst: Caerdroia, Gwydyr forest. First performed: 21 April 2011.

Theater Der Unterdrückten (TDU), Wien and DanceAbility, Vienna. (2011). *Invalliden Strausse*. Vienna. First performed: 28 May 2011.

The Republic of the Imagination, School of Psychology in association with Pontio.,2012. *Cerebellium I.* I. Brioc and G. Thierry, dir. Bangor: W.C. Evans Laboratory, Bangor University. First performed: March 2012.

The Republic of the Imagination, School of Psychology in association with Pontio., 2013. *Cerebellium II.* Iwan Brioc and Guillaume Thierry, dir. Bangor: W.C. Evans Laboratory, Bangor University. First performed: February 2013.

The Republic of the Imagination, School of Psychology in association with Pontio., 2014. *Cerebellium III.* Iwan Brioc and Guillaume Thierry, dir. Caernarfon: Antena. First performed: March 2014.

The Scotsman., 2010. Interview: Adrian Howells, theatrical producer. *The Scotsman*, [online]. First published 16 May 2010. Available at: <http://www.scotsman.com/news/interview-adrian-howells-theatrical-producer-1-476044> [Accessed 3 April 2013].

Trueman, M., 2009. *Review: 'Internal', Mercure Point Hotel.* Available at: <http://matttrueman.co.uk/2009/08/review-internal-mecure-point-hotel.html> [Accessed 1 August 2015].

Trueman, M., 2014. Theatre goes walkabout: these shows really move audiences. *The Guardian* [online]. Published 19 June 2014. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2014/jun/19/theatre-goes-walkabout-audiences-get-on-their-feet> [Accessed 1 July 2014].

Tsiris, G., Pavlicevic, M., and Farrant, C., 2014. *A guide to evaluation for arts therapists and arts & health practitioners.* London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Tufnell, M. and Chrickmay, C., 2004. *A Widening Field, journeys in body and imagination.* Alton: Dancebook.

Tufnell, M. and Crickmay, C., 1993. *Body, space, image: notes towards improvisation and performance.* London: Dance Books.

van Dijk, A.M., van Weert, J.C.M. and Dröes, R.M., 2012. Does theatre improve the quality of life of people with dementia? *International Psychogeriatrics*, 24(3), pp.367–381.

von Held, P., 2002. Beyond the Black Box. *Dance Theatre Journal,* 8(4), pp.20–24.

Walmsley, B., 2013. 'A big part of my life': a qualitative study of the impact of theatre. *Arts Marketing: an international journal*, 3(1), pp.73–87.

Walsh, F., 2013. *Theatre & Therapy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Warhurst, M., 2014. Immersive art: have audiences earned their place in the show? *The Guardian* [online]. Published 30 July 2014. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/jul/30/immersive-art-do-audiences-deserve-it> [Accessed 1 December 2014].

Watson, N. and Cunningham-Burley, S., 2001. *Reframing the body*. Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave.

Weissmann, E., 2015. 2015: a TV odyssey. *CST online* [blog]. Available at: <http://cstonline.tv/2015-a-tv-odyssey> [Accessed 23 January 2015].

Whelan, G., 2012. Running through a field. *Performance Research*, 17(2), pp.110–120.

White, G., 2012. On Immersive Theatre. *Theatre Research International,* 37(3), pp.221–235.

White, G., 2013. *Audience participation in theatre, aesthetics of the invitation*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Whitmore, J., 1994. *Directing Postmodern Theater*. Ann Arbour: The University of Michigan Press.

Wilson, N., 2015. *Plaques and Tangles*. Lucy Morrison, dir. London: Jerwood Theatre Upstairs, royal Court Theatre. First performance: 2015.

Williams, M. and Penman, D., 2011. *Mindfulness: a practical guide for finding peace in a frantic world*. London: Piaktus.

Wishart, T. ed., 1996. *On Sonic Art*. Amsterdam: Harwood.

Worthen, W.B., 2012. 'The written troubles of the brain': *Sleep No More* and the space of character. *Theatre journal*, 64(1), pp. 79–97.

Woods, P., 1999. *Successful writing for Qualitative Researchers*. London; New York: Routledge.

Wright, M., 1995. *Dialogue in the Dark*, review. *Theatre Record*, 13, [supplement], p.18.

You Me Bum Bum Train., 2010. *You Me Bum Bum Train*. LEB building, London. First performed: 6 July 2010.

Zerihan, R., 2010. *La petit mort:* erotic encounters in One to One performance. In: K. Gritzner. ed. *Eroticism and Death in Theatre and Performance*. Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press.

Appendices

Outline of contents

Performance study one: *The College on the Hill*

Call for participants

Call for participants for the first performance (*The College on the Hill*). The call was released in both English and Welsh languages in line with the university's language policy. It was posted to noticeboards within the university and local area and was also published electronically on the universities online noticeboards.

Information sheet

Information was given to the audience prior to giving consent to participate in the study.

Consent forms

All audience were asked to sign two copies, one kept by the research and a second copy kept by the participant for their reference.

Questionnaire forms

Copies of the questionnaire form used in the first study.

Performance study two: When Autumn Passed Me By

Risk Assessment

Information sheet

Consent form

Questionnaire forms

A- **Call for Participants – *The College on the Hill***

Gofyn am Gyfranwyr
Perfformiad ac astudiaeth Theatr am ddim!
Rydym yn chwilio am bobl i gymryd rhan mewn perfformiad lle mae'r gynulleidfa yn mynd ar daith unigol dan arweiniad ac yn cael eu hannog i ryngweithio gyda'r amgylchedd a'r cymeriadau. Cynhelir y perfformiad ar Chwefror 5 a 6, o 6.30pm ymlaen.
Cynhelir cyfweliad neu holiadur byr cyn y perfformiad ac ail holiadur neu gyfweliad yn fuan ar ôl y perfformiad. Gofynnir cwestiynau i gyfranwyr am eu profiadau yn ystod y perfformiad. Dylai'r holl beth bara tua dwy awr i gyd rhwng y perfformiad a'r astudiaeth.

Rydym yn ceisio nifer cyfartal o gyfranwyr (dynion a merched) mewn dau grŵp oedran: 20-39 a 40+. Oherwydd natur yr elfennau synhwyraidd yn y perfformiad sy'n gallu ennyn ymatebion emosiynol, ni chaiff unrhyw un a allai fod yn sensitif i ysgogiad synhwyraidd neu'n fregus i ymateb emosiynol o'r fath gymryd rhan gwaetha'r modd.

Er mwyn trefnu amser neu os oes gennych unrhyw gwestiynau am yr ymchwil hon cysylltwch â Teri Howson yn: cop610@bangor.ac.uk
Noder, caiff astudiaeth yma ei gynnal yn Saesneg

Call for Participants
Free theatre performance and study!
We are seeking participants for a performance where the audience are taken on a solo guided journey and encouraged to interact with the environment and characters. The performance will be on the 5th and 6th February commencing from 6.30pm onwards.
A short interview or questionnaire will take place prior to the performance and a second questionnaire or interview immediately following the performance. Participants will be asked questions regarding their experiences during the performance. The performance and study should take approx 2 hours to complete in total.

We are seeking equal numbers of participants (males and females) in two age groups: 20-39 and 40+. Due to the nature of the sensory element to the performance which can evoke emotional responses, those who may be sensitive to sensory stimulation or vulnerable to such emotional response cannot unfortunately participate.

To schedule a timeslot or if you have any questions regarding this research please contact Teri Howson at: cop610@bangor.ac.uk

Please note, this study will be conducted in English

PRIFYSGOL
BANGOR
UNIVERSITY

B- Information Sheet, *The College on the Hill*

To begin with you will be asked to sign a consent form.

You will be asked to complete a short questionnaire or interview asking about your experience and knowledge of sensory labyrinth theatre.

You will then be invited to participate in the performance. The performance involves a solitary journey and you will be taken one at a time along the route. There will always be actors and stewards at hand, you will not be left on your own and there is no element of trickery to the performance or the performers. There are no hidden video cameras and you will not be filmed during the performance. It is a private experience between yourself and the performers. The performance involves active participation and sensory stimulation involving all five senses: touch, taste, smell, sight and sound. If you have any allergies please make them known to the investigator at the beginning of the performance who can advise you on what best to do during the performance. The actors will not force you to do anything that you do not wish to do. Before you commence taking part in the performance you will be told a word by the investigator which you can use to stop the performance at any time. You will then be brought out of the performance without any prejudice or penalty.

The performance will involve walking short distances between different locations and will move between indoor and outdoor spaces. Participants must wear suitable, comfortable clothing and footwear to participate in this study.

At the end of the performance there will be a second questionnaire or interview. All participants will be debriefed at the end of the study.

You may withdraw from this study at any time.

Please make sure you understand this information sheet. If you have any further questions, please take this opportunity to ask the investigative assistant.

Your participation is greatly appreciated and valuable to the research, we thank you for taking part.

Teri Howson (Lead researcher).

C- Pre-performance questionnaire, *The College on the Hill*

Participant ID:

Age:

Gender:

1 *What do you think a sensory performance is?*

2 *Have you ever experienced a sensory performance before?*

3 *What do you think Sensory Labyrinth Theatre is?*

4 *Do you have any expectations of the performance? If so, what are they?*

5 *Do you have any reservations about the performance? If so, what are they?*

6 *In one word, how are you feeling at this time?*

D- Post-performance questionnaire, *The College on the Hill*

Participant's ID:

Age:

Gender:

1 *Describe your immediate reaction to the performance.*

2 *Can you describe your experience of the performance*

3 *What did you like about the performance? Why?*

4 *What did you dislike about the performance? Why?*

5 *What one moment stands out the most for you from the performance?*

6 *How did you feel during the performance? Did your feelings change?*

7 *How was this performance different to other theatre performances you have been to?*

8 *Having been through the performance, do you think you have been to a similar performance before?*

9 *How would you describe the performance to another person?*

10 *Were your expectations (if you had any) prior to the performance met? If so, why? If not, why?*

11 *Were your reservations gotten over? If so, why? If not, why?*

12 *Has your opinion of what Sensory Labyrinth Theatre is changed? What do you think sensory labyrinth theatre is now?*

13 *Would you go to a similar kind of performance in the future? If so, why?*

14 *In one word, how are you feeling at this time?*

E- Call for participants - *When Autumn Passed Me By*

'When Autumn Passed Me By', an exciting sensory PhD performance study

Free to attend, but booking is essential. Please click on poster for further information about the performance.

Booking please contact: **teri.howson@bangor.ac.uk** or scan the QR code on the events poster to register.

Led by a team of experienced performers, 'When Autumn Passed Me By' invigorates the senses and reminds you what you may have forgotten to love about the Autumn season.

Performance study conducted through the English medium.

Times: 3.45pm, 4.15pm, 4.45pm, 5.15pm and 5.45pm

Event facts

Location: J P Hall, Bangor University

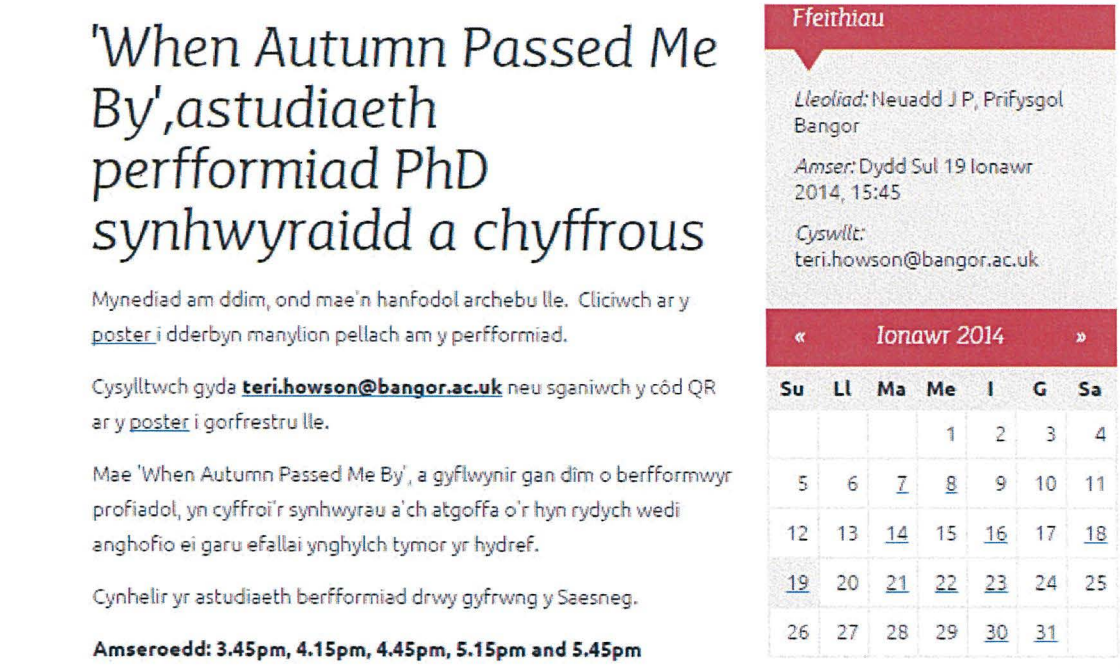
Time: Sunday 19 January 2014, 15:45

Contact: teri.howson@bangor.ac.uk

« *January 2014* »

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Avilable at: <http://www.bangor.ac.uk/news/events/-when-autumn-passed-me-by-an-exciting-sensory-phd-performance-study-17414>



'When Autumn Passed Me By',astudiaeth perfformiad PhD synhwyraidd a chyffrous

Mynediad am ddim, ond mae'n hanfodol archebu lle. Cliciwch ar y poster i dderbyn manylion pellach am y perfformiad.

Cysylltwch gyda **teri.howson@bangor.ac.uk** neu sganiwch y côd QR ar y poster i gorfrestru lle.

Mae 'When Autumn Passed Me By', a gyflwynir gan dîm o berfformwyr profiadol, yn cyffroi'r synhwyrau a'ch atgoffa o'r hyn rydych wedi anghofio ei garu efallai ynghylch tymor yr hydref.

Cynhelir yr astudiaeth berfformiad drwy gyfrwng y Saesneg.

Amseroedd: 3.45pm, 4.15pm, 4.45pm, 5.15pm and 5.45pm

Ffeithiau

Lleoliad: Neuadd J P, Prifysgol Bangor

Amser: Dydd Sul 19 Ionawr 2014, 15:45

Cyswllt: teri.howson@bangor.ac.uk

« *Ionawr 2014* »

Su	Ll	Ma	Me	I	G	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Available at: <http://www.bangor.ac.uk/news/digwyddiadau/-when-autumn-passed-me-by-astudiaeth-perfformiad-phd-synhwyraidd-a-chyffrous-17414>

F- Promotional poster – *When Autumn Passed Me By*

'When Autumn Passed Me By'

Perfformiad theatr synhwyraidd a cyfranogol
A sensory, participatory theatre performance

Perfformiad synhwyraidd mwgwd gyffrous ac ysgogol, a arweinir gan ymchwilydd PhD Teri Howson, a thîm o berfformwyr profiadol.
Mae 'When Autumn Passed me by' yn bywiogi'r synhwyrau ac yn eich atgoffa o'r hyn y gallech fod wedi anghofio i garu am y tymor yr hydref.
Neuadd JP, Dydd Sul 19eg, Ionawr.
Noder: mae'r perfformiad ac astudiaeth yn cael ei gynnal drwy'r Saesneg.

An exciting and stimulating blindfold sensory performance, led by PhD researcher Teri Howson, and a team of experienced performers.
'When Autumn Passed Me By' invigorates the senses and reminds you of what you may have forgotten to love about the autumn season.
JP Hall, Sunday 19th, January.
Please note: the performance and study is conducted through the medium of English.

Mwy o fanylion a chofrestru
More information & Sign-up

PRIFYSGOL
BANGOR
UNIVERSITY

G- Information Sheet, *When Autumn Passed Me By*

Thank you for your interest in taking part in this study. Your participation is very much valued and will help contribute towards creating documentation and understanding of a largely un-researched area of Theatre: Immersive Theatre.

This research forms part of a doctoral thesis and is being carried out by Teri Howson in the School of Creative Studies and Media, supervised by Dr Kate Taylor-Jones.

The intention of the thesis is to create an understanding of audience responses to an immersive theatre performance.

You will be asked to partake as an audience member in an immersive theatre performance.

The performance uses sensory stimuli to present the autumn in a different light. You will be blindfolded for a part of the performance to draw attention to your bodies other senses. There will be someone with you at all times to guide you. As the performance is sensory, if you are allergic to any substances, please inform the researcher, who will contact you to discuss any allergies, and if the allergy will hinder your participation in the performance. Unfortunately, due to the nature of the performance space, it is possible that some mobility issues will hinder your ability to partake in the performance. Please inform the researcher to discuss suitability for this study.

Immersive theatre performances are interactive in their nature. The performance centres on an autumnal theme. Nothing in this performance is designed or intended to harm, scare or frighten you in any way. However, you can leave the performance at any time if you wish to by saying the code word to one of the performers. You will be told the code word before the performance starts.

Having met with the performer, you will then be asked to remove your shoes (socks can still be worn), and then the performer will ask to blindfold you, before leading you through to the performance space. The performer will invite you to, using your senses, engage with particular objects or items within the space. They will be offered to you and it will be your choice whether to interact. Where there is movement within the performance you will be guided or someone will be close at hand should you need guidance. At the end of the performance the performer will remove you blindfold and you will be led to a separate area to conduct your interview. For the safety of yourself and others, if at any time you wish to leave, please use the code word and you will be safely led out of the performance space.

Following the performance you will be asked to respond to a series of short questions in private, using a dictaphone. Someone will be available to help if you need assistance. You will be given a participant number so that your responses will be anonymous.

A three-month 'cooling off' period is in place, should you wish to withdraw your interview. You may do so within this timeframe without question by contacting the researcher at: **teri.howson@bangor.ac.uk** before 11.59pm on the Saturday 19th April.

If you have any further questions, please speak with the researcher before signing the consent form. If you are happy to continue and have no further questions, please now sign the participant consent form and return it to the researcher.

Thank you again for your participation.

Teri Howson (researcher).

PhD, Drama. School of Creative Studies and Media, Bangor University.

H-Participant consent form, *When Autumn Passed Me By*

PRIFYSGOL
BANGOR
UNIVERSITY

Bangor University's 'Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards of Research Programmes' (Code 03)
https://www.bangor.ac.uk/ar/main/regulations/home.htm

COLLEGE OF ARTS & HUMANITIES

Participant Consent Form

Researcher's name .....

The researcher named above has briefed me to my satisfaction on the research for which I have volunteered. I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the research within a three month period following my completion of the study. I also understand that my rights to anonymity and confidentiality will be respected.

I agree to having the interview questions recorded using a dictaphone.

I understand that the research being conducted may result in my contributions being included as part of the submission for the researcher's (Teri Howson's) doctoral thesis and any associated publications or conferences. Any references to data supplied will be referred to by way of an anonymously allocated participant number.

Signature of participant .....

Date .....

This form will be produced in duplicate. One copy should be retained by the participant and the other by the researcher.

I- Performer participant consent form, *When Autumn Passed Me By*

PRIFYSGOL
BANGOR
UNIVERSITY

Bangor University's 'Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards of Research Programmes' (Code 03)
https://www.bangor.ac.uk/ar/main/regulations/home.htm

COLLEGE OF ARTS & HUMANITIES

Performer Participant Consent Form

Researcher's name .....

The researcher named above has briefed me to my satisfaction on the research for which I have volunteered. I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the research within a three month period following my completion of the study. I also understand that my rights to anonymity and confidentiality will be respected.

I understand that the research being conducted may result in my contributions being included as part of the submission for the researcher's (Teri Howson's) doctoral thesis and any associated publications or conferences. Any references to data supplied will be referred to by way of the performer participants' initials. Should I wish to remain anonymous, I will have ticked the following box: ☐

I agree to being photographed for the purpose of documenting this study. (Please tick) ☐

I agree to being filmed for the purpose of documenting this study. (Please tick). ☐

I agree to maintain confidentiality of audience participants and will not discuss audience members and/or their experiences and comments outside of the research group.

I agree not to disclose details of the training process and performance and not to discuss these elements except with the researcher until after the thesis has been submitted for completion.

Signature of participant .....

Date .....

This form will be produced in duplicate. One copy should be retained by the participant and the other by the researcher.

J- Participant Question Sheet, *When Autumn Passed Me By*

Please read each question carefully. Follow the instructions provided for operation of the Dictaphone devise. If you are having any difficulties, please speak to the researcher for assistance.

Please try to explain your answers as fully as possible and avoid simple yes/no responses. We would like to hear your opinions (good or bad) in answer to the questions.

Please speak out your participant number before recording your response to the questions.

Please read out each question BEFORE you answer, to make it clear which question you are responding to.

Q.1. Why did you decide to attend the performance today?

Q.2. How would you describe the performance?

Q.3. Can you say what you liked the most about the performance?

Q.4 And what did you like the least?

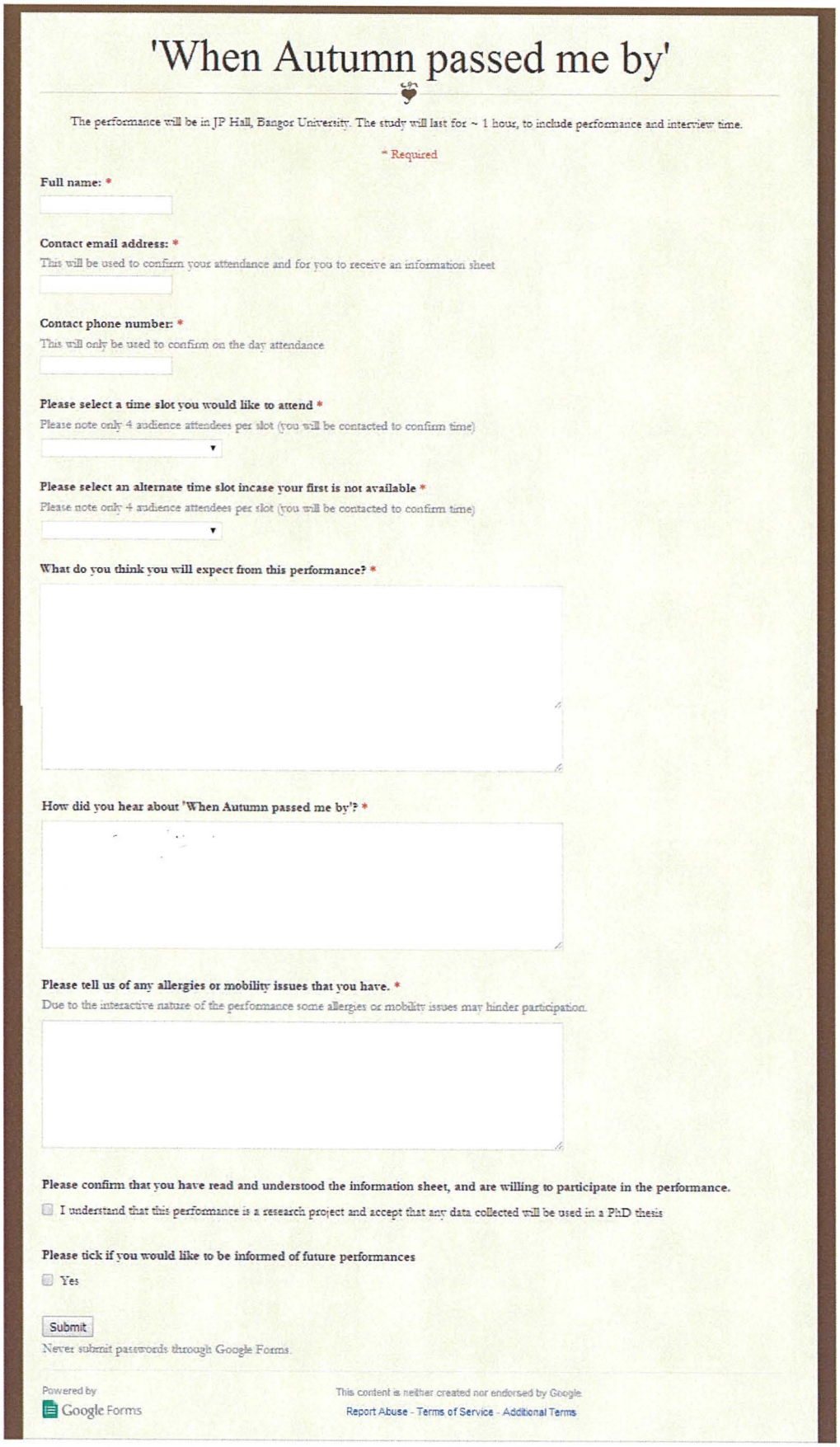
Q.5. Can you describe if you feel any differently now from when you first entered the performance?

Q.6 To what extent did you feel 'safe' during the performance AND can you say why you felt this way?

Q.7. Were you able to carry out everything that you wanted to within the performance? Was there anything you would have liked the opportunity to do?

Q.8. Is there anything else you would like to add?

K- Participant online registration, *When Autumn Passed Me By*



'When Autumn passed me by'

The performance will be in JP Hall, Bangor University. The study will last for ~ 1 hour, to include performance and interview time.

* Required

Full name: *

Contact email address: *

This will be used to confirm your attendance and for you to receive an information sheet

Contact phone number: *

This will only be used to confirm on the day attendance

Please select a time slot you would like to attend *

Please note only 4 audience attendees per slot (you will be contacted to confirm time)

Please select an alternate time slot incase your first is not available *

Please note only 4 audience attendees per slot (you will be contacted to confirm time)

What do you think you will expect from this performance? *

How did you hear about 'When Autumn passed me by'? *

Please tell us of any allergies or mobility issues that you have. *

Due to the interactive nature of the performance some allergies or mobility issues may hinder participation.

Please confirm that you have read and understood the information sheet, and are willing to participate in the performance.

I understand that this performance is a research project and accept that any data collected will be used in a PhD thesis

Please tick if you would like to be informed of future performances

Yes

Submit

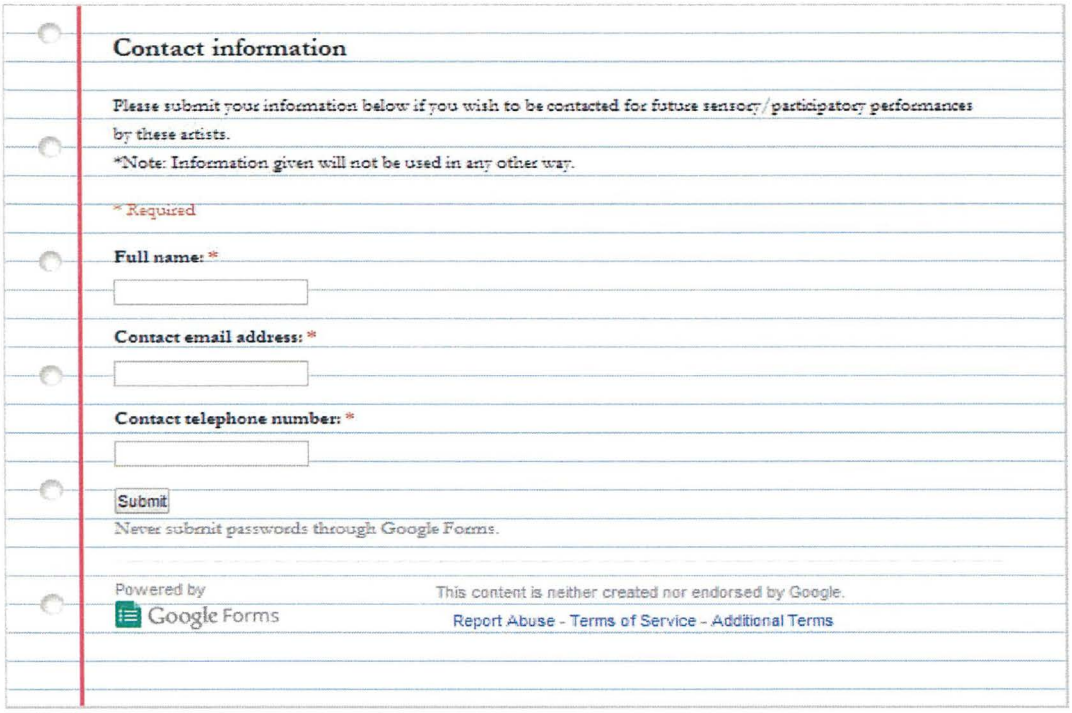
Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

Powered by Google Forms

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

Report Abuse - Terms of Service - Additional Terms

L- Sign up for future events, *When Autumn Passed Me By*



Contact information

Please submit your information below if you wish to be contacted for future sensory/participatory performances by these artists.

*Note: Information given will not be used in any other way.

* Required

Full name: *

Contact email address: *

Contact telephone number: *

Submit

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

Powered by Google Forms

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

Report Abuse - Terms of Service - Additional Terms

M- Chronology of practice and research undertaken

Date	Title	Organiser	Location	Type
February 2009	Take a chance into the Labyrinth	AE20 and Theatr Cynefin	Piodão, Portugal	Workshop
March 2009	The Lost Child	Theatr Cynefin	Piodão, Portugal	Performance as actor
March 2009	Art included: on the use of applied participative arts and labyrinth theatre methodology	Theatr Cynefin	Llandudno/Llanrwst, Wales	Workshop
June 2009	DreamEscape		Bangor and Gregynog, Wales	Workshop/Performance
October 2009	Gothic Theme Night		Bangor, Wales	Own Trial
March 2010	Joker Training: aesthetics of the Oppressed', Media Artes	Media Artes	Ohrid, Macedonia	Workshop
March 2010	Inter-disciplinarity in environment and well-being research: Early Career workshop	Behavior for well-being, environment and life (BeWEL), University of Aberdeen	Aberdeen, Scotland	Conference/Symposium
May 2010	Come the Dawn	Theatr Cynefin	Conwy, Wales	Performance as actor
July 2010	Arts trail	Megan Broadmeadow	Penrhyndeudraeth, Wales	Performance as actor
February 2011	The College on the Hill		Bangor, Wales	Own performance
March 2011	Earthfall: The Factory	Earthfall	Bangor, Wales	Workshop
May 2011	Digital Tea Dance	Pontio	Bangor, Wales	Performance as actor
July 2011	"Don't pick me!" Interactions, ethics and facilitating the audience in participatory and immersive theatre forms	Mecssa PGN conference	Bournemouth, England	Conference/Symposium
December 2011	"Where do we go from here?" Framing and coding performance in sensory labyrinth and immersive practice	Postgraduate research network, Bangor University	Bangor, Wales	Conference/Symposium
March 2012	Cerebellium I	Pontio, The Republic of the Imagination and Bangor University	Bangor, Wales	Performance as actor
May 2012	Invalliden Strausse	Theater Der Unterdrückten and DanceAbility	Vienna, Austria	Workshop/Performance
June 2012	Rainbow of Desire'	Epsilon III	Bucharest, Romania	Workshop

June 2012	Opposing use of games and gameplay in immersive and sensory performances	Goldsmith literature seminar series	London, England	Conference/Symposium
July 2012	Project X and The Republic of the Imagination: Applied theatre in social arts practice	Anna Lindh, Network Symposium, World event young artist (WEYA)	Nottingham, England	Conference/Symposium
October 2012	Carnival		Bangor, Wales	Own Trial
March 2013	Cerebellium II	Pontio, The Republic of the Imagination and Bangor University	Bangor, Wales	Performance as actor
April 2013	*Nine*: Mr and Mrs Clark	Mr and Mrs Clark	Bangor, Wales	Workshop
April 2013	Becoming Nomad: Hybrid spaces, liquid architectures and online domains	Theatre and Performance research association (TAPRA), Technologies working group intermediary conference and workshop	York, England	Conference/Symposium
July 2013	Wellbeing and sensory performance	Wellbeing 2013 international conference, Birmingham University	Birmingham, England	Conference/Symposium
September 2013	Sensory, Sensual and questionable interactions: Distinguishing theatrical and aesthetic forms in immersive theatre	Theatre and Performance research association (TAPRA)	Glasgow, Scotland	Conference/Symposium
January 2014	When Autumn Passed Me By		Bangor, Wales	Own performance

N- Performance Reviews

Below is a short summary for each of the performances discussed and explored throughout this thesis. Whilst other performances are referred to throughout, the companies/ individual's below have been selected in order to represent a breadth of immersive theatres that use different scales of production (in terms of size of space and audience) and generate a variety of affects using a combination of participation and/or changing the audience's viewing perspectives, sensory stimuli, walking or movement through a space and experiential modes of performance delivery.

Ontroerend Goed: *The Smile off Your Face* (2009)

Formed in 1994, it was not until the early 00's that they became largely recognised for their work. Ontroerend Goed first performed *The Smile off Your Face* in 2003 in their home country, Belgium. It was four years later that the performance was first encountered in the UK and also saw the development of *Internal* (first performed 2008) and later *A Game of You* (first performed 2010), forming a trilogy of one-on-one performances. Directed by Sophie De Somore and Joeri Smet *The Smile off Your Face* is one of, if not the most intimate of performances created by the company (and the only one I would list as *therapeutic*). The three performances have been individually toured but have on occasion been performed in series (the 2010 Battersea Arts Centre's One-on-one festival).

The group has come under criticism particularly for *Internal* (first performed 2008) and the more recent *Audience* (2011). Yet the company have insisted that if these works are uncomfortable it is because they are raising it as a point for examination (Alexander Devriendt in Costa; 2009).

In removing sight (as an almost completely blindfolded performance) 'The Smile off Your Face' relies on the experiential instead of visual to communicate the theatrical. I went through this performance on one of its UK tours at the Salford Quays (Sunday 21st June 2009). It is exemplary of the power of the experiential in the way I am able to still recall it with familiarity some years later.

Outside of the studio space, you are greeted by one of the performers who explains the logistics of the performance: you must remove your shoes, you will be sat in a wheelchair, hands tied loosely to the arms and blindfolded. You are told you may leave at any time. I saw an audience member leaving the performance and noted her expression of calm. Feeling nervous at being called forwards for my turn to now sit in the wheelchair I felt in a state of apprehension.

On entering, you are aware of various sounds, some gentle music playing. Some scents swirl around you before you feel a warmth next to your face. Trying to see through the blindfold a warm light appears close to your face- a candle is discerned- before hearing the sound if it being blown out. You are wheeled around the space. The hand ties are gently removed and you are helped to standing. A figure lifts your hands to their face and places theirs on yours. I feel a rough beard and wiry hair and the image of an older

man comes to mind. Walked gently up a slope you feel a body rush against you and you are pressed to a wall. At the time, I felt unsettled by this but with hindsight, I view it as a simultaneously pleasant sensation. There is then a feeling of being alone, there are no other hands touching yours or guiding you. A flash and a click and whirring sound makes me jump and I realise that a photograph may have been taken. It feels odd not knowing for sure what the subject of the image is and worrying that if it was you, you have now been gazing in an un-admirable way.

Hands then lead you on and you are guided down what feels like a slope. A voice whispers in my ear: "left or right?" I choose left. I am not sure how, but I find that I have been whisked into a lying down position, executed speedily and yet with care. I am led on what feels like a bed and am aware of another body led close to mine, feeling warm breath near to my face. A series of questions are asked, each more intimate than the last. Some are hazy in my memory now, but one remains clear: "Have you ever been in love?" I answer very honestly in a way that surprises me, I am able to say things to this person that I would not have revealed then outside of that space. It is a perturbing and yet releasing feeling. Frequently the performance raises conflicted emotions.

Raised to standing and then sat in the wheelchair again, I deep female voice whispers stories that remind me of Santa Claus. She tells me she likes little figures in marzipan shapes and one is popped into my mouth. She asks if I would like to sit on her knee. I answer that I am not sure it's appropriate at my age but I will if she likes. I hear a laugh and am told: "it is not possible!" One corner of the blindfold in lifted and I see a slender figure in a red costume with a full and bushy white beard. I consider my conjectures were right but remain concerned if I answered her question correctly; feeling suddenly aware of the presence of possibly many performers around me and wondering; who is the real spectator in this?

Some more wheeling, sounds and smells become apparent. Finally, I am wheeled to a stop. The blindfold in removed and as my sight adjusts I see a wall of Polaroid images on a black wall, an empty chair before me. A young man in a blue vest, with long curly hair, sits before me. He asks if I remember him, I say I do not. He explains in the performance where we met and I am surprised as the visual image of him does not sit with the vision that was in my mind. We quietly talk about the performance and I realise it must be coming to an end and feel sad not to have extended my time in the space. He asks me if I can see myself in the wall of photos but I am unable to identify myself. The man points out my image. I am surprised by the appearance of it, my arms outstretched and my face wearing a curiously inquisitive expression.

We talk a little longer; he makes me laugh at something although I no longer remember what it was. He asks for me to hold on to it. I ask him "what?" He replies "That smile". His hands slowly stretch towards my mouth and I find myself moved between laughter and severity in this exchange. His eyes begin to water and I feel saddened. From behind the chair slowly begins to be wheeled backwards out of the space. I am able to see other audience members at various points in the performance moving through the space.

As I am unfamiliar with the space I am surprised at its size, it felt much larger when blindfolded.

Once outside the first performer asks me how I am and invites me to put back on my shoes and write in their comments book. There is a strange mix of feelings in my head, some happy some sad, but my overall being feels filled with a sense of calm. I recall the audience member I saw at the beginning and wonder if my expression resembles hers. Whilst sat waiting for my friend to finish her experience, another audience member is brought out of the space who it seems has asked to leave the performance. She is upset but also laughs. She cannot pin down her exact reasons for leaving but something has been stirred within her. The performer sits and talks through the performance with her. Afterwards, my friend and I compare experiences, mostly logistical, going through what order we think things happened. There are some conflicts in how we recall it, only moments after having gone through it: she met with a woman at the end. Some things remain unsaid: our answers to some of the questions asked (although we laugh about the Santa Claus and our similar responses).

When, later back at home, I am asked about the performance I feel strange articulating some aspects of the performance to others and receive a few responses which jokingly question whether tied to a chair and rushed at in the dark, led on a bed was I really at the theatre at all! Some are wistful to have missed the opportunity, others seem thankful they were not I. A few months later I meet with someone who experienced the performance on its Edinburgh fringe tour and we share a personal exchange that leaves others excluded as we reminisce and recall our different experiences. Initially, I was more critical about some elements of the performance but with time I have felt gladdened to have been through the performance, to have felt my personal trust and spatial boundaries gently provoked and feel safe that the words shared within the performance space, have remained there.

The Republic of the Imagination: *Cerebellium* (2012 and 2013)

Iwan Brioc is an applied theatre specialist whose work has led to many development and training programmes globally as well as working as artistic director for Theatr Cynefin and The Republic of the Imagination. He has developed his own 'Context Orientated Theatre' practice, which provides a larger framework for his own Sensory Labyrinth Theatre (developed from that of Enrique Vargas's Poetics of the Senses) and Forum Theatre works (from Augusto Boal). I first encountered Brioc's work five years ago and have since attended several training and performances that inform some of my understanding of his practice (see timeline).

The particular performance used for discussion is *Cerebellium*, a performance in collaboration with Bangor Universities School of Psychology and Pontio. The performance as a conceptual framework went through an extensive development process following the first two year's where it was performed in a disused laboratory.

The first 'version' (which I shall term *Cerebellium I* for clarity of which is being discussed) of the work was performed between 13–16 March 2012. The second incarnation involved a developed narrative expanding on the previous year's narrative (which I shall term *Cerebellium II*) and was performed between 11th–16th March 2013. The work involved a residency period typical of Brioc's process, but, rather than occurring as an isolated and intense training, workshop and performance period (usually over one or two weeks), it was developed over a series of months with the performers moving back and forth between attending to the performance and their regular day-to-day activities.

Cerebelium's overall narrative concentrated the self-reflexiveness of Sensory Labyrinth Theatre to attitudes on perception and reality. The performance questioned the audiences' relationship to the world through experiencing that of an 'other': 'Project K'. The audience is presented with a series of illusions designed to question their understanding of how the 'self', views its relationship with reality. The performance suggests that much of the self's acuity relies on the perceptive qualities of the brain, which can be easily manipulated. These manipulations of our version of perceived 'reality' are presented in such a way to draw attention to the way our perception of the world can be easily altered, without revealing how the illusion is constructed.

Cerebellium I

The premise for Cerebellium I was founded on illusions and perceptions which are hosted by the human brain. The name Cerebellium is a corruption of the correct spelling Cerebellum, yet often it is pronounced with an 'I' inserted. In the same way that this 'I' is deceptive, Cerebellium was designed to allow the audience to see the brains sensitivity to external stimuli, exposed and to determine the fragility of our account of reality and call it to question. The meta-narrative of 'Project K' focusses the audience's attention to an external scenario, but, through the process of the performance, permits the audience to reflect on and question their personal experience perception and reality.

The audience were brought in groups of six to a waiting room. Initially told that they are being invited to act as part of an ethics review for 'Project K', the audience is informed that this fictional experiment has been running at the University since 1997. Whilst specifically advertised as theatre, once the audience enters the performance space

the narrative is presented as real. The plot is further elaborated on in this initial consultation with the first performer. The audience is told that 'K' is a dead brain that has been donated, stimulated and in recent years led to the creation of a conscience coming into existence in this brain. 'K' remains a brain kept alive by various wires and tubes, but he believes he is a member of the laboratory team working on Project K and has formulated friendships and memories, all under the control of the laboratory staff. The audience is placed in the role of deciding 'K's' fate: whether the experiment should be terminated immediately, that 'K' should be told about his physical state or a third option that 'K' should not be told and the experiment continues in its current form. The audience is then offered the chance to begin discussing the ethical dilemma presented to them, being taken out of the waiting room individually in turn on the understanding that they are meeting with the project leader, Professor Kurtz (a meeting that Kurtz has requested and that has been granted by the review board). At five minute intervals, the audience leaves the space and are taken to go through the performance.

The audience were guided up the stairs and their hands washed by one of the performers in the role of a laboratory assistant. This process is completed with a thoroughness not usually undergone allowing the audience the first experience of being alone with a character from the performance and to begin to indulge the sensory stimulus which focuses attention on a particular sense. Once the hand washing was completed, a green serum was rubbed meticulously into the skin (the significance of this will be referred to later). The audience is then taken to Professor Kurtz's office. An intense man, Kurtz begins to question the audiences' perception of their relation to reality and the world outside. Through a series of quick tests: viewing two optical illusion posters, a spinning circle (which when stared at and spun effects the vision for a short time afterward) the audience are to consider how they know whether the world outside truly exists.

The performance continues delving further into the problem of perception: a world which seems to turn on its axis, where the laboratory assistant asks us: 'do we travel through the world or does the world travel through us?' The audiences' hands glowing under Ultra Violet light (the earlier rubbed in serum causing this effect) and a logic puzzle presented for the audience to solve. The performance then shifts, the audience being guided through darkness and told that they are entering 'K' (or as they now know him to be called, 'Kevin')'s dream. The audience hears a live piano recital, which seems to be affected by the space to sound as if it is coming from speakers. As they crawl through a series of tunnels the pianist is revealed as 'Kevin', (whose image they have seen earlier on a desk frame), playing. From there the audience is left to negotiate through blackout until a hand reaches out through the darkness. Seated in the dark, they hear a voice whispering through a funnel utilising auto response techniques to direct their reaction ('a cool breeze through an open window flows gently over the skin and softly brushes the fingertips. The body shudders'). The audience are then guided to crawl into a small space and to lie down, which is then revealed as a room designed to effect the audience's impression of gravity, an optical illusion involving a mirror and the hands, designed to effect the understanding of how our brain connects to our limbs, before meeting 'Kevin' for the first time, seeing his brain in a tank surrounded by wires and connectors. The audience is then invited to 'talk' with Kevin using a social media interface, before being asked by Kevin to fetch a red file for him from the room next door. The room is lit using sodium light, which removes colour from all objects and makes everything appear as tones of an orange/brown colour. It is only when the audience is offered a torch by one of the laboratory assistants, that they are able to shine the white torch light over the room, 'revealing' the colour of the

objects in there. On finding the file, the audience opened it to discover a photograph of them, which was unknowingly taken in Professor Kurtz's office at the beginning of the labyrinth. The audience then enters a room where they experience their own pulse amplified through a speaker system and, staring out into a two-way mirror see another audience member stop to pause on the other side. The heartbeat seems to come from this other individual. The audience has passed this mirror near to the start of their journey and were invited to stare into their reflection and consider the question of perception. At this point seeing the unaware audience member, its purpose becomes clear. The audience is then asked to vote on their decision for the outcome of the original question posed for the ethical review. A bead given to them earlier in the performance is placed into one of the three jars tagged with each of the possible outcomes proposed. The last room, known as the 'decompression room', acts as a return to the audience's version of reality, a debriefing zone, filled with cushions, soft candlelight, and aromatic smells.

The premise for Cerebellium affected the style of the labyrinth performance. Whilst there was still a focus on the sensory and the aesthetic, the dominant focus of the narrative on perception and illusion in the brain guided the audiences' reflections. As such, the audiences' thoughts are directed toward how they perceive their relationship to reality. In turn, this meant that the audience still engaged in the opportunity for self-reflection, but it is fixated through the narrative being focussed on the story of 'Kevin'.

Cerebellium II

Continuing the narrative employed in the first version of the performance, Cerebellium II begins under the premise that the ethical review being made by the ethics committee (of which the audience were informed they were partaking in the previous year), have overturned the decision to keep Project K operational on the basis that human rights laws cannot be applied to a brain in a vat. The audience is informed that Professor Kurtz has now taken up residence in the building with some of his staff, to try and protect 'Kevin''s brain from being turned off by the committee. Reversing the audience's trajectory through the space and developing the plotline further, has the resulting effect that audiences who attended the previous year's performance will not be familiar with this second version of Cerebellium.

Punchdrunk: *The Drowned Man* (2013)

Punchdrunk are believed to be one of the oldest Immersive Theatre company in Britain. Founded in 2000, Punchdrunk Theatre's, (generally recognised as the first Immersive Theatre company in the UK), style is in some ways, unique to their particular form of this genre, in using physical theatre to tell the story. Punchdrunk's name has become synonymous with theatre performed in vast warehouse spaces. These large scale venues become occupied for the duration of the performance, transformed into the fictional world of the performance. Their limit is the four walls and ceilings of the space, often multi-layered through the building design. The audience travel between different 'zones' or areas of the fictional space, by traversing stairs and travelling on lifts to move between each floor. Punchdrunk, who frequently rework existing play texts for their performances have utilised existing plays such as Shakespeare's Macbeth (for *Sleep No More, 2003*), *The Duchess of Malfi* (in a performance of the same name) and John Webster's *Faust* (performance of the same name), as their inspiration. In several works, they have collaborated with others including *The Duchess of Malfi* (2010), where the company worked alongside the English National Opera, *The Crash of the Elysium* (2011 and 2012), based on the BBC's *Doctor Who* series and '*...and darkness descended'* (2011) working with Sony PlayStation to re-create the game *Resistance 3* for its launch.

The Drowned Man

In The Drowned Man (2013), the narrative circulated several times in the three hours within which the audience occupy the space. The final loop was the only change of course to bring all the audience members together for one final scene at the 'wrap party' where the audience, collected into one space, are initially drawn to gaze up a raised area into what appear to be woodlands before their gaze is re-directed to one more familiar to the a traditional placing of audience: being posited in a lower area (like an auditorium), whilst the performers occupy a raised wooden decking which becomes the stage area for the final scene.

The nature of the performance means only fragments of the entire work are captured. Depending on the audience's movements they will either witness most or the entire story from one-half of the overall main characters and their plots, they may find they have seen mostly the minor characters and explored their stories more fully, or, if they have moved between each plot, theirs will be the most fragmented and intermingled experience.

You are led in through a series of disorientating twists and turns with little red lights, you couldn't really see where you were going and it was winding back and forth. You are shuffled in a group of 15-20 into a little space and handed out of the anticipated masks. A voiceover comes on and you hear this voiceover throughout the performance. He's the director/ head of the company character and he explains the rules of the performance: you should be silent throughout the performance, phones off, keep the masks on at all times, people in black masks are there to help you but they can't guide you, it's up to you to choose which direction you want to go and that choice will lead you on your journey. Two metal doors open and the group are all shuffled into a lift. A lady in a silver very glamourous outfit, hair done up, American drawling accent reiterates what's just

been said. There are three posters down one side of the lift with the lead actors of the studio and the other side has got three of the main service workers, so it introduces six of the main characters very briefly. She suggests if you're with friends to go it alone and separate yourself off from them, flirts a bit with one of the guys in the lift and then she opens the lift and people start filing out and then all of a sudden she pushes the last persons shuts the lift and carries on. So we immediately get split into two smaller groups.

This all happens within the first five minutes of being in the building. So you already feel quite tense at that point. I was feeling a bit intimidated at this point, by the fact that you know several people have been chucked out of a lift and had the door shut on them and you're thinking, 'where have they gone and where are we going?' You're suddenly aware that the group and the lift are much smaller and you're thinking 'is she going to do this a couple more times', 'am I going to get left on my own', and 'what else am I in for?'

There are now about 10 of us and we get off at the next stop. As we depart the female figure turns to one audience and says: 'oh honey I'd be careful if I were you' as if to be wary. It sets you a little bit on edge because at this point you've been told to be silent so you're presuming you're not going to be asked to speak but you're not quite sure what kind of transaction is going to be required of you, unless you've maybe been before, but it might differ to other Punchdrunk performances.

We are left in this sort of town and it's a bit like being on a complete stage set as if you're in a western. There's a fountain in the middle with running water, a little shop that's selling tacs and equipment, there's a small bar with postcards from various places at 23 cents apiece and little telephone booths... everything's there for you to physically touch and pick up (or so it seems). It's all quite tactile.

There's little house at one end of this street. The first thing we end up seeing is this kind of physical theatre dance happening around a car, because you know it's based on Woyzeck you're thinking this is probably one of the main characters, maybe the main female and one of the men she gets involved with, either her partner or her lover, at this point you're not quite sure. It made sense later as I saw the same scene again and it became clearer what was going on.

I stayed with the female character (Mary) initially before looping round and choosing to follow the male character(William) the second time. There were moments when I stumbled across other stories but they were very illogical within my own encounter. One of the most disturbing moment was a room with a black and white check floor where characters in formal suits and grotesque masques are stood and (I cannot remember how or why) but two are seemingly shot. I knew the text of Woyzeck beforehand but this scene did not fit into my recollections of it, however, it was re-imagined.

I encountered little of the Wendy and Marshall story, although I did see a very moving scene with Dolores Grey (following on from the strange shooting) after I followed her character from the room. I had one moment when I thought 'I get it' during the performance. I had ventured into the small cinema in the town and found it full of plush red seats. 'On screen' was a two-way mirror, with a nude woman on the other side, legs spread and arms outstretched. It appeared that she was being examined by some kind of Doctor. I could see other audience members on the other side of the screen and it felt as though it was a particular moment of pointing out the voyeurism of the whole piece. Somehow the audience were all collected together for the final scene, with a huge crowd

now gathered to watch together. After the denouement and applause, we're encouraged to stay and linger in the bar, but after 3 hours I am hot and desperate to see the outside world again and breathe some fresh air. It is a relief when I do after the claustrophobia of the warehouse.

Theatr Cynefin: *Eco Panto* (2011)

Theatr Cynefin's Eco Panto (2011) was a departure from their previous work, further exploring new techniques for use in Sensory Labyrinth Theatre performances. Over a period of 7 days, the labyrinth path (permanently constructed into the landscape) in the Gwydyr forest became the site for a pantomime with a uniquely sensory and eco-themed twist. The audience arrived in groups up to a maximum of seven and were then divided into smaller groups following the first section of the performance. Rather than negotiating the labyrinth alone, these small groups walked the route together. Audience members travelled around the labyrinth path in small groups and the performance content was aimed at families including young children. This performance differed in form and content from previous sensory labyrinth works, yet it still presented a therapeutic affect (albeit one very different to their previous works, see section – for more on this distinction).

Rather than the personal journey of the solo labyrinth, the Eco Panto provided a jovial experience which could be enjoyed as a group. Utilising characters from popular British Pantomime (which often utilises popular fairy tales for the plot), the company set up a way for audiences to have a sense of familiarity with the storyline, however, the characters were subtly altered so that whilst recognisable as their personality to the audience, they also took on new possibilities. The performance also used recycled materials for the entire construction of the set, props, and costume.
The audience is taken up to the start of the path (the labyrinth path itself is hidden amongst part of the Gwydyr forest amongst a maze of other paths and mountain biking trails) to be met by "Prince Charming", or "Prince Charmless" as the audience soon discover. Each person, in turn, was greeted and invited to be his one true love, to place their foot by a giant shoe said to be his bride. As each person tried and failed, the Prince reveals that each one who has touched the shoe now shares his curse and must remain in the forest until it is lifted. The audience follows Prince Charmless as he introduces us to our new "home", whereupon we are set upon by "Sargent Cinderella" and we begin to realise these are not the familiar characters that are expected. Sargent Cinderella puts the audience through a short "drill", standing to attention, a brief warm-up (consisting of practicing our Dame poses, trialling bowing and mooing as the Panto Cow, before being deemed "ready" to travel through the forest, in order to escape the curse.

It left a different feeling to other Sensory Labyrinth experiences, I came out giddy, uplifted, confused and excited all at the same time, with a light feeling. Sharing the experience with someone, it sounds like a surreal dream: helping Jack save his cow from becoming an evil villains 'cash cow', singing and dancing with King John, swapping shoes with Puss in Boots, sitting in the Genie of the Lamp's tent and being offered a wish, being led blindfolded by a blind mouse (the blind, literally leading the blind), going through a mirror to meet with Snow White before being offered a slice of apple to the words 'what's your poison?', being playing percussion with Captain Hook, telling Sleepy Beauty to a story to try and overcome her insomnia, before finally being led out of the forest by the witch of Hansel and Gretel's narrative and returned to the beginning to be led out of the forest by Prince Charmless. Being with someone else was good in some respect, panto, after all, can be quite dark and sinister and the fear is somewhat removed from being with someone to share the experience. It offers a different interaction to the more personal and self-reflexive sensory labyrinth journey, yet this shared jaunt through the woods fitted the panto theme well. It does, however, leave the audience feeling more self-conscious and what results is less of a connection to the actors. However, this did not feel designed to be

a personal exchange between the strangers: instead, a connection was built between group members, having shared the performance with another we are able to talk about our shared experience of it and it gives a stronger connection to that relationship. How this might have worked had we been grouped with strangers I am not so sure. It would have increased the self-conscious awareness, particularly at moments when we were asked to sing or make up a story for Sleeping Beauty and to dance and sing along with the King. Negotiating these scenarios with friends or family as an already connected unit I would foresee as much easier than with strangers.

The actors are there with you: Jack (hides behind a branch after he has handed one to you also) and creeps up towards where his cow is being held captive, you're drawn to be on his side, you ambush the hut and rescue the cow out having being asked to decide whether Jack should rescue the cow or give in to the offer of money, and as the evil captor comes to his senses, Jack and the cow with yourselves do a cheeky dance before being encouraged to hurry as you are chased off down the path.

There is no false promise from the Genie of answering your wishes. S.L.T does not set up to be a mystical experience which can solve problems. Rather it asks you to question what you truly want and to look for the answers within yourselves. There is a sense of acceptance too for those who cannot think of a wish: they are asked to stand with eyes closed, hands across their hearts and to breathe and search within their hearts for their wishes. They are asked to think of three positive things within their life which they are grateful for, more if they can, and if a wish still doesn't come to mind then they are told it's ok, it does not mean they are any less.

Teatro de los Sentidos: *Ariadne's Thread* (1994)

Having toured to the UK in the 1990's, the company have toured the globe with their performances in the last twenty years with rare performances in this country, although their influences through training and workshops cannot be under-estimated. Whilst Iwan Brioc has made clear his connection and development of Vargas's work, others will similarly have been influenced without the connection and trajectory from their work being made clear. Teschke's description of travelling through Orâculos gives an excellent sense of the performance experience.

The company has toured internationally, with only four visits to the UK since the 1990's. They twice appeared as part of the Norwich Festival in 2007 and 2008. Previous to this they performed as part of both the London International Festival of Theatre (LIFT) and The Wales Theatre Festival (Aberystwyth, Cardiff, Bangor).

Ariadne's Thread

Dyfan Roberts[53] came across *Ariadne's Thread* on the companies visit to Bangor in 1994. He describes his experience 20 years after he encountered the performance:

"ARIADNE'S THREAD by Theatre de Sentidos visited Bangor during the nineties and was one of the most wonderful and innovative piece of theatre I've ever experienced.

The show, representing a mysterious labyrinth, was constructed and took the whole floor-space of the John Phillips Hall when that hall was double its present size. None of us had heard of this company – a company apparently derived from Bolivia. My family's interest was aroused when we were requested to accommodate two of the cast at our home. The show had toured previously in Wales, but we knew nothing about it, and our two visitors certainly didn't give us any clue as to what was in front of us....

The show was designed as a complete sensory experience- delving into the recesses of a person's thoughts and memories through light and dark, colour, sounds and smells and touch . The following are things that have stuck in my mind after all these years...

On my own, I was led into an ante-chamber and asked to take my shoes off. [It] *made me feel homely, and vulnerable at the same time. Then I was off on a personal travel through the maze. I arrived at a chamber which resembled a train station, where I sat on a seat. A girl dressed in old-fashioned costume sat intimately next to me and showed me some small dog-eared family pictures. She waved me goodbye, as I entered a dark tunnel. The tunnel got smaller and smaller until I was forced to my hands and knees to keep going, in pitch dark. Strange music and sounds permeated the walls. Suddenly the only way ahead was a stairway. There was no turning back. I crawled up the stairs, and at the top felt a slide going down the other side. I slid down it, face-first, and landed on a soft cushion. Suddenly I was caressed by invisible arms- like a child. Arriving at another*

[53] Dyfan Roberts is a well-known welsh actor and promoter of the arts in Wales. He currently works with Pontio, Bangor as Arts Development Officer. With thanks to Dyfan for sharing his experience and granting his permission to include it here.

chamber, I found some cupboards and balls. A girl dressed as a child laughed and giggled and played ball games with me. There was no pressure by anyone to make me leave the room, but leave I did, and my inquisitiveness led me to another chamber, this time, faced by a huge wardrobe. After exploring for a while, I opened the wardrobe door to find a row of fur coats on hangers, and a strong smell of camphor. Through the fur coats, the passage led on to some more chambers, while all the time the distinct smell of cattle-dung became noticeable. Eventually, I reached the centre of the labyrinth, a small cell where I made out in the semi-darkness a slumped horned bull-like figure. The passage got darker, until, creeping forward blindly, I was grabbed and made to lie in a coffin-like box, with the lid placed on top of me. I waited for a bit, but eventually started to push at the lid, which was immediately lifted, and someone led me to a dimly lit tent. There the ones who had gone through previously all sat on cushions in a circle. I knew some of them, but nobody said a word. I was given a cup of warm mint tea and sat sipping its contents in silence with the others. Eventually, I stood up, and my shoes were brought back to me. I stepped out of the labyrinth into the bright lights of the foyer.

I'm sure there were other elements in the show which I can't remember as clearly- but the above were the main impressions.

The show broke new ground for me in many ways. It was a different, exciting, slightly scary and risky, but finally life-affirming. Its effect, in the life-journey it symbolised, from darkness to light and back again, finally arriving at the relaxed silent warm haven, was magical and thought-provoking simultaneously. The Creator knew what he was doing. Without us knowing, giving us the illusion of free will, he manipulated us into creating our own journeys".

Pontio: *Digital Tea Dance* (2011)

I volunteered as a performer in a production that included many of the conceits of immersive theatre: *a Digital Tea Dance* (2011). In this production, actors would dance with members of the audience as part of the performance. The building fed into the performance having played the role of housing the BBC's entertainment department during the Second World War. The space was suitably dressed, a live band playing music from the era and the audience were invited to dress for the event and join in with dancing interspersing the drama. The performance was certainly participatory but I remained unsure of whether it could be called immersive. The story happened in and around the audience but they were seated on three sides of the space looking onto a central dance floor and performance space. The scenes had all been scripted and it was in the in-between spaces that participation occurred. All the audience saw all the same on-stage sequences, it was only the interspersing dance numbers where audience participation was included and this did not alter the overall narrative. Additionally, whilst the space was dressed, the audience did not come into contact with the space directly, lacking the physical interaction that, in my view, would make the performance immersive. Whilst they were given tea and cake, they were handed out to them by performers, not sought out and chosen. This performance highlighted the importance of play within immersive theatres, for the audience to seek out and engage with the performance or performers in some way. Although closely linked to immersive theatres, the subtle differences in my mind made the work participatory, but not immersive.

Figure 36: ***Digital Tea Dance*** **(2011). The performance space where the audience were seated on three sides. The audience were encouraged to dance between each scene.**