Glitter and Glue: Examining the Role of Participation with Young People at Northern Stage, 1967-2017

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on Northern Stage's engagement with young people from 1967 to 2017 and reveals how this work has played a key role in shaping the identity and values of the organisation and those involved in it. Although Northern Stage is a prominent cultural organisation in the North East, it has received little academic attention to date. My research addresses this gap and positions Northern Stage within the fields of regional theatre history and young people's participation. Northern Stage has a longer and more important history of participation work with young people than the theatre itself, or the wider research community, has been aware of. This thesis engages with recent scholarship regarding the concept of participation and explores its meaning from the point of view of Northern Stage's Participation department, its artistic directors, and young people.

The thesis provides an analysis of the character and impact of participation at Northern Stage through archival research, interviews with thirty four people (staff, stakeholders, and participants) and observations of five different participation projects. It presents Northern Stage as a pioneer in its work with young people and demonstrates how a strong line of hereditary succession amongst staff has created a powerful, tacit transfer of knowledge.

The originality of this study is three-fold: it uncovers new material about the history of one of England's major regional producing theatres; offers an original use of oral history for the study of participation; and explores practices of participation over a fifty-year period. This approach has value for academics, policy advisors, marketers and practitioners working in the arts. It demonstrates how participation for young people in regional theatre matters to our society in increasingly challenging circumstances.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Overview

Northern Stage has its own building in the centre of Newcastle upon Tyne within Newcastle University's campus and produces original drama as well as hosting visiting companies' shows. It is a well-established part of the regional and national theatre scene in the UK. In 2015, the Audience Agency described Northern Stage as 'one of the Big 11' most significant regional producing theatres in England, and Northern Stage became one of Arts Council England's National Portfolio Organisations in the same year. This thesis examines the role of young people's participation at Northern Stage between its inception in 1967 and 2017, when my time as a researcher-in-residence at Northern Stage as part of the Collaborative Doctoral Award came to an end. It proposes that Northern Stage's work with young people – its participation work – is a more important part of the theatre's identity than has previously been recognised. Through an exploration of the nature and impact of participation work at Northern Stage, this thesis argues that the theatre's engagement with young people is one of the most consistent and significant parts of its history.

Examining the role of young people's participation at Northern Stage during this fifty-year period involved investigation of a series of distinct areas of enquiry, and used of a range of different methodological approaches, including interviews, observation, archival research, and 'deep hanging out' (Geertz 69). It required understanding of what 'participation' means in the context of this venue, and a comparison of this use with the term's application in scholarly literature. It involved examining how staff and stakeholders have perceived young people's participation, how it has impacted the organisation and those responsible for its delivery. It has also been necessary to analyse the establishment and development of the organisation so as to place the company's work with young people in context over this period. This engagement with the history of the theatre provided a background and a historical framework for the analysis of the theatre's work in 2016 through observation and interviews. It also resulted in the

identification of previously unstudied and uncatalogued archival records. Determining exactly when Northern Stage came into existence proved to be challenging, however. Although Northern Stage celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 2020, which would place its inauguration in 1970, my research puts Northern Stage's origins earlier than this, in at least 1967, with the opening of the Newcastle Playhouse in Jesmond ("Newcastle Playhouse Cuttings"). Other aspects of the company's history also complicate the production of a simple account of its organisational development. The theatre and its company have been known by several different names and have moved locations more than once.

Establishing the organisational home of participatory work at Northern Stage appeared – at least initially – more straightforward. Since 2006 Northern Stage has had a Participation department that has mostly centred upon work with young people. As I set out in the Literature Review, 'participation' has received considerable scholarly attention as a term and concept in recent years. Nevertheless, Northern Stage does not make the same differentiation between various forms of participation that the academic literature does. To align with the way that the theatre itself determines participation, I use the term to encompass the spectrum of ways young people engage with Northern Stage. As will become apparent, it might appear that the organisation approaches participation in a more light-hearted way than academia usually does. The phrase 'Glitter and Glue' in the title of this thesis refers to an internal, organisation nickname for the Participation department at Northern Stage.[1] It indicates that participation is seen as less than serious; and it also positions participation as a fun and hands-on activity that sits adjunct to the main artistic programme. Whilst I observed that Participation staff accepted the informal nickname from their colleagues with a wry smile, I argue that their acceptance of this label risks underplaying the integral role that participation with young people has within the artistic vision of the theatre. Below, I demonstrate that young people's work has significantly affected the theatre and those who engage with it, and that participation at Northern Stage deserves recognition as an art form rather than an activity. The historical records which detail participation at Northern Stage, together with the information obtained from interviews and observations, indicate that the theatre's work with young people is neither light-hearted, nor a peripheral activity. Further to this, it is important to highlight the use of the term 'young people'

[1] Information gathered from interview with Participation staff at Northern Stage, 31 May 2016.

rather than 'children' in this thesis. The participants interviewed and observed ranged in age from 3 to 30 years old, and so the descriptor 'young people' more accurately reflects this breadth. The term also signals a continuum of development rather than something separate from being an adult, encouraging readers to remember, following Dr Seuss, '[a] person's a person, no matter how small' (*Horton Hears a Who!*).

The originality of this study is three-fold: firstly, it uncovers new material about a major regional producing theatre; secondly, it analyses the history of participation at this theatre over a fifty-year period; and thirdly, it uses oral history methods for the study of participation. The use of historical documents, oral histories, and ethnographic observation to examine young people's participation at Northern Stage in this way is original. The main argument of this thesis is that Northern Stage's work with young people can be perceived as a *golden thread* throughout the organisation's history, drawn forward from early pioneers associated with the theatre, including Dorothy Heathcote. I argue that the important position and work of this regional theatre, particularly the history of its work with young people, has been overlooked by the organisation itself and academic scholarship. The purpose of this thesis is to begin to remedy that gap in understanding.

1.2 Justification

Despite being a prominent Tyneside cultural venue, there is very little scholarship on Northern Stage (as discussed in the Literature Review which follows). Indeed, the theatre itself has not previously sought to document and understand its past practices or its historical identity in any sustained way. At the outset of this project in 2015 there was nothing on Northern Stage's website or in its print material about the history of the venue or the company. Inside the theatre there was a single, backstage wall plaque, with text and images which gave a brief outline from 1970 but did not mention young people's work. There is evidence, nevertheless, that some of its staff have considered engagement with its history to be of value. In 1990, the Artistic Director of Northern Stage, Andrew McKinnon, is quoted as saying, '[t]o understand this company, you need to understand its history' (qtd. in Pattison), but in the same report a marketing consultant employed to advise the theatre warned Northern Stage in capital letters: 'DO NOT BECOME PRISONERS OF YOUR OWN HISTORY' (Pattison). The report advised that the only lessons

Northern Stage needed to learn were from financial mistakes. Sadly, this was not the last time the theatre faced financial problems, but it does appear that from here on the theatre followed the consultant's advice, effectively ignoring its history. From 1991, Northern Stage stopped actively archiving its records.

The Collaborative Doctoral Award framework created a valuable opportunity to remedy this gap in knowledge about Northern Stage's past, through the assessment and gathering of the archival records which did remain, and through spending time within the theatre and witnessing its current operation first-hand. There was also an urgency to this research. As the history of the theatre still resided within living memory, it presented a timely opportunity to speak directly to people who had been involved in participation work, as staff, stakeholders, and participants. As will become clear, this research fundamentally shifts the story Northern Stage tells about itself. It has led to a growing appreciation within the organisation towards its history, as demonstrated by Northern Stage's decision to publish historical information on its webpages and to establish an official archive at Newcastle University Special Collections and Archives. This thesis establishes its organisational identity as an important regional theatre in Tyneside with a longer history than has previously been acknowledged. Within this context, it becomes possible to determine what characterises participation at Northern Stage, and how it impacts on the organisation, the participants, and the people attached to it.

This study demonstrates that staff at Northern Stage have been preoccupied, for the most part, with facing the present and looking to the future. Yet, as this thesis will demonstrate, Northern Stage's history continued in its practices, especially in relation to participation work with young people. The nature of Northern Stage's history of working with young people consists of inherited participation practices and ideas, passed down through the direct line of successive people leading this work. Indeed, much of this transferral of knowledge and experience has happened tacitly since many of those involved were unaware of the antecedents to their work. In turn they have not been conscious of their legacy. The research makes apparent that there is a vocational drive amongst staff who work in this field. It also identifies problems in relation to trying to measure the value and the positioning of participation within Northern Stage. Part of the issue is the predominant focus on present delivery and forward planning, rather than reflexivity. This thesis provides this reflexivity, showing that the company's participation work

should be understood as part of a spectrum of provision across a continuum of more than fifty years.

1.3 Literature Review

The following section indicates the key publications and sources that have informed this research. It assesses the little scholarship on Northern Stage that does exist and the scattered documents which detail its development. It explores the references that are made to the organisation in publications concerned with British theatre history and contextualises the theatre's participation work in relation to scholarly understanding of the emergence of the traditions of Theatre in Education (TIE) and Drama in Education (DIE) in the UK. It engages with recent scholarship in theatre and performance studies on the concept of participation and discusses the influence of Jacques Derrida's concept of hauntology upon the thesis.

Scholarly Literature on Northern Stage and Archival Sources

Few scholarly publications engage with the work of Northern Stage in depth, and none provide any kind of overview of its development over time. Three reasons could account for this absence of work about Northern Stage within scholarly literature. As will be detailed in the following chapters on the history of Northern Stage, the theatre has seen repeated name changes, relocations and different directors, and this complex history has made the task of engaging with its history more challenging. Though some archival material relating to the company does remain, in recent years there is no evidence that the organisation has seen a value in collecting and curating material about its past. The geographical location of the theatre no doubt impacts the amount of scholarly attention it has received. In *Twentieth-Century British Theatre: Industry, Art and Empire*, Claire Cochrane identifies a significant metropolitan bias in theatre studies to date (2), and the paucity of scholarship on Northern Stage evidences the relative lack of attention received by theatre practice being developed at a distance from London.

The first scholarly references to the work of the company are fleeting. John Elsom refers to the theatre which became Northern Stage in *Theatre Outside of Londo*n. In his review of British regional theatre companies, published in 1971, Elsom observes that 'it is too early to hazard a guess as to the ways in which the new theatre will improve the work of this admirable company' (21). The use of the word 'improve' in his short reference to the company is useful in

as much as it (together with the archival material which receives more detailed assessment in Chapter Three) indicates that the genesis of the theatre began earlier than 1970 – which the theatre's current managers consider to be its opening date. Elsom makes it clear that the company that took up residence at the University Theatre in 1970 had already built up a profile and positive reputation within the field of regional repertory theatre. He does not provide detailed discussion of the company's work, however. In his 1976 book, *Theatre in Education*, John O'Toole uses examples from young people's theatre activity in Newcastle, activity which forms an antecedent to Northern Stage's Participation department today. In generalist surveys of British theatre there are occasional sentences about Northern Stage under its various titles (George Rowell and Anthony Jackson note in their history of regional British theatre that by 1984 it had already had at least three names (106)). Collectively, the material in these sources reveals the theatre's prominent place in the cultural life of the city, particularly within the City Council's aspirations for civic development, but does not provide detailed engagement with its work.

In more recent years scholarly engagement with the theatre's work has been provided by scholars located in close proximity to it (a trend which this thesis continues). In 2010 researchers from the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape at Newcastle University studied social engagement within regional theatre, taking Northern Stage as a case study and publishing three articles about theatre habits in the North East (Grisolía et al). By analysing box office data this study revealed that, in line with other UK theatres, the audience for Northern Stage was predominantly from affluent and highly educated sections of society ("Social Engagement" 225-44). However, this study was not looking at the participation work of the theatre but only its box office sales for performances. Duška Radosavljević's 2013 profile of Lyddiard's ensemble practice in the 1990s is the next and arguably the most substantive piece of academic literature about Northern Stage. She makes a compelling case for the pioneering nature of Northern Stage's practice in the field of ensemble work. Finally, Northern Stage featured as one of the case studies in Susanne Burns' research on participation for the Paul Hamlyn Foundation in 2015. Northern Stage was part of the ArtWorks North East pathfinder, led by the University of Sunderland, to research the value of participatory settings. Within the large body of reports associated with this research and advocacy initiatives led by academics and policy makers across

the UK, Northern Stage is briefly flagged as an example of good practice for its participation work (ArtWorks Alliance, "Knowledge Bank").

With a paucity of analysis in secondary scholarship, it became critical to uncover information elsewhere. The earliest references I found relating to Northern Stage come from press articles and ephemera stored at Newcastle City Council local studies archive collection ("Newcastle Playhouse Cuttings"). These cover 1966-1977 and are contained in nine scrapbooks with clippings from newspapers and theatre marketing material, as well as photographs and production information. There is no information about the collection's provenance, but it seems likely that the theatre itself, or someone closely connected to it, kept the material. Reviews of productions and of the building itself in several broadsheet newspapers from this period demonstrate it was deemed worthy of comment in the national press ("Newcastle Playhouse Cuttings"). Closer to home, it was possible to find discussion in Newcastle University's copies of *The Courier* student newspaper, including a relevant article from 1963 ("Flora Robson Playhouse" 5-8). An obituary of John Blackmore, artistic director of the company from 1983 to 1987, is accompanied by an interview in which Blackmore touches on his time at Northern Stage very briefly (Quinn). I have also utilised more recent (and therefore more easily accessible) theatre criticism, for example, from the theatre commentator, blogger and critic Lyn Gardner and articles in the local press.

The Sid Chaplin Archive at Newcastle University holds information about some of the theatre's earliest and most famous productions, including *Close the Coalhouse Door* in 1968 (Sid Chaplin Papers). After this, there is a brief flurry of information relating to the opening of Northern Stage (then called the University Theatre) in 1970 in a new purpose-built, cutting-edge building (Sid Chaplin Papers). Again, most of this material comes from archive collections at Newcastle University and at the City Library, including the original plans (Northern Stage Archive; "University Theatre Illus."). The next time Northern Stage appears in the archives is in two collections stored at Tyne and Wear Archives within its City Council holdings (because the council was the main funder of the theatre). These records date from 1976 to 1991 and include board papers, production photographs, press cuttings, and publicity. I was then unable to find any later information on the theatre until eventually discovering that material from 1991 onwards had been kept at the theatre itself in a storeroom, without anyone at the theatre being aware of it. I

arranged for this material to be transferred to Newcastle University Special Collections where it has since been catalogued and labelled as the Northern Stage Archive under the leadership of Rosalind Haslett and Ian Johnson.

Regional Theatre History

Natasha Vall argues that the North East of England possesses a distinctive regional cultural identity, not least because it is the furthest English region from London and has a history of using culture to encourage regeneration (3). As such, the study of a prominent North East cultural venue acts as a counterpoint to London-dominated narratives. There is value, however, in placing the development of Northern Stage in the broader context of the history of British regional theatre. Elsom's *Theatre Outside London* provides a national overview contemporaneous with the foundation of Northern Stage. It places what was happening in Newcastle within a wider picture of national growth and civic pride in regional theatres, illustrating that at this time regional theatre was becoming a significant part of the cultural history of the UK. Rowell and Jackson's *The Repertory Movement*, a study of regional theatre which appeared in 1984, remains a key reference text despite its age. This text provided a context and understanding in which to situate research on Northern Stage. In their introduction, they point out that there is no straightforward, linear narrative of regional repertory theatre and that there are patterns and phases of development which are both progressive and/or conservative at different times. Their analysis accounts for some of the flux that Northern Stage has gone through, helping to explain why its history is complex, and why it has intermittently expanded and shrunk as an organisation. Furthermore, Rowell and Jackson observe that 'regional theatres have to reinvent themselves, otherwise they risk being left high and dry as society, its tastes and its needs, continues to change' (187). This statement continued to ring true during my observations of Northern Stage in 2016. Rowell and Jackson's account enabled me to view Northern Stage as being emblematic of the history of modern regional theatre.

Kate Dunn's *Exit Through the Fireplace*, *The Great Days of Rep* (published in 1998) takes a more personal and anecdotal approach, surveying the experiences and insights of actors, writers, directors, and designers. She traces the origins of the repertory movement from Dublin to Manchester and then across England, first encouraged and enabled by CEMA (the Council for

Encouragement of Music and the Arts) and then followed by its successor after World War Two, the Arts Council of Great Britain (ACGB), and superseded in 1994 by Arts Council England (ACE). The strength of Dunn's work is the first-hand testimonies from the theatre practitioners that she interviews from 1920 to the 1990s. She establishes that many significant theatre careers were forged through the experience of working in repertory, and that those involved have vivid memories attached to their time working in regional theatres. Dunn's work indicated the role of memory and personal stories in providing historical insight and informed my decision to interview Northern Stage's staff, participants, and stake holders.

More recent scholarship on regional theatre history includes the work of Cochrane and Ros Merkin. Cochrane's work on the Birmingham Rep (2003) and Merkin's work on the Liverpool Playhouse (2011) provide exemplary models of theatre scholarship on specific institutions and supply insights which resonate with this study on Northern Stage. Merkin's history of the Liverpool Playhouse demonstrates how a theatre can retain a strong identity even in the face of name, location, and leadership changes. Kate Dorney and Merkin's edited collection on the Arts Council, *The Glory of the Garden: English Regional Theatre and the Arts Council*, also provided a much deeper contextual understanding of this organisation's founding principles and structure upon its publication in 2010. In the case of the Birmingham Rep, Cochrane reveals how personalities have a large impact on the nature of a theatre and how the perception of a theatre by its local populace can have a significant impact on its identity. Overall, even though Merkin and Cochrane focus on different venues, their histories provided models which demonstrate how fragmented traces of a theatre's past can be shaped into a descriptive and analytical narrative. Indeed, Cochrane's work as a leading figure in the research of regional theatre history bookended the development of this thesis. I started out with her *Twentieth-Century British Theatre: Industry, Art and Empire*, which sets out the economic, social, and political factors that impacted the theatre sector. This enabled me to reflect on the history of Northern Stage within the broader context of British theatre development. I finished my research by turning to Cochrane again in *The Methuen Drama Handbook of Theatre History and Historiography*, co-edited with Jo Robinson. Although this work presented a global picture rather than a British one, the editors' call to widen knowledge about the individuals who transmit

knowledge about theatre practices, as well as bringing theatre in from the margins of the discipline of history, resonated loudly in my approach to Northern Stage.

Participation

There is a wealth of scholarly literature on participation in theatre and performance studies relating to audience engagement, immersive theatre, and applied theatre practices, yet much of this literature does not focus on work which is specifically designed to be produced by and with young people. Nevertheless, some studies provide a useful framework for engagement with the kind of practice developed at Northern Stage. In *Audience Participation in Theatre,* Gareth White's concept of participation as interaction which involves tactile engagement and can cover a spectrum of non-hierarchical activity is key to understanding the nature of participation at Northern Stage. Other literature explores the history of applied drama techniques in ways that reveal connections between these practices and approaches to participation at Northern Stage. In *Participation*, Claire Bishop does not specifically discuss the experiences of young people, but she does analyse the roots of participation in theatre, as evident in Brechtian practices of the 1930s which sought to disrupt boundaries between the stage actors and audiences (11). Over the following decades, as Nicholson describes in *Applied Theatre*, these practices migrated towards and combined with other initiatives that were specifically aimed at involving young people in shaping the drama performances they were engaged with, namely Theatre in Education (TIE) and Drama in Education (DIE) (8). TIE and DIE are both part of Northern Stage's profile and are discussed in more detail below.

A review of scholarly literature on participation also indicates awareness that there is a great deal of participatory work being developed across arts and community organisations. Discussing community art practices, Francois Matarasso noted that participation is a pervasive phenomenon that:

> has spread from the marginal urban and rural spaces it occupied in the seventies to the centres of cultural power. It can be found in arts and cultural institutions; social, urban and economic policy; health and education services; criminal justice; housing; the voluntary sector; the media; across the Internet, and in communities everywhere (19).

Matarasso argues, however, that the increasing ubiquity of participatory practices is not matched by a rise in status, and that participatory art is valued less than presentational forms of art. In 2012, the AHRC-funded project *Understanding Everyday Participation* proposed that there needed to be a 'radical re-evaluation of the relationship between participation and cultural value' (Everyday Participation, "The Project") while in 2015 the Paul Hamlyn Foundation argued that 'participatory work has not enjoyed the status it deserves' (ArtWorks Alliance, *ArtWorks: A call to action* 3). The four-year research initiative, *ArtWorks*, also found that 'the poor image of arts in participatory settings limits opportunities for artists' (qtd. in Burns 13). These contributions regarding the disparity between the perceived status of participatory practice and its *de facto* prevalence are representative of wider debates about the position of participation (Bishop; McCarthy and Jinnett; Brown and Novak-Leonard). The study of Northern Stage presents an excellent opportunity to explore the issues these publications present. I examine how participation, specifically with young people, is an important core feature of the organisation, which positively impacts on the identities of those involved with it, but which still struggles to achieve recognition in the theatre and beyond.

Theatre in Education (TIE) and Drama in Education (DIE)

Theatre in Education and Drama in Education are core to understanding participation at Northern Stage, and their use at Northern Stage is examined in more detail in Chapter Six. The following section allows a brief summary of the literature in this area which has informed this study. Theatre in Education (TIE) was a term first used in the 1960s for a broad range of activities which were designed to take theatre experiences into schools, and to use theatrical performance and drama workshops to explore issues of cultural, social, political, and moral significance (Nicholson *Theatre & Education 22*). Scholarship on TIE often explores its history, examines its aims, and seeks to argue for its cultural significance. Writing in 1980, Anthony Jackson argued that TIE was one of the most important developments in British theatre in the previous sixty years (i). Helen Nicholson also testifies to the importance of TIE, outlining its social and educational aims (*Applied Drama* 8). She explains that its 'primary objective was to use theatre as a tool to explore ideas, feelings, and values rather than to teach children how to put

on plays' (*Theatre & Education* 24). Most histories of TIE focus on its origins at the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry in 1965 (Jackson, *Learning Through Theatre* 15; Trussler 346; Wooster, *Contemporary Theatre* 2). Wooster suggests its heyday ran from the 1970s to the early 1990s and identifies its origins in post Second World War changes in British politics and society (*Theatre in Education* 13). This time frame correlates with the expansion and then contraction of TIE work at Northern Stage, and elsewhere. The Belgrade Theatre closed its TIE unit in 1996 (Wooster, *Theatre in Education* 176). Other theatres also struggled to keep their TIE units going after the Education Reform Act of 1988 (Cochrane, "It stands" 188).

Writing in 2016, Wooster offers some fairly pessimistic views on the current state of the original manifestation of TIE and sees little evidence of classic TIE in contemporary theatre work with young people. Yet records of debate at a conference at the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry in November 2015 – designed to celebrate TIE's fiftieth anniversary – demonstrate that some practitioners disagreee. The conference convener, Justine Themen, argued that many current leaders of young people's work see themselves as continuing practices and ideologies that TIE initiated, albeit under different headings such as 'participation' or 'learning.' Others share her view. In an earlier interview with Cochrane, Paul Sutton noted that TIE no longer exists in its original form, observing, 'What was a unified movement twenty years ago has now fragmented into a range of different methodologies' (qtd. in Cochrane, "It stands" 195).[2] Given that Nicholson observes that 'participation' was one of the bywords for TIE right from the outset (*Theatre & Education* 26), and Northern Stage's TIE successor is called the Participation department, it seems that Themen's point of view is well founded.

It is also important to note here that Northern Stage has a longer, more consistent history of influential TIE provision than other institutions – a history which surely deserves greater recognition. Whilst Northern Stage began its TIE work later than the Belgrade Theatre, with the foundation of its TIE company, Stagecoach, in 1969, it has never ceased to provide participation work with young people using the TIE model. Furthermore, O'Toole, who wrote one of the earliest accounts of TIE (1976), was employed by Northern Stage as well as being Newcastle University's Fellow in Theatre in Education, 1973-74 (ix). This thesis aims to remedy the omission of Northern Stage in the histories of TIE.

[2] Sutton's own company C&T started as a TIE venture and now uses applied theatre to fuse drama and technology.

Drama in Education (DIE) is a pedagogy that focused on using drama techniques in schools to support teaching and learning in the classroom. Unlike TIE, it is not associated with a definitive starting date but is seen to have gradually evolved from ideas about using drama techniques in education from the early to mid-twentieth century. It gained momentum after the publication of Brian Way's *Development Through Drama* (1967) and the work of Heathcote (1926-2011) and Gavin Bolton (1924–). Both Heathcote and Bolton were attached to Northern Stage as advisors for its work with young people, and their work with the company receives more detailed discussion in Chapter Six. Heathcote worked at the University of Newcastle (1964-1986) and became a prominent figure in academia and the media for her innovative and unorthodox approaches towards teacher training. She established a diploma in Drama Education at Newcastle University in 1963. Bolton, who was based at the University of Durham (1961-1989), often worked alongside Heathcote, and also developed theories and practices for creating drama with young people. Heathcote and Bolton were on the advisory panel for the Theatre in Education department at Northern Stage from at least 1983 to 1991, according to the TIE programmes.[3] Northern Stage's relationship with Heathcote and Bolton, as well as O'Toole, demonstrates that the company was nationally significant: a leading light in the field of young people's work. The relationships also established a precedent for fruitful academic links between the theatre and the university.

Whilst most studies of DIE credit Heathcote and Bolton as being its most famous proponents, they invariably focus on the influence DIE had on teaching in schools (O'Neill). for Wooster talks about a relationship between DIE and TIE (*Contemporary Theatre in Education* 23-26) but generally there is less examination of the influence that DIE had in theatres than in school. Its North East of England connections are invisible. My discovery that both Heathcote and Bolton were advisors to Northern Stage's Theatre in Education team (1983-1991) demonstrates not only that DIE has been used outside of a classroom context, it makes the link between TIE and DIE explicit and draws out the North East roots. This connection is of particular significance because DIE theory and practices were still evident in Northern Stage's practices in 2016.

[3] Terry Deary, who went on to become nationally renowned for creating the Horrible Histories series, was also an advisor at this time ("Northern Stage TIE programmes," Chris Bostock Archive).

Although DIE is associated with delivering drama within educational settings such as schools, and focuses on working with teachers, it produced ideas which became central to participation activity at Northern Stage. DIE focused on training teachers to deliver drama in their classes whereas TIE used theatre practitioners to lead activities. Northern Stage, however, embedded ideas and practices from DIE in their TIE work with young people. The two fields of TIE and DIE worked well together because they were both about 'participation' and encouraging role-play. Historically both TIE and DIE practitioners describe the young people as 'participants' which highlights these practices' relevance to participation in theatre today. The practice of participation at Northern Stage indicates that specialisms in theatre provision for young people, such as TIE and DIE, cross-pollinate one another. Indeed, Nicholson considers them together under the umbrella of applied theatre and notes their shared educational goals and participatory practices (*Applied Drama* 2). I argue that ultimately TIE and DIE work in tandem and overlap in the development of Northern Stage's work with young people. As will become clear, Northern Stage both exemplified and pioneered TIE work and continued it for a longer period than many other theatres found possible (Wooster, *Theatre in Education* 86).[4] The theories of TIE and DIE espoused by O'Toole, Bolton and Heathcote consciously drove Northern Stage's effort in the 1980s and 1990s to pioneer work for young people. It was the greenhouse where Heathcote and Bolton's ideas were seeded – ideas which in turn informed the approaches taken by subsequent Directors of Participation, both consciously and tacitly. A fuller appreciation of the details of the historical development of TIE at Northern Stage marks an important step to understanding participation's current role at the theatre. As such, whilst the term TIE is almost redundant in the language that theatres use today, its mission and approaches persist at the theatre. The TIE and DIE work gave a strong theoretical and academic foundation for Northern Stage's work with young people. In 2016, staff continue to enact the vocational approach of TIE and DIE, even though they do not consciously credit these predecessors.

[4] Wooster does not talk about Northern Stage, but he does address the problems that theatre companies had sustaining TIE.

Hauntology

This thesis is informed by the concept of hauntology, in so far as it argues that past figures and practices involved with young people's work at Northern Stage resonate through time and continue to make their presence felt. The term originates in Jacques Derrida's French *hantologie*, which first appears in his *Spectres de Marx* (1994) and the concept lends itself readily to the study of a theatre. Ghosts and hauntings both literal and symbolic are often associated with theatres and performance, and frequently present themselves in theatre studies (Carlson, *The Haunted Stage*). Indeed, Derrida himself uses the ghost in *Hamlet* to push forward his ideas about dislocated time. In Derrida's work, the spectre is a figure that is neither alive, nor dead. It is a symbol of temporal disjuncture, which Mark Fisher describes as having 'no being in itself' ("What is Hauntology?" 20). Derrida encourages people to speak and listen to the spectre to encourage and open up meaning. Similarly, the research for this thesis encourages engagement with Northern Stage's past to deepen understanding about the organisation. However, the use of hauntology is not without risk. It has become such a popular tool within literary and critical criticism that some argue that it is in danger of becoming meaningless through overuse (Davis 373; Gallix). Mindful of this, I was also wary about promulgating the potentially clichéd image of a theatre and its ghostly inhabitants, and yet I found myself constantly referencing past actions and people when conducting field work. Ultimately, I embraced Peter Buse and Andrew Stott's assertion that it is clear that 'modern theory owes a debt to ghosts' (6), in so far as present circumstances are widely recognised as being built upon a layering of knowledge over time. Indeed, as Julian Wolfreys states, 'all forms of narrative are spectral to some extent' (*Victorian Hauntings* 1), and 'the spectral is at the heart of any narrative of the modern' (3). Following Wolfreys, I would argue that piecing together the narrative of Northern Stage's past development and the role of participation within the organisation necessarily invokes ghosts.

I wish to avoid negative Western connotations of ghosts and spectres as figures who haunt proceedings with unpleasant emotions or an ominous prescience, however: participation, I believe, should be interpreted as a positive and persistent spectral influence at Northern Stage. The spectres within participation at Northern Stage are more akin to wider global perspectives on ghosts as benevolent ancestors, with whom a relationship is actively cultivated – as with the Obon festival in Japan (Teiser) or the Day of the Dead in Mexico (Haley and Fukuda). The

spectres at Northern Stage are the people who have influenced or delivered its work with young people, whose ideas and practices continue to be traceable today. Appreciation of the concept of hauntology highlights the fact that the present is not self-sufficient, and that returning, persistent elements of the past should be acknowledged. In this study, this acknowledgement enables better understanding of Northern Stage's participation work with young people.

Mike Crang's work is also instructive here. In the opening chapter of his book, *Cultural Geography*, Crang discusses how places develop meanings, and explores the possibility of seeing the landscape as a palimpsest – a surface (in ancient history a writing block) which has been engraved and wiped out and engraved again, and each time leaves a faint indelible mark. The engravings (or actions) may be symbolic or physical, but the importance is that their presence is still with us, even if they are not there. Drawing on Crang's insight, I propose that practices of participation at Northern Stage could be conceived of as a palimpsest. In this sense, the hauntology of participation at Northern Stage can be positioned as something which has left an indelible mark on the organisation which cannot be erased even if it is ignored, as new chapters are written. Using hauntology, this thesis makes clear the persistence of elements of Northern Stage's past in its present. I argue that although Northern Stage is not always aware of its past, its history unequivocally resonates and shapes its present.

1.4 Thesis Structure

Following this introduction, Chapter Two provides an account of the methodologies used during this research. Without any substantial existing academic work on Northern Stage to draw on, accessing archive and documentary sources was key to creating a historical and contextual picture of the company. Research involved visits to various archives and identifying relevant primary sources such as board papers, theatre ephemera including programmes, and press articles. A study of secondary literature was conducted to contextualise Northern Stage in relation to other regional theatres' participation work with young people. Subsequent primary research involved the observation of and interviews with staff, stakeholders, and participants. In this chapter, each research action is examined in turn, beginning with archival analysis and engagement with wider theatre scholarship, before moving on to the process of conducting and collecting information using oral history techniques, observation, and ethical considerations. The

chapter concludes with a reflection on my position as a researcher and what is learned from triangulation of findings.

The thesis then moves to present Northern Stage's historical development before engaging with detailed analysis of its young people's work. Chapter Three analyses the early history of the theatre. It begins with a summary of the name and location changes of the theatre. It positions Northern Stage as part of the regional repertory movement that blossomed in the post-war era outside of London and argues that Northern Stage's importance has been overlooked. This chapter unveils how the establishment of Northern Stage was a product of local politics and culture, as well as a national initiative to invest in regional work. It argues that young people's participation was embedded within the founding vision for a regional theatre in Newcastle; a vision which blended ideology with pragmatism. Although Northern Stage officially cites its inauguration as 1970, my research dates its origin to 1967, with the opening of the Newcastle Playhouse in Jesmond, while its sustained work with young people started in 1969 with the Stagecoach Theatre in Education company ("Newcastle Playhouse Cuttings"; Found and Hartnoll 346). Archival sources reveal that early on in its history, the theatre had a strong social mission directed towards engaging young people. In addition to the regional repertory status, a new building for the theatre in 1970 heralded a vision for greater community engagement. This chapter argues, therefore, that from the outset there was a desire to include young people in theatre in a dynamic way.

Chapter Four looks at how Northern Stage has presented and positioned itself since 1991. At the time of writing, the archival material available finished in 1991 and so to be able to continue a history of Northern Stage I turned to evaluating secondary sources and conducting interviews with the artistic directors since this time. 1991 is also significant because it is when Alan Lyddiard took over directorship and founded the Northern Stage Ensemble. This is the first time Northern Stage as a title is used and refers to the theatre company (it is not until 2006 that the venue also becomes known as Northern Stage). The chapter argues that a social agenda which championed young people continued to be a core part of Northern Stage's identity under each successive directorship, as the theatre continued to develop a strong Participation programme for young people.

Chapter Five builds upon the historical overview provided in Chapters Three and Four. It ranges across the whole of the company's history, assessing how the theatre's relationship to its geographical location has informed its approach to its identity and to its participatory practice. It touches upon the social, cultural, and political implications of 'Northernness' in relation to the theatre and those who engage with it and reveals that this quality is often defined in opposition, either to the South, or to the metropolitan centre. It also demonstrates that the significance of the 'Northern' in Northern Stage has evolved during different directorships. Under Alan Lyddiard's leadership, the theatre's identity was articulated as distinctly Northern European, while Erica Whyman promoted the company as a champion of a Northern UK network. However, there is also continuity. Those in charge of Northern Stage have consistently felt that it is important that the theatre promotes work which is relevant to people who live in the region and which champions theatre professionals from the region. This has relevance to young people as both the consumers and creators of this work.

Chapter Six moves from the broader institutional context to focus exclusively on Northern Stage's participation work. Here the theoretical and practical use of the term participation is discussed to present a fuller understanding of what it means for Northern Stage. The significant history of the company's close links with pioneers in TIE and DIE, O'Toole, Heathcote, and Bolton, are shown to be highly relevant to its current practices. Using material generated through interviews with participants and supported by observations, the chapter argues that Northern Stage's practices and ideas have had a distinctive and powerful impact on the identities of those involved for over fifty years. It also makes the artistic integrity of participation work at Northern Stage clear. It reveals, however, that the reconciliation of cultural and education policies has been problematic for Northern Stage.

Analysis of the testimonies of participants indicates that although participants' experiences were clearly personal to them, there were repeated themes, words, and phrases which produce a clear and consistent narrative around the work. Four key outcomes in relation to participation at Northern Stage are identified. Participants reported feeling empowered and confident; having improved social and practical skills; feeling valued and respected; and feeling welcome, comfortable, and safe. Moreover, there is an indication that these outcomes were long

lasting. The theatre has never conducted a longitudinal study of the experiences of participants, but this chapter draws upon responses from people who have engaged across several decades. The chapter also indicates that the testimonies of young people in 2016 frequently echo the sentiments that Heathcote et al. propounded about the value of TIE and DIE, showing that their ideas continue at Northern Stage. The chapter concludes by proposing that participation is best viewed as an art form at Northern Stage rather than an activity, because it has been crafted so carefully with a distinctive aesthetic over years of work.

Chapter Seven draws upon oral histories gathered with both the artistic directors and the young people's leaders. It also brings in the perspective of key stakeholders who fund or work alongside the organisation as well as wider management. This chapter argues that there is a clear vocational drive behind participation work at Northern Stage, created by key individuals who have shaped and delivered the programmes. The pivotal part which artistic directors play is analysed before going on to argue that there has been a powerful tacit transfer of knowledge about what participation means and how it is delivered between the successive staff who have led this work at Northern Stage since 1984. Together these insights make a case for the distinctive nature of participation work with young people at Northern Stage. The chapter argues that, whilst there have been changes in each era of Northern Stage's management, it is possible to identify overriding qualities and principles that define the company's work with young people throughout its history. Interviews with artistic directors and Participation leaders at Northern Stage demonstrate that participation work is driven by a vocational and ideologically driven belief in the value of this form of engagement. The interviewees all shared a strong belief in participation's power to benefit young people, to fulfil their own artistic needs, and to enrich society. The chapter sets out a number of defining features of their work, including a strategic approach that allows space for opportunistic engagement and risk-taking in a safe environment that supports self-expression; approaching young people's work with the same professional standards given to adult-orientated work; using young people's voices as the starting point for developing work; and putting training at the heart of their practice.

In sum, this thesis presents the reader with a new history of a major regional theatre, Northern Stage, and its work with young people. It is important to acknowledge that the research

focuses specifically on Northern Stage and does not engage with wider regional theatre and participation with young people, though it does have implications for future studies in this broader field. It contributes to knowledge about cultural life in the North East of England, to knowledge about regional theatre, and enhances knowledge about a regional theatre's work with young people. It adds new material and a fresh perspective on the body of scholarly research on theatres as organisations and is intended to raise the profile of participation work with young people. Its hauntological approach illuminates the golden thread that runs through Northern Stage's participation work from its earliest days and the work of the renowned drama teacher Heathcote through to its practices and ideas up to 2017. It provides a level of reflexive insight that the theatre has not been able to pursue before, revealing that participation work with young people has had a powerful effect on the identity of the organisation, on participants, and on staff.

Chapter 2

Methodologies

This chapter outlines the research methods which generated this thesis and discusses arising issues. Before doing so, however, it is important to note that the nature of my Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA) meant that the theatre and the University had drawn up a partnership agreement before the appointment of a researcher. As part of the CDA partnership, Northern Stage agreed to give the researcher access to their organisation, and to support the project by identifying relevant material and providing a member of staff as a point of contact. This affected the methodology in so far as I had access to both university resources and those at Northern Stage. Accordingly, the project drew on a wide range of sources and the research methodology employed a combination of historical and observational approaches to make best use of the access provided to the organisation's work.

Initially, I surveyed the extant scholarship and identified secondary sources on Northern Stage. As noted in the thesis introduction, these sources proved to be sparse and did not provide a comprehensive picture. I then turned to archival research to develop my own analysis of primary documents and images about the theatre. Having built up a background picture of the history of the theatre, as far as was possible, I still needed more information about young people's past engagement. This required identifying the key figures who had experience of this work, both as creators, observers and/or as participants. Having done so, I began a series of interviews to collect their memories and insights using oral history methods, which included open ended questions. As well as historical figures I interviewed current participants and staff to ensure that the account was up to date. This enabled me to gauge whether what had happened in the past had any bearing upon present understanding of the role of participation at Northern Stage. Alongside these methods I adopted an observational approach similar to Ben Walmsley's interpretation of Clifford Geertz's 'deep hanging out' (Walmsley, "Deep Hanging Out"). This involved spending close contact time with Northern Stage for a year in 2016 which enabled me to witness the nature of the theatre's current participation work first-hand, and to undertake interviews with present-day participants.

2.1 Documentary Research

Research on this project began with a standard review of relevant scholarship. Evidence from secondary literature was found largely through three sources. Firstly, my supervisors made reading recommendations, followed by searches on Newcastle and Northumbria universities' library catalogues. This involved using terms related to the topic with a host of combined variations using Booleans. Finally, I relied on the bibliographies from the key texts that I initially identified which were proving useful to signpost other material. The scope and nature of the extant literature on Northern Stage was explored in the introduction to this thesis. Below, I cover how I supplemented that material.

A number of archival collections have provided valuable sources of information for this research, including holdings at the Tyne and Wear Archives (TWAM), a collection detailing Northern Stage's history held at Newcastle City Library, and the Sid Chaplin Archive held at Newcastle University's Special Collections. As I discuss below, I was also able to access the theatre's own files which were still in use, and my research generated a new archive of material relating to the theatre's past. This was the result of my discovery of a collection of historical documents at the theatre. This material, now held at Newcastle University's Library Special Collections, will be supplemented by the contents of Chris Bostock's personal collection of material relating to the history of participation work of the theatre, another product of my research.

My work in the archives began, however, when I first accessed the Tyne and Wear Archives having been informed by Northern Stage that this was where official material pertaining to the theatre's history was housed. I identified the relevant Tyne and Wear Theatre collections and ordered the boxes of materials to consult over several weeks in the archives. This resource enabled me to piece together a partial history of the theatre. Working with this collection was not straightforward. The collection is not digitised and as I surveyed the material, I made notes on each part of the collection held so that I could return to it if necessary. Yet the collection does have strengths which reward time spent with it. The Board papers detail both the financial proceedings and the discussion framework around development and changes. The collection's weakness, from the point of view of this project's focus, is the lack of detail about

young people's work and the circumspection of the accounts of discussions saved. Though the papers provide inferences about problems, debates, and disagreements, they provide no details. The information given generally outlines the final decisions taken with a supporting rationale and does not give insight into the decision-making process or the personal views of the people charged with making those decisions. Faced with this material, which often seemed to invite the researcher to read between the lines, it was necessary to guard against overly speculative engagement and to stick to conclusions that could be corroborated with evidence.

Another limitation was the time period covered by these documents. Although the information was detailed, it mostly came from the 1980s and I knew that the theatre had opened in 1970 from the information on a brief history display panel in the theatre's backstage area which mentioned the architect. Casting my research net more broadly, I identified a collection of material at Newcastle City Library that documents the earlier history of Northern Stage. This nine-box collection contains images, publicity material, newspaper reports, and wider ephemera. There is no provenance for the material. The joy of this collection is its breadth and the anecdotal insights it provides (which are lacking in the TWAM archives). Its shortcoming is that there does not appear to be a system governing its organisation or clear rationale for what has been kept. However, the collection provided my first glimpse of the original 1970 plans for the theatre and contained a number of articles about the reception of the building in local and national press, which provided contextual analysis. It also led to another archival resource. Having found reference to Sid Chaplin in this archive, using Archives Hub and Discovery I found that Newcastle University's Special Collections keep the Sid Chaplin Archive. Consulting this archive, I was able to identify papers which related to Alan Plater's play, *Close the Coalhouse Door*, and its production in 1968 at the Newcastle Playhouse (Northern Stage's predecessor).

I was then unable to find any later information on the theatre until eventually discovering, during my time working from a desk at Northern Stage, that material from 1991 onwards had been kept at the theatre itself in a storeroom, without anyone at the theatre apparently being aware of it. After consultation with the theatre and my supervisors, I arranged for this material to be transferred to Newcastle University Special Collections where it has since been catalogued and labelled as the Northern Stage Archive under the leadership of Rosalind Haslett and Ian Johnson. Because this material only came to light during my research, I was unable to use it in

detail as it was in the process of being catalogued.

These archival collections contain rich, albeit partial, sources. Their strength is the visual and documentary records they have preserved across a stretch of time. However, these records were not specifically about young people's work, although they make it clear that young people's participation was always a part of the theatre's delivery model. As a result, the majority of the evidence for young people's work came from two other uncatalogued archives. Firstly, I gained some primary documents as result of the interview that I conducted with Bostock, TIE leader at Northern Stage 1983 to 1992. After a two-hour insight into his memories of young people's work at Northern Stage, Bostock kindly gave me boxes of original programmes and playscripts for the TIE work – an unusual but extremely compelling example of the value of utilising a range of research methods. The in-person interview with Bostock also highlighted the way in which sources can supplement each other. Alone, the programmes were interesting and factual, but together with the oral history recording, which covered the meanings and actions relating to them, they generated much richer insights into this field of work. A final set of primary sources was provided by Kylie Lloyd (Director of Participation 2002-2017), who gave me access to her department's files which amounted to several cabinets' worth of material about participation projects, labelled alphabetically going back to 1992. Going through these previously unstudied files, together with material from the other archives, I was able to draw up a list of projects, putting together a chronology for the first time (see Appendix 1).

2.2 Oral History Methods

As noted above, the use of oral history techniques provided significant sources of information and insight. Using these techniques gave access to the 'invisible' archives located within Northern Stage. Following training at a British Library workshop, I interviewed past and present participants as well as members of Northern Stage, adhering to the Oral History Society's Principles and Best Practice Guidelines. Nearly all of the interviews for this thesis conform to the oral history model because they focus upon gathering an in-depth account of personal experience and reflections on the past from those involved with Northern Stage, with sufficient time allowed for the interviewees to present their story and memories at the length and with the level of detail they desired. The only exceptions were the Summer School interviews

where the participants were asked for their perceptions at the outset of the project and as well as at the end; therefore, these interviews were a commentary on purely contemporary events as opposed to being grounded in reflections on the past, as is the case for oral history. It is also important to note here that I was aware from the outset that these accounts were necessarily subjective. As Alessandro Portelli points out, oral sources 'tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, what they now think they did (99-100) … Subjectivity is as much the business of history as the more visible "facts"' (100). Portelli's observation is relevant to this study, because throughout the fieldwork I was interested in drawing out the subjective perceptions, emotions, and observations of my respondents: something that I could not get from the archives.

Using oral history methods empowered the interviewees to signal and discuss material that they felt was the most relevant to a discussion about young people's participation at Northern Stage rather than responding to a pre-set agenda or argument. These interviews also presented the opportunity to reveal a multiplicity of viewpoints not already present in any written records and to provide something that could be more powerful the written word yet no less reliable. The oral history recordings about Northern Stage represent the point of view of those who experienced the theatre in a particular way at a particular time: they provide a means to access the emotional record and a more detailed record than the printed material presents. The oral histories I collected are about the memory of experience, whether that experience was forty years ago or earlier in the week, and whether the experience lasted two hours or twenty minutes. The interviews used open-ended questions/prompts and interviewee-led discussion about people's direct experience of participation at Northern Stage. They create a unique record of Northern Stage and enrich the archive.

2.3 Sample Size

The people I interviewed represent the key agents with the theatre – those with direct, in-depth, relevant experience of delivering participation. In line with my research questions, I also interviewed people who participated in the theatre in the past or during 2016. Between March and November 2016, twenty-eight interviews were held with thirty-four people. This was the maximum I was able to undertake during this period. One of the consequences of using oral

histories is the amount of material they produce, and the time that they take to transcribe. The Oral History Society calculates a ratio of 1:7 for transcription (every hour of recording takes seven hours to type up). Each interview took between thirty minutes to two hours which explains why I had to be selective about who to interview. Thus, the sample size meets criteria for 'the time and resources available, and the number of suitable people who can be identified and contacted for inclusion' (Denscombe 334). In addition, I observed the different participation activities and events Northern Stage offered during 2016, including workshops with schools and pre-school children, summer schools, Christmas shows, and the *NORTH* training programme for young theatre makers. At most events, I spoke informally to staff, parents, and young people and for some of the projects I held small group interviews. Appendix 6 provides more information on data collection.

2.4 Interviews with Key Management and Delivery Agents

As Ros Merkin notes (in relation to Liverpool Playhouse), artistic directors are often perceived to be the person who has 'stamped their mark most on the character of the theatre at any one moment in time' (3). This observation can also be applied to Northern Stage and, to gain insight into Northern Stage's relationship with young people, I conducted interviews with the three most recent artistic directors of Northern Stage, dating back to 1992: Alan Lyddiard (1992-2005), Erica Whyman (2006-2012) and Lorne Campbell (2013-2019). In addition, I interviewed the Directors and leaders of Participation who had been with the theatre since 1984. These included Chris Bostock, Tony Harrington, Kylie Lloyd, Susan Mulholland, Mark Calvert, and the freelance participatory artist Ruth Johnson. By interviewing the leaders of young people's programming since the 1980s, it is possible for the first time to form an impression of the identity of that work from the perspective of the people who designed and delivered it. Lastly, I interviewed two of Northern Stage's senior managers who had little direct involvement in participatory work but who held responsibility for the smooth operation of the company. Edmund Nickols, the Director of Operations (1990-2020), was the longest serving member of staff at the company. Kate Denby, as Chief Executive, was one of the newest, having arrived in 2015. The nature of all of the interviewees' jobs and the length of time that their tenures cover provided a detailed picture of participation and how it has been envisioned and delivered at

Northern Stage. The archive indicated the importance of participatory activity but did not prioritise or detail it. In contrast, the interviews revealed that participatory activity forms a key part of Northern Stage's identity – indicating the value of using these different methodologies.

2.5 Interviews with Professional Stakeholders

Northern Stage's stakeholders – the people or organisations who can exert an influence on the theatre and its participation work – may have had a significant role to play in shaping the organisation's approach to participation. Accordingly, I consulted stakeholders with direct and extensive experience with Northern Stage and the broader cultural infrastructure of Newcastle.[5] Stakeholders include bodies with a financial interest which have made a conditional monetary investment in the organisation – an investment given to meet a need or aim of the funding organisation, usually involving some form of official contract. Their investment gives these stakeholders an ability to exert an influence over Northern Stage. Newcastle City Council is historically a key financial stakeholder of Northern Stage since it has provided funding for the longest period of time. In 1967, it was the original and largest investor, and in 2016 it retains an interest, although the investment comes from an arms-length trust and is only a minority stake. Andrew Rothwell, Culture and Tourism Manager at Newcastle City Council (NCC), agreed to be interviewed for this thesis. Rothwell had worked within the cultural sector at the council for over 26 years and sat on the Board of Northern Stage until 2013.

In contrast, creative stakeholders represent bodies which do not invest financially in Northern Stage but are affected by what the theatre does. This group includes the media and other arts companies as well as individual artists and Board members. For these stakeholders, the presence of Northern Stage offers a prominent platform (virtually and physically) for them to engage with the theatre, either through the theatre's influence on their own practice or through

[5] The application of the term stakeholder within theatre is a recent phenomenon and is driven in part by the repositioning of theatres as business operations; indeed, much of the literature on stakeholder theory derives from business management theory (Donaldson and Preston). The role of stakeholders specifically in arts organisations has been researched in Australia by Gattenhof, in Spain by Quero and Ventura, and in Korea by Chung et al. In 2016, Maria Cleofe Giorgino investigated theatre stakeholders using an Italian case study and notably used UK research by Matarasso and Holden amongst others.

their influence on the theatre. Creative stakeholders impact Northern Stage by influencing the reputation of the theatre through how they engage with it or represent it.

Annie Rigby represents a creative stakeholder's perspective in this thesis. She is the Director of Unfolding Theatre, a small company based in Newcastle which was founded in 2008 and uses participation methods to create theatre shows which tour the UK. Their shows have regularly won accolades from the national media and in 2018, they received National Portfolio Organisation status from Arts Council England (ACE), which indicates their rise to prominence (Unfolding Theatre, "Press"). Prior to founding Unfolding Theatre, Rigby worked at Northern Stage as a resident director from 2003 to 2008. Although Northern Stage is a producing theatre company, it is also a hosting venue, which displays the work of other companies like Unfolding Theatre. Rigby offers a relevant perspective as someone who has been both an 'insider' – working at Northern Stage – and an 'outsider' through running a different theatre company.

2.6 Interviews with Participants

I interviewed participants from the summer schools for eleven to twenty-one-year-olds, and the *NORTH* training programme for early career theatre artists (aged twenty to thirty years old). I also advertised for past participants through a call-out on social media (through Northern Stage's Twitter, Facebook, and my own Facebook account). Using self-identification to recruit participants via Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms has its flaws, particularly in terms of generating comments which display extreme positive or negative bias (Daschel et al.; Snelson). Self-selection by any method is often criticised as a means of achieving robust data, due to likely bias in the types of people who come forward and the possibility that such volunteers will have strong opinions, which may not be as representative as apparently random selections (Marshall). In defence of this method, it should be noted that all person-based research involves an element of self-selection to some extent, as consent is required (Seidman 57). Recruiting participants in this way also had benefits. It enabled me to reach a wider spread of ages, ranging from people who had participated in projects in the 1970s through to participants in 2016. All participants were made aware that this was an independent Newcastle University project and not a research initiative commissioned by Northern Stage to reassure them that they could express themselves freely.

In contrast to interviews with members of staff cited in thesis, the participants interviewed for this research have been given pseudonyms in order to preserve their anonymity. I opted to use pseudonyms to retain the sense that these stories and comments belong to individuals. Focusing on engaging with a few participants from each project enabled them to speak in detail about their experience. The responses I secured were weighted towards participants' experiences between 2012 and 2016 but there were two respondents who talked about their participation in the 1960s as part of a youth theatre, and a few families who referred to experiences dating from the early 2000s. The nature of the topic also meant that, in everyday life, I would occasionally meet people who had a connection to Northern Stage's youth work and who were keen to share their memories. This study cannot and does not claim to represent the experience of all participants at Northern Stage. It only presents analysis of the experience of the people who wished to participate in the research. However, it is important to acknowledge that this study has captured responses and memories covering an unusually large time period, (covering fifty years) at a single venue.

2.7 Observation

Observation of staff, participants, audiences, and stakeholders was a key component of this project. In 2016, I had a 'hot desk' in the offices at Northern Stage and began a process of 'deep hanging out', a term used by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1926-2006) in 1998 to describe the research method of spending time within a group on an informal level for periods of time (69). This approach enabled me to observe and listen to people working for the organisation. During this time, I spoke informally with most members of the theatre's staff, from box office staff to fundraising, administration and the backstage team. I also observed rehearsals, meetings and participant projects and shows for children, families, and young people to see Northern Stage's participation work in action. Further information on data collection is in Appendix 6.

The role of observation was largely to inform and contextualise the reading of what people were saying in their oral histories, as small talk and everyday behaviours enabled me to situate my findings from interview material and to supplement and support the conclusions that I was able to draw from archival research. It allowed me to investigate contemporary staff and

participant responses to the work of the theatre to better understand the day-to-day workings of the organisation and allowed me to see the participation work in process. I was able to witness participation with young people – rather than only hearing people talk about it – and to understand what participants were *doing* as well as saying.

There is little direct or explicit reference to my observations in the writing-up of this research. I was unable to detail every interaction that happened during this period because it was so generalised. It was not appropriate in the informal environment to hover around taking notes; often I was in the background, conducting my own reading or going through files. Nevertheless, my first-hand experience of the theatre's work at this time played an important role in helping me process the material that I garnered from documents and interviews. For example, if I had only turned up to interview the Summer School participants rather than spending several days also observing them, I would have found it hard to know whether what they said was congruent with observable reality: through observations I could see whether their verbal accounts matched their observable behaviours. My regular presence also helped to build rapport with members of staff. Furthermore, stakeholders such as the Arts Council who were not keen to be interviewed would speak off the record at informal meetings. Though I am not able to employ this material directly in the thesis, it did provide insights which helped me gain a clearer understanding of the organisation's historical development and present priorities. So, whilst there is little overt reference to observation work in the written account that follows, it nonetheless provided a valuable foundation for understanding the organisation.

2.8 Ethical Considerations and Transcription

The project underwent the University's standard ethical review procedures. Particular consideration was given to the ethics relating to observing and conducting interviews with young people and adults. As discussed above, I have used pseudonyms to protect the identities of participants. Staff members and stakeholders were too easily identifiable to offer anonymity, and this was made clear. Each person was given a consent and information sheet before the event (provided in Appendix 5), and afterwards each interviewee was offered a copy of their recording and/or a transcript as well as their right to redact or change their views. There were also ethical issues to consider regarding the project's status as a Collaborative Doctoral Award, which gave

Northern Stage and the University joint oversight of the project. Both organisations provided privileged access and information, which needed to be handled with discretion, respect and in accordance with data protection legislation. I also needed to consider how the time I was spending at the organisation might be informing my perspective on the research project. My university supervisors regularly checked that I was guarding against uncritical advocacy in my approach to the organisation and that I maintained an appropriate critical distance. This was not something I had anticipated as a particular issue, but it did require consideration, as I discuss further below under the section entitled 'Reflexivity'.

Transcribing the oral history interviews undertaken also presented ethical issues. There are no hard and fast rules for transcription, which presents both ethical and practical dilemmas in terms of how best to turn the spoken word into text. Whilst Paul Thompson stresses the importance of transcription (mainly so that others can access and use recordings), he also details its flaws and risks. For example, Thompson points out that a transcript becomes a literary form and as such 'the spoken word can very easily be mutilated in being taken down on paper. […] There is already an inevitable loss of gesture, tone and timing' (260). The current training on collecting oral histories from the Oral History Society does not advocate automatic transcription for three reasons: the loss of accuracy, the time involved, and perhaps most importantly because the written record is rarely as powerful as the spoken record with its loss of emotion and intonation. However, I decided to transcribe the interviews in order to reflect upon the content, meaning, and significance of what was being said, and so that any quotes could be more easily referenced. There are multiple options and approaches to transcription, from word-for-word and sound-for-sound verbatim, to simply noting the rough ideas (Penguin Transcription). My transcriptions follow the guiding principles laid out by Thompson, 'which preserves the texture of the speech' (262). As he notes, transcription should try to 'remain as faithful as possible to both the character and meaning of the original' (262). I have attempted to follow these principles in my own practice. A sample of these transcriptions is provided in Appendix 6.

2.9 Reflexivity

As noted above, during this research I was both an insider and an outsider; frequently based in the Northern Stage building but not employed by the organisation. My supervisors and I

were mindful of the project's status as a collaboration between the University and Northern Stage, and the amount of time that I was spending at the theatre, could inadvertently generate an uncritical perspective on their work. Practical measures taken to address this concern included regularly reminding myself and the staff at Northern Stage about the reason for my presence at the theatre. I built rapport with staff who spoke to me with candour and friendliness, but I was aware that ultimately, I was there to analyse their practices. My contact at Northern Stage, Kylie Lloyd, regularly met with myself and with my university supervisors to review progress and positionality every few months. I maintained an awareness of my role by holding two lunchtime sessions about the progress of my work, including giving the theatre a version of its chronology and briefing them about the benefits of establishing an archive. This enabled both parties to understand my relationship to the theatre and helped me to maintain a professional position as someone who was there to analyse their work rather than as an employee.

As the project progressed, I realised that scrutiny of my own relationship to Northern Stage, and to the broader field of young people's participation in theatre, would be helpful. I reflected on my own identity and my relationship to the material under analysis to see how I might inadvertently influence my findings (Blaxter et al. 82). This involved examining my motivation for undertaking the thesis. I applied for this PhD when I saw an advert for it whilst working at Arts Council England. It came after I had spent more than a decade working in arts policy. On reflection, I realised that I had an emotional and intellectual investment in the project beyond a professional interest, which had likely influenced my decision to pursue this opportunity, and which could affect my approach to it (Denscombe 69). I had almost forgotten that I had been a participant in a youth theatre, and that as a young adult I was a regular theatre attendee. Indeed, I used to queue up at Northern Stage's Stage Door to collect autographs between 1988 to 1997. Moreover, ten years earlier, whilst working as a Heritage Education Officer in Middlesbrough, I had collaborated on producing a community opera with Northern Stage. that experience had been a meaningful and memorable project for me. It brought young people with little experience in the arts into a scenario where they were working with professional actors and musicians. My employment with the Museums Libraries and Archives Council in the North East of England, and years spent as a school governor, also meant that I was particularly aware of the debates around young people's creativity and cultural engagement. All

of these experiences had clearly informed my interest in focusing on Northern Stage's work with young people.

Therefore, during this project I came to acknowledge my long association with theatres, with young people's participation, and with Northern Stage in particular, which was not apparent to me at the start of the project. Nonetheless, it is important not to overstate my historical involvement with the organisation. I was never employed by Northern Stage and had not had any contact with the theatre for over a decade when I started the CDA. It is also important to recognise that I am typical of the UK's theatre-going demographic as a white, middle-aged, middle-class woman. Indeed, I found the biggest barrier when interviewing young people was my age and status as an adult: I knew they would moderate their behaviour and speak differently to how they would express themselves with their peers. To address this, I met them in small peer groups so that they could interact with one another as well with as me. I hope that my 'lived experience' of having been a youth theatre participant in the past myself also served to build rapport (Schwandt and Burgon 98). Self-reflection has allowed me to recognise and address my unconscious bias to ensure that the research remains robust. I hope that throughout the project I have maintained a balanced position as informed and open-minded, but also able to question unconsidered assertions or unreliable information.

2.10 Summary

The process of unearthing Northern Stage's past and observing how that affects its present work was inspired by Derrida's argument that the present is not present in itself. The historical and anthropological methods applied on the project were selected to support this exploration of the hauntological elements of the theatre's practice in relation to participation. The documentary evidence in the archives was not substantial enough to give a detailed and holistic account. Therefore, as the history of the theatre still resides within living memory, it presented a timely opportunity to speak directly to people who have been involved in participation at the theatre to develop a richer picture of this work and its meaning within the context of the broader identity of the theatre.

Using a mix of methods may occasionally be 'messy' but, as this thesis hopefully demonstrates, it can be productive. The 'passages' between methods can create spaces for conversations which can invoke fresh ideas and revised understanding (Schneider 83). In this

instance, using a range of methods enabled me to capture a fuller and more complete picture of Northern Stage's history, and the role of participation at the theatre. An exclusive use of either historical or anthropological approaches would have produced more limited insights. For example, Bostock's archive (which includes all of the TIE programmes from 1983 to 1991 plus other ephemera relating to young people's participation), only came to light as a result of undertaking an interview with him.[6] Moreover, if I had not observed and interviewed present participants, then the hauntological element would have been less visible; the historical record would have existed without the ability to recognise its relevance in the present. The strength of the documentary record was the factual information and detail it provided, but these records also contained many gaps and did not provide much by way of insight into the motivations of staff, or the experience of participants involved over the years. In contrast, the interviews and observations had less factual detail but held rich reflections on the significance of the work for the individual interviewee. Bringing together the methodologies of archival research, oral history and 'deep hanging out' allowed me to piece together a full understanding of the role of participation at Northern Stage.

[6] The Chris Bostock Archive (which is currently uncatalogued) will be gifted to Newcastle University to become part of the Northern Stage Archive after this thesis is completed.

Chapter 3

A History of Northern Stage to 1991

What follows represents one of the first accounts to trace the history of the theatre, Northern Stage, through a consideration of the forces which led to its establishment, its programme between 1967 and 1991, and its emerging strength in young people's work. Northern Stage cites its inauguration as 1970 but this chapter proposes that its story begins before this, with the opening of the Newcastle Playhouse in 1967 in Jesmond ("Newcastle Playhouse Cuttings"). It argues that although Northern Stage has frequently changed its name, its location, and its personnel, it has remained fundamentally the same organisation. As Stuart Hall notes, a 'fully unified, completed, secure, and coherent identity is a fantasy' (Hall et al. 598). Jen Harvie's insight that theatre 'identities are formed not in isolated, discrete categories but in dynamic overlapping networks' (*Staging the UK* 7) is also highly applicable to Northern Stage as this chapter will discuss. Northern Stage's identity has adapted and responded to the changing society which it serves. However, the organisational flux surrounding Northern Stage has hidden its history as an important regional theatre and subsequently contributed to its relative obscurity in theatre scholarship. Before immersing ourselves in the history of Northern Stage, a brief outline of the theatre's various names, venues, artistic directors, and operating trusts is required.

In 1962, the Flora Robson Playhouse opened in Jesmond. This was bought by Newcastle City Council in 1966 and reopened as the Newcastle Playhouse in 1967 under the directorship of the actor-manager, John Neville. The Tyneside Theatre Company was established in 1968 and operated from the Playhouse. In 1969, the Theatre in Education Company, Stagecoach, was formed. In 1970, the Tyneside Theatre Company moved from the Playhouse (which was then demolished) to a purpose-built new theatre building on Newcastle University's campus called The University Theatre with its Artistic Director, Ann Stutfield (the same building which is now called Northern Stage). Gareth Morgan took over as Artistic Director in 1971 and appointed Michael Bogdanov as Assistant Director. In 1972, the Tyneside Theatre Company took over the TIE company, Stagecoach. In 1978, the theatre was renamed the Newcastle Playhouse. The Tyneside Theatre Company was closed and instead the Tynewear Theatre Company moved into

the Playhouse (overseen by the Tyne and Wear Theatre Trust). In 1978, John Blackmore was appointed as Artistic Director and Chris Bostock was appointed as Director of the TyneWear Theatre in Education Company in 1983.[7] The TIE company operated from a base in the Discovery Museum but reported directly to Blackmore. In 1987, Blackmore and the theatre company moved to the Tyne Theatre and Opera House (a pre-existing Victorian theatre) on Westgate Road. Meanwhile, the Playhouse on campus continued to operate as an independent hosting venue. The Tyne and Wear Theatre Trust became the Tyne Theatre Trust. Blackmore left as Director and Andrew McKinnon took over. In 1988, the company left the Tyne Theatre and Opera House and moved into offices on Westgate Road. In 1992, Alan Lyddiard took over as Artistic Director and the theatre company moved back to the Newcastle Playhouse on campus. The theatre company renamed themselves Northern Stage, but the building was still called the Newcastle Playhouse. Bostock left, and the TIE company was then merged to become part of the Northern Stage ensemble rather than a separate body. This was led by Tony Harrington (who had worked for Bostock). In 1998, the Tyne Theatre Trust was closed, and Northern Stage Limited was set up as the operating company. In 2006, Erica Whyman became Artistic Director and following a refurbishment the management trust, the venue, and the production company were called Northern Stage for the first time. In 2013, Lorne Campbell became Artistic Director of Northern Stage. As will be apparent from the above, the history of Northern Stage is an extremely complex one. A timeline providing greater detail appears in Appendix 3 and a table of the different names and locations in Appendix 4. The chapter which follows contextualises the emergence of the theatre in the 1960s, explores its programming, its relationship with Newcastle University, and its early work with young people. It shows that whilst provision for young people was not the driving force behind the founding of Northern Stage, the vision to have a theatre 'in which we all can share' and which celebrated North East theatre making created the foundation for young people to become a core part of its identity ("A Theatre for the Tyne").

[7] For clarification, the theatre company was called Tynewear and the Education company TyneWear (see Appendix 4 for name changes).

3.1 Forging a Civic Theatre: Investment and Collaboration

Theatre historians observe that the decades immediately after the Second World War saw a dramatic 'blossoming' in civic theatre development across Britain, reflecting governmental decisions to invest in the development of regional theatre as a valuable part of a healthy and progressive society (Elsom, *Theatre Outside London* 82; Rowell and Jackson 89; Cochrane, *Twentieth-Century British Theatre* 89). The creation and swift development of the Arts Council of Great Britain also enabled this social and financial investment in theatre; a history which is well documented (National Archives "History of Arts Council England"; Sinclair). The relationship between the Arts Council and the regions is explored in Dorney and Merkin's *The Glory of the Garden* and its specific relationship with the North East by Vall in *Cultural Region* (96-120). Founded in 1946 to improve the state of the arts around the country, the Arts Council of Great Britain, began life as a modest non-departmental organisation operating at arm's length from government, only allowed to subsidise non-profit distributing companies (Banham 42).[8] Its remit grew alongside its budget, however – from £3 million in 1964 to £100 million by 1984. Bolstered by the creation of twelve Regional Arts Associations, it was to become a major player in an extraordinary, country-wide theatre building boom (Banham 42). Between 1959 and 1969, the number of repertory companies opening outside London had almost doubled from twenty-eight to fifty-two (Arts Council of Great Britain 35). Dunn states that these years were 'arguably the finest that the repertory movement has seen' (5).

Northern Stage not only represents an excellent example of this development in the growth of regional theatres: it was in its vanguard. A debate in parliament on 22 July 1963 indicates that at this time the Arts Council of Great Britain was donating approximately £10,000 to the North Eastern Association of the Arts, an organisation that had been set up in 1962 (Commons Chamber). In addition, the minister claimed that it spent about £50,000 a year in the North East, and added, 'I am told that a month or two ago the Council agreed in principle to take on an additional commitment, to the tune of about £5,000 a year for three years, as a share in the Flora Robson Playhouse in Newcastle' (qtd. in Commons Chamber). This early investment was a propitious indicator of support for regional repertory theatre in Newcastle that went on to have

[8] The Arts Council was preceded by CEMA, the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts, founded in 1939 (National Archives "History of Arts Council England"; Vall 98)

nationally significant consequences.

In 1964, Harold Wilson's Labour government took power. The publication of a White Paper on the Arts by Jennie Lee in 1965 set out a strategy for the future for the arts in the regions, which was directly inspired by what was happening in Newcastle. The paper reports,

> Miss Lee expressed her firm belief in the establishment of regional arts associations on the lines of the only one that already exists, in the North East…This would help to create the atmosphere in which local authorities recognised the importance of spending more on the arts ("White Paper").

This White Paper, inspired by Newcastle's regional arts board, clearly played a significant part in the establishment of both the means and the appetite for the growth in regional theatres at this time. Under both Labour and the Conservatives, the Arts Council of Great Britain became the major funder of the twelve Regional Arts Associations, heavily influencing a new generation of theatre building. The above records suggest that Northern Stage was both a product of and inspiration for this extraordinary surge of interest in the creation of regional, civic theatres. Its emergence was enabled by the civic aims of the City Council, the decision to invest in regional theatre by the Arts Council, support from the regional arts board, and an endowment Newcastle University held to build a theatre.

Although the Arts Council subsequently became the main funder of Northern Stage, it is important to note that Newcastle Council was the original key stakeholder who pushed forward its development. There was a close and powerful relationship between the theatre and Newcastle City Council in the company's early years ("Newcastle Playhouse Cuttings"). Following its initial investment in the Flora Robson Playhouse in 1963 (detailed in the parliamentary debate cited above), Newcastle City Council went further in 1966: it purchased the Flora Robson, renamed it the Newcastle Playhouse, and announced its intention to develop a regional repertory company. This was greeted warmly by the North East Association of the Arts' founder and director, Alexander 'Sandy' Dunbar. He welcomed the City Council's proposal as 'a potential powerhouse of drama for the area' (Dunbar), pointing out that the initiative would address a perceived lack of provision. He noted, 'there is no resident professional repertory company

between Harrogate and Edinburgh for a population of 3 million, 750,000 of them in Tyneside alone' (Dunbar).

The City Council commissioned the Nottingham Playhouse Trust, led by the actor-director, John Neville, to run the enterprise until they could set up their own civic theatre trust. At that time, Nottingham had a reputation as one of the strongest regional theatre companies, and so Neville's appointment in Newcastle must have been something of a coup. It is also indicative of the model that Newcastle sought to emulate. The newly formed Newcastle Playhouse opened on 20 February 1967 with praise for its productions and leadership ("Press Cuttings"; Rowell and Jackson 131-39). There was a permanent company, the Newcastle Playhouse Company, with actors who became household names such as Bill Maynard, Rodney Bowes, and Denis Lotis. Newcastle City Council's arrangement with Nottingham Playhouse quickly developed into something more Tyneside-specific. In July 1967, Alderman Donald Gilbert, Chairman of the arts working group of Newcastle City Council, claimed that '[b]y April next year Newcastle will have its own civic theatre trust and director' (qtd. in "Newcastle Playhouse Cuttings").

The Council had still greater ambitions for the theatre. In 1967, Mr Frank Harris, Newcastle's City Manager, said: 'We're planning for a new civic theatre for the seventies …the city council is giving Newcastle a theatre and I shall move heaven and earth to make it go…it has the full support of both sides of the city council' (qtd. in "Newcastle Playhouse Cuttings"). Gilbert asserted: 'It will be very much a cultural centre as well as a theatre' (qtd. in "Newcastle Playhouse Cuttings"). Plans were first drawn up to build a theatre in Blackett Street in Newcastle but were shelved when an incoming Conservative council leader, Arthur Grey, decided it was too expensive – a development which is indicative of some of the reversals of fortune which awaited the theatre in later years ("Newcastle Playhouse Cuttings"). At the time, however, the theatre was representative of a wider programme of building and investment designed to revitalise the regions – and specifically Newcastle. It was first conceived during T. Dan Smith's campaign to promote Newcastle as a future-looking, modernist city – the 'Brasilia of the North*'* (BBC, "T. Dan Smith"). This was a time for massive regeneration and civic investment in Newcastle with lots of new buildings (Yorkshire Film Archive). The theatre was also a product of broader collaboration between the local authorities and other local institutions. Newcastle University became a stakeholder in the venture because an anonymous benefactor had made a donation so

that they could build a theatre. The University partnered with the City Council, the Arts Council, and the Tyneside local authorities to set up the Tyneside Theatre Trust and The Tyneside Theatre Company in April 1968.[9] Following a public feud with the Arts Council, the director, John Neville, resigned from both Nottingham and Newcastle in May 1968, which gave further impetus for the development of an independent Newcastle-based theatre (Chambers 548).

This collaboration and joint investment from the City Council, the Arts Council, and Newcastle University resulted in the creation of the newly built University Theatre at the new purpose-built venue at its current site near to Haymarket and next to Newcastle University. [10] The Tyneside Theatre Company swiftly transferred from the Playhouse in Jesmond. The actor Bill Willis, a regular member of the company in its first years, recollects that the rehearsals for the opening production took place in a site still under construction (Wallis and Wilson 28). Formally opened on 30 November 1970, this joint venture seems to have been a great success in many ways (Northern Stage Archive). The project, designed by the architect William Whitfield, cost £35,000 and is reflective of an era when theatre design became more innovative and adaptable (Elsom, *Theatre Outside London* 82; "University Theatre Illus."; Balme 58-61). In 1973, the theatre won a RIBA Civic Award (1973) for a design that was praised for its 'basic simplicity' and 'sensitive use of a minimal number of materials', one of only seven buildings nominated for this award from a long list of two hundred and forty-seven ("University Theatre Illus."). The council's aspiration to provide a cultural hub for the city region also seems to have been fulfilled. Rowell and Jackson observe that theatres at this time 'were not merely playhouses but community centres, cafes, bars, lunchtime concerts, exhibitions, recitals and educational programmes' (92), and this seems to have been true of Northern Stage during this period. More than once, people with whom I spoke about my research did not remember the plays at the theatre but recalled coming to the theatre for lunch (especially those who worked at the Civic Centre across the road) or for drinks with friends because the bar put on live entertainment.

The theatre's relationship to one of its core funders – and closest neighbours – did not develop entirely smoothly, however. Newcastle's University Theatre was part of a wider

[9] The company continued to reside in the old Playhouse/ Flora Robson building in Jesmond while the plans were being drawn up for a new-build theatre (Rowell and Jackson 106 and 194).
[10] The Playhouse/Flora Robson Theatre was demolished in 1971 to make way for a new road that was never built ("Newcastle Playhouse Cuttings").

movement for universities to fund and establish theatres on their premises during this period: Rowell and Jackson note that at this time, many universities built repertory theatres so as to foster cultural links with their respective cities (106). However, the relationship in Newcastle between the theatre and the University appears to have been distant and fractious from early on.[11] The theatre sat in the centre of the campus, and had been partly funded by the University, but it maintained a tenant and landlord relationship rather than representing the artistic and educational partnership otherwise ascribed to campus-based theatres (Banham 1031). The theatre has always paid rent to the University whenever operating at this location and conversely charged the University to hire its spaces for student productions. When it opened as the University Theatre in 1970, an appraisal by the architect Peter Moro stated, '[s]trictly speaking this is not so much a university theatre as a professional repertory theatre leased by the university to a theatre trust' (109). This quote illustrates there was a preconception about what constituted a 'university theatre,' implying that it would be something integral to the University. Yet Newcastle University only used the Gulbenkian Studio theatre space within the University Theatre building, where it put on student productions, and it does not appear to have had any involvement with broader programming. From the outset the relationship between the theatre management and the University was difficult, as implied in a quote from a cultural commentator shortly after opening: '[p]erhaps its only disadvantage is its name, for the people charged with running it believe, rightly or wrongly, that it suggests exclusivity, which is potentially damaging to its search for an audience' (Stitt 21). Northern Stage may have been called the University Theatre in 1970, and it shared some of the attributes with other theatres established by universities in England at the time, but its identity began to be shaped before that and extends beyond it. By 1978, the theatre had changed its name to the Newcastle Playhouse (the same name they had previously had between 1967-1970 when they were in Jesmond).[12]

Northern Stage's chequered relationship with Newcastle University is evident in its Board papers. The 1986 Board papers indicate increasing tensions between the University and

[11] University theatres which are situated in the scholarly literature alongside Northern Stage (called the University Theatre at the time), include the Contact in Manchester, Northcott in Exeter, Nuffield in Southampton, Warwick Arts Centre, Stirling's Macrobert and Gulbenkian Canterbury (Cochrane, *Twentieth-Century British Theatre*; Trussler).

[12] Although in her 1998 book, Dunn still calls it the University Theatre (274).

the theatre company: the lease was due to be renewed at £27,000 and there were arguments about liability for replacing the electrics ("Tyne and Wear Theatre Trust"). At this point, the company received an Arts Council grant of £338,000 and a Northern Arts grant of £225,600 but it was finding it hard to balance the accounts ("Tyne and Wear Theatre Trust"). On 30 September 1987, the theatre company ended its lease of the Playhouse with Newcastle University following major financial concerns and conflict ("Tyne and Wear Theatre Trust"). This signifies the start of what the Director of Operations, Edmund Nickols, described as a 'murky' period for the theatre because it was fraught with change and disagreements. They moved to the Tyne Theatre and Opera House on Westgate Road. The Tyne and Wear Theatre Trust became the Tyne Theatre Trust, John Blackmore left as Director, and Andrew McKinnon took over. The Playhouse continued to operate as an independent commercial venture, hosting visiting productions. In 1988, the company fell out with the Tyne Theatre and Opera Trust and faced a £300,000 deficit. They then moved to Newcastle Arts Centre on Westgate Road as a base for administration but not for performance, becoming solely a touring company.

The appointment of Alan Lyddiard as Artistic director in 1992 saw the theatre company return to its purpose-built premises back on the Newcastle University campus, once again becoming a building-based company but now called Northern Stage at the Newcastle Playhouse. Nickols talked at length about the waxing and waning of the theatre's relationship with the University, but he felt it was better in 2016 than he had ever known it and that this bolstered the whole outlook of the theatre. It is certainly true that Northern Stage retained strong links to Newcastle University in 2016. This is most apparent through its geographical location on the centre of the campus, but also because Newcastle University owns the land, and a university representative sits on the Board of Trustees. Concern over the implications of its location remain, however. During my observations and interviews in 2016, there was still wariness amongst some staff at Northern Stage about the organisation's association with the University, which they – like the theatre management of the early 1970s – felt risked the company seeming elitist or exclusive.

3.2 Programming and Priorities

The work produced at Northern Stage in its early years received a range of reviews and commentary. As noted above, Elsom celebrated the company's work as 'admirable' in 1971

(*Theatre Outside London* 21). Yet a year later, a critic at *Theatre Quarterly* disparagingly noted that 'the Playhouse concentrated on safe, generally commercial, run-of-the-mill rep' (Stitt 20). This dismissive comment invites further consideration of what constitutes 'run-of-the-mill' rep. In many ways, the work produced in Northern Stage's early years fits Rowell and Jackson's description of a 'modern' repertory theatre. They note, '[i]ts season of plays, while conceived as a whole, is yet presented in a single linear sequence: each production runs for three or four weeks at a time […] with no rotation, no return of plays once done, no "repertoire" as such' (1). But it is important to acknowledge that, as Daniel Barrett points out, the British repertory movement has had a changeable, varied nature over time, and 'is not a tidy, neatly packaged subject' (182). The original concept of a rapidly changing programme performed by a resident theatre company was not practical or affordable for some companies, who adapted the model to suit themselves (Encyclopaedia Britannica). This flexibility is reflected in Patrice Pavis's description of the repertory programming, as he observes that it 'includes the classics, contemporary creations and everything that an actor deems useful for drawing up a quality program structured over several years' (308).

At Northern Stage, where the theatre was designed as an emblem of civic pride for the city and the region, a quality programme was strongly associated with work which celebrated the North East and represented the experiences of its citizens. From the outset, the theatre company prioritised work which celebrated North East theatre makers. The opening of the Flora Robson Theatre presented a gala performance of CP Taylor's *A Went Tae Blaydon Races* (with Flora Robson herself – who was born in South Shields – attending the opening (Found and Hartnoll 346).[13] CP Taylor continued to be closely associated with the theatre and its work with young people as the theatre began to evolve into what would become Northern Stage. One of Northern Stage's youth theatre participants talked about how Taylor frequently came to their sessions with material for his plays for them to test out and for him to make notes on, including *Gynt!* And *Peter Pan*.[14] In March 1967, the theatre staged CP Taylor's *Bread and Butter*, which Penguin

[13] The theatre opened on the site of a previous theatre, The Newcastle Playhouse, which closed in 1961. There is an unsubstantiated reference that before this it was an old cinema, the Dinky, which was built in 1928 ("Newcastle Playhouse Cuttings").
[14] *Gynt!* was first staged in 1973 before being published by Methuen in 1987, and *Peter Pan and Emily* was staged in 1977 (Doollee).

subsequently published, and it went on to be performed around the world (Bryden et al.). Significant commissions with Taylor and other northern playwrights for North East-based drama became a core feature of Northern Stage's output and created an appetite for regional theatre productions for regional audiences based on working-class themes (Elsom, *Post-War British Theatre* 102).

One such production was *Close the Coalhouse Door* by Alan Plater, Sid Chaplin, and Alex Glasgow, written for and first staged at the Newcastle Playhouse in 1968 ("Close the Coalhouse Door"). It became a defining production for the theatre and built on the theatre's distinctive North East identity with their commitment to commission plays by local playwrights about local issues that affected ordinary people. *Close the Coalhouse Door* made its initial reputation by word of mouth. As a fictional musical based on factual material about the contemporary struggles faced by miners in the North East, it was already a sell out by the time critics, commentators or newspapers wrote about it. It attracted buses full of non-traditional theatre audiences from the pit villages, as well as the Women's Institute (Stitt 21). It is still a play strongly attached to the theatre and has since been revived twice by the company in 1973 and 2012 as well as receiving national tours and a West End run ("Close the Coalhouse Door"; Hickling, "Close the Coalhouse Door").

In 1970, the company, which had transferred from the Playhouse to the newly built University Theatre, opened with a gala production of Ben Johnson's *Bartholomew Fair* with Ann Stutfield as Artistic Director. In his article published at the time, "A Theatre for the Tyne," Sid Chaplin outlines the social ideology that the theatre represented, reflecting the sense of local pride and aspiration that it encapsulated:

> This theatre is our roof tree, no high art or low but only the best in which we all can share. It is a theatre of the Tyne where all the diverse rich threads can be gathered together at last. Here we can draw power from the massed voltage which in some strange and mysterious way makes us wholly and completely individual again. Here we can be together, yet private; members of a crowd but royalty all. Here when the temporal is shattered, we can exist outside time, laugh, weep and be shriven. Here at last we can find our long-lost heritage.

The development and prominence of the theatre in the regional theatre landscape continued apace when in 1971 Gareth Morgan from the RSC was appointed as Artistic Director and the young Michael Bogdanov as Assistant Director (who went on to become a nationally significant director and founder of the English Shakespeare Company). Together they formed a resident company of ten with the intention of recruiting additional actors as and when individual productions required. The founding civic and social ideology for the theatre clearly continued, alongside commitments to classical work, international plays, and experimental work. This mix is evident in programmes of the period, which carried the following message:

> The Tyneside Theatre Company aims to present a team of the highest calibre and standard with the emphasis in the main University Theatre equally placed upon classical revival, new plays by established authors, and programmes of local specific interest, and in the Gulbenkian Studio Theatre rarities and programmes of an experimental nature. The company endeavours to interest Tyneside in the best of international drama both old and new, and to encourage local writers to identify themselves with the University Theatre as a regional centre of repertory in the North East ("Newcastle Playhouse Cuttings").

The theatre itself was attaining status nationally. Several high-profile productions followed *Close the Coalhouse Door*. In 1971 James Kirkup's adaptation of Dürrenmatt's *Play Strindberg* received very positive reviews in the national papers and a West End transfer ("Tyne and Wear Theatre Trust"). Other productions also did well: *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* sold to 85% houses, and *Under Milk Wood* played to 90% capacity ("Press Cuttings"). Newspapers including the *Guardian* and the *Telegraph* regularly reviewed its productions, and it represented the UK at the prestigious Avignon festival in 1972 (Festival d'Avignon). In an article entitled "The Theatre in 1972," the *Financial Times* reported that 'out of London the theatre blossoms healthily […] At Newcastle, the University Theatre joined the first division with Dürrenmatt's *Play Strindberg* and Anouilh's *The Baker, The Baker's Wife and the Baker's Boy*' (Young). The only other regional theatres directly mentioned in the article are the Glasgow Citizens and Bristol Old Vic. This suggests that at this time the University Theatre, Northern Stage's precursor, held

a high status within modern British theatre. Northern Stage began to develop a reputation for staging classics: in 1977, it began a long and close partnership with the Royal Shakespeare Company. The RSC called Newcastle their 'second home' and brought annual productions to Newcastle for several decades ("Announcement in 1976"; BBC, "Newcastle's Special Relationship"). In 1979, the Tynewear Theatre Company provided the director, costumes, and sets for Newcastle Theatre Royal's Christmas Pantomime, *Cinderella*, again illustrating that they were a leading theatre in the region ("Tyne and Wear Theatre Company"). The selection and commission of plays by North East writers including Kirkup and Peter Terson showed a continued appetite to support the region during this period. There was also a move to employ actors from the North East such as Alun Armstrong and Val McLane. Some of these went on to be household names, including Jim Carter, Robert Powell, David Rintoul, and Freddie Jones. The actor George Irving recalled that during his 1972 season with the theatre, a young Sting played in one of the Christmas productions ("Final Say" 66).

The theatre's history inevitably contains evidence of disagreement and missteps, as well as success and celebration. As well as directing several plays, Bogdanov became heavily involved in developing work with communities and young people in Newcastle. However, in 1974 he left, and the *Journal* reported, 'Mr Bogdanov's view is that the theatre is not representing the region properly' (Hurwitz). What he meant by 'properly' is left to speculation, but Bogdanov's projects notably often happened outside the theatre building in the most deprived parts of the city and did not necessarily have any correlation to main stage productions. In 1983, John Blackmore was appointed Theatre Director and Ken Hill (Joan Littlewood's close associate from Theatre Workshop) joined as Director of Productions with Arnold Elliman in place as General Manager, and they began to premier productions again ("Tyne and Wear Theatre Trust"). In 1984, the theatre sold the rights of Ken Hill's *Phantom of the Opera* to Andrew Lloyd Webber and, according to a note in the board papers, '[t]he Director also reported that Andrew Lloyd Webber had bought the script of *Phantom of the Opera* and therefore no residual rights would accrue to the trust' ("Tyne and Wear Theatre Trust"). Unfortunately, this happened at a time when the theatre faced increasing financial problems and therefore a potential lifeline was lost. Despite financial problems, 1985/6 was the most successful season for the company with attendance at 86,000 boosted by nearly sell-out productions of an adaptation of

Catherine Cookson's *The Gambling Man* (another North East-based drama commission), a Christmas family adaptation of C.S. Lewis' *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, and *Little Shop of Horrors.* However, in contrast, at the national premiere of David Mamet's *Edmond*, audience attendance was only 32.8%. A co-production with Live Theatre of Tom Hadaway's *Yesterday's Children* premiered with 88% of tickets sold. However, it was not approved for touring due to the specific regional nature of the script, and Live Theatre and the Tynewear Theatre Company fell out over it. The family productions of *Peter Pan* and *The Enormously Big Weed* did very well and compensated for the losses from other productions. However, overall ticket sales were a struggle, and the Arts Council reported that they would not fund two theatres in Newcastle (the Theatre Royal and the Tynewear Theatre Company) with static numbers. At this point in the 1980s, the Arts Council's policy was to fund theatres that brought in the most revenue (Dorney and Merkin 5) – similar to a policy that was reintroduced in 2015, as Peter Bazalgette's address to the Creative Industries Federation entitled, "The Business of Arts," describes.

3.3 Engagement with Young People

This section briefly illustrates how young people featured in the theatre's early history, a subject which receives in-depth discussion in Chapters Six and Seven. From the first, the theatre demonstrated a significant interest in engaging with young people. As early as 1962, the Newcastle University student newspaper, the *Courier*, carried an extended feature on Northern Stage's predecessor, the Flora Robson Theatre, and its appeal to young people, noting that 'bona-fide students' could get a discount ("Flora Robson Playhouse" 8). The desire to appeal to young audiences is also shown by the production of *Treasure Island*, starring the well-known actor Griffith Jones in its first year ("Flora Robson Playhouse" 7). The theatre has always championed work with young people within its vision and was an early adopter of the Theatre in Education (TIE) movement: an initiative that used drama to engage young people in social issues. Its production company for schools, Stagecoach, was formed in 1969 (Found and Hartnoll 346). Northern Stage acquired a high profile for its young people's work early on in its history and Tyne Tees Television made a documentary about it. O'Toole, who became an international expert in applied theatre and young people's participation, was Newcastle University's Fellow in Theatre in Education 1973-74 (*Theatre in Education* ix) and drew on his experiences of working in the region for his book. In 1983, Bostock took over as the Director of TIE, continuing to

strengthen the theatre's output. Deary, Heathcote, and Bolton, all nationally renowned for their work in Theatre in Education, were on the drama advisory panel (Chris Bostock Archive).

In line with its civic goals, Northern Stage's staff were proud to support and champion participation work with young people as a core facet of the theatre's mission. Bogdanov's views on the relationship between the arts and education illustrates the company's position at the time:

> You've got to have a public infrastructure for the arts, they are part of education, they are a service, they are not a luxury. It should be the inalienable right of every man, woman and child to participate in or be present at events […]. That involves an approach to the arts that links it inexorably with education and social fabric (qtd. in Dunn 240).

This quote shows the strong social agenda that opinion-makers and theatre practitioners at Northern Stage had – a commitment which has continued throughout its history.

Despite changes to the structure of the organisation, the company has continually devised a young people's programme and created Christmas shows for families since 1969. In 1972, the TIE company Stagecoach merged with the Tyneside Theatre Company to become one organisation, and then in 1979 young people's work received a further revamp. The TyneWear Theatre-in-Education (TIE) Company was formed to sit alongside but operate separately to the TyneWear Theatre Company. During these changes, it appears that the young people's work was one of the most stable parts of the theatre; it kept going with the same core personnel whilst the rest of the theatre moved around. In 1987, the November minutes of the Theatre-in-Education Company noted that they were moving to the Tyne Theatre and Opera House in a development that would 'endeavour to bring the main house and the TIE closer together' ("Tyne and Wear Theatre Trust"). This is an acknowledgement that the two parts had been operating at arm's length from each other. Whilst the move was not a success for the overall business, it did not appear to negatively impact young people's engagement as the TIE company continued to be both active and profitable. In 1988, when the company moved out of the Tyne Theatre and Opera House to the Newcastle Arts Centre, the Theatre-in-Education Company continued as before, going into schools across the region and staging shows in the Discovery Museum, where they also had rehearsal space (Bostock). Furthermore, the young people's performances consistently

had the highest attendance rates (above 90%), and the Board reports and interviews indicate that the profits from these shows were crucial to the organisation.[15] This signals that TIE was one of the more stable parts of the Theatre Trust during this period.

3.4 Summary

The establishment of Northern Stage was clearly shaped by the sudden and decisive interest in supporting the development of regional civic theatre on the part of local and national government – a shift which fuelled a theatre building boom across the country during the period covered in this chapter. Funding from the Arts Council of Great Britain, the Regional Arts Association, and Newcastle City Council had a significant role to play in enabling its development in ways that reflect the broader national context during this time. Some aspects of its history are specific to Northern Stage, however. The anonymous benefactor who donated funds to support the building of a theatre on the Newcastle University campus clearly had a major impact in forging a relationship between theatre and university. The particularly complicated organisational flux which characterised the early history of Northern Stage has also had an impact on understanding of the theatre's past and identity. After all the changes of company name, venue, artistic directors, and management structures, it is not surprising that Northern Stage's importance as a producing community repertory theatre based in the North East has been masked. The range of work that it has created and curated over the years also makes it difficult to pigeonhole. Northern Stage has been a theatre for new writers (commissioning and premiering plays), a theatre for young people (with its schools' programme, its early years shows, and its work to develop future theatre makers), a home for classic drama, and a showcase for European work. Nonetheless, despite multiple names, personnel and location changes, and an extremely varied artistic output, Northern Stage has consistently maintained a strong identity as a major regional producing theatre with a core interest in engaging young people.

[15] See Appendix 2 for attendance rates.

Chapter 4

A History of Northern Stage 1992-2017

This chapter outlines Northern Stage's more recent history, focusing upon the period since it has been called Northern Stage. This chapter considers the operation and identity of the organisation – the broader context for the development of participation – under the three most recent directorships during the period under analysis: Alan Lyddiard (1992-2005), Erica Whyman (2006-2012), and Lorne Campbell (2013-2019). Before engaging with the detail of their distinct approaches, however, a brief recap of the key phases in Northern Stage's history may be of help to the reader. The buildings associated with the company have been known as the following: the Newcastle Playhouse (in Jesmond 1967-70); The University Theatre (current location 1970-1978); Newcastle Playhouse (current location 1978-1987); the Tyne Theatre (Westgate Road in 1987-1989); the Newcastle Arts Centre (1989-1992, as a home to the company rather than a performance space); The Newcastle Playhouse and the Gulbenkian Studio (together back at the location on Newcastle University campus occupied in 1970 and today, 1992-2006); and Northern Stage from 2006. The operating management has also been known under different names, from the Nottingham Playhouse Trust (1966-67) to the Tyneside Theatre Trust (1967-78), to the Tyne and Wear Theatre Trust (1978-1987) to The Tyne Theatre Trust (1987-2005). In 2006, those different strands came together, and in 2017 Northern Stage is the name of the theatre building, company, and management.

This chapter focuses on the identity of the organisation under Lyddiard (1992-2005), Whyman (2006-2012), and Campbell (2013-2019). There are several reasons for this focus. As described in Chapter Two, during the research process the archival documentary trail effectively dried up in 1991, making interviews with individuals essential. Interviews with the company's artistic directors seemed essential. The preoccupations of artistic directors will always be of interest in an attempt to characterise the development of a theatre company.[16] Artistic directors

[16] The title 'Artistic Director' emerged in the 1940s, and it is a position that has subsequently become ubiquitous in modern British theatre (Cochrane, *The Birmingham Rep* 17). Cochrane cites John Harrison from Birmingham Repertory theatre as having claimed to invent the title Artistic Director (17).

play a key role in shaping the identity of a theatre (as argued by Voss et al. 741-755). At Northern Stage, the artistic director is at the top of a hierarchical management structure. They hold what Bradby and Williams call the 'authorial function' (1) and 'the central power in the theatre enterprise' (21); they are the person who determines the nature, content, and vision of the theatre (Shepherd, *Drama/Theatre/Performance* 24). Moreover, an artistic director at a regional theatre like Northern Stage has a broader, multi-functional role since they have access to a smaller infrastructure than at a national theatre (Hughes 139).[17] This position, where the artistic director is individually responsible and closely connected to all aspects of its management, is also reflected in how Lyddiard, Whyman and Campbell saw the role.

4.1 Alan Lyddiard (1992-2005)

In 1992, the theatre company returned to the Newcastle Playhouse (originally called the University Theatre) under the directorship of Alan Lyddiard, after agreeing new terms and conditions with Newcastle University.[18] For the first time, the company was now officially called Northern Stage (the building remained the Newcastle Playhouse, so it was Northern Stage at the Newcastle Playhouse). When Lyddiard became Artistic Director of Northern Stage in 1992 – having previously worked in regional theatre settings in Scotland and England – he was taking on a theatre in crisis, with no building, debt, and a dwindling income. This presented a huge challenge but also created opportunities for a new way of working. At the time of writing, Lyddiard has held the longest directorship at Northern Stage with a thirteen-year tenure.

Lyddiard's directorship was characterised by a clear commitment to connecting with European performance practice, the development of a performance ensemble, and a Project Model Approach (PMA) to the theatre's work with young people. He is, perhaps, most well-known for championing the region to the rest of Europe and bringing European ideas to the UK and North East England. His approach to ensemble working was informed by this preoccupation.

[17] Gwenda Hughes was Artistic Director of the New Vic in Staffordshire 1998-2007.
[18] The archives held at Tyne and Wear Museum end in 1991. I was unable to find any material post-1991 until I discovered there was a room in Northern Stage where boxes had been kept with the ongoing Board papers and ephemera since then. With a grant from Newcastle University, I had this material transferred to Newcastle University Special Collections where it now rests. But the transfer process meant that I could not continue to research the collection whilst it was being catalogued. I hope to take up the story again at some point or encourage others to do so.

As an admirer of Peter Brook and Lev Dodin, he introduced a new way of working with his ensemble that was influential in British theatre. Duška Radosavljević was a dramaturg at Northern Stage whilst working as a lecturer at Newcastle University from 2002-2005 (Radosavljević ix). In Jonathan Pitches' *Russians in Britain* she charts how Lyddiard established a distinctive ensemble approach to the theatre's work (139-167). Under Lyddiard's directorship, Northern Stage at the Newcastle Playhouse forged a national reputation as an ensemble company inspired by the Maly Theatre in Russia. They consciously developed strong links with European theatres and practices in preference to national or, more specifically, London ties. Radosavljević positions Lyddiard as supporting a renaissance in regional theatre, rescuing and raising the profile of Northern Stage, and also raising the bar for working with young people in theatre, both in terms of seeing them as part of the theatre's core provision, and using actors from the main company to produce work for young people. Northern Stage's approach during this time is exemplified by Lyddiard's invitations to international leading theatre-makers like Dodin (Maly Theatre) and Robert Lepage to make work with the ensemble. Lyddiard described his time at Newcastle in terms of an evolution of Northern Stage's development:

> Many people have tried to make something extraordinary happen in Newcastle e.g., John Blackmore and Andrew McKinnon [previous directors of Northern Stage]. For a time, it was one of the most vibrant theatres in Britain ... This was an inspiration to me when I first arrived.

More significant for the purposes of this thesis, however, is Lyddiard's impact upon the theatre's work with young people. To align better with his vision for ensemble working, and in a move that coincided with a reduction in local authority grants for education work, the TIE company no longer operated as a separate/arms-length body and it became incorporated into the ensemble.

Upon his arrival at the theatre, Lyddiard turned his attention to young people's work very quickly. He explained that when he landed in Newcastle, the theatre was in a financial and managerial crisis, within a region that was suffering following the closure of shipbuilding and mining industries. Lyddiard said, 'I did not feel I had any other option but to disband the Tyne and Wear Theatre Education team. This was a hard decision to make for someone just coming

into the organisation.' Lyddiard only retained Tony Harrington from the TIE company to set up a new Community Education Department within Northern Stage. Lyddiard's primary argument is that he felt obliged to disband the TIE due to financial constraints, but it is also apparent that a new set-up would suit his ideas for the way he wanted the ensemble to work since the ensemble was made up of everybody that worked in the theatre. Lyddiard articulated that his vision for young people as being:

> to work alongside them and to create a new style of theatre with them. […] I want to see a new type of theatre that is young, innovative, questioning authority, questioning the status quo, questioning the world and how we live now, and I think the only people that can help us achieve that are young people.

This demonstrates that young people were central to Lyddiard's approach and way of working and resonated with DIE and TIE practices of working alongside young people. He adopted something which he called PMA (Project Model Approach) whereby one show or theme on the main stage became the basis for a whole season of satellite work with young people and communities.

This approach was apparent in the Northern Stage ensemble's productions including *Animal Farm*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *Black Eyed Roses*, and *Ballroom of Romance*, that had a strong collaborative relationship with young people and local communities. Although Lyddiard disbanded the pioneering TIE company, in its place he positioned young people as integral to the body of the whole organisation. As well as participants themselves, there are people who began their careers in the ensemble who continue to work in participatory arts in the region who credit their current ideologies as being heavily influenced by this period. Examples are Annie Rigby, Director of award-winning Unfolding Theatre; Tony Harrington, Director of the Forge; and Mark Calvert, Susan Mulholland, and Kylie Lloyd. In this respect, Northern Stage in 2017 continued to be imbued with Lyddiard's legacy.

The Director of Operations, Edmund Nickols (1990-2020), attested that alongside the ensemble approach, Lyddiard brought a distinct international approach and saw it as a very successful era for the theatre: 'I think this was one of the great heydays of Northern Stage.

People really sat up and took note of this stuff coming over here.' Nostalgia can affect the accuracy of memory, and Nickols' positive take on the period may seem to ignore some of the difficulties that the ensemble faced. The archival records of meetings allude to, but do not detail, internal upset, and disruption within the organisation and with its stakeholders at the end of Lyddiard's tenure in 2005 ("Letters from Dramaturg"). Although Lyddiard made significant changes to Northern Stage – including restructuring it, rehoming it, and placing young people's work at its centre – by 2006, the theatre was struggling financially again as the accounts show. He chose to leave as he felt he could no longer pursue his goals and the Board decided to look for a new Director. Nevertheless, it is certainly true that under Lyddiard's directorship the company significantly expanded and garnered more attention. On his arrival in 1990, the theatre company was operating on a substantially reduced budget from an office, not a performance venue. By the time he left, it had returned to its original location on campus with a new name, Northern Stage, and the funding to renovate itself. In 1990, there were five or six people in the core company, working from offices on 67 Westgate Road, but by the time they moved back to the Playhouse there were more than forty people, and the company was renting spaces in other places in the city, such as Claremont Road and Eltham Place. This was an era of growth and expansion, but also of growing financial tensions with the Arts Council and the local authorities.[19]

Reflecting on the way that British theatre has developed since his time as Artistic Director at Northern Stage, Lyddiard observed that the approach he implemented at Northern Stage in the 1990s now appeared to be reflected in funders' thinking in 2015/16. For example, at the Arts Council he felt there used to be a priority of Great Art *for* people, seeing people as consumers whereas now it has shifted to 'Great Art For, By and With Everyone.'[20] Lyddiard did not claim any responsibility for this shift, but it would be reasonable to state that Northern Stage was an innovator or early adopter of this participant-centred approach. For Lyddiard, everyone – practitioners, participants and wider society – gain from community centred, participatory arts work.

[19] In 1994 the Arts Council of Great Britain was disbanded and was superseded by Arts Council England, with other councils operating in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
[20] This is a play on words. In 2010, the Arts Council adopted the slogan, 'Achieving Great Art for Everyone' as its ten-year strategy.

In sum, there were three core elements to Lyddiard's directorship: the Project Management Approach (PMA), ensemble working, and the European outlook of the theatre. Northern Stage does not have any of these in place at present. Still, this should not lead to the conclusion that there is no meaningful legacy from this period. Lyddiard was saddened that the European vision he had for the theatre has been lost, but the projects remain in the memories of regional and national critics, funders, and the audience members I spoke with. There is a presence on social media where people who were part of the ensemble continue to share pictures and thoughts. Moreover, having gone on to work on many other projects in a wide range of theatres, nationally and internationally, Lyddiard stated, 'everything that I did at Northern Stage informs everything that I do now'.

4.2 Erica Whyman (2006-2012)

In 2006, following a £9 million refurbishment, Northern Stage became the name of both the venue and the theatre company, and a new Director took charge: Erica Whyman ("Tyne Theatre Trust"). Whyman talked about how she came to Northern Stage: '[i]t was advertised as Chief Executive. […] They were in the middle of a capital project that had just started to come off the rails a bit and so there was a real anxiety about putting a Director in charge.' Although Whyman came from the Gate in Notting Hill (2001-2004), she felt that it was her background in Southwark Playhouse (1998-2001) and the Tricycle at Kilburn (1997-1998) that best prepared her for Northern Stage. Both of those theatres had a long history and commitment to learning and participation. Although they were London theatres, Southwark, and Kilburn, like Newcastle, faced complex deprivations, diverse populations of different kinds, and a lot of potential audiences and participants with low confidence in cultural activity. Whyman noted, 'I think Southwark was particularly influential because I was there at a time when The Globe was just opening. […] Our relationship to bringing the community into the theatre and telling stories in which they recognise themselves was quite key. I think that was very formative in my approach to Northern Stage.'

Although she intended to retain what she interpreted as Northern Stage's 'experimental' and 'international' reputation, Whyman also adopted a different approach from her predecessor and appears to have wanted to create some distance from Northern Stage's avant-garde approach.

She recalled, '[w]e banned the word "challenging." I remember we had notes by the desk saying, "We're not the weird theatre up the hill." It's about making it a genuinely welcoming and accessible place, but not letting that shrink our ambition intellectually and theatrically.' Whyman described plays under her tenure that exemplified her approach and hoped audiences felt that '[i]t did not matter how you came through our doors. You felt welcome and stretched.' These productions included *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (2011) and *A Doll's House* (2008) as international plays staged in a way to bring resonance to the North East audiences. In addition, there was *Oh What a Lovely War* (2010) and *Close the Coalhouse Door* (2012), which were firmly about the North East but were staged to bring out contemporary issues. For example, in *Oh What a Lovely War*, the production drew attention to men recruited to fight in Afghanistan from the same regiments that lost many men in the First World War of the original play. Whyman observed, 'I used to talk about the fact that we wore our political conscience quite vividly on our sleeves.'

Under Whyman, the education and outreach work with young people was renamed Participation. The participation team were encouraged to develop their own large-scale productions such as *Out of Toon* and the *Happiness* project which ran independently to main stage shows. Whyman admired Northern Stage's participation work with young people and brought a background in community-based theatre with her. She expressed 'huge admiration for Lyddiard's work and very specific admiration for Lyddiard's commitment to participation' (Whyman). When asked to describe her own approach at Northern stage, Whyman said that there were three phases. The first phase was about 'absolute discovery' whereby she and the organisation were finding their feet: 'We did not know exactly who we were. We did not know who our audience was. We did not know what was possible.' Then there was 'a middle phase' which Whyman expressed as a 'golden' period. She stated, '[w]e were very ambitious in that phase.' This was the era when she directed several larger scale productions, and this is when she allowed Participation to start designing and leading their own creative projects. She noted, 'we made a case for ourselves as being a contemporary theatre. Theatre of the moment. A place where people could recognize themselves but not nostalgically.' Then, the 'third phase' was during her last couple of years and they 'started to have the room to think about national strategy, to think about national profile.' At this point, she opened a venue in Edinburgh during the Fringe

festival called the *St. Stephen's Project* which in subsequent years became the *Summerhall Project*. This final stage reflected that she felt that Northern Stage was in a strong enough position to lead the theatre sector in the North East region and to assert itself beyond regional borders. Nonetheless, she noted with regret that, in the final two years of her time at the theatre, 'austerity started to bite.' She observed, '[i]t was a different time politically and, in some ways, less was possible' (Whyman).

It is noticeable that Whyman's sphere of reference was not instinctively towards participation projects. Under Whyman, participation work happened separately to her own main stage productions. Alongside her clear esteem for the participation work within the theatre, Whyman also revealed that there were points of contention. Discussing where her approach differed from Kylie Lloyd (Director of Participation 2002-2017), Whyman noted:

> Kylie was always very strong with me that participation is not about audience development and when it becomes that, then it loses its raison d'être. I agree with her in principle, but I think one done well can lead to the other. If you do participation really well, you switch people on to the possibility of coming. If that's your only reason for doing it, you won't do it well. I think we had some very happy examples of, if you like, agreeing to disagree about that, that she was right, and I was right.

Whyman followed this with several examples in practice to support her case, including projects which the Participation team created, which directly or indirectly fed into ticket sales, although conceding that the Participation team's argument not to be driven by theatre ticket sales was a valuable and sensitive approach. Whyman was keen to specifically mention the Christmas shows:

> The under-sixes shows were an unbelievably important part of building an audience for that theatre… you reach parents at quite a vulnerable age where they're going to stop coming, and you reach children at a formative age. [...] I think it changes people's minds forever potentially if you catch them that early. We always took a very collaborative approach. The kids would come to the dress rehearsal and give us feedback.

So, although Whyman accepted the case that her Participation team made for using theatre to nurture people for their own sake, she also believed that theatre for young people could and should be used as a vehicle for growing audiences.

Like Lyddiard, Whyman has left a legacy in terms of the physical building, having seen through the refurbishment and rebranding of Northern Stage which remains in place at the time of writing. Like Lyddiard, she left an important legacy on the theatre's work with young people by handing on an emboldened Participation team. Whilst Lyddiard stated how he believed that everything he did at Northern Stage informed everything he did afterwards, Whyman took it a stage further. She revealed that people and practices can be shaped by past experiences but also that the development of one organisation can influence that of another. In 2016, the RSC was developing a participatory philosophy and practices directly informed by Whyman's work at Northern Stage, essentially trying to bring participation and artistic leadership closer together. So, the legacies of these directors are both within Northern Stage but also spread externally through the projects and organisations that directors went on to work with after leaving Northern Stage.

Whilst Lyddiard felt the young people inspired him, Whyman felt most inspired by the Participation staff themselves. Whyman noted:

> Right through the work, there was a sense that there was nothing too challenging, so they could devise a play in a week, they could write their own play, they could think about completely new form for theatre, they could take rhetoric and public speaking and use stories to enable primary school children to speak in public. They could work with learning disabilities and with other disabilities perfectly happily because it was such an inclusive approach, but not an inclusive approach at the expense of the quality.

There was a natural evolution from Whyman talking about what she hoped and managed to achieve at Northern Stage, the ethos she aimed to foster throughout the organisation, and her focus on the main stage, to reflecting on the participation work. She wanted to express what she gained – a greater understanding and appreciation for participation work through watching and allowing her team to manage their own work and seeing what the participants themselves got

from it. The dialogue turned from focusing on what she wanted to articulate artistically to what the Participation team achieved. Like Lyddiard, she wanted to empower the team but to take it even further to have the confidence to be led by them.

4.3 Lorne Campbell (2013-2019)

In 2013, Lorne Campbell was appointed Artistic Director after Whyman moved to the RSC. He came directly from London, where he had been running his own production company, Greyscale, since 2009 (Sykes, "Acclaimed Young Director"). Campbell had a link to Northern Stage prior to becoming Artistic Director, having worked briefly with Lyddiard on productions at Northern Stage. Campbell had been an Associate Director at the Traverse Theatre in Scotland, a place where Lyddiard felt there was more sensitivity towards community-based theatre than in England. Campbell was the current Artistic Director during my research, which meant that he only had three years' experience at Northern Stage to reflect on, in contrast to Lyddiard and Whyman who had twenty years of experience at the theatre between them. Campbell was also commenting on something he was still actively engaged with, unlike Lyddiard and Whyman who had the luxury of retrospective reflection from a distance. Like many other newly appointed artistic directors at Northern Stage, he arrived at a time of financial insecurity. In 2015, Newcastle City Council proposed a 100% cut to its arts budget, citing austerity measures (Butler). Following a public outcry, instead they set up a Cultural Investment Fund in 2015 with £600,000, representing 50% of its previous investment, managed by the Community Foundation on their behalf (Community Foundation). In 1966, Newcastle City Council talked about Northern Stage with a sense of pride, ownership, inclusion, and vision for celebrating the arts for art's sake. In contrast, the 2015 arms-length approach in investment – using a third party to select and distribute funding – distanced the City Council. The Culture and Tourism Manager for Newcastle City Council, Andrew Rothwell, used to sit on Northern Stage's Board but that position ended, and he admitted that he no longer knew so much about their work. The new funding structure (which continues at the time of writing) means that arts organisations compete by bidding for funds, positioning arts organisations as tools to provide outcomes for wider agendas such as education, health, and wellbeing (Butler; Higgins, "Culture Clash"). In 2015 and 2016, according to *GrantNav*, Northern Stage received £50,000 from Newcastle City Council (360Giving). Campbell had to manage this notable shift in the relationship with the City Council,

and his approach involved making partnerships with other regional theatres to produce shows.

Nevertheless, the company's focus upon young people and participatory work continued. Campbell outlined three ways that Northern Stage had been in contact with young people: firstly, continuing to present work in terms of staging plays suitable for a young audience (such as the Christmas shows); secondly, through formal educational contexts delivering workshops within a school, college, or a university; and finally, through larger scale participatory projects such as *NORTH* and *Young Company*, or work devised by the Participation team in partnership with third parties. He noted that engagement with young people 'sits on a spectrum. [...] It is important that we think of those things as a continuum rather that a set of binary states and ways of working' (Campbell). He placed what he termed 'talent development' participatory work as a core part of his ambitions for the whole organisation.

Although it might seem incongruent to talk about legacy relating to a person who was still in post at the time of this research, Campbell's ambitions for the theatre represent aspirational legacies. This includes his plans for growing *Young Company* into a body through which the theatre would champion young people from a range of backgrounds:

> The white middle-class audience who get the most value out of this thing [Northern Stage], we don't want to take anything away from that audience. We want to build equal opportunity for a whole scale of other audiences. [...] Knowing that with each community, and with each context, with each set of young people, there's a different set of barriers that it takes real time to work through…It's like you can make the door as big as you want. If people can't get to the front door, it's useless (Campbell).

His comments are similar to his predecessor, Gareth Morgan, in the 1970s, but whereas the company used to work with hundreds of children, *Young Company* aims to recruits fifty, albeit to work with them in greater depth. Campbell's approach also clearly focused on inclusivity and empowerment. He observed:

> It will be very important [to foster] the sense that this building is theirs. One of the things I'm proudest of over the last three years is a group of artists in their mid-twenties through to early thirties who've been through support and artist development with Northern Stage. They treat this building like their front room. They come, they go, they use

computers, they eat biscuits. It's their space.

These quotes echo the vision of Morgan held at Northern Stage in 1972. Campbell also appears to display a similar viewpoint to Lyddiard regarding the theatre's openness and desire to learn from young people, as much as wanting to impart learning to them. Indeed, Campbell went further than Lyddiard and Whyman by suggesting that he wanted to bring young people on to the theatre's management committees: 'We'll move towards establishing a Youth Board which will oversee the governance of *Young Company* and will also have a representation within the Board of Northern Stage.'

4.4 Summary

The history of Northern Stage since 1991 has been shaped by its artistic directors who have each had a distinctive and impactful approach to shaping the identity of Northern Stage. The theatre has continued to be dogged by significant financial concerns, but it has also seen periods of growth and greater stability: the three most recent directors have stayed in post longer than many of their predecessors. As well as refurbishment to their premises, Northern Stage have developed and toured productions outside of Newcastle. Although the artistic directors have been clearly distinct from one another in their preoccupations, they have also shared a sense of wanting the theatre to connect with its local community and seeing young people as a core part of that. As well as directing engagement with young people, they all expressed how much they learnt from participation and how it influenced their outlook toward theatre more broadly.

Chapter 5

On the Northern in Northern Stage

Northern Stage has been the theatre's longest-held title in a history which has seen multiple name changes. The company Northern Stage has existed since 1992 (for thirty years at the time of the completion of this thesis) and the venue has also been called Northern Stage for over ten years (since 2006). This suggests that the theatre has finally found a name which connects with its sense of self and reflects its identity. This chapter examines the significance of the 'Northern' element of Northern Stage's name, to reflect on how this informs its approach to young people's participation. It acknowledges that 'Northern' is a relative concept, depending on the position of the viewer. It also notes that some of the claims that Northern Stage makes for itself as a regional theatre require critical challenge. Nevertheless, it argues that the term 'Northern' in the theatre's name serves to create a strong sense of place for staff and in the company's participation work with young people. Every interviewee was asked if the 'Northern' in Northern Stage held any significance for them and this chapter draws upon their personal reflections.

5.1 A Relative Concept

The 'Northern' in 'Northern Stage' clearly resonated with many of my interviewees. They talked about how the theatre generates, perpetuates, challenges, or reflects an intangible yet heartfelt feeling of being Northern, of being from the North of England. They suggested that people connect to the theatre through a subtle yet powerful emotional sense of being Northern. Yet 'Northern' is an awkward term in many ways, not least as its interpretation invariably depends on your viewpoint. For example, Newcastle certainly sits in the north of England, but the city is not northern compared to, for example, Svalbard, the Norwegian archipelago – or even in comparison to Aberdeen in the UK. Moreover, Tomaney and Ward point out that Northern is also a term that is subject to change and interpretation because it has social, political, economic, and cultural connotations as well as being indicative of a geographical position (10). Moreover, like many other descriptors, 'Northern' is often defined through comparison to other

classifications. Scholars observe that it can be as much about what it is not, as what it is (Russell 14; Hayton et al. 6). Steven Miles argues that a Northern identity is often defined in response to external perspectives rather than resulting from self-determined characteristics, a finding congruent with the experience of conducting this research (Miles, "'Our Tyne'" 915). My interviews with young people showed that they had not necessarily registered their Northerness until they left the region. For example, one participant went on to work in the theatre profession in London and found themselves facing prejudice and preconceptions about the North East (Amy). They had not encountered these opinions when they lived in the region, nor did they feel they were justified by any evidence. For this individual, the unwelcome experience of encountering negative perceptions of the North from people outside the region engendered an unexpected sense of loyalty and pride that they had not previously felt and motivated their decision to return and make work that celebrated Newcastle and the North East (Amy).

5.2 A Sense of Place

Vall makes it clear that the North East is defined not just by its culture, but by its cultural institutions. She identifies an underlying tension between the local authorities' desire to introduce metropolitan high culture to the region, whilst also wanting to promulgate locally rooted arts (97-120). Although it does not feature in her case studies, Northern Stage exemplifies the tension she identifies. The early years of Northern Stage are indicative of preoccupations with bringing classical and high-profile drama into the region, while also commissioning and championing regional talent and values. Northern Stage continues to navigate its identity as a place that brings new experiences into the region but also one that tries to create locally relevant pieces and exports its productions to other places outside of the region. As a Band 3 (highest level) Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation with an annual investment between 2015–2018 of £1,562,496, it is expected to represent a region (Arts Council England, *How Arts Council England*).

However, while Northern Stage is clearly a regional theatre, it does not follow that Northern Stage represents the Northern region. The Director of Operations and longest serving member of staff, Edmund Nickols, recalled that when he joined the theatre in 1990 there was an argument about whether the theatre should be called 'The Northern Stage' or 'Northern Stage.' Nickols did not elaborate on the substance of the arguments and the archives are silent on the

matter. We can speculate, however, on why this nuance might be worthy of heated debate. If the Board had chosen 'The Northern Stage' it would have suggested a singularity towards the representation of theatre in the North and perhaps even an obligation which might have been contested by other theatres in the North East, Yorkshire, and the North West. Choosing to omit the definite article and leaving the title as the non-specific 'Northern Stage' leaves room for multiplicity, allowing for other venues to claim to represent the broader region, too.

As Rowell and Jackson note, however, theatres are defined in relation to what is going on elsewhere in the country – or within their region (187). Northern Stage may not be named '*The* Northern Stage,' but its marketing does emphasise its location as a key part of its overall identity by celebrating its status as 'the largest producing theatre in the North East of England' (Northern Stage, "Company Jobs"). This phrase appears repeatedly in Northern Stage's own marketing material as well as in literature produced about the theatre. This suggests that regional location is understood to be a defining feature of Northern Stage, both by the theatre itself and by external commentators. It is something that they are confident about, that they think is important, and that they have persuaded others is a valuable and defining feature (Arts Council England, "National Portfolio: 2018-22"). Whilst Northern Stage's claim to be the largest producing theatre in the North East of England gives it a distinctive strapline, it is a problematic concept. A claim to pre-eminence as a 'North East' company presents something of a challenge when Northern Stage's work is predominantly Newcastle-based. Newcastle may represent the North East from outside the region, but it is questionable whether Durham, Middlesbrough, Sunderland, Berwick, and the places in between see Newcastle as either representative of or relevant to them. Moreover, there are other theatre companies that create work locally and further north in England, such as the November Club and the Northumberland Theatre Company. There are also other venues further north in the North East region, including Alnwick Playhouse and the Maltings in Berwick. Yet Northern Stage distinguishes itself from these companies and venues by its larger size and its dual nature of being both a venue and a company. References to the North East of England also mark Northern Stage out as different to other English regional theatres.

In fact, Northern Stage is most strongly rooted in Newcastle rather than representing the broader region. Northern Stage's recent programmes certainly suggest that its outlook is more city-focused than regional. The front pages of the 2015 and 2016 seasons' programmes have the

logo and theatre name prominently displayed and underneath are the words 'Theatre Made in Newcastle.' It could be argued that Northern Stage conflates the North East and Newcastle (they would not be alone in doing this). This emphasis on Newcastle rather than the North East is also continued inside with a reiteration of the 'made in Newcastle' strapline and an opening statement: 'Northern Stage is a powerhouse of theatre and creativity in the heart of Newcastle.' This strong association with the city is more obvious than the company's regional position because the building is sited in the city centre, and the productions predominantly take place in Newcastle. Under Artistic Director Alan Lyddiard (1992-2005), the work did sometimes reach out across the region including the large community Opera project *Blaze* (2004) in the Tees Valley and, under Erica Whyman's directorship (2006-2012), *Apples* (2010) was performed in Middlesbrough. In the past few years, however, there have only been a couple of small-scale regional touring performances. By using Newcastle in its programme but North East in its vision, Northern Stage may be accused of failing to acknowledge the pluralism of the region. It is probably more accurate to say that Northern Stage represents its own locale, Newcastle and Tyneside, since most of its productions have been made here and involved people from this environ more than anywhere else. Furthermore, it may be that the strapline speaks more directly to the company's relationships with other venues in the city than those elsewhere in the region. Since 2009 Northern Stage has strengthened its Newcastle association by forming an alliance with other Arts Council-funded cultural organisations through the Newcastle and Gateshead Cultural Venues, NGCV (Northern Stage, "NewcastleGateshead Cultural Venues"). This alliance includes two other building-based theatres in Newcastle: Live Theatre and the Theatre Royal. Northern Stage's strapline as the 'largest producing theatre' effectively serves to distinguish themselves from these other organisations.[21]

For some, this tight city-focus might seem rather parochial. For Lyddiard, the 'Northern' element of the company's identity went far beyond the city, it was about broadening horizons and establishing the theatre on a European stage, bringing international and European influences and stories to the North East, and taking the North East across to Europe. For Lyddiard, the

[21] In practice, these identities are not so clear cut. Northern Stage both showcases new writing and receives companies, and conversely Live Theatre produces work on a similar scale to Northern Stage and the Theatre Royal sometimes initiates creative practice.

‘Northern’ represented a Northern Europe positioning. He wanted to create a ‘European Centre for the Arts’ (Lyddiard). During his tenure, Northern Stage gained a European flavour, inviting companies from across Europe to perform and collaborate and to take productions from Northern Stage to Europe. Lyddiard felt that this gave a distinct identity to Northern Stage and its relationship with other cultural organisations in the Newcastle city region:

> My rationale was always to have a European Arts Centre, to create a world class theatre company with young people from the North East, taught through a process to create great world class art.

During this period, it was more important to Lyddiard that the theatre was connected to the rest of Europe rather than other English regions and London. Lyddiard talked about how, during his final year at Northern Stage, there was a production in Barcelona, Romania, and one in Newcastle, all running at the same time with the same ensemble playing in three different places and some of the ensemble speaking Catalan. For him, this was a major achievement. However, it was not a position that lasted and Northern Stage returned to being a North East England, Newcastle based cultural venue.

5.3 Temporal Positioning, Ideological Interventions

There are, of course, other ways of thinking about the meaning of ‘Northern.’ Nickols proposed that the Northern in Northern Stage possessed a temporal as well as geographical resonance. This suggests that being ‘Northern’ is not only about where the company is physically based or performs, but what that positioning might signify in relation to its past and its future. As discussed above, the company has fostered work made in and about the region since its inception. But it has had surprisingly little to say about its own history within this landscape. This distinguishes it from other North East based theatres that use their websites to define themselves in relation to their history and the type of work they present. For example, Live Theatre positions itself as a home for new writing, while the People’s Theatre produces community-based amateur theatre. Northern Stage has also been something of an outlier nationally in this regard. There are examples of other regional theatres who have taken firm

control of their own narratives, and who champion their history, including Liverpool Everyman, the Birmingham Rep, West Yorkshire Playhouse, and Bristol Old Vic. They highlight their past as part of their present in their websites but also gain coverage in scholarly literature on theatre history by having accessible archives (Bristol Old Vic, "Heritage"). In contrast, Northern Stage has focused almost exclusively on its present and future. Unlike its neighbour, Live Theatre, Northern Stage does not speak about its own back story (Live Theatre, "Live Theatre History Films").

Nevertheless, in recent years Northern Stage has clearly been engaged in attempting to cater for the region's interest in its own past, and in addressing – and countering – external preconceptions of the region, based upon its history. This is a major task. Many of these preconceptions reflect the region's historical association with heavy industry and extreme poverty in an area associated with shipbuilding and mining. They reflect the legacy of J.B. Priestley's vehemently disparaging account of his visit to Newcastle in 1934 that cemented the idea that it was 'grim up North'. Notoriously, Priestly said of Newcastle, '[i]f T. S. Eliot ever wants to write a poem about a real wasteland instead of a metaphysical one, he should come here' (310). Still, other aspects of his account – pertinent here – have been forgotten. He was very positive about the cultural landscape of Tyneside, specifically popular theatre. Priestley was a supporter of regional theatre and in 1948 wrote, '[i]n times like these, when the spirit sickens, we need the theatre urgently. It is not properly recognised that a repertory theatre is a glorious amenity, a blossoming oasis in the desert of our austerity' (qtd. in Dyas, 6). Of course, Priestley was making an argument which many others also advanced and then acted upon, bringing about changes in the regions. Commentators have observed the extent to which post-war arts investment was a key driver in redefining the cultural landscape of the North East, transforming its cultural life. Vall, for example, cites several examples of North East culture which counteract a London-centric perception of the region as a 'cultural desert' (1). Others have argued that artworks such as Anthony Gormley's giant statue, *The Angel of the North* (1998), are a significant part of the region's imaginative regeneration (Miles, "'Our Tyne'").[22]

[22] Though there is a clearly a positive story to be told about the culture of the North East and the regeneration of the region, many commentators acknowledge a belief that other regions, particularly in the South look down on the North East, that London theatre gets more attention in academia, and more funding per capita than the North East (Stark et al., *The RoCC Report*).

Northern Stage fits seamlessly into this narrative. Whyman sought to develop a Northern identity for the theatre as one which championed a positive ideology about what being Northern represented. She believed that her work at Northern Stage was about celebrating the North East. Furthermore, she oversaw a drive to use participation work to champion the North East within the UK and to challenge negative perceptions about the region and young people. She observed, 'I really worry about [negative] clichés of the North East.' Furthermore, whilst based at Northern Stage, Whyman used the Northern identity of the theatre to establish a national status for itself, saying that when the company started going to Edinburgh for the Fringe festival, '[w]e owned up and said: "It's about brilliant work from the North of England." That was explicitly against the trend of: "This work is only good if it goes to London."' Whyman's successor, Campbell, continued to use the Edinburgh Fringe platform in a similar way. Taking over a venue at the Fringe enabled Northern Stage to give a platform to other, smaller North East theatre companies. The purpose was to mentor and champion North East theatre-makers, bolstering the confidence of companies within the region, and reaching out to audiences beyond Tyneside. Campbell also prioritised another important strand in the theatre's 'Northern' identity: a focus on training people from the North East region.

5.4 Connecting People

Northern Stage has long been proud of its interest in producing theatre and offering training that is 'connected to the life of our region'. This powerful claim, which appeared on the company's website in 2016, was not elaborated upon there. Yet if it was seen within its historical context, it gains depth of meaning. Since 1967, the theatre has indeed developed multiple training routes for young people to become actors, stage technicians, and more confident citizens. As such, being 'connected to the life of our region' relates to this history of training opportunities leading up to the *NORTH* training programme in 2016, which subsidises professional theatre training for actors from and living in the region. For some of the company's staff, the 'Northern' in Northern Stage was very clearly linked to the way that it engaged with local theatre professionals. In his interview, Nickols observed that Northern Stage attracted local theatre makers to work there instead of bringing in people from outside of the region to develop their careers – as was traditionally the model in repertory theatre (Dunn 4). Nickols said:

When I arrived here, in the '90's, practically everybody had gone through Tyne and Wear

> Theatre Company. I notice, now, that many people are coming here from already being in the North East rather than coming from elsewhere.

It had certainly been important for Lyddiard that the ensemble was created from and developed by people in the North East and that audiences in the North East got the opportunity to witness theatre from outside the UK within their region. The two aims were seen to be complementary, and particularly relevant for young people who encountered the theatre's work, as it provided them with material for understanding the world and their place in it. In 2016, Artistic Director Campbell observed:

> I believe that a healthy theatrical culture in any context, but particularly within a regional context like this, requires creatives in every possible sense — performers, writers, directors, designers, technicians — to be of a place. It doesn't have to exclusively of a place, but you need people from here to be able to tell both our stories and other people's stories to us.

As valuable as Northern Stage's continued practice of championing local voices has been, it is understood that this needs to sit alongside work and practices that introduce new influences on audiences, to present them with the unfamiliar as well as the familiar. The TIE director, Chris Bostock (1983-1992), for example, made concerted efforts to employ actors from racially diverse backgrounds because he was aware that Tyneside had a predominantly white demographic.

5.5 A Northern Significance for Participation Work

These preoccupations are apparent in the company's Participation programme. Bostock talked at length about his belief that it was valuable for young people and the local community to see and hear unfamiliar faces and voices in a positive learning environment, such as theatre, and that this representation needed to avoid stereotypes or tokenism. Bostock tried to adopt a similar approach to what has become known as colour-blind casting (Thorpe). Bostock specifically referred to a production that he created which centred on the story of a king and his daughters. The actors that he employed to represent the daughters were racially different to the actor playing their father, the king, and to each other. Their ethnicity was not part of the storyline and therefore the audience was encouraged to be colour-blind. It is impossible to tell whether this

was effective, but it illustrates an attempt to use the stage as a platform for diversity and cohesion and that young people's engagement was a key part of this. Alongside this, Bostock also argued that young people from the region deserved the opportunity to continue their careers within the region and that young audiences should be able to see and admire people from their own community on the stage to cement a sense of community cohesion. He asserted that '[i]t was important for local people who went away, trained, and came back here that they were working in their community, for their community.'

Bostock pointed out that young people would not necessarily notice that the actors had northern accents because we do not notice what is familiar and normal to ourselves, we take it for granted, but that the familiarity of language and culture could subliminally help young people to feel comfortable and accepted. This is congruent with the increasing concerns today from some parts of the acting profession that the more it becomes dominated by privileged people, the more disconnected young people from less elite backgrounds feel (Arnett; Singh).

This resonates with comments made by Participation Director, Kylie Lloyd, in 2016. Lloyd, referring to her own experience of coming to the theatre as an eighteen-year-old to see *Animal Farm* as a set text for school, asserted that the 'Northern' in Northern Stage represented something particularly meaningful to her. She recalled how she fell in love with the theatre, and ended up working there, going on to assert, 'Northern Stage must represent people of the North East. It has to have some sort of political identity, which is about the fact that we acknowledge and recognize the fact that we are the largest producing theatre company in the North East, and we have a relationship with that geography.' Lloyd's comments, while clearly informed by the company's marketing, offer an insight that helps to reconcile the topical with the psychological importance of the North and Northerness at Northern Stage. She felt strongly that it was important for Northern Stage to make work with young people that referenced where they were, that made it distinctive: 'I think it's important that we are creating work that has the voice of the North East in it. […] It's about expressing our culture through theatre' (Lloyd).

Artistic Director Whyman stated that she was interested in the specific identity of Newcastle and the North East in similar terms: 'It felt to me as though there was a strong political voice in the North East that had national interest, so I was always keen to try and capture it.' She noted, 'I often saw it most vividly in participation work and then that would

influence what I made on the other stages.' The direct link which Whyman describes here between young people's work in participation and the main stage programming was not overt at the time and only becomes apparent when she describes the connection, a connection built upon the idea of the theatre's Northern position. She described one project which she felt was very particular to Northern Stage, but that she felt should have wider relevance: Northern Stage and Company of Angels staged an adaptation of Richard Milward's book, *Apples*, in Middlesbrough. Whyman insisted that, in a break from tradition, Northern Stage should perform the show in Middlesbrough, rather than Newcastle. She noted that '[i]t is not something that I would probably have said without that experience of those few years with Lloyd [the Director of Participation] and her Participation team.' This comment illustrated how she was inspired by her staff who had all grown up and worked in the region and how she felt a confidence in them to branch out into new ways of working. Whyman commented further that:

> [*Apples*] doesn't look like a Participation project, but without Participation, it doesn't happen. It was a huge success with young actors in that it had lots of participatory projects around it, bringing lots of new people into the various theatre spaces [it toured]. *Apples* stays very strong for me because it's a 15-year-old saying, 'life is really hard and really full of joy.'

Whyman's successor, Campbell, also felt Northern Stage gave young people a connection with the area and a chance to hear voices which represented something familiar to them in their region as well as something aspirational. He commented that the company should be 'nurturing and creating voices that are of this place but can have proper aspiration and support to become excellent and to be national or global voices.' Campbell also indicated that it was important to grow and present a creative workforce within the region but, like Whyman, he held aspirations to then showcase their work to the rest of the country or world. He noted, '[t]he voices that young people hear when they come into this theatre are not voices from elsewhere going, "Welcome to the building, you northern people, you sit down there".' In other words, they hear voices that are familiar to them which is more inclusive.

Whereas Lyddiard had his ensemble, Campbell's vehicle for developing this Northern

voice is the *NORTH* programme and *Young Company*. These represent different tools used for a similar purpose. As Campbell saw it, the company had tended toward deep engagement with smaller numbers and had done some amazing work, but he wanted to move away from that and start to think about how to engage with larger numbers, to have an offer which was accessible to more people. Campbell stated:

> Rather than working with twenty, thirty kids within the context of this building, we're going to be trying to work with more than a hundred kids with a number of regional partners. […] In three years' time, I would like to see a circumstance where we have more than a hundred young people […] who are engaged on a weekly basis with Northern Stage inside and outside of this building.

However, whilst Northern Stage wanted to create lots of opportunities for young people to engage, the Chief Executive, Kate Denby, said in 2016 that they did not want to prescribe what Northern meant to young people:

> When we're working with young people it's about giving them agency, it's about creating the space for those young people to respond to the time and the place in the world in which they live. That place is the North East.

She felt that the North East offered a distinctive time and place which would automatically mean that young people's perspectives were different from young people in Cornwall, for example, or anywhere else, observing, '[i]t's a lens through which you view the world.' Yet she also felt that it could only be young people who could describe that lens, not her. Further to this, Denby recognised that digital technology has an impact on how young people define their sense of place, noting:

> They can be having a conversation with somebody on the West Coast of America as easily as they can with somebody two houses down. I think that for young people, their view of the world is absolutely shaped by where they are but their connection to the world is so much more international in its reach.

Within this new digitally connected age, Denby felt that adults should be wary about defining a

Northern identity for young people because their experience is so different from the way that previous generations grew up and viewed the world. She observed, '[w]e need to create the space for those young people to explore the world in the way that they choose to explore it.'

For the North East-based theatre maker, Annie Rigby, the Northern nature of Northern Stage represented a distinct value of participation at Northern Stage. Echoing sentiments already expressed, she felt it was important for young people to hear voices they recognise and affiliate with a professional setting, stating, '[t]here is something about the North Easternness of the work of Northern Stage […] It can be powerful for young people to see that person [on stage or leading a workshop] is from Washington and feel, "I'm from Washington, they're doing that, and I could be doing that".' Rigby felt that provision of this experience is a specific responsibility that regional theatres, such as Northern Stage, held, noting, '[y]oung people have an amazing time at National Theatre projects but there is something powerful about hearing Northern voices' in a place that young people are familiar with.

5.6 Summary

Even though the concept of being Northern is relative and cannot be considered to encapsulate a static or fixed descriptor, Northern Stage has always had a staunchly Northern identity. That Northern identity manifests itself through its location, its people, and its ideology, and is particularly relevant to its participation work. Northerness is a fundamental part of Northern Stage's identity and its value for young people in the city region by bringing external influences into the region as well as hearing voices young people are familiar with and championing their potential to be part of producing future work in the place where they live. Whilst it has a distinctly Newcastle and Tyneside position rather than a regional one, Northern Stage has tried and continues to encourage young people to reflect upon and to create their own sense of what the word Northern means to them.

Chapter 6

Contextualising Participation at Northern Stage

This chapter explores the impact of Northern Stage's contribution to young people's participation and assesses the way in which its approach to participation has been shaped by broader changes in funding and education policy over the period. It first presents an overview of these changes and their impacts, before turning to an assessment of the experiences of participants. It begins by looking at the broader context of cultural and educational policies during the period before looking at how these have influenced the theatre. It then explores how developments in the practical application of educational theory came together at Northern Stage in the forms of Theatre in Education (TIE) and Drama in Education (DIE). This discussion picks up the thread begun in the introduction to further highlight Northern Stage's relationship to figures who became international leaders in participatory work, specifically O'Toole, Bolton, and Heathcote. The chapter examines the struggles Northern Stage faced with its Participation programme in later years – struggles which largely relate to its relationship with wider cultural and education policies, as well as systems of evaluation and scrutiny. This chapter sets out the way in which major shifts in the way that participatory work – and the arts more widely – have been funded over the past fifty years and have both benefitted the theatre and limited what it has been able to achieve. It reflects on the way that these policies have impacted the structure of the company and on the implications of these organisational changes for participation work. Its final section turns to consider the experiences and voices of the participants themselves. It reveals that the accounts of the young participants indicate consistent and powerful evidence of positive impacts. This chapter aims to show that the development of Northern Stage's work with young people since its beginning has always been a distinctive, strong part of its identity. Indeed, the theory and practices of those opening years continue to reverberate in the experiences of participants in 2016. In contrast to the changing fortunes and identity of Northern Stage more broadly, its participation offer has been consistent in the powerful impact it has had on young people.

6.1 Participation and Policy

The story of participation with young people in theatre is closely linked to cultural and education policy (Miller et al. 5). Article 27 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights states: 'Everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts' (United Nations). However, policy is not always matched by investment for delivery. Theatre in Education and Drama in Education were theories and practices which were closely linked to the civic and cultural policies of the 1960s and early 1970s, when there was a growing interest in supporting engagement with the arts, accompanied by significant state investment. This benefited Northern Stage who were able to grow their offer. However, subsequent policies including the introduction of targets, and a reduction in local authority and national government investment in arts education, have led to difficulties for the theatre (Wooster *Theatre in Education* 174-185). The Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) – the primary arm of government responsible for cultural policy in England – devolves the management and funding of the arts, including theatre, to the Arts Council of England (ACE) who in turn distribute it to arts organisations via regional agencies (National Archives "History of Arts Council England"). The Arts Council has a remit to 'make the arts, and the wider culture of museums and libraries, an integral part of everyday public life, accessible to all, and understood as essential to the national economy and to the health and happiness of society' (DMCS, *Lottery Policy Directions*).

The position of theatre and young people within policy reflects the nature of the relationship between society and the arts, as well as broader social hierarchies (Nicholson, *Theatre, Education and Performance* 12). Nicholson argues that the cultural policy and funding environment in the first decade of the twenty-first century has put pressure on theatres to create projects for particular social ends – projects which are products of an individualistic, target-driven education climate. The increasing discussions about participation within cultural policy may be because of its perceived potential to reach wider demographics than theatres currently attract through their stage productions. The Arts Council's own reports show that theatre productions predominantly attract white, middle-class, high-income patrons (Jermyn). The independent work done by Grisolía and Willis ("A Latent Class Model") shows that this has also been the case for Northern Stage. Participation work is often seen to be more accessible because

it is so closely connected to community identities, even if those identities are sentimentalised or imaginary (Nicholson, *Applied Drama* 83). However, whilst there are repeated policy claims for participation to widen inclusion, there are signs that access remains narrow. The expectations of inclusivity across all levels of society are raised by policy but there has not been a parallel increase in investment to match the rhetoric. This means that delivery struggles to meet expectations: in the 1980s, Northern Stage could afford sixteen core members of participation staff and delivered participatory work across Tyneside for free, but in 2017 it had only three permanent members of staff and charged a fee for many of its activities.

Research for this thesis has shown that Newcastle played a pivotal role in establishing a model for the Arts Council to fund regional theatres; "Northern Arts became the template for regional arts funding nationally" (Vall, 101.) As discussed in Chapter Three, Newcastle was the first region to establish its own arts board in 1962. Nigel Abercrombie at an Arts Council AGM recommended that Northern Arts should become the model for arts funding across the rest of the country (Vall 101). Indeed in 1963 the Arts Council of Great Britain devolved £50,000 to the NE region and made a promise to invest £5,000 directly in the Flora Robson Playhouse – Northern Stage's predecessor (Commons Chamber). Based on the perceived success of the Newcastle initiative, in 1965 the Arts Council of Great Britain produced a strategy for devolving funding and delivering arts projects across Britain, through regional agencies ("White Paper"). The mechanism and strategy for funding the arts in the regions shifted over the years, with changes in geographical boundaries, and changing names and governance structures for both the central funding agency and its regional arms (Sinclair 112-113, 133-134). However, since this 1965 strategy, the model of a national Arts Council operating through regional agency representatives has been sustained across England. The essays featured in Dorney and Merkin's *The Glory of the Garden: English Regional Theatre and the Arts Council* provide insights into the complicated relationship between regional theatres and the Arts Council. The title of their book refers to the 1984 Arts Council report which outlined how, as a purportedly national organisation, the Arts Council of Great Britain needed to be less metropolitan/ London-centric and to reach out into the regions (Sinclair, 439-455). Bailey, Miles and Stark track the narrative of cultural policy in North East England, arguing that in-depth knowledge about the geography and history of the region is key to successful arts investment, particularly for regeneration

(2004). They make a case for the distinctiveness of cultural investment in the region, noting that between 1980 and 2001 the region saw a 40% increase in funding from the Arts Council at a time when many other regions experienced a decline (6). At this time the North East was the second largest recipient of arts funding outside of London (after Merseyside). However, rather than being a huge boost to activity, this additional investment mostly went towards making up for losses incurred due to the abolishment of the region's Metropolitan County Councils. Nonetheless, it does account for how arts activity, including TIE work, remained buoyant in a region which was otherwise facing an economic downturn at the turn of the century.

Despite different approaches and measures taken by the Arts Council to diversify and spread its funds into the regions over the decades many argue it has never been wholly successful. In October 2013 a report called *Rebalancing Our Cultural Capital* illustrated how Arts Council funding remained highly London-biased (Stark et al.). Following this, the Chair of the Culture, Media and Sport committee, the MP John Whittingdale said, '[t]he Arts Council generally does a good job in allocating limited resources between many competing demands. However, there is a clear imbalance in arts funding in favour of London – which the Arts Council itself admits' (qtd. in UK Parliament). Through detailed analysis, the follow-up *PLACE* report in 2014 further illustrated the discrepancies in National Lottery funding, highlighting how most of this type of funding goes to the most affluent areas of England and the least to areas that have invested the most in playing the lottery – particularly in the North East of England (Stark et al.). These reports indicate that the North East of England was at a significant disadvantage during this period, and that cultural policy would benefit from greater engagement with the specificities of socio-economic context at a regional level.

Education policy as it relates to the arts has also impacted on theatre's ability to provide for young people during this period. A sudden boom in both spectatorship and participation by young people in theatre followed the end of the Second World War, rising alongside greater access to better quality education opportunities for an increasing amount of young people (Jackson, *Theatre, Education*). The establishment and spread of comprehensive education from the 1960s encouraged engagement with the arts and opened opportunities for teachers to provide creative opportunities through programmes such as Drama in Education and for theatre companies to run youth theatres and Theatre in Education initiatives (K. Robinson 141).

Robinson claims that part of the incentive in introducing drama into state education was a move to break down class barriers (141-175). Nicholson also draws attention to the link between the growth in TIE and a 'progressive education' model (*Applied Drama* 9) As such, the education policy environment of the 1960s and 1970s created a sympathetic climate for Northern Stage's TIE to thrive.

A gradual tightening of education provision to focus on exams and core subjects followed. The National Curriculum was introduced in 1989 with the aim to raise standards by centralising education provision and removing the liberal freedoms of Local Authorities and Head Teachers (Fisher 2008 256). Nicholson illustrates how there was a corollary retraction of arts opportunities and the closure of many TIE companies (*Theatre & Education* 36-40). There were no longer local authority drama specialists in the 1990s in Tyne and Wear and Northern Stage was struggling to fund its own TIE by 1991 as was discussed in Chapter Four (Harland 12).

Opportunities for theatres to engage with schools opened up again in the first decade of the twentieth century, with the publication of the *Every Child Matters policy* in 2003 which encouraged agencies working with young people to collaborate better and, specifically, to enable young people to 'enjoy and achieve' (Hopkins 1). Creative Partnerships was a programme developed jointly between the Department for Education and the Department for Culture which encouraged arts organisations, including theatres such as Northern Stage to work with schools in deprived areas (UK Parliament). Secondary Schools could also apply for 'Performing Arts status' if they made an exceptional effort to deliver and arts curriculum through the governments Specialist Schools initiative (Harland 578). This was a period with more funding and status awarded to work with children that had been available in the previous decade. Tellingly, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) became the Department for Children Schools and Families in 2007 (DCSF) which reflected the more holistic approach to young people (National Archives *Department for Children, Schools and Families*). Together, these initiatives signified a renewed interest from government in generating relationships between theatre, the arts and schools.

However, education policy towards the arts tightened from 2015 onwards with a focus on core subjects; using school workforce data, the Cultural Learning Alliance reported that the

number of drama teachers had reduced by 17% and the number of hours drama is taught had gone down by 16 % between 2010 and 2018. This happened alongside wider austerity measures which saw arts budgets particularly hard hit (Oakes 739). Northern Stage also struggled to create schools' programmes as local authority structures for state schools become more fragmented with the introduction and spread of Academies and Free Schools (Lloyd). Indeed, recent education policy and provision has arguably accentuated inequalities and marginalised theatre participation opportunities in theatre for young people by reducing access to theatres. This is important in the context of Northern Stage, which as a regional, publicly funded organisation is trying to reach out to a wide spectrum of young people but finding it increasingly challenging because there is neither the funding nor the networks which they once had. Northern Stage's participation offer can therefore be seen to have mirrored state education's wider relationship with theatre, expanding or contracting accordingly.

A disparity between drama provision in the private education sector and that offered in the state sector also impacts on Northern Stage. The private education sector has long realised the intangible benefits of the theatre, in contrast to the state system and Jackson makes the case that Eton has encouraged pupils to put on plays for centuries (*Theatre, Education* 61). The contrast between state schools and independent schools' participation offer is made clear in the Warwick Commission's 2015 report (Neelands et al.). Indeed, Eton's prospectus claims to put on more than twenty shows per year with budgets and facilities that rival professional companies (Eton College). The author Frank Cotterill Boyce wryly observed: 'They've got a classical stage and a TV studio. Honestly, you could train a monkey. It would be a disgrace to leave there and not be a brilliant actor' (qtd. in Cadwalladr).

Private schools have a long history of recognising that the skills needed to make successful theatre also make confident and eloquent citizens, and Robinson claims that this function was part of the incentive in introducing drama into state education post 1950 (Robinson, *Exploring Theatre* 141-75). At this time, there was a move to break down class barriers in the education system with the introduction of Comprehensive schools, but since this time the provision of Drama opportunities in the curriculum and in extracurricular activity has significantly diminished, local authorities no longer employ drama advisors. It appears that privately educated people (7% of the population) have a disproportionate access to theatre

through their education, compared to those in state education (Independent Schools Council). The impact of this can be seen in the Sutton Trust's 'Leading People' 2016 study, which revealed that several professions are dominated by the privately educated, including theatre (Kirkby). 67% of Oscar-winning British actors were privately educated (BBC, "Privately Educated"). During his 2016 interview at Northern Stage, Campbell said he had noted an increasing amount of contact from privately educated young people.

The differentiated provision between state and private education, and between upper and lower classes, has prompted a backlash from some high-profile cultural figures who have expressed concerns that the theatre profession was becoming too elite and that more young people from a wider range of backgrounds should have access to theatre opportunities both for the health of the creative industries and for societal benefits (Addley). They argue that the benefits of participatory theatre help to shape a sense of self as much as offering a career option and that there is a benefit of going beyond the experience of watching a show to having a hands-on role.

The *Taking Part Children's Survey*, which documents participation rates, questioned nearly two thousand five- to-ten-year-olds about their cultural and sporting preferences (Shibli et al.). It showed that 32% of five- to ten-year-olds accessed theatre in 2014, which marked a significant decrease from 47% in 2008. It also highlighted that significantly more females engage than boys. Sheffield University's analysis of the statistics in 2013 establishes that cultural tastes are embedded young, and shape future preferences, achievement, and position in society: 'Direct cultural capital transfer occurs positively for two dependent variables (DVA2 and DVH1) whereas there is an indirect relationship with seven dependent variables (six positive and one negative). Adults who went to the theatre or heritage sites whilst growing up are likely to have children who do the same' (Shibli et al. 17).

Savage makes use of evidence from the Great British Class Survey which indicates that the experience of theatre remains a privileged rather than universal one and reflects or even contributes to a more divided society (51). Indeed, the division of theatre provision for different young people, dependent on whether they have the social capital or educational opportunity to access it, means that policy rhetoric is not matched by practice, the latter of which still favours a privileged minority (Savage 90).

In summary, throughout its history Northern Stage's participation programme has been both facilitated and driven by public policy relating to culture and education as well as inhibited by it. The growth, decline, growth and decline pattern in the theatre's ability to deliver a far-reaching participation programme mirrors wider policy agendas and investment; when there is a political appetite for investment and inclusion the theatre expands its provision and when resources are withdrawn, their reach becomes more limited. Northern Stage has seen a great deal of social, political and cultural change since it was first founded – as well as enduring issues with a broad range of inequalities. Below I reflect on how these changes – and continuing challenges – have informed the development of its participation work.

6.2 Theatre in Education and Drama in Education

The early – and extremely strong – development of Northern Stage's Theatre in Education (TIE) work can clearly be linked to the generous funding available at the time, the support of the local authorities, and the enthusiasm and interest in theatre in the education sector. By 1970, the social agenda for Northern Stage's provision for young people was clear and Newcastle City Council extended its investment to include participation work. Most of the TIE programmes at Northern Stage between 1969 and 1992 were free at the point of delivery because the local authorities funded the work (Chris Bostock Archive; "Newcastle Playhouse Cuttings"). The Education Authorities which existed at that time also wanted the theatre 'to provide opportunities for young people to involve themselves in theatre-related activities' ("Theatre Link").

This environment enabled the development of an influential and original TIE programme at Northern Stage. Playbills show that provision for young people was quickly adopted as part of the theatre's programming with regular events including a Festival of Youth Theatre (1971-1992) ("University Playbills"). Its first TIE company, Stagecoach (1969-1972), gained a national reputation, becoming the subject of a documentary by Tyne Tees Television (Sutherland). Stagecoach was led by Patrick (Paddy) Masefield who wrote award winning plays for the company that went on to be produced by other TIEs around the country. [23] Drawing on his own

[23] His first of many plays was *Blow the Whistle* for the company, and in 1970 he won the Welsh National Dramatists' award for *Play with Fire*, co-written for Stagecoach (Sutherland).

experiences in the 1970s at Northern Stage, O'Toole's book, *Theatre in Education* (1976), demonstrates that the work had status the industry and in academic studies at the time.

Between 1972 and 1991, Northern Stage exhibited the full scope of TIE work and produced more than fifty productions. The socially led pieces often set up a scenario whereby the young people were introduced to characters within a drama setting, watched the acting, and then engaged in debate. *Soap Gets in Your Eyes* (1986) is a typical example of this because it was designed to explore sexism and gender inequality. The young people watched a drama involving characters called Mark and Angela and subsequently joined in with participatory workshops where they could discuss the ideas presented.[24] Some of the TIE programmes were a more straightforward example of a drama based on an issue being performed for young people such as *Smugglers* (1985), which was a play about young people learning to come to terms with their lives and learning to take responsibility for their own destiny. The purpose of plays like this were to present 'complex and challenging pieces of theatre aiming to provide not only diversion and entertainment but also to pose serious questions about human relationships' and they were always issued alongside a teaching pack of materials (Chris Bostock Archive). Whilst many of the TIE outputs were similar to the type of TIE work going on in other companies, Northern Stage pioneered producing annual shows for an Early Years, preschool audience. Examples included *Angelo* (1983), an adaptation of Quentin Blake's story, *The Enormously Big Weed* (1987, also performed at National Garden Festival in 1990), through to *Trouble Under Foot* (1991) (Chris Bostock Archive). The TIE programmes during this period demonstrate that as well as making work for Early Years, and reaching out into schools, schools were also invited to attend theatres to see specially devised performances. One example was *Aggie's Dump* (1983) in which an elderly lady who has lost her memory forms a bond with a gang of young people in a rubbish dump (Chris Bostock Archive). The programmes and several of the play scripts still exist (although yet uncatalogued) and reveal a busy department which served a wide demographic of young people from Early Years to secondary age pupils.[25] They show consistent ideological

[24] All of the examples given are from TIE programmes from the Chris Bostock Archive, yet to be archived, given to the author for custodianship.

[25] Tyne & Wear Theatre In Education programmes, Board reports, and images (Chris Bostock Archive); author's own collection 1983 – 1991. Due to be deposited with Newcastle University Special Collections and Archives upon completion of thesis. Participation filing cabinet drawers in Northern Stage Offices contain information from early 2000s to the present day.

principles and practices for participatory work and required young people to reflect on topics that still resonate, such as asylum seekers, dementia, women's rights, capitalism, and food production. There were also the plays which were designed to enable young people to enjoy the spectacle of theatre, such as the Christmas shows.

Regardless of whether the TIE company was working in schools or in theatre venues, and whether the productions included workshops or were stage shows, TIE was consistent and distinctive in its aims to create work to make drama more accessible, more relevant, and more affordable. The language attached to work with young people in archive material is about inclusivity. Bostock, the leader of TIE at Northern Stage from 1983 to 1992, observed that their programme of work was designed to 'empower young people to understand the world that they live in. They have the opportunity and the right to control their own lives. Our work is participatory.' In the 1980s, Northern Stage defined its TIE as 'a forum for learning within a theatrical context' where they hoped young people could 'develop their own identity, self-respect and a responsibility for others' ("Introduction note," Chris Bostock Archive). Programmes highlight range of techniques used, including performance, participation in-role work, hot seating, depiction, workshops, and discussions. They assert that Northern Stage was a place where young people could observe, question, play and pretend 'without a fear of failure' ("Introduction note," Chris Bostock Archive).

The funding available in this period also enabled the development of Drama in Education (DIE) practices at the theatre. Throughout the 1980s, Heathcote and Bolton brought their trainee teachers to observe work-in-progress and provided feedback on the ideas and methods Northern Stage's TIE team were employing (Bostock). Heathcote is famous for influencing the way that drama is taught in the curriculum within schools (Heathcote 9), but her work also had a clear impact upon Northern Stage. Bolton is perhaps less well known but was a close colleague of Heathcote as well as an academic and practitioner himself (Heathcote 112). Drama in Education remains important to Northern Stage because the methods and motivations developed by Bolton and Heathcote resonate throughout the historical and current participation work at Northern Stage.

Bolton and Heathcote's recognition comes from an approach they developed together called the Mantle of the Expert (Heathcote 192-193). Heathcote described the Mantle of the

Expert as a 'teaching strategy' which created an environment for teachers to investigate topics collaboratively with their pupils (qtd. in Matusiak-Varley 300). It revolved around a teacher creating a fictional scenario and asking the students to take on the responsibility of being the 'expert' to generate and work through a series of tasks and activities in a leadership role which allowed them to explore a range of emotions and applications which may or may not be directly related to curriculum areas. The programmes and scripts for Northern Stage's TIE (1983-1991) show how ingrained this approach became in the theatre. Bostock described several projects at Northern Stage which conformed to this model whereby the young people were given a sense of responsibility and a degree of agency over how the drama would unfurl. Examples include *The Change'll Do Me Good* (1984), which set up a hypothetical industrial relations dispute and placed the young people in the role of the workers forced to negotiate a settlement with the industry manager/owner. In *Fight for the Forest* (1991), the young people take on the roles of South American Rubber tappers living and working on the edge of the rainforest faced with a dilemma of selling their land for profit or retaining it to save the forest. This way of working is now quite familiar and the National Curriculum for primary age recommends that '[r]ole-play can help pupils to identify with and explore characters and to try out the language they have listened to' (DfE, *The national curriculum in England* 22), and that: 'Drama and role-play can contribute to the quality of pupils' writing by providing opportunities for pupils to develop and order their ideas through playing roles and improvising scenes in various settings' (31). Nevertheless, its familiarity as a technique in teaching practice today (Zeeman and Lotriet, 179-191; *Mantle of the Expert)* should not mask the innovation which Northern Stage exhibited in using this practice during the 1970s and 1980s.

Heathcote's use of drama to heighten young people's awareness of a topic, to enable them to reflect on reality through fantasy and to dig below the surface of actions to find meaning rather than using young people to produce plays (Wagner 80), is pertinent to the practices observed at Northern Stage in 2016. Heathcote liked to use what young people already knew about a topic rather than piling information onto them and often she let the young people decide what the play was going to be about. Heathcote called the practice of starting at one point and seeing where it leads 'edging in' (Heathcote 192). Whilst a child-centred approach to teaching and learning is frequently applied now, the idea of young people participating in the creation of

work thirty years ago was unusual not only in theatre but in education (King 30; Keay and Lloyd 77). Piaget's theories about the cognitive development of young people became popular in the 1960s and opened the door to a more child-centred approach in education which encouraged the use of all senses (Boyle; Piaget et al.). Heathcote's DIE approach built on these ideas and opened the opportunities for theatre companies, including Northern Stage to make young people's theatre more interactive and participatory, to empower young people to develop their own ideas and find ways to express themselves through drama.

6.3 Funding and Organisational Structures

The Board reports for Northern Stage (Tyne and Wear Theatre Company) during the 1980s illustrate that the Theatre in Education team were the most financially secure part of the theatre but also operated at arms-length from the main stage ("Tyne and Wear Theatre Trust"). It had reliable funding from the local authorities and its performances for young people were profitable. It also could reach the widest demographic, offering free plays and workshops to schools across Tyne and Wear. As well as delivering work away from the main venue, the TIE company functioned in a slightly detached manner: it had its own name and submitted separate reports.

This separation had positive and negative implications. During his interview in 2016, Bostock talked about how this arms-length approach also gave him a freedom to pursue projects and activities that he and his team most valued, rather than what the management determined. There was a freedom which later incumbents did not have. As well as a management based in a separate building (the TIE operated from the top floor of the Discovery Museum), their funding was relatively generous and ringfenced. Each of the five North East local authorities provided a grant for work but did not dictate terms and conditions beyond that it must reach out to schools across their authorities. Yet Bostock also recalled the difficulties he had faced during his tenure (1983-1992) with getting the Directors and Board to take a close interest in his work and see beyond the financial benefits. He talked about getting the young people themselves, or their teachers, to speak about how the work they engaged in impacted on them and even on occasion inviting the Board (or their spouses) to watch the education work. Bostock noted, 'I learnt that lesson fairly late that people like stories about events rather than just a report.'

As Bostock discovered, positioning young people's work aside from the 'main' offer for administrative purposes runs the risk of marginalising the prominence of work with and for young people within a theatre's programme. Within theatres as organisations, participation is frequently set apart from the mainstream audience offer and is predominantly, although not solely, associated with young people. There is usually a section of the programme or website listed which invites people to take part, distinct from the rest of the theatre's programme. Requirements to provide specific reports on activities undertaken with young people may drive these forms of organisational separation. In recent years, funding organisations, such as Arts Council England, have demanded specific reports about activity for young people (under their Children and Young People goal) which encourages data about young people to be kept separate from that of other audiences. A functional decision to position young people's work separately in response to these requirements could inadvertently lead to their marginalisation – a marginalisation which is clearly unwarranted given population statistics. In 2017, people under the age of thirty made up 37% of the UK population in 2017 (18.9% under 16) (Statista).

For a time, under the tenure of Lyddiard, Northern Stage did not separate its participation work out from its artistic output. From 1988 onwards, the TIE department at Northern Stage began to struggle when one by one each of the local authorities withdrew funding, a development reflective of a broader national trend. With Lyddiard's arrival in 1992, the TIE department ceased to exist as a separate entity, becoming part of the Northern Stage ensemble. Tony Harrington became the Director of Education and Outreach having previously been part of the TIE team, a post he held until 2001. During this period, Northern Stage shifted its work away from schools in deprived wards towards community partnerships, youth services, and the probation service. The participants were young people involved in social services and young offenders, as well as schools and families that could afford to buy experiences for their children.

Harrington deemed the integration of the company's participation work into Lyddiard's Northern Stage Ensemble to be a positive development. He viewed this era as 'a golden time because there was creativity coming out of all elements of the organisation.' Harrington was keen to avoid what he termed as the 'classic' model for an education department in a theatre, providing workshops or activities to accompany main stage shows. He did not want to be an 'adjunct' to other departments. He felt the education team could take advantage of being part of a

building-based theatre and to but that also they could operate as an extra producing arm of the theatre adding to the creativity of the organisation. It helped that Harrington felt there was that commitment across the organisation and 'a commitment to stretching the boundaries' from Lyddiard. Indeed, Lyddiard wanted his ensemble members to be role models for young people. Lyddiard stated in his interview:

> The model was the Maly Drama Theatre of St Petersburg, where I had seen the big ensembles of Eastern Europe and how they worked, how the training was important. The training was not just training actors, but it was about the development of young people in their community and to develop some of them into performers in the company. Some of them became doctors, nurses, barristers, oil rig workers, but they had this extraordinary education of theatre that informed who they were, whatever they were doing.

Specific members of the ensemble who were allocated to work on projects with young people, including Kylie Lloyd, Annie Rigby, and Mark Calvert; people at early stages in their careers who went on to continue to set-up or manage theatre and arts work with young people.

Harrington argued that the integration of the Participation department had a positive economic impact on the organisation, noting that 'we proved through the model that we developed that you could generate income. [...] We generated a lot of income for the organisation through these pieces of work, but also, you could see participation as a route to art making'. His approach was certainly not driven by a preoccupation with attendance. Harrington did not aim to create future audiences for the theatre. He felt the work had merit in its own right – that it was an end in itself – noting, '[w]e want to create work that is transformative for those people; whether that meant they attended a show in ten years' time or two years' time was never high on our agenda.' Looking back, Harrington felt that he had a degree of creative freedom that he felt might not be present now. He noted, '[a]s scrutiny got tougher, and finances got tougher, it became harder.'

When Whyman joined as Artistic Director in 2006, she did not work as closely alongside Participation as Lyddiard had. The work that Participation did was no longer required to centre on the main house productions, but neither was it relegated to a back office. Whyman noted, '[w]e talked about Northern Stage does five productions a year, one of which is Participation-led'. The Director of Participation, Lloyd, felt that Whyman's focus was on reopening the

building and finding audiences and that this shaped the work of the Participation team: 'We had a big job to reinvent ourselves.' Lloyd reflected that the style and type of work Whyman did was very different from Lyddiard, and this was reflected in her attitude towards participation: 'It was adaptations of classic texts and in some respects, I think she had a more traditional view of what participation should be.' By a 'traditional view,' Lloyd inferred an approach that placed participation as a ballast for main stage productions rather than front and centre itself. However, Lloyd also acknowledged that Whyman valued work with young people and she empowered the Participation team to make their own work. She showed her respect for their creative abilities by encouraging them to make their own work and she gave it a significant profile in the wider artistic programme of Northern Stage. However, the difference between Whyman and Lyddiard was that Whyman did not engage directly with the Participation output so closely. By keeping her distance from the work and by keeping it distinct from other programming, particularly from the shows which she directed herself, she may have inadvertently signalled a lack of status. Whyman had the most public profile as well as holding the highest position in the theatre.

Whyman's argument that she wanted to allow Participation to shine without her interference – a position which the Participation team also accepted – could be read differently, however. It could be seen, particularly from an outside perspective, as separating Participation from the artistic direction of the theatre, as it had been in the 1980s, and potentially lessening its status. Yet Whyman asserted that the work was important to her artistic vision and informed her ongoing career path at the RSC. Although at times she refers to projects that she played an active part in, she did not necessarily feel the need to relate participation activity to other performances at the theatre. This is very different to Lyddiard, who wanted to relate participation activity to main stage work and to keep an element of control over it. Whyman said that when she arrived, the work with young people fell under the remit of the Projects Team and she felt there were some issues to tackle. Although she could see that it had a strong mission, and 'it had had lots of success with terrific projects' she felt that it had become positioned as a sort of cash cow. Participation had become a victim of its own success. The rest of the theatre looked to them for ways that contributed to the bottom line of the whole organisation. Lloyd felt that separating the work of Participation from the theatre's main productions again (as had been the case before Lyddiard arrived) had significant benefits. It gave Participation a protected budget specifically

for young people and its own distinctive status. Whyman noted, '[i]t felt really important to say, "We do this whether or not it can support the rest of our activities"'.

Speaking in 2016, however, after further significant funding cuts, Lloyd noted she faced a major challenge managing Participation between the demands for fundraising, planning, delivery and producing results. Lloyd also felt that Participation was seen within the organisation as the easiest part of the theatre to fundraise for, in that there were numerous grants available for work with disadvantaged groups. She described the pressures that the team were under, as they were expected to generate their own income, increase numbers year on year, and reach new participants according to the demands of their funders and the company's own business plans. However, she felt that this was not straightforward because she did not have the time, the resource, or necessarily the skills for fundraising, when her team's specialism was delivery, and not report or bid writing. Lloyd asserted that the monetary aspect of participation work affects its status; if it doesn't generate money there is less interest in it but conversely if it is profitable there is a pressure to use it to generate income – an observation that chimes with Bostock's view that the senior management were mainly interested in the profits that his Christmas shows raised.

Interviewed in 2017, Whyman repeatedly talked about the challenges that Northern Stage had faced and was facing at the time from political and economic conditions outside of the theatre. She talked about funders and stakeholders placing conflicting demands on the theatre, asking it to develop a clear business plan, to raise more money but also to reach out to hard-to-reach (financially unprofitable) audiences. She contrasted this with the relative privileged position she was facing now in her job at the RSC, where they could choose that the only schools they would work with were schools with multiple deprivations: 'We do that because we've got resources to put into the schools over a long time and we've got Shakespeare.' Whyman felt that not only did the RSC have greater resources, but they had a captive market because teachers are obliged to teach Shakespeare in the curriculum. Yet, she acknowledged, '[e]ven so, it's hard to reach as widely as we would like.' She felt that regional theatres like Northern Stage were being squeezed to deliver widely to deprived communities whilst also being pushed to make a profit: 'I think they [Northern Stage] are under untenable pressure to do contradictory things. […] Northern Stage's resources are depleted. The city's resources are depleted.'

Whyman showed humility when comparing the situation in 2016, as she saw it, to her

tenure: ‘We did not have a lot of money and we always felt we did not earn enough, but we were able to draw in a series of different kinds of pots to make our ambitious work happen. I think that’s got harder and harder.’ In accordance with Lyddiard, Whyman thought that outside funders and stakeholders don’t sufficiently appreciate the situational context of regional theatres such as Northern Stage and what it can or cannot achieve. Whyman chose to focus on the negative financial results this causes, whereas Lyddiard talked more about the impoverished understanding of the value of theatre for young people. But for both, the consequence is that Northern Stage struggles to fulfil its aspirations for young people either in terms of recognition or achievement.

Likewise, Campbell touched on both these areas, asserting that the opportunity to access theatre should be universal but that it is becoming more and more restricted and elitist:

> The difference between a kid from Benwell and a kid in Eton is not talent, it’s opportunity. That kid at Eton, opportunity will be walked up to them again and again and again and they’ll get to try a bit of this, and they’ll get to try a bit of that. [...] For kids from a different arena, for young people from here, for the economic disenfranchised, that’s simply not the case. They don’t get the opportunity again and again. I think there is talent everywhere but there is vast inequality of opportunity.

Like his predecessors, Campbell discovered the challenges that face Northern Stage in terms of its status (physical and ideological) and its ability to change and develop. He felt that within the North East the major barrier to all forms of engagement sits in economic deprivation and lack of infrastructure:

> Comparing the cultural infrastructure with the North East to pretty much every other region in this country we fare very badly. There is no producing theatre in Middlesbrough, there is no producing theatre in Sunderland, which is incredible for cities of that size. To find a building like this, you have the theatre in York, then you’ve got more than a hundred miles until you’ve got us. Then you’ve got more than a hundred miles and you’ve got Edinburgh.

He continued, ‘[o]ur capacity to be able to operate as a regional theatre for a region that goes

from Alnwick to Middlesbrough and a long way inland, the resources just don't work and there's very little other infrastructure.' Campbell also made the following observation about the forces obstructing widespread participation from young people at Northern Stage:

> There's a direct correlation between economic deprivation and cultural engagement. The poorer the community is, the harder it is to get that community to engage in a cultural activity. Alongside that, the poorer community's educational infrastructure is more than likely under-resourced and over-stretched.

Campbell's comments that access is contingent on economic and social factors is well supported in research (Blood et al.; Buraimo et al. 32). Amongst all the challenges, Campbell acknowledged 'that there are amazing people doing amazing things and lots of great work and things that come out of that.' Campbell said that the local authority cuts to regions, which were especially noticeable in Newcastle, were still yet to be fully felt by arts organisations. He pointed out, '[t]axpayers in London have a vast amount more taxpayer money spent on their cultural infrastructure than anyone else in the country. You see it so clearly in the North East: one NPO in Sunderland, 34 in East London. That's not okay. That's the challenge and it's a profound one.' His opinions and experience are supported by research such as *The RoCC Report* (2013), which revealed the extent of bias towards London in public funding of the arts provided by taxpayers and National Lottery players throughout England (Stark et al.). In making these statements regarding a lack of cultural infrastructure and societal issues around wealth, status and access to the arts, Campbell revealed that Whyman's perception of the difficulties facing Northern Stage correlated with his experience, and the challenges he was experiencing trying to achieve the outcomes he wanted for young people within the limited opportunities and funds he could find, although he was not despondent.

6.4 The Challenge of Measuring Value

The challenge of securing funding for the company's work clearly dominated thinking in the organisation in 2016. Yet the receipt of funding also raises its own issues. As soon as organisations accept public funding, they are tied into a contract to deliver work that aligns with the funders' publicly stated goals (which, as Belfiore and Bennett note, are informed by the

preoccupations of the current government (135). Northern Stage – as an organisation which is primarily publicly funded – is obliged to justify itself via its reports to Arts Council England or risk losing its main source of income (Bishop, *Artificial Hells* 175). Coverage of this subject in interviews indicated that Northern Stage's Participation managers and artistic directors have found this process a challenge, observing that they were required to measure value and demonstrate worth in a way that does not match their delivery. It would be easy to respond critically to this, viewing this as an unwillingness to be evaluated. Yet each person I spoke to was happy to have their work scrutinised and were ready to offer self-critique. They all, however, called for a system of recognition that more closely reflected the ways that they work and took account of the amount of time that might lapse between an output, the activity they are doing, and an impact – the way that it affects the person or people involved.

During their interviews, all the Participation staff expressed concerns about measuring the value of their work that resonate with these issues around education and public policy provision for drama and theatre. They struggled with the short-term nature of evaluation and the reductionism of being required to transcribe a live event into a written report. For instance, although he was able to speak about impact and value, Bostock was keen to point out flaws with measuring value and impact within participation. He disliked the short-term nature and reductive approach of asking people at the end of their participation, noting, 'I don't think that the majority of art is meant to be responded to instantly.' Bostock believed that it takes time, days, months, years even, to absorb an experience and be able to articulate it, observing:

> Fine intellectual folks can turn a coin, spin it around and give you an evaluation but if you asked me to write an essay the following week on the effectiveness of the work, I can't tell you because we don't know how we're going to respond and that's always been my gripe about evaluation and I want people to say, 'how does it feel?', does it feel good?'… for most of your tick boxes, Mr Government, you're not asking me what I feel you're asking me what I know, and Theatre in Education went to ask people what they were feeling and what they could do about it.

Although Bostock was reluctant to be drawn into whether the impact of theatre can or should be measured, his sentiments reflect some of the issues already highlighted around the problematic field of quantifying intangible outcomes.

Even though there is a move to ask people about their feelings, social accounting methods reduce them through formulas to produce numerical figures and do not allow time for long term reflection (Wood and Leighton 14). Bostock's views resonate with Lyddiard's argument that he felt that the problems with prioritising participation lay outside the theatre's control. Lyddiard believed that the people who have the power and responsibility for funding the arts 'need to see the great work that's happening in the participatory area of the arts' rather than reading about it in reports, noting, 'you've got to touch people by the heart not by their intellect.'

Amongst Participation staff there was some self-criticism too alongside criticism of the funding and evaluation structure that the Arts Council requires. This mirrors the direction that Bostock and Harrington felt that the theatre was being pressured into, whereby accountability curbed freedom to plan, deliver, and to take risks. Speaking in 2016, a member of the Participation team noted that, '[o]ne of our big problems is not enough resource for us to dream that big and have time to plan. We are constantly very active. When the demand comes in you go "Go on and think big"'. When we do think big it goes "Oh perhaps too big" or "can't find the money" or something else.' The Participation staff felt there was very little opportunity to plan on the scale that they would like to or have the time to reflect suitably after a project. There was also a feeling that sometimes they were too reactive, responding to requests or income sources. Moreover, the pressure to fundraise also impacted on their creativity. The team member continued, noting that because participatory activity is required to generate income:

> Either we're applying to trust and foundations or we're asking people to pay a fee to be involved. It covers its cost; we don't make a profit. What we bring in, we spend. [...] It feels to me that the pressure is about a number of people, […] The ambition isn't matched by the resources that the company will put towards it.

The Participation staff recognised this position was accentuated by the reporting systems put in place by the theatres main funders, namely Arts Council England. On one hand, they feel obliged to increase numbers and on the other to have depth and quality of engagement and sometimes they felt that trying to combine the two compromised them. This feeling of stuck between two competing forces — numbers and depth — was expressed by one team member as follows:

> I care about the people that we meet and that we want to provide the next opportunity for,

> and then that is when capacity cripples you, because you think, 'I can't be the person that they see in a week's time because our project's finished and now I'm looking over here and I'm dealing with these different people.'

Participation staff want the theatre to be open and inclusive to people from all backgrounds, but they struggle to realise that ambition:

> The entry routes are still quite narrow because there are people whose parents already come here, or they go to university, it's a natural progression for them. We do get people who meet us through summer school who are absolutely first time in the building, but they're quite few and far between.

This is a reflection on their lack of resources to reach out to new audiences but also the wider societal picture that is beyond their control. It supports the argument that education and arts policy provision makes the theatre profession increasingly elitist.

There is also the same conundrum facing Participation in 2017 as faced the TIE company in the 1980s: the need to evaluate their work, but it is difficult to measure impact. As its impact is about personal development and centred on storytelling, young people do not necessarily know how something will affect them immediately or do not know how to articulate their feelings (Greene and Hogan). Moreover, there are intangible benefits that cannot be evaluated based on one experience but need to be able to be seen in terms of a family's cultural development. Lloyd at Northern Stage articulated this challenge:

> It's a family event and it's a family memory even if they are too young to remember it. We start making stories as soon as we are born. […] You start to build narratives all along […] there's something about being in an environment, being held in your mum's arms or your dad's arms, listening to a story.

Another anecdote from the interviews further reveals the shortcomings of evaluations made at the end of a project or activity. The staff member told a story about how one of the actresses in a Christmas show encountered a child in a different place to the theatre but how the child continued to suspend their disbelief and use their imagination:

> Jane played golden bird and when in real life she was in the hospital and she'd given

> birth, behind the curtain, the daughter of the woman next to her said, 'Mummy, I think the Golden Bird is on the other side of that curtain,' because she could hear Jane's voice. This was nearly a year after she'd seen the show.

If that girl had been interviewed after the show, the little girl might have said she enjoyed the performance. However, no-one speaking to her for an evaluation would have been able to predict that it would stick so deeply in her mind that she could recognise the voice of the actress without seeing her and continue to suspend her disbelief to imagine that it was the golden bird many months after the original theatre visit. That would represent an unquantifiable social value and reflects how creative experiences cannot be commodified or translated into market forces, as Lewis Hyde argues as a core concept in *The Gift* about the unique value of the creative sector.

Participation represents an ideology and an art form, and it is hard to measure ideologies and art, but the theatre also must conform to a public funding structure with pragmatic decisions to make. Alongside his aspirational ideology for working with young people, Campbell later referred to the practical structure:

> We are increasingly a project-funded company […] and we all must understand that better. I think as an organization we understand that better now than we understood it three years ago. If you look at the levels of money that we bring in through trusts, foundations and philanthropy, that's very clear within that. […] For people who always work within a revenue funded context, that's a big philosophical change […]. [It] is a very different way for people who work in senior management, in an organization like this, to think. That's where we all are now. It's the reality of the world.

In 2016, speaking from an outside perspective, the creative stakeholder, Annie Rigby, was sympathetic to the problem Northern Stage faces about demonstrating impact through participation work, having experience of the process herself. She stated that the most successful projects that she witnessed and delivered were ones that lasted a long time, more than a day or week. However, working with young people in this way is expensive in terms of time and resources and therefore has become a luxury that theatre companies such as Northern Stage cannot afford when they are expected to produce results quickly. Moreover, as Bostock expressed in his interview, it can take time for someone to recognise or be able to articulate the

effect a project has had on them. Citing several examples, Rigby asserted that, '[f]rom some of the projects that I delivered ten or more years ago, I come across people who only now tell me what the effect was.' The problems with measuring value for external governing and for funding bodies on something that takes years to embed its worth also links to the status that participation is afforded within the theatres themselves, including Northern Stage.

6.5 Young People's Perceptions

Despite a changing policy environment, and the challenges described by staff above, the interviews with participants indicated that Northern Stage's participation work is distinctive and has a powerful positive impact on participants. Their comments show that they feel empowered and more confident, and that they perceived an increase in their social skills and their theatre skills because of their work with the theatre. Interviewees noted that that they felt more valued and respected in Northern Stage than they did in other settings, and that Northern Stage helped them to feel welcome and safe. Overall, and overwhelmingly, they reported that participation had improved their wellbeing. These findings from speaking to participants at Northern Stage correlate with other studies which demonstrate the positive impacts that participation in the arts and theatre can have on young people (Belfiore and Bennet, *The Social Impact of the Arts*; Everyday Participation; Hughes and Wilson; Jackson, *Learning Through Theatre*; Kershaw and Nicholson; Matarasso, *Use or Ornament?*; Reason, *The Young Audience*; Shibli et al.).

The historical scope of this research is unusual, however. It presents the interviews and observations made with a range of young participants across a range of projects and a timeframe to match the organisation's history. This opportunity to hear participants' thoughts on longer-term impacts provides insights that previous efforts to evaluate participation activity at Northern Stage have not been able to access. Although staff at Northern Stage ask participants about their experiences both during and at the end of their participation, and the theatre uses this feedback as evidence for public and financial stakeholders, the information provided is short-term and limited. The theatre has not conducted a longitudinal study of the experiences of participants, and the effect of participants' experiences on themselves as an organisation. The conversations and interviews with past participants conducted through this research has shown that such experiences can have long-lasting impacts, revealing that involvement in participation work at

Northern Stage has deeply and positively affected the lives of families who brought their toddlers, teenagers, and young adults. The research in this study indicates that participants at Northern Stage gain specific beneficial outcomes which last well beyond the projects they engage with.

Whilst participants' experiences were extremely personal to them, there were also repeated themes, words, and phrases. Their accounts of the joy and positive impacts, whilst very moving, were also unanimous and repetitive (although no less powerful for this). The words 'homely', 'family', confident', 'safe', 'fun' and 'great' came up repeatedly alongside others such as 'seismic', 'magic', 'amazing'. There are of course a few standout quotes. A thirty-year-old commented, 'it's been the most important thing I've ever done in my life' (*NORTH* Participant). Similarly remarkable were the reflections from a participant looking back after fifty years and stating, 'I would say it's definitely formed me…if I hadn't done that, I think a massive part of my personality and life experience would be missing' (Jane). For some, the experience of participation was entirely novel. One noted that they had 'never done anything like this before' (*Big and Small* Participant). Some commented that it had transformed their appreciation and understanding of the region's cultural life. One *NORTH* participant noted that their participation helped 'me to understand what the North East has to offer […] I thought there was nothing here, even though I've spent my whole life here.'

Responses such as these are clearly deeply personal, but there were identifiable themes and repeated sentiments across the individual experiences. They were coherent, in that they were similar across different time periods, different ages of participants, and different programmes of participation. This enabled me to identify four key outcomes, reflected in the headings below: feeling empowered and confident; having improved social and practical skills; feeling valued and respected; and feeling welcome, comfortable, and safe. Of course, these four outcomes are not an exhaustive list of everything that participants expressed, but they represent the common and recurring elements, voiced by most people across most programmes.

The sentiments expressed above and below in more detailed discussion reflect great enthusiasm, strong emphatic positive responses, and positive impacts amongst interviewees. Indeed, the level of positivity expressed during the interviews could be seen as problematic in so far as it sounded like hyperbole. However, the project's methodology was designed to avoid

prompting or leading responses. Participants were expressly told that the research was not commissioned by Northern Stage and that their responses would be anonymous. I consciously tried to mediate any participant bias and the interviewees were not told about each other's responses, except where they were in a small group situation and could respond to one another (Mellenbergh 5). It is also important to note that the participants were not prompted with words or references to specific emotions during interviews but generated responses through open questioning. Even considering the predication that the responses for this study were likely to be positive due to the self-selecting nature of the methodology, the extent of the level of positive impact the young people were reporting – and their emphasis upon it – was striking (King and Horrocks 34-36). Even where comments were clearly exaggerated for effect – such as those from the young people I spoke to during the *Big and Small* project who said they wanted it to go on forever – they appeared to be a genuine reflection of emotions and experience.

Finally, it is important to restate that these were the findings reported by participants across a range of programmes and projects at Northern Stage covering a timescale from 1969 to 2016 (albeit predominantly towards the latter date). This indicates that in this timeframe Northern Stage provided impacts which were distinctive, and which reflected a strong identity and coherence to its young people's work. Responses from participants were remarkably similar despite the decades between them, such as: 'It was liberating, it was validating' (in response to taking part between 1969 – 1974) (Jane) and '[t]hey give you a confidence, they don't tell you what to do', in 2016 (*Big and Small* Participant). Participants' names have been altered to protect their identities.

6.5.1 Empowerment and Confidence

This research on Northern Stage affirms wider research which demonstrates that good quality arts participation projects give young people confidence (Hughes and Wilson). Time and again, when asked open-ended questions about what impact, if any, the projects had had on them, participants said that they felt more confident and more independent. The notable part is that confidence was not the main driver for people to attend or the first reaction that they had towards participation. The main reason they took part, and their first reported emotions, were pleasure and enjoyment. Confidence is something that they were able to identify in hindsight.

Sometimes this was at the end of a day as in the case of *Big and Small*. Sometimes it was after months, such as in the case of the *NORTH* training programme, and sometimes it was after years and decades of participating in youth theatre projects at Northern Stage. For example, Alex, who took part in the *Big and Small* project with his school, had never done any drama before, but his mum said how proud she was 'seeing him come out of himself' and was now looking to see if she could find a drama group for him to join (*Big and Small* Participant). Similar sentiments were echoed by other parents on the same occasion.

Several of the participants acknowledged that they were facing personal issues which participation helped them to address, such as low self-esteem, loneliness, or bullying. Amy said that Northern Stage had helped her to cope with being bullied at school and, over successive years of participating at the theatre, she had developed into a more confident, independent, and happy individual, starting at the age of eleven and going each year until she was eighteen:

> My first summer school that year was a really bad time for me at school. I'd been bullied that year, and I did not want to go to summer school at Northern Stage. Then I went and made all of these friends and built up my confidence from rock bottom.

Another example was Wilf, who felt confident enough when he was at Northern Stage to assert his identity, which he had struggled to do previously. He noted, '[t]hat was the first time I had said to anyone, out loud that I was gay which was another big step'.

The nurturing qualities that the drama leaders at Northern Stage provided stood out in participant responses. Many of the participants explained that they faced a range of difficulties at school, either with friendships, academic performance, or speaking up for themselves. They all felt that the experience of participating at Northern Stage gave them increased confidence. The credit for that appeared to be from the practical drama activities that the theatre provided, such as the voice and movement workshops. It was also linked to finding themselves in a like-minded community of peers who shared their interests and their concerns. When asked to define how she would describe what Northern Stage offered to young people, one participant said, '[m]any opportunities. Every opportunity provides a different grounding to build confidence. That's the main thing, to build confidence and friendships' (Andrea).

Participants felt that the drama activities Northern Stage offered encouraged them to be more collaborative with one another than they were used to being. One participant pointed out

that he felt that at school subjects were taught for the purpose of passing exams, whereas at Northern Stage he did not feel judged and could pursue open-ended goals. Another noted that she felt that school and sports encouraged competition but that the participation activity at Northern Stage allowed everyone to shine and feel good about themselves and support one another. One or two participants felt that when they first arrived there were some cliques of people who had participated in previous years but that the staff management of the programme ensured this did not become an issue affecting their enjoyment or engagement.

The evidence from this research appears to bear out other researchers claims about the value of participation in the arts to develop more confident citizens (Matarasso *A Restless Art*; Walmsley "A Big Part of My Life"). If the participation projects were set up explicitly to develop confidence or if participants were choosing to participate to expand their confidence, then it could be seen as an instrumental benefit because the participation work would have been designed to achieve an output separate to the drama content. However, at Northern Stage by and large, projects are designed with the drama and wishes of the young people at the heart: they are not set up as confidence building exercises, but as projects to allow young people to direct and experience drama. The exception to this is the *Big and Small* programme which uses drama with an explicit purpose to help Year 7 pupils feel more confident about going to secondary school. Yet none of the young people expressly said that they were motivated to take part in order to gain confidence or to address the personal issues that they faced. Their main motivation was enjoyment, learning theatre skills or occupying time during holidays. Confidence was a by-product, albeit a very important one which they only recognised in hindsight.

Northern Stage as a venue also played an important part in developing people's confidence. Some of the *Big and Small* participants said that they did not go to the theatre and that they had never been to this one before, but that having been they felt comfortable and that it was a place where they would like to 'hang out.' Participants also liked the space because it felt professional and that they felt important by being part of it. A participant from the seventies said:

> I think what it gave me, was a sense of being real — you weren't just a kid on the stage in a school play with your mum and dad in the audience. They sold tickets to the public and people you did not know came and watched…we felt like we had a little bit of ownership

(Jane).

The 2016 Summer School participants said, 'I think the location is great' and 'they [Northern Stage] always asked us what we wanted to get out of the experience, so we got to delve into quite a lot and shape what we wanted to do as a group, which was really good.' Participants observed that the environment that Northern Stage created was different from school or other leisure spaces because they felt that Northern Stage was less structured, less competitive, and less demanding: it gave them 'freedom.' As well as the space, individual staff members had a big impact on participants' experience. Each of the current team members got glowing comments, either for how they challenged the young people or nurtured them – or both – and even the interview describing participation from the 1960s stressed links to staff who made a memorable impression. The combination of the venue and those who run participation activity made for the distinctiveness of its offer.

6.5.2 Increased Social and Technical Skills

Participants felt the projects helped them to develop empathy and to form friendships, positively asserting that 'we're like a family' and 'I've met people who I never would have come into contact with.' Many of them described Northern Stage as somewhere where they felt they could be themselves more comfortably than in other environments: 'It's made me more resilient…I have more self-belief' (*NORTH* Participant). They also described feeling that a key benefit of participating at Northern Stage was the chance to see things from another person's perspective through acting. They recognised that this does not come naturally and that they had to work hard to understand other people's positions. They said that it was 'harder work than expected' but that it was a positive thing (*Big and Small* Participant).

Forming friendships through participation at Northern Stage helped participants to feel accepted and comfortable: 'I've never felt quite so like myself than I have done this week' (Wilf). This sentiment was expressed by several people even though they were in an unfamiliar environment: 'I'm not used to feeling so comfortable' (*Big and Small* Participant). Again, participants put this down to the nature of the venue, the qualities of the staff and the content of the programme:

> Since I've started here, I can be more comfortable with somebody who I have just met because before all this I would just not really talk to anybody new. But after this I'm just so much more comfortable with new people and I would make sure that they're comfortable and they can get along with others as well (Allison).

Alongside forming friendships, the participants enjoyed the chance that participation gave them to explore roles which reflected experiences different from their own lives, observing, '[i]t's a safe place to look at humanity and the human condition' (Andrea). In the interviews that the artistic directors gave, they felt that a core value of participating in drama was the ability to develop empathy and the responses of the participants echoed this. Andrea was now working in theatre in London's West End, although she wanted to return to the North East. She contrasted the experiences in London with her experience at Northern Stage. She felt that her drama course in London promoted the qualities of theatre as being about 'elegance' and 'escapism,' whereas she felt at Northern Stage participants and audiences gained a closer insight into 'learning about the world.' There is some irony in this given that London is more cosmopolitan and racially diverse than Newcastle (ONS) . However, this participant is referring to the theatre training and practice and her experience was that the London West End was more parochial. The global citizen's skill of empathy was also a key impact identified by other participants from other projects at Northern Stage.

On top of these social skills, there were practical skills which participants cited such as an ability to appreciate and deliver stage craft. Whilst none of the participants used the term stage craft, I have chosen it because the theatre skills that they learnt extended beyond acting or drama to include technical, marketing, and customer service roles. There were a mix of responses as to why young people chose to participate. It ranged from being signed up by their parents or school, through to those who wanted to pursue a professional career in the theatre industry. The oldest participant, Jane, did not go on to pursue a career in theatre but she thought that the youth theatre projects that she had been involved in more than forty years earlier had directly impacted on her professional and personal life, commenting, 'I would definitely say it's formed me.' As a sports teacher she continued to use the movement and warm-up techniques that she had learnt at the

theatre, and as a parent she used role play with her own children and grandchild and she took them to theatre (one child had taken up a career working in theatre).

The participants in *NORTH* (twenty- to thirty-year-olds) expressed that they felt the course had given them a springboard into becoming professional actors and producers. They have gone on to form their own company (as have previous participants from the programme). One noted, '[o]ne of the strongest things about *NORTH* is that it's really pushed me to do things I wouldn't do which is so valuable as a performer and as a person.' They felt that Northern Stage offered them a holistic programme which taught them about administration and marketing as well as acting and directing: 'I took such a lot from it so it's not easy to see what could have gone better.' Importantly they also recognised their training in delivering participation work and work with young people as a distinctive quality that the programme at Northern Stage offered. They said that they would not have chosen to operate in the field of young people's work but having done it they felt it was one of the most rewarding and beneficial aspects of their experience on the programme. This resonates with what Lyddiard had said about his rationale for requiring his ensemble being to work in schools in the 1990s and then finding that they actively chose to do this type of work. Mark Calvert, who led the *NORTH* programme in 2016, was part of Lyddiard's ensemble, so we can see how tradition is passed on, since this *NORTH* cohort similarly planned to go on to deliver drama in schools.

Younger participants felt that they had learned acting skills but also gained insights into the wider operations involved in running a theatre and putting on a show: 'I really did not think we'd be making our own songs and script' (Penny). The young people were given tours of the building and met with staff from different departments in the summer schools. This reflects the broad and distinctive nature of participation at Northern Stage. The younger participants expressed that they felt they were given privileged access to the organisation and enjoyed having access to a professional stage crew, sound and lighting as well as using the theatre's performance spaces (rather than workshop or rehearsal spaces). They felt that the programme of participation introduced them to a wide range of theatre experiences with workshops on movement, voice, devising drama, styles of production, and acting.

6.5.3 Feeling Valued and Respected

Participants from the 1960s and 2016 all voiced that participating in theatre made them feel valued and respected: they felt listened to and encouraged to develop an independent voice which was taken seriously. This helped to support their sense of worth and achievement. Almost all the participatory work that Northern Stage has created over its history has been improvisatory. That is to say that it has involved participants creating original material through prompts and activities which the Participation staff have set up. Fifty years on from her time in the youth theatre it was clear that Jane still felt proud about CP Taylor's regular visits to the youth theatre to develop work: 'There would be a theme and you would go into groups of four or five and do something. I remember him writing from those improvisations to create and publish plays and I sort of feel I'm in a published place.' Later she added, '[y]ou feel like you've got a right to be listened to – you've got a right to speak.' This sentiment was also expressed by more recent participants. A *NORTH* participant commented that 'the director gave us more freedom that I'm used to' and a Year 11 pupil said, '[i]n almost every other drama thing I've done it's all been scripted for us, and I really like the freedom they've given us to decide' (Penny).

The 2016 participants asserted that Northern Stage gave them opportunities to find their own voices, to express themselves, and to have their opinions respected and valued, meaning that they felt their words were taken on board and reflected in the work produced. This was something that participants expressed at an early stage in their engagement with the theatre and it appeared to continue throughout, as I asked at the end whether they still felt the same way and got affirmative responses – 'definitely' – with descriptions about how this continued, such as being able to write their own scenes. This helps to explain why the *Big and Small* project has run for over a decade because supporting the young people to find and value their voices is a core part of this activity alongside it aims to enable them to interact with others. The young people felt happier about placing themselves in unfamiliar situations because of their engagement. Being listened to and making contributions that affected the drama appear to have been a distinctive feature at Northern Stage which participants felt stood out from their experiences elsewhere, noting for example, '[i]n other places your own opinion isn't taken into account as much' (Karen). Another said, '[i]t feels like it's coming from us, not a pre-planned thing because that's what happened with [other] drama groups. They sometimes just pre-plan a story and make

you think you're doing it' (Lisa). This thesis has not surveyed all the provision in Participation departments across the UK and therefore it would be disingenuous to assert that Northern Stage's approach is completely unique. However, several of the participants had taken part in a range of workshops and clubs across Tyneside and London, and they asserted from their sphere of reference that Northern Stage did have a distinctive approach in the way that it foregrounded the opinions and ideas that the young people had when devising participation work. The young people felt that what made it uniquely special was the way that staff listened to them, were willing to be led by them and empowered them with greater social and drama skills. This directly relates to the historical links between DIE and TIE explored earlier which continue to resonate in 2016.

6.5.4 Feeling Safe, Welcome and Improved Wellbeing

'A home away from home' and 'it's like a family' were frequent quotes from participants when asked to describe Northern Stage. More than half of those interviewed used the terms home, homely or family without hearing it from either myself or each other. The expression of such strong emotions implies that Northern Stage evokes a distinctive sense of belonging amongst these participants. Participants talked about feeling 'welcome', 'comfortable' and 'safe' at Northern Stage from a very early stage in their engagement, saying that it was a 'friendly and welcoming' place (Sally). One participant noted, '[i]t feels quite natural and all the staff and other actors [participants] are extremely friendly and after a few times or even just a week they start to feel like family, they create a bond' (Kelly). I asked participants how Northern Stage was different to other places that they choose to hang out and received responses including, 'it feels more welcoming and more homely here' (Katherine). Participants compared Northern Stage favourably to other local venues: 'It's much more welcoming than other places' (Sarah).

It was clear through observation and then during interviews that school-aged participants were initially nervous at being in an unfamiliar environment with unfamiliar people at the start of a project. The skills of the Participation staff in quickly reassuring and organising them were noted by participants during their interviews without prompting. Notably these participants were not asked how safe they felt at Northern Stage but were simply asked to describe Northern Stage with no language prompts and therefore their repeated choice of the word 'safe' holds

significance, especially since some of them were new to the organisation.

The concepts of feeling welcome, safe, and comfortable at Northern Stage were attributed to two specific factors; the place and the staff: 'The staff are really helpful — the facilities are wonderful too' (James). This supports my previous observation that the building and the people are a key part of the overall identity of Northern Stage. During their interviews, Northern Stage staff had expressed concern and negativity towards their building, which they felt was too closely associated with the university and not visible. However, the evidence from these participants indicates that the location is not such an obstacle to access: 'I've always thought the university itself was a really good place to be and as Northern Stage is on the campus, I thought that it would be a really good place to get some grounding in theatre rather than just at a school' (Andrea). Others talked about how they liked the smaller space that Northern Stage provided in contrast to their schools, sports halls, and other theatres: 'It's a lot nicer than the Theatre Royal. It feels more personal. Out of everywhere I've been, this is probably the best place to perform in Newcastle. It's very open' (Polly).

People who I spoke to who had participated in activity at the theatre in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s also expressed feeling welcome and excited by the spaces Northern Stage used. Whilst the theatre has undergone several renovations and adaptations over its fifty-year history, as has the environment around, it is still recognisable: 'It was brilliant being in the Gulbenkian […] being backstage and being in the green room and things like that' (Jane). This included the buzz of meeting friends at the 'dirty angel' (the war memorial at Haymarket) and walking up to spend time in the venue even when they were not participating in a specific project because it was a friendly and 'cool' place to be.

There were some comments that the venue presents psychologically intimidating factors, although these were tempered with a view that they could be overcome once people participate in an activity at the theatre. The difficulty is reaching through those barriers in the first place. Although the participants expressed positive emotions, they were only doing this after they had had the courage to book onto the programmes and turn up. They had to overcome the initial barriers to access that some people face and, as such, it cannot be said that Northern Stage is universally experienced as welcoming, safe, and comfortable. One interviewee pointed out that 'I feel that if you don't know it's here, you wouldn't necessarily come. To me it's my second home

but I can understand that it's quite adult. Quite adult and family orientated. But I'm not sure how you'd make it different.'(Wilf) Another said, 'I was nervous in the beginning to come to somewhere as exclusive as this. I did feel like that, but now I've actually been here, I've realised that although it is still an exclusive and amazing place, I feel really comfortable here.'(Andrea).

The personal involvement of staff led to participants feeling at ease and offsetting their qualms. Respondents talked about how approachable all the staff were, with words like 'warm' and 'friendly.' Others gave specific examples of how particular individuals did things to make the participants feel welcome, noting, '[s]he [staff member] was just calm and comforting. She knew exactly what she was doing so that was really relaxing' and '[w]hat I really like about it was that they did not just open the doors, they let us sit down together' (Joseph). One participant reflected how he had felt nervous on the first day until a member of staff took the young people into the theatre and 'there was something about her lovely manner and I thought, "I've never met anyone who is so nice"' (Wilf).

Participants also asserted that staff had a warmth about them which was a distinctive quality at Northern Stage: 'I feel like it's a very tight knit family. I'm sure you'll get that around other places, but I haven't experienced it anywhere else' (Ailsa). This echoed how staff saw themselves in relation to Northern Stage in their interviews: as a family. One participant said, '[t]his feels so much better (than other activities he's engaged with) because I think everybody is more welcoming and nicer. […] On the first day they asked us what we wanted to get from this. […] They made sure that we got something out of this' (Matt). As well as referring to Participation staff, some comments were made about the artistic directors, including praise for Campbell: 'When [he] came in it was amazing for participation, it just went sky high. It was incredible. Because of him, I was able to understudy [a part in a mainstage play]' (Ailsa). This participant also felt that Whyman was 'well respected' though not 'necessarily present.' However, another participant praised Whyman and the input that she had given during a summer school. Two of the participants who were involved over the course of a few years expressed that they observed occasional tensions between artistic leadership and the Participation staff about who was steering the work, although they did not feel it impacted on their own experience.

6.6 Summary

The participant viewpoint indicates that Northern Stage provides a very distinctive and impactful experience of arts participation. Participants attributed credit for the projects' benefits to both Northern Stage as a place, and to the staff whom they engaged with – the two were closely entwined. Responses from participants make a case for the intrinsic value of participation. Participants made it clear that their engagement was about the intrinsic personal satisfaction, skills, and enrichment that they had gained. The motivations and intentions for getting involved being reported were about direct, immediate, and intrinsic benefits, simply to enjoy taking part in the experience of making theatre. Their comments demonstrated powerful instrumental benefits, however. For example, a young person during Summer School who talked about making friends (intrinsic) said the experience helped them to be more considerate to others (instrumental) and another person taking part in the *NORTH* training programme felt more professionally fulfilled (intrinsic) and went on to find employment in the region (instrumental). Their comments support Belfiore's claim that a distinction between intrinsic and instrumental benefits is a false (yet prevalent) dichotomy, while the longevity of the impacts expressed in many of the interviews also supports Belfiore's argument for employing a historical perspective (Belfiore and Bennett, "Rethinking the Social Impacts"). They also testify to the distinctive and consistent nature of Northern Stage's offer throughout its history. Participants were praising it for the same qualities in 1969 as they were in 2016.

Reviewing the way in which the company has responded to changes in funding and educational policies over the years also reveals significant continuities. In 1972, Artistic Director Gareth Morgan expressed the following ideal for youth engagement:

> I'd like to find the money to set up a large house somewhere slap in the middle of a tough area of Newcastle, which would not only provide rehearsal space, but be a place for putting on further experiments in theatre, involving the local community, having an adventure playground for kids, a canteen, facilities for a group of actors to meet and live with whoever drifts in without all that hassle of going to the theatre to get a ticket. Eventually I would like to see the place being accepted as another one of the social services (qtd. in Wallis and Wilson 39).

Whilst this dream was never fully realised, the theatre has continued to be focus on social

inclusion through its TIE and its Participation departments. Morgan's interest in working with groups of young people facing deprivation continued to be reflected in Northern Stage's practice between 2001 and 2007 when the theatre became heavily involved in delivering work for Creative Partnerships, an initiative by the national government at the time to inject more creativity into schools in order to raise aspirations and attainment (Nicholson, *Theatre & Education* 73; Jones and Thompson, "Policy Rhetoric").[26] That programme enabled Northern Stage to work in some of the most socially and economically deprived wards in the North East, which reflected the demographic the TIE team had been working with decades earlier. Indeed, the Creative Partnerships work reached out to young people from deprived catchment areas and worked with large numbers, hundreds rather than tens.[27] Staff are understandably proud of this work. Lloyd described the Creative Partnerships Tees Valley project, *Blaze* (2004), as a defining part of her career. It was a two-year project, working in a different part of the region with six schools culminating in a huge community opera at Darlington railway museum. At the time, when I was employed by Creative Partnerships in Teesside, I remember hearing the young people talking about *Blaze* as being a life-changing experience for them. The interviews for this thesis with staff reveal that the adults involved were also strongly affected. As Lloyd said, '[t]he whole ensemble was involved in that. We made lots of connections on that project and it was a turning point in which we all really appreciated what a project of that scale does. I'm still incredibly proud of the work that was created and of the young people that came with us on that journey.'

More recently, participation practice at Northern Stage has echoed Morgan's aspiration to place work in spaces which are more readily accessible in some of the city's 'tough' neighbourhoods (qtd. in Wallis and Wilson 39). It has used rehearsal spaces in Byker again, and Benwell, and invited school groups there to watch the process of creating drama. In 2016, whilst there is no local authority subsidy, there is a reduced offer for free and subsidised places to schools and individuals for some shows (particularly the Christmas ones) from private company sponsorship and some activity programmes through the Arts Council grant. Although for many it is still not inclusive or accessible, the Participation department reaches a wider demographic than

[26] The author worked for Creative Partnerships 2003-2005.
[27] Information gathered from TIE brochures, and video, photographic footage and authors own notes from 2006.

the main artistic programme reaches (Grisolia et al “Social engagement”).

Chapter 7

Characterising Participation at Northern Stage

This chapter advances the case for recognising the distinctive and important nature of participation work with young people at Northern Stage by looking in more detail at the accounts of its artistic directors and Participation leaders. We see that the impacts which young people felt reflected in the ambitions and strategies of staff. The chapter is divided into two sections. Firstly, the influential role of artistic directors is explored, revealing that despite different approaches and practices, there has been a shared ethos and value placed on the involvement of young people. Secondly, by examining the position of Participation leaders, it emerges that they underpin and shape the views of the artistic directors and account for the consistency and longevity of Northern Stage's participation offer. The amount of testimony that inadvertently echoes Heathcote and the practices of TIE and DIE attests to a tacit hauntological tradition. Together, the accounts of artistic directors and staff reveal four clear and significant characteristics to Northern Stage's work: opportunistic risk taking; main-house professional quality; young people-led; hereditary knowledge and training. These characteristics which describe the nature of participation at Northern Stage mirror the distinct qualities which participants described in many ways. The accounts of artistic directors and Participation staff support the argument that there is an invisible golden thread connecting recent participation practice at Northern Stage with its earlier work in this field.

7.1 The Role of Artistic Directors

The artistic directors at Northern Stage have heavily influenced the values, content, and structure of Northern Stage's engagement with young people. The artistic directors at Northern Stage have played a pivotal role in determining that work with young people is a core and defining part of the organisation. Despite differences in their artistic programmes and approaches, the three directors interviewed for this study (Lyddiard, Whyman and Campbell) independently concurred that they see engagement with young people as crucial in shaping the theatre's future workforce, its future audiences, and even society's future citizens. Director of Participation Lloyd, who had the opportunity to see all three Directors in post acknowledged, 'I

have been lucky; all three artistic directors have been really committed to the importance of working with young people.'

There has been a marked change in the artistic directors' role with young people's work at the theatre over the theatre's full history, however. Between 1970 and 1974, the artistic directors were actively involved with young people's engagement with the theatre. When Morgan led the theatre in 1970, Michael Bogdanov conducted workshops with young people as well as directing shows on for adults. Morgan and Bogdanov were advocates of the view that theatre can be a positive agent for social change and that young people should be encouraged to engage with it. They envisaged the theatre should provide an open social space for young people and families, 'a place for putting on further experiments in theatre […] without all that hassle of going to the theatre to get a ticket' ("Newcastle Playhouse Cuttings").

By 1983, young people's work had become partitioned off from the main house. The TIE lead, Bostock, indicated that young people's work was most valued by the artistic directors as a means of supplementing the main house budget and as a means of fulfilling social obligations by working with a wider demographic than the theatre could otherwise reach. The Christmas shows were popular and generated revenue. The board reports support this view. Young people's work is predominantly recorded as budget income line and only referred to within the reports by the TIE lead rather than in any comment or discussion led by the artistic director. The archive shows that artistic directors John Blackmore (1983-87) and then Andrew McKinnon (1987-1991) kept abreast of activity through items on the agenda, but it implies that they did not directly engage with young people's work ("Tyne and Wear Theatre Trust").

A proactive relationship between the Artistic Director and young people's work resumed with the arrival of Lyddiard (1992-2005), and whilst he claimed that financial necessity drove him to restructure the education team, he also took an ideological stance. He incorporated work with young people into his vision of ensemble working and programming through his PMA (Project Model Approach) whereby one show or theme became the basis for a whole season of satellite work with young people and communities. Since Lyddiard's era, young people's work has fallen more directly under the influence of the artistic director, and it has never left the main building again.

7.2 Artistic Directors' Scope and Ambition for Participation

Over the past fifty years, the Participation department at Northern Stage has consistently aimed to empower young people, to give them a voice, status, and respect that they feel the participants merit but do not necessarily get elsewhere. The interviews with participants testified to the success of this aspiration. This section discusses the how approach of artistic directors Lyddiard, Whyman, and Campbell supported and shaped this work in more detail. As will become clear, they were all highly committed to the success of this work, and their ambitions for work with young people represent their investment in participation. Each of the three believed that an early experience of theatre could enormously enrich a young person's life and help a young person to define themselves within their society, as well as opening dialogues about experience and developing empathy. The three artistic directors saw the activity as a training in both theatre and citizenship. They believed that an engagement in theatre helped inform young people about who they were, whatever they went on to become, whether they pursued a career within the arts or not. The interviewees all believed that, as Lyddiard put it: 'We understand ourselves and the world better by participating in the arts.' The example of Northern Stage indicates that a regional theatre's artistic director can have a very close relationship with participation. More significantly, the detailed discussion of the work of Lyddiard, Whyman, and Campbell which follows indicates that the relationship has two-way influence: the artistic directors shape participation and in turn are shaped by what they witness participation achieving with young people. Due to the close connections between the artistic director and all the functions of the Northern Stage, the theatre's work with young people has often been overtly influenced by the artistic directors, regardless of whether they have directly engaged in it. By creating work which challenges the participants, the stakeholders in Northern Stage have, in turn, enjoyed seeing young people challenge them.

7.2.1 Lyddiard's Plan for Young People

Lyddiard's leadership in the 1990s when the Northern Stage Ensemble approach was geared towards participation across the theatre and the ethos was 'we don't make plays, we make projects' (Northern Stage Ensemble 10). Lyddiard's ambitions were focused on three areas: his

Project Model Approach (PMA); his whole ensemble initiative; and community engagement with young people (Lyddiard). The PMA was about having a single show that had some sort of 'resonance' with the local area and creating a satellite of related activities around it. Lyddiard described it as being about, 'creating a relationship with young people from the four corners of Tyne and Wear that we served'. The plan was to create a season of work and then look at how he could inform that work and how that work could inform other projects that were going to happen outside the building. It was two-way traffic. Lyddiard noted, 'It's not about making a piece of theatre in isolation, it's about making a piece of theatre from the heart of a community'. The principal idea of the PMA was to do a range of work around a production, which included work in youth clubs, clubs where people would dance and hear music, with the Probation Service, particularly with young offenders in institutions such as Deerbolt – a young offender prison in County Durham – where a very strong relationship was made. He cited the 2001 production of *1984* as a strong example of this and said that it was made with young people in mind. *1984* was not only an adaptation of the George Orwell's novel of the same name but drew upon cultural connections to young people; in 2001, *Big Brother* was a popular TV show, and it was also when people who were born in 1984 were able to vote for the first time in a general election.

> The company was talking directly to these young people, saying you have an opportunity and a responsibility to vote for what you believe in, and what you want to happen in this country (Lyddiard).

Lyddiard's PMA reflected his vision for ensemble working, which Duška Radosavljević argues was highly innovative in British theatre at the time (*The Contemporary Ensemble* 81-87). From his actions, we can infer that Lyddiard was careful to ensure that his artistic vision for participation was not patronising or hierarchical. He explicitly stated that he did not see it as bringing people in from a higher echelon of learning to bestow their gifts and wisdom to people but instead saw it as a mutually beneficial partnership: 'Much better to say we have to learn from you, we have to listen to you, because that will inform the work that we are doing on our stages, but at the same time as listening to you we are expressing who we are, what we do, what we feel and what we believe in as well'.

Lyddiard also built up a role for the wider ensemble to work with young people in

schools and community settings. Specifically, he referred to the 2004 high-profile Teesside community opera, *Blaze*, set at Darlington Railway Museum which he directed for Creative Partnerships education initiative which working with schools across five local authorities (Hickling, "Blaze"). He said that it was a key aspect of the production that every single performer and artist from the Northern Stage ensemble became part of that project. Moreover, he thought it was important despite initial opposition or challenge: 'I personally think there was a bit of resistance at the beginning, actors did not want to be seen doing community work. […] Once they had done that and started to see the joy, the love, the amazement of young people, they started to feel this was a worthwhile project and they were learning from it as well.'

Lyddiard's way of working suggests his artistic ambitions were associated with a participation-based agenda. He ensured that not only was participation activity a core part of the organisation with in-house trained arts professionals developing specific skills in working with young people but that it achieved greater recognition and status from actors themselves. Although Lyddiard described other opportunities that the theatre offered to young people, including a free youth theatre, a four-week summer school and continuing the Christmas shows for families, it is the PMA, the ensemble work, and the large-scale community work that most significantly characterised Northern Stage's engagement with young people during his time as artistic director. Lyddiard was clearly influenced by his engagement with young people, and he aimed to deliver a programme which was not centred on educating young people but on letting young people speak to adults: 'Young people are more capable than the opportunities they are given. People still think that we have to offer a service to young people, I think it's completely the other way around.'

Lyddiard articulated how important it was that engagement with the arts began at an early age and that if not consciously pursued, young people could lose the skills, empathy and confidence gained by dramatic role-play when they stop playing:

> The earlier young people get involved and develop a relationship with the arts, the earlier it broadens their attitudes, minds and their understanding of themselves and the world around them. At Primary School you play, pretend, dress up and have games. As soon as you leave Primary School that goes.

Lyddiard felt that he was keeping that door open, allowing young people to continue to use role play as a mean to develop stronger creative and citizenship skills.

Lyddiard described two of several projects that adopted the PMA method in detail, *A Clockwork Orange* and *1984*. These plays were put on the main stage, toured nationally and internationally, and met with positive press reviews. However, around the performances there were 'a circle of projects that happened outside the play but all of them informed the play' (Lyddiard). He also described a youth conference, *Deprived or Depraved*, that explored the idea of whether people are born evil or develop evil traits due to the influences around them (nature or nurture). This and other projects involved forming close partnerships with the probation service, youth services, the prison and others creating films and workshops. Northern Stage had a young people's Probation Officer in residence during this time, working inside the company and going out doing workshops. Increasing financial pressures meant that Lyddiard's resource-intense approach became less tenable. Lyddiard felt that financial and executive board constraints (also evident in board reports) meant the company began to feel obliged to create more prescriptive, pre-prepared workshops which schools could book rather than continue with experimental and organic projects. At this point he chose to resign, and Whyman was appointed to take over.

7.2.2 Whyman's Artistic Ambition

Whyman did not pursue the ensemble model or the PMA programme. Instead, her artistic vision for participation involved encouraging her team to develop three different types of participation activities: ongoing relationships with schools (rather than one off projects); medium scale partnership work (including training Newcastle College students); and biannual large-scale projects that involved cultural exchanges and productions (*Happiness, Talk of the Toon*, and *Manifesto* are examples of this). This marks a clear break in the way that Lyddiard approached participation. Whyman did not value participation less, but her artistic vision saw participation as having its own autonomy and purpose rather than serving her artistic main-house programme or the company.

In addition to talking about how she felt the Participation team enriched the organisation, Whyman articulated what she felt the young people got from this form of delivery: 'For me, at the moment, it's about giving genuine, lasting sense that they have a voice in our society.' She

felt that drama could give young people a platform to speak in many ways, including helping them to articulate their own ideas as well as speaking someone else's words in a script. This reflects what the participants saw as their involvement. As well as offering the young people different ways to express themselves, Whyman felt that Northern Stage was also challenging parents to view their children in a fresh way. She talked about parents coming to the theatre and being astonished in a positive way with what they saw: 'Lots of parents had no idea what their kids were doing and did not value it until they were doing it. Then saw them holding a stage with 400 people watching.'

Whyman felt that the opportunity to hold an audience's attention was a distinctive feature that participation gave young people at Northern Stage, and she felt it was an increasingly important one, albeit harder to achieve in a financially austere climate with educational policy that did not prioritise the arts. It was an issue because her perception was that young people no longer had those skills or experiences as a matter of course (in contrast to the TIE era when the arts in schools were overtly encouraged). She used the example of *Dream*, a 2016 participation project based upon *Midsummer Night's Dream* (and run across the country in partnership with the Royal Shakespeare Company):

> I think confidence in this country is a massive problem. *Dream* had 680 people in and 500 of them were vocal about it giving them a sense they mattered. There's a very strong link there for me about people feeling that they matter and what they have got to say and what they can do is valued and heard (Whyman).

Whyman's perceptions match that of the participants. She achieved her goals to raise the aspirations and skills of Participation staff and participants but felt constrained by the socio-economic structures that she perceived around her. Under her tenure Participation developed a more autonomous sense of creative direction on small and large-scale projects. Her Participation staff were encouraged to devise and direct their own work. Therefore, whilst Whyman adopted a different framework for managing participation than Lyddiard, there was still the same ethos regarding empowering young people, empowering her workforce to deliver young people's work and a receptiveness to learn about and from participants and participatory practitioners.

7.2.3 Campbell's Scope for Participation

Following on from Lyddiard and Whyman, Campbell talked about the ambition he had for participation work. Like them, he said that his focus was centred on building confidence, building skills, building aspirations, and building a sense of possibility. He was keen to continue a range of inclusion activities but wanted to unite them under the banner of *Young Company*, to give the work a sense of cohesion that he felt had been lacking:

> What we are trying to work towards with *Young Company* is about creating the context and experience and time and patience for those young people to develop their voices…We as an organization can create a platform or a context, where the adult world can hear those voices (Campbell).

Although the specific activities he led were different from Whyman's Participation programme, this quote shows that he had a similar aim: giving young people a creative voice. Moreover, like Whyman, he felt that opportunities were threatened, and an increased stratification of society was being matched by an increased stratification of access to culture: 'The thing that makes me angry is the consistent, deliberate, broad attack on the basic human rights of young people from all backgrounds to have access to a creative and cultural life. That I believe is becoming increasingly stratified within our society' (Campbell). Campbell talked about his experience running an undergraduate programme at Central Saint Martins in London; how each year the intake was becoming more and more privileged because the costs of training were so high. He felt that access to the arts 'should not be your ability to spend £30,000 or £45,000' but that increasingly that was the reality. In response, at Northern Stage he championed a training programme that offered a full subsidy to students to study acting and to set up their own drama company, the *NORTH* training programme.

Campbell's views on what the different programmes of activity for young people at Northern Stage offered were very similar to the views that Morgan expressed when he was running Northern Stage in the 1970s, about the importance of inclusion and experimentation. Campbell also put more emphasis on their responsibility to develop empathy skills in young people, asserting, 'I think of the theatre as a meeting place, as a forum space […] to create space

for other people to hear them and have empathy with their experience. But also, to build the muscle of their empathy as well through exposing them to a different context, different experiences to people from different backgrounds to different stories, styles, forms all of that.' Campbell tacitly built on what Morgan and later Lyddiard described as an approach which weaves young people into the artistic vision for the organisation: developing people as citizens first and foremost whilst also being very proud of those who went on to pursue professional arts careers after participating at Northern Stage. Campbell phrased it as, '[w]e are consciously establishing pathways towards being professional within the arts, but that is only part of what we do.'

7.2.4 Summary of the Artistic Directors' Experience

The interviews with the three artistic directors show that young people have been a core and influential part of Northern Stage. They reveal that the directors see young people's work as influencing their own directorships. Moreover, whilst there have been different approaches, there is a consistent nature in young people's engagement. They express a desire to impart value into young people's lives through engagement with the theatre. Whilst young people's work has been a source of pride and delight for the directors, it has also presented dilemmas and frustrations. All have witnessed very powerful positive impacts on young people and staff, yet none have managed to reach the number or range of young people they aspired to.

The recent artistic directorships relationship with the Participation department can be briefly summarised as follows; with Lyddiard (1992–2005) his pan-European perspective and ensemble approach brought participation work into the main body of the theatre more closely than ever before. Subsequently, Whyman's tenure (2006-2015) was characterised by a growing confidence in Northern Stage to lead and champion the region's theatre-making and raising the ambitions of the Participation team's own artistic abilities. However, whilst Lyddiard had integrated participation within his work, Whyman let it run it alongside her directorship programme as a highly valued but separate entity. Finally, the relationship established by Campbell sought to consolidate participation activity and raise its profile under the banner of having a *Young Company*, which brought together some of the different strands of participation activity into a larger more singularly focused aspiration of inclusion.

Surprisingly, given their very individual standpoints and approaches, there is a lot that

unites the different artistic directors' tenures. These corroborations represent a unifying identity for the theatre's approach to working with young people. They were all committed to empowering young people, giving them a 'voice,' and developing empathy skills. The directors all talked about developing young people in the North East as theatre practitioners but at least as much about supporting them as citizens. Showcasing the work of the North East to other parts of the country or abroad was important to the directors to enable young people to be proud of the work created in their region, from being part of the Avignon Festival in 1972, to winning awards at the Edinburgh Fringe in 2016.

Another unifying leadership element has been the support of artistic directors to devise Christmas shows continuously since 1969, rather than hire in companies or putting on crowd-pleasing, income-guaranteed pantomimes. These factors around the directors' approach towards young people are not necessarily unique to Northern Stage. Similar examples can be found in other theatres. Collectively, however, they represent a strong commitment to the importance of young people to the theatre and Northern Stage's role in pioneering new ways of working with young people. This is a way of working which has been steadfastly upheld over decades, even if they have not managed to meet their full ambitions for reach and inclusivity. The artistic directors shared artistic ambition for participation as a vehicle to create a more empathetic, understanding society represents a distinctive vision for Northern Stage whose work focuses specifically on developing the young people who live in North East England.

These characteristics show that there is a profile and continuity to work with young people which has, in turn, constituted a strong organisational identity at the Northern Stage. Artistic directors might not be expected to have such close ties to the work with young people, given their strategic managerial role in a theatre that is not classified as a children's theatre, yet it appears that young people have formed an integrated, pivotal role within the theatre. Indeed, work with young people has shaped the artistic directors' views of theatre at least as much as the other way round. Artistic Directors have a socio-political agenda, believing that theatre builds social skills and understanding. At the same time, they are immensely proud of their role in developing talent within the industry. Each Director referred to people whom they had worked with who has gone on to perform, write, design or direct productions within the region and across the UK following participation at Northern Stage. Therefore, whilst participation operated

in different ways under the different directorships, underpinning them were shared core values about the importance and value of young people's work. They shared a drive to see young people more prominently represented within the theatre and more valued by society as well as wanting to empower the Participation staff too.

7.3 The Perspective of Participation Managers and Staff

Participation management at Northern Stage is one of its most distinctive features due to its hereditary nature. Each of its leaders between 1983 and 2017 worked inside Northern Stage before they took on their leadership role, producing a stable and longstanding workforce. This contrasts with the Artistic Directors, who each came into post from geographically remote organisations. By passing on their responsibility and expertise to successors within the organisation and passing it up to their artistic directors, the Participation managers have been pivotal in creating a sense of continuity and community. However, this has largely happened tacitly, without conscious effort or reflection. Staff have not recognised their inheritance or their legacy because of an organisational focus on facing forwards and implementing new projects.

Bostock arrived at Northern Stage in 1983, having trained in TIE practice. Bostock employed Harrington within his TIE team, and Harrington became his successor in 1992. Harrington employed Lloyd within his department, and she became his successor from 2002. Concurrently, Calvert, Rigby, and Susan Mulholland all became involved during Harrington's leadership of education during Lyddiard's ensemble years, and they all went on to contribute to Participation programmes at the theatre. Together their tenures and views account for the consistency of the impacts which participants described. Whilst artistic directors have changed, the Participation team has quietly remained, retaining, and relaying the embedded memories of their work in current practices.

Heathcote's description of participation as 'an attempt to create a living, moving picture of life, which aims at surprise and discovery for the participants rather than for any onlookers' (Heathcote 62) still unconsciously encapsulates the approach of Northern Stage's Participation department in 2017. Since Heathcote was such a hugely influential figure in the international history of theatre work with young people, it is important to acknowledge this approach, which has tacitly continued since she was herself a teacher at Newcastle University and drama advisor

at Northern Stage in the 1980s.

Heathcote was reluctant to put a name to the practices that she used, saying, 'I don't have a name for what I do… I simply stand midway between all that has happened before I arrived and what is now' (qtd. in Wagner 13). In this phrase, Heathcote illustrates her intuitive approach which was built upon years of a tacit transfer of skills and experience of working with young people and teachers. It is this same tacit transfer of skills and experience that Heathcote passed on to staff at Northern Stage and which has continued to be passed on, a tradition which they are also reluctant to put a name to. In 2016, Calvert said, 'I don't know how you would evaluate it on a piece of paper, but there's something about the personal relationships that happen within projects that are as valuable as the art that happens'. Participation staff feel that personal gain is at least as important as the artistic outcomes which is in sympathy with Heathcote's view about the spiritual importance of participation work. In this quote we can see that the relationships that are formed with participants have perceptible yet intangible benefits for the participants under each successive leader.

7.3.1 Chris Bostock (1983 – 1992)

Bostock developed the TIE's prominence during his tenure, with a stable grant from local authorities to work in deprived wards and income from profitable young people's shows. It was Bostock who invited input from leading international drama experts including Heathcote, Bolton, and Deary, who were based in Newcastle and Durham. As well as offering a schools' programme across Tyne and Wear, during this period the theatre also grew its reputation for staging productions for pre-schoolers and held national Youth Theatre conferences. Bostock's background in both teaching and drama impacted on the way he delivered participation work. He came to Northern Stage from working in repertory theatre in Harrogate and York and before that, teaching in London. His training had included developing an understanding the use of Theatre in Education, but he was not aware that he was continuing TIE ideas first pioneered by O'Toole at Northern Stage in the 1970s. Although Bostock left Northern Stage in 1992, he continued to deliver drama, storytelling, and theatrical experiences to young people, including Saturday workshops at Northern Stage (A Bit Crack).

Bostock articulated the main areas where he felt his work had impact and value as being

about empowering young people to have a voice and make decisions, providing a safe imaginative space where they can explore difficult issues, presenting familiar and new faces and voices, challenging young people to think for themselves, developing them as citizens and giving the work a professional status. These themes were unconsciously echoed by each subsequent interviewee which indicates a clear continuity and reciprocal understanding between staff and participants about the nature of participation at Northern Stage.

7.3.2 Tony Harrington (1992 - 2001)

Harrington took over leadership of Northern Stage's work with young people in 1992 when Lyddiard became director and when the local authority income for the TIE had mostly dried up. Harrington had previously worked within the TIE company under Bostock's leadership and now worked to raise the artistic profile of participation work within Lyddiard's ensemble theatre company. He supported the view that financial necessity and Lyddiard's vision of an ensemble company led to a revisioning of this field of work. With some irony, Harrington reflected that: 'The same thing happened 10 or 15 years later with the ensemble when Erica came along and had to make a decision about how she could operate.' In a shift away from the schools' work of the TIE company, Harrington often worked with youth services and the probation service. The TIE became known as Education and Outreach and later as Projects. The clientele for this field of work also changed from school pupils in deprived wards to a more eclectic clientele of young people involved in social services, young offenders, schools, and families that could afford to buy experiences for their children.

Harrington's leadership of young people's work signals organisational changes and continuities. During the 1990s, Northern Stage shifted its work away from schools towards community partnerships and it became a much closer part of the whole company of the theatre. Harrington felt it was stronger for this although he tried to preserve a degree of autonomy to create and devise participation-specific own work similarly to his predecessor. Without knowing anything about the interview with Bostock, Harrington reiterated the same ideas about wanting to transform young people's lives, creating work around topics that was relevant to their lives, and using theatre to allow young people to speak about and share their feelings. He asserted, '[w]hat we did at its best was transformational and people still talk to me about projects that we did 15

years ago.' Harrington felt proud of the work they had created, and it had a big impact on him and went on to influence the delivery of young people's engagement in the arts in County Durham, because it 'has undoubtedly shaped what I do now. […] It completely shaped the ideology that underpins the Forge' (the arts education charity based in county Durham where he has been Director since 2001).

7.3.3 Kylie Lloyd (2002 - 2017)

As the longest-standing Director of Participation at Northern Stage over a period of fourteen years, Lloyd's perspective reflects both the tenacity of Participation to uphold a distinct set of values and its ability to adapt. After Harrington left, Lloyd took over and the department became called Participation in 2006. The choice of Participation as the title of the department, rather than Education, Outreach or Projects, was part of the aim to project an accessible image. It reflected a change in language across the arts sector; staff felt that it was more of 'a leveller'. They felt it matched their approach towards engagement with young people which sees the work as a 'dialogue'. It is worth reiterating however that it was not a new word. Heathcote was talking about 'participation' and 'participants' in the collaborative sense in drama three decades earlier.

Lloyd worked under three different artistic directors and observed that each had a different relationship with her work, both supportive and challenging at different points. She also felt that there were always shared core values which she felt explained why there was a high retention rate amongst Participation staff. Lloyd noted that there remains a sense of the:

> importance of theatre as a socio-political, art form about the way in which it engages with people in the role it can play in inspiring lives, sit in the same way between the three artistic directors…. I think the way in which they run the theatre is very different, but I do think there's something core [in their beliefs].

Lloyd's attempts to acknowledge the difficulty of capturing the work undertaken by the Participation team echo the sentiments of Heathcote, albeit with more modern references: 'Saying we're going to make a piece of theatre is quite an abstract term. You can't touch it, you can't find an example of it on YouTube to show, and it's only at the end of it can you really

explain what it is that you're doing' (Lloyd). Her comment reveals that the staff as well as the young people are participants in the process, learning and creating work together.

7.3.4 Participation Staff in 2016

All three of the staff interviewed in 2016, Mark Calvert, Ruth Johnson, and Susan Mulholland had worked under all three of the most artistic directors which provided a valuable insight into the shared values and differences across the respective eras.[28] They saw participation as a two-sided coin: on one side is the affirmation and interest in theatre that young people get from participating, whilst on the other side is the professional satisfaction the staff themselves find from working in this field. Again, this speaks to the dual nature of participation at Northern Stage as both empowering young people but also developing professionals working in this field of work.

Northern Stage's Participation staff all felt that Northern Stage offers something unique, but they found it hard to define in words. It was something they appeared to know innately and value through their experiences. They all joined the team from different backgrounds including administration (Mulholland), acting (Calvert), and teaching (Johnson). They each had a strong, specific attachment to Northern Stage. It was more than a place of work for them, it was a place where they had invested themselves as people, as well as in their careers. They talked about a strong pastoral element to the role, reflecting the vocational nature of the work through a sense of a calling to empower young people through the medium of theatre.

In contrast to the artistic directors, the Participation staff struggled to give an account of the overall identity and vision of Northern Stage but nonetheless they felt extremely loyal to it with a great sense of belonging: 'There's a real sense of family and family with all its dysfunctions'. They felt that Northern Stage had given them chances that are unusual in a workplace, letting them try out roles and practices and take risks in their careers. In turn they had passed on chances to participants to pursue careers at the theatre, employing some as facilitators and helping others set up their own companies. The trust that they felt that the theatre had placed in them had created 'a sense of loyalty to it, as a building, as a brand'. However, they found it

[28] These staff were interviewed together on 31st May 2016. They are not anonymous but I have not attributed their quotes individually upon request and because each comment used was corroborated by each other.

problematic to elucidate on how they would describe Northern Stage and they weren't without critique.

> [Northern Stage] has to wear so many hats that…it cannot clearly define who it is, and what it is to people, and so it becomes a sort of jack of all trades, slightly linked with either the bizarre or the spectacular. I think sometimes when you come in you expect to be given something you don't get from the rest of the city. That is a great selling point for us but also, it's a quite awkward thing to negotiate constantly with the audience, who you're trying to bring through the door.

Initially it appears strange that these staff feel such a strong attachment to something that they struggle to define. However, reflecting on their descriptions of Northern Stage as a family, it makes more sense because families are unique and personal. It appears that Northern Stage engendered a strong sense of family amongst these staff because they had spent a lot of time and invested a lot of emotion in the space and their work. Moreover, their perception of the theatre as an organisation which has reimagined and presented itself differently, under different leaderships and within different political climates, has indeed created problems around how to describe it at any one point.

In 2016, Participation staff focused their work on Northern Stage as a venue because they wanted young people to feel comfortable inside a theatre space. This contrasts to the work of Stagecoach (1969-1972) and the TIE company of 1983-1992, who took theatre experiences into schools. However, these initiatives all shared an aim to empower young people to become more confident citizens. The 2016 approach is reflected in the participants' feedback too, whereby many of them chose to talk about how much they liked the venue as well as the activities. One Participation staff member said, 'I can't imagine ever doing a project somewhere else and then never coming here. I just think it's a really easy way to introduce people to the theatre and what the possibilities of them coming to see work is.' The staff interviewed wanted the participants to feel valued, wanted to impress the young people and wanted to go even further, to make them feel comfortable in a theatre as a building. In this sense, it appears that a major purpose of participation has been about making theatre more inclusive: '[t]o walk through these doors is a major thing, unless you've got someone to hold your hand and look after you, and go, "It's all right".' They recognised that there are a lot of associated behaviours with going to the theatre

which can be off-putting to a first-time attender, both young people and their parents, such as knowing what to wear, whether they can eat sweets, how to move around the building. These things are a barrier to coming in through the doors, but staff felt that proud that participants who came and then brought their families to see them now felt a sense of ownership and entitlement to use the space, that they could feel that 'it's their building now.'

The interviewees saw themselves as creating an environment to collaborate with young people to create theatre. Inspired by Heathcote and Bolton, they used very similar terminology to both Bostock and Harrington about wanting the theatre to be a place where young people feel welcome and safe to share ideas and feelings, even if the methods used have changed over time. In the following quote, Calvert echoed Heathcote by recognising that the situations that young people find themselves in could be uncomfortable because they are strange but that it was their role as leaders (or teachers in Heathcote's case) to engage with them sensitively:

> The things that we ask them to do are quite exposing but if you manage the situation correctly, it feels like cooperation: 'I'm expecting you to do something which I know it is exposing so I will support you in that journey all the ways I can and try to use anything I can to make you feel comfortable with that'.

Indeed, although Heathcote called it 'collaboration' whereas Calvert said 'cooperation,' the ethos is the same: that of working *with* rather than *for* young people. Calvert's view tacitly reflects Heathcote and Bolton's teaching: that drama and acting in role, when done with care and forethought, can empower young people who otherwise feel self-conscious.

In addition to creating an environment to nurture and stimulate young people's creativity and self-worth, the Participation staff felt that they gained from the experience of working with young people. This builds upon Harrington and Bostock's views about wanting to develop the artistic skills and motivations of their staff. Moreover, it emphasises the point that the work they began at Northern Stage has stimulated and fed their future careers. The current staff reflected this by saying, 'I don't think I've ever done a project that I haven't got something out of it myself,' and, 'I have learned so much from those young people about how to make work…they are so honest; they are the most honest audience you'll ever meet in life, and I think everybody

should be made to make work for young people (and sit in the room while they are watching).'

These quotes express the essential value of the collaborative nature of the way that the staff work with young people. Both participants and participatory leaders gain from it: '[It's] not about us being satisfied as artists going, "Guess what we made. Look what we put together." It's about going, "Guess what they did, and we were part of that"' (Participation Staff). In terms of the impact of the work, the team talked about 'enabling' young people, to empower them as performers but even more to empower them as people:

> It's not about discovering talent, it's about discovering, 'Wow, I think we can facilitate you in some kind of journey. Let's figure it out along the way'. It takes great strength of character to go on stage in front of semi-dark auditorium and not freak you out, and I think for someone to get up there and do that, it's brave and you can see in them you can see the buzz they get. [...] It echoes a long time for them.

This sentiment clearly reflects the perception of the participants and the artistic directors. It suggests that there is a clear and embedded vision for young people's work right through the organisation. Through the projects, the team felt that they built confidence and inspiration in the young people to believe in themselves, 'finding the poetry in their own lives':

> It's immensely satisfying to see people, year on year, coming back… they might just be more confident people and they might not end up with a career in the arts. It's not about generating the next generation of us, it's about just making people happier, more confident, more able to stand up in front a room full of people and speak. I think those skills are important, and I feel like it's sort of the heart of what we can enable people to do.

This echoes the artistic directors' values in seeing young people who engage in theatre as becoming people who are better equipped to participate in society more broadly, to become informed and empathetic citizens. As well as building confidence and giving the young people a voice, the team echoed the TIE ideology about using theatre to develop skills in empathy and

understanding: ‘It also creates relationships about understanding people are different and, I think you learn a lot about yourself and about others by making theatre’.

7.3.5 Summary of Participation Managers and Leaders

The comments from Participation staff reveal that whilst participation work does not fit neatly into the artistic programme of the theatre, it nonetheless defines the ethos of the organisation. Participation staff go beyond their job descriptions to adopt a pastoral, almost parental, care approach. They display a vocation to want to empower young people and share a passion for theatre. As well as delivering drama workshops, they are supporting the personal development of young people. This presents challenges for the day-to-day workings of the department because it makes it hard for them to be objective in their encounters with participants, and it makes it challenging for them to business plan because they are emotionally driven. On the other hand, these qualities are essential to the work because they allow the Participation staff to create a working environment for participants which is comfortable, reassuring and offers a sense of adventure within the domain of theatre for young people. The people who have worked in participation for the past fifty years are committed to young people and the importance of theatre for young people. The artistic directors come and go and stamp their own individuality on the work while they are there. Whilst artistic directors are working at Northern Stage, they become further convinced of the value of participation work. They take the practices which they have learnt from Participation staff at Northern Stage with them when they leave. The ethos, motivations, and practices that the current staff express is the same as those of their predecessors going back to 1978, centred on empowering young people and seeing artistic merit in the work. Taken together, this all provides compelling evidence that Northern Stage’s work with and for young people has been a defining aspect of its mission and identity throughout its history, without the theatre explicitly realising it.

Whilst there have been distinct elements to each era, there have also been shared qualities and principles that have defined Northern Stage’s work with young people throughout its history. Interviews with artistic directors and Participation leaders at Northern Stage demonstrate that participation work is driven by their vocational belief in the value of this form of tactile engagement. It is vocational because participatory work requires very specific skills and motivations from those who conduct it. The analysis of DIE and TIE showed that the

practitioners not only need to be adept in drama practices but also have an ability to engage young people which represents a very distinctive skills set. The interviewees in 2016 shared an inherited ideology and a fervent belief in participation's power to benefit young people, to fulfil their own artistic needs, and to enrich society.

7.4 The Four Key Features of Participation at Northern Stage

There emerged four defining features to Northern Stage's participation work. Firstly, opportunistic risk. Northern Stage Participation staff have confidence, built upon their experience and ability, to make bespoke projects which aim to challenge themselves artistically as well as the young people. Secondly, there is high professional quality – giving young people's work the same standards and resources as is given to adult-orientated work. Thirdly, the work is led by young people, as Northern Stage use young people's voices as the starting point for developing work. Fourthly, and arguably the most distinctively, there is a powerful yet tacit hereditary tradition of passing on knowledge and skills, putting training and development for future North East theatre makers at the heart of their practice.

7.4.1 Opportunistic Risk

Although Northern Stage regularly produces a 'Participation Strategy' to give the company a focus and to help it to secure funding from Arts Council England, it is not a rigid plan. The reality is that the department has always delivered a flexible and responsive approach taking advantage of opportunities and having the confidence to risk trying something new. All of the interviewees balked at the idea of having a Participation programme with standard workshops to accompany main stage plays, a format which they saw as the standard expectation of a theatre. Instead, they were much more focused on creating work which young people demanded or they were personally interested in. Harrington felt there were strengths and weaknesses to his approach. He regretted that they had not worked as closely with schools as his predecessor Bostock had done and had not sustained engagement over a long period. Harrington noted, '[w]e were quite project-driven. […] There was an element of jumping from one opportunity to another.' However, in their favour, he felt that they were ambitious and the scale of the department, which became known as Projects rather than Education and Outreach, enabled

them to make many new relationships and 'make new pieces of work that weren't in the plan'. He observed, 'I think it was a golden period where we were given an opportunity partly through everyone making up as they went along, to just make different types of projects that people did not expect. […] I felt we were seen as a company'.

The Participation Strategy for 2015-2018 has four core elements.[29] First, *Introduction and Access* is the work with pre-school young people and with those outside formal education, including the summer schools. Secondly, *Education and Learning* is the strand attached to work with formal education settings, including schools. Its *Big and Small* programme has run for over a decade (helping primary pupils transition into secondary education). Thirdly, *Artist Development and Training* is about 'nurturing talent and supporting progression routes', or rather working with those who have already expressed an interest in theatre and developing their skills and knowledge. Its *NORTH* programme is one of few fully funded professional theatre training syllabi for young adults. Finally, *Participation Productions* are the projects or shows devised by the Participation staff, driven either by their own interests and ambitions, such as producing a revival of *Manifesto* (2015) a Julia Darling play, or from grant funding such as *Raised on Songs and Stories* (2016), a piece developed with Irish Tyneside Cultural Society. These headings are intentionally broad to provide the flexibility to include a range of different activities.

Whilst sub-headings within the Participation Strategy are a way of the Participation department organising and presenting their work to funders and the Board of Trustees, the day-to-day operation of the department does not stick to such clear boundaries. As with their predecessors, some of the work is more opportunistic than the business planning cycle and funding structure the organisation demands. As such, successive leaders of young people's work at the theatre have upheld their right to determine what they work on, and how they work, rather than being beholden to a strategic plan. This has strengths and weaknesses. A criticism from stakeholders was that they found it hard to grasp the overall picture of participation, something which had also frustrated the Chief Executive, Denby, who said it was sometimes hard to talk about participation in a succinct way to funders. However, the Participation department is well

[29] Author's own copy. Held within uncatalogued theatre records and Arts Council files – accessible by Freedom of Information Request.

networked within cultural sector in the North East, sitting on the NGCV (Newcastle Gateshead Cultural Venues) Education Group and meeting regularly with the 'Big 11' producing theatres across England (The Audience Agency). The work of the Participation department has been singled out by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation as exhibiting leadership and good practice within the arts sector under Lloyd's leadership (ArtWorks Alliance, "Knowledge Bank"). A feature of their leadership model is to adopt this approach of opportunistic risk, led by an instinct about what they believe will work well for the young people based on their knowledge and experience rather than following guidance.

Bostock felt that the theatre created high calibre work which challenged both the organisation, its staff, and young people. His vision was to use the theatre as a uniquely 'safe' space for enabling young people to take risks in order to learn: 'To create a learning situation, we've got to be challenged, we've got to create that safe environment where you can say "I don't like what you think"… within a context, so that fears, concerns, aggressions, etc., can find a place to be expressed … and so that you can reach an understanding through practice, through knowledge'.

Bostock believed the practice, knowledge, engagement, and images that can be delivered through a live theatre performance 'potentially creates something that is unforgettable, because that's the nature of our theatre'. To exemplify this, he referred to a production the company took into a special educational needs' schools. They set it up like a science lab and the participants discovered a 'live alien' there. The participants had to take responsibility for her. She was portrayed as being terrified, and the young people had to meet with the doctors and work out what to do. Bostock noted, 'So that's handing over responsibility to a group of young people in a special needs school to help this alien who's never going to get home unless they commit to her, unless they care, unless they do something about it'. The outcome, as Bostock saw it, was that the young people, who themselves frequently had to face challenging, uncomfortable situations, could recognise and express their own fears as well as finding courage and ideas to overcome them through the safe, playful nature of the theatre experience. It was designed both to get them to reflect on their own experiences, but also to grow empathy and decision-making skills.

Bostock cited that time and again the theatre shows developed the confidence of young people who struggled in mainstream society noting teacher feedback which said that the pupils

who were often silent in the classroom were the ones who found the most confidence, because they were in a safe space, they were within the drama, and they could open out. He felt that:

> If we give children the empowerment of the dramatic sphere they know where they are, where they stand, …you know it's safe and you know you can get out of there afterwards and to a certain extent, it's not you, it's you contributing to the drama, people are freed to open up to express themselves in a totally different way.

The strength of the TIE programme, as Bostock saw it, was that it allowed young people to face difficult issues through the medium of play or playfulness. He observed that 'it's vital that our small people learn to play', because play allowed them to stop and start the action as they felt comfortable, to be involved or to be objective at different points. To illustrate this, he referred to a play about a boy growing up in 1930s Germany under the influence of the Nazi party where at the end of a boxing match a young Nazi boy kisses another young man. This action was designed to signal issues about sexuality, power through fictionalised characters. Bostock commented:

> Within the context of a play, it's safe. If I'm asking you about your sexuality and how you're going to express yourself, it's not safe because you have to expose yourself, but you can expose yourself in relation to this character and this character can expose itself and you can sit down with your peers and talk to this man in role and say: 'Why did you hit him? Why were you so angry?' and try and work out his feelings. You can be his companion, his challenge, his teacher, his opponent safely.

Bostock's argument is that if the situation is transposed into a real life setting with real people who have faced or are facing these issues it becomes harder to be open and honest as you can potentially offend someone or expose yourself to embarrassment or threat. One of the participants I interviewed as part of Northern Stage's participation work in 2016 said that he only openly came out as being gay after participating in a workshop at Northern Stage. This was not in relation to the workshop that Bostock had talked about (that was thirty years earlier) but the insight reveals indicates that the safe space argument and approach for participation is a core

feature at Northern Stage. As Bostock noted: ‘In the drama situation, you’ve got nothing to lose, you’ve got everything to gain so you can only become a helper, an empowerer.’ Harrington also talked about the innovation that he felt Northern Stage conducted with participation work:

> It was interesting, creative time where the parameters were being redrawn of what an Education Department could be, what a Marketing Department could be, the producing element within the organisation. I think that it created interesting work from that. I would say this, but I thought we were way ahead of the game.

To support this assertion, Harrington cited the project a *Nest of Spices* (1996). This was a produced piece of work by the Education team working in the community but was directed by Richard Gregory (a main house producer in the company). The work delivered was a mixture of projects that were either stimulated by a show that was happening in the main house or there was work that was instigated by the education department. They worked across all ages, but they very rarely did the post-show talks or workshops that Harrington felt dominated other theatre education departments.

The Chief Executive, Denby, spoke confidently about where young people’s work sits within her vision for the organisation today and what she perceives young people gain from engaging with the theatre. Her perspective reflected both that of the artistic directors and Participation staff from the past forty years, although she did not appear to recognise that she was continuing a tradition: ‘Participation helps you as an individual in terms of life skills. It increases your confidence; it gives you different perspectives on the world’. She gave the recent example of an autistic boy’s work experience. By the end of his placement at the theatre, from being escorted everywhere he ended up coming to and from work on his own. He achieved, over a quite short period of time, a new level of independence and confidence. This success was perhaps partly due to the nature of working in a theatre but also the specific role that Northern Stage played in making him feel welcome and comfortable.

Furthermore, Denby discussed the *Big and Small* programme as ‘a really good example of the power of theatre and performance as a tool to know yourself better and be more confident’. *Big and Small* is a project where nervous 10-year-olds, who are due to start secondary or ‘Big’ school, come to Northern Stage, to meet older pupils from the secondary

school and create a play together. Denby noted that: 'It's a really powerful example of how performance as participation in the arts can help your wider life'. Similar to the Participation staff, both past and present, Denby talked about the collaborative nature of the work and how teamwork was not just a mantra but a necessity to make successful drama: 'You have to allow other people to shine. You have to shine yourself and step forward and do your bit. You have to depend on each other and build trust and responsibility with your fellow participants'. The cumulative extensive experience of Participation staff at Northern Stage enables them to be opportunistic and trust with confidence in the process for participatory work that has been developed over many decades.

7.4.2 High Professional Qualities

The early TIE work at Northern Stage instilled the idea of giving high level professional qualities to the work created for young people and this practice has continued throughout the theatre's history. Bogdanov (1970-1972) led the way in working outside the theatre in community settings with young people. For instance, one participant talked about a project to build a boat on the Tyne as a youth participation activity (Gilman). Arguably, Bogdanov established the model, later embodied by Calvert at Northern Stage, whereby staff can switch from directing or acting in main stage productions to leading young people's activity. Moreover, Northern Stage pioneered the production of Christmas plays for very young people and has staged original shows annually since 1972.

Broadly speaking within theatre provision for young people in the twentieth century there has been a move from observation to inclusion and a move towards giving young people their own voice rather than acting as a conduit for adult expression and to engage them in the making of the drama (Robinson, *Exploring Theatre*; Nicholson, *Theatre, Education and Performance*). Robinson argued that young people needed both forms of engagement; a balance of being consumers as well as producers to gain the full social benefit because '[t]heatre helps to take us out of customary social situations and learn openly from each other in an atmosphere of social interaction' (159). The participation practices at Northern Stage have always included both formats: shows made by adults for a young audience to watch as well as the hands-on participatory art created by young people.

Young people's work has traditionally happened both inside and outside the theatre building. When asked whether there was any difference in working in community settings, such as outreach, or working within the theatre itself, Lyddiard commented:

> It's important to do both. It's important to meet people in their own communities, to find ways to explain what you do and why you do it in the places where they live and work…but it is also crucial to bring people out of their communities into world class establishments to see the best lighting etc. [...] We need the best facilities for the poorest people.

This comment echoes the sentiments that Morgan and Bogdanov expressed when they were at Northern Stage in the 1970s. It reflects a shared belief at Northern Stage that it is important for theatre makers to reach out and perform drama in communities but also to ensure young people have access to quality, professional standard artistic work at a theatre. Unfolding Theatre's director, Rigby, talked about the benefits of doing outreach as well as bringing children into the theatre: 'I think the Christmas shows are massively important – it's the first time that many of them [children] have come into a theatre'. She noted that this represented 'such a gift and such a responsibility' for the theatre company because it's an introduction which is going to affect young people's perceptions and tastes.

Although in the nineties Harrington was continuing principles that grew out of his time within TIE, he felt that his 'created a feel for the organisation that was fresh for what Education Departments were at the time'. By this he means that the young people's work was not a separate arm to the rest of the artistic programme, but integral to it. Key to this approach were the partnerships with external organisations that the outreach team formed, such as with the probation service. The link with the probation service began as some small opportunistic projects within the education and outreach team but then spread to become an integrated partnership with the wider theatre. For example, the probation services manager, Mike Worthington, joined the management board of the theatre. The significance was that external partnerships like this were not one-off events but presented a lasting collaboration. Under Harrington there was less work with schools than before, but the theatre developed links with community groups instead.

Harrington felt that the education and outreach work was supported internally and that his team's work with young people was integral to the Northern Stage ensemble.

A trajectory emerges from Bostock raising young people's work to a professional status followed by Harrington and Lyddiard ensuring the whole theatre company engaged with it. At the time of writing this continues in 2017 and Participation staff take great care in ensuring that the participants have access to a professional experience. Speaking in 2016, a member of the Participation team noted: 'I am proud that we give everything full production values, giving people space and time to think about what they think about the world and then the skills to be able to tell the world what that is. That feels to me personally important no matter what age'.

During their participation, participants are given access to the main stages and to technical, marketing and management staff to put on productions. The scale of participation work with young people has changed over time. In 2016, with four staff, there are half the number of Participation staff as there were during Bostock and Harrington's time (1983 – 2002). This appears to be due to funding issues rather than a planned change – the local authorities no longer provide the core funding that they once did. The smaller size of the department affects the amount of work that can be delivered and how much can be done outside the building. Whilst in 2016 most of the activity takes place in the theatre building, some projects happen in schools and community settings. This is for practical, financial, and ideological reasons: practically and financially it is usually cheaper and easier on resources to work within the theatre. However, the staff also think it is important that participants realise the work is attached to Northern Stage and the venue is key to that. They note, 'We do a lot of work of supporting young people who are having their first experience of theatre, [who say things like] "It's the best thing I've ever done", and "having that professional experience is something I'll never forget".' Northern Stage believe that the young people's participation empowers them to feel it is a building which belongs to them in some way, and which is accessible to them and by operating within the venue the Participation staff can give it a higher status and more professional qualities.

7.4.3 Young People Led Work

Although Heathcote avoided labelling her work, she was happy to talk about the approach and methods that she used which centred on having young people lead work and not

following a script. In a BBC Omnibus documentary she says, 'When I meet a group for the first time, I don't go in with definite ideas about what's going to happen because I think, "I must use their ideas", and I want them to see their ideas coming in to this marvellous action that they bring' (British Film Institute, "BBC Omnibus"). For all that the footage appears visually dated, it felt remarkably like watching a session with the Participation team at Northern Stage in 2016. Heathcote gathers the young people around her, sits them on the floor, listens to their ideas and gently questions and challenges them in a very similar manner to how I observed the Participation staff working in 2016. Furthermore, the Participation staff in 2016 are as uncomfortable as Heathcote was about attaching terminology to their work. They employed Heathcote's conscious methods and techniques to engage young people and almost always started by seeking ideas from the young people themselves rather than prescribing what was going to happen. Whilst apparently instinctive, this respect for the young people and a confidence in their own abilities as staff to organise the action around the young people's initiatives is indicative of an inherited knowledge. Heathcote was not professionally trained to teach and came from a background working in the Lancashire mills. It was her experience of working for years in the field that gave her expertise. This corresponds with the experience of the Participation staff at Northern Stage in 2016 who, like Heathcote, came from non-theatre backgrounds before finding a vocation in participation. This ground-up, embedded approach to leading participation work is something which typifies participation at Northern Stage, where experience in-situ is valued above academic qualification. One contemporary interviewee in 2016 observed the lines of continuity, without knowing about the detail of the succession saying: 'There is something about meeting young people and creating something together that's always been part of Northern Stage's ethos. That's something worth cherishing and celebrating' (Rigby).

Heathcote's approach opened opportunities for TIE companies, including Northern Stage to make young people's theatre more interactive, more participatory, and less scripted than at other places. Other youth theatres often follow a scripted/production-led model and in Tyneside the People's Theatre and the Pauline Quirke Academy both follow this model. The National Youth Theatre is also centred on staging productions rather than the co-development of a drama. However, as noted in the previous chapter, participants at Northern Stage noticed that Northern Stage is different. Without realising it, Northern Stage continues to embrace Heathcote's DIE

approach towards centring the drama on the interests, experiences, and issues that young people themselves determine, giving a structured freedom to the young people, and allowing them to make decisions and take risks. Heathcote argued that even if the young people make choices which might be problematic, the teacher should simply raise questions about how they are going to tackle these issues, rather than correct or instruct them. I witnessed very similar practices at Northern Stage during their workshops. They did not indicate whether a young person was right or wrong, and they did not make suggestions. Instead, just like Heathcote, they asked and continued to ask questions, allowing the young people to reach their own conclusions and make decisions for themselves. When Heathcote first introduced this approach in the 1970s it was unusual and novel but now it is an integral part of Northern Stage's approach.

Bostock also talked about the importance of giving young people a voice and an emotional education. His successor, Harrington, adopted and adapted in his practice noting, 'At that time, I felt that a lot of the work that was done by the Education Departments of other theatre companies was very show performance related. It might be the *Romeo and Juliet* workshop, whereas my background was much more about using art to allow people the capacity to speak and to share their feelings'. Moreover, whilst Harrington was happy to be part of the ensemble, he felt that the staff who worked specifically with young people needed to be viewed as producers. This view goes on to be upheld in the current Participation team's views. Harrington referred to the David Glass Ensemble's *Lost Child* project, begun in 1998, as inspirational for Northern Stage's approach. It was the antithesis to what he deemed 'page to stage' workshops whereby an education department created young people's activities based on main-house productions, almost as an afterthought in programming. Harrington observed: 'At its heart, it was about going in to work with young people and creating a piece of theatre about their lives or something they were interested in. There was a lot of talk about understanding what creates the environment for trust and what creates the environment for creation within a group'.

Whilst Participation staff found it hard to describe the overall identity of Northern Stage, they were much clearer when it came to articulating what their role was in the theatre's identity and the potential for young people. A member of the team noted that it was about 'empowering people to make their own work and actively take part in something'. In contrast to the TIE model, the staff in 2016 see the work as co-curation with the young people and nearly always

work with them to create a production, however short. Also, in contrast to the TIE programme, which devised productions and took them out into schools, Northern Stage makes each engagement a 'bespoke project' and utilising the theatre building is key to their work. A team member noted:

> I'm a real planner and you plan so much and then you meet the group, and you go, 'Well, that's not going to work.' […] You are there with a shape and know what you need to get to by the end, but it's very much led by what happens within the project. I think that every project is absolutely, totally different.'

This is remarkably like Heathcote's view. However, given that in 2016 they have half the number of staff that the TIE team had in the 1980s, this is a labour and resource-intensive approach which perhaps indicates why they cannot reach as many schools/young people as their predecessors. Moreover, their approach in 2016 is resource intensive. Whilst the TIE company used the same plays as the basis for participation projects over several years, in 2016 Northern Stage creates a bespoke project each time, although they use similar participation tools. As a former Associate Director, Rigby, states:

> One of the things that is distinctive about the participation work that Northern Stage does is that they invent projects for and with groups. There's a lot of [other] companies that have their programmes that they have that get rolled out, set projects.

This observation indicates that Rigby recognises Northern Stage's bespoke approach to creating drama – an approach that contrasted with other companies which she had experience of, and an approach which she thought showed exceptional vision and imagination but was also a very labour-intensive method of working with young people. Northern Stage's participation is characterised by starting with the individual needs and interests of the young people at the moment of engagement and letting that lead the practice.

7.4.4 Tacit Hereditary Knowledge and Skills

There are two aspects to the training work of the Participation team; whilst it offers training opportunities for participants, it also opens an avenue for theatre-makers to develop their own skills. The Participation staff I interviewed all felt that they had been encouraged to develop their own skills and interests whilst working at Northern Stage. For instance, Mulholland wrote play scripts and Calvert developed training programmes with Newcastle College. Lloyd cited a couple of the larger scale pieces she worked on as highlights: a project called *Happiness* (2008) – a response to negative reporting about young people at the time, designed to create a more positive image of young people – and another was around the time of the Cultural Olympiad called *Truce* (2012).

All of the leaders of Participation placed an emphasis on developing training opportunities for young professionals in their field, with a specific interest in growing a pool of North East talent. This reflects what Heathcote was doing in Newcastle two decades earlier. Whilst Heathcote worked with young people, and we have seen the techniques she used, her work was also focused on training teachers. She taught them to be more confident and to be able to use drama effectively across the curriculum. In 2016, Participation Director, Lloyd, felt that growing the training arm of her department was important and that there was a role for Northern Stage to fill a dearth of other training opportunities: 'There is a real gap in the region from graduating in a Performing Arts Degree to there being very little opportunity for employment. Very few companies were making work on a smaller scale stages'. The nearest theatre and education course was at York St John University and consequently Lloyd and Calvert drove the idea for Northern Stage to become a place to grow new and early career theatre professionals. This culminated in the *Young Company* and *NORTH* training programmes at Northern Stage. In this regard, Northern Stage's Participation programme today responds to Bostock's fear in the 1980s that professional training for participation work was diminishing and it addresses a problem identified by The Paul Hamlyn Foundation's large-scale study of participation, which notes:

> There are too few dedicated courses to prepare artists for work in participatory settings. […] There are also major gaps in training and development opportunities at different

> stages of artists' working lives and a lack of any clear career paths for them' (ArtWorks Alliance, *ArtWorks: A call to action*).

When Campbell took over as Artistic Director in 2015, the skills development work that Lloyd and Calvert had already begun continued to develop. According to Lloyd, Campbell was keen to tackle the issue that, 'Once you've identified talent, then how do you support that young artist?' Lloyd identified that Campbell's support to run the *NORTH* training scheme and to encourage local young companies to display work at Northern Stage evidenced his commitment to participation. It continued the commitment to training begun by Bostock with Heathcote and Bolton's support begun in 1983.

Lloyd felt that her small team made a big impact, not on lots of lives but deeply on several lives. Lloyd talked about how from *Young Company*, 'Five out of the thirteen regulars all went on to drama school. And they all say the experience they've had at Northern stage has been part of that'. Lloyd's pride is evident and echoes the way that Bostock referred to people who had developed their professional drama skills under his TIE leadership. Lloyd talked about working with people who first came to the summer school and ten years later are professional set designers, stage manager and actors:

> That's a really special feeling. It shouldn't be underestimated in the search for numbers. […] That is something that we're good at, treating young people as professionals and having an expectation of them. […] They're people that we're interested in.

This statement unconsciously mirrored the sentiments of Lloyd's predecessors Bostock and Harrington about the importance of listening to young people and seeing them as having valid and valuable opinions. Lloyd went on further to add that it was important that the young people felt ownership of the theatre company too, particularly the space:

> Young people love the building, they love the theatre, they love the fact that it's like a rabbit warren, people say that it looks small on the outside but it's huge on the inside and that feels exciting…They like all the different ways in which they can get involved, so

> that might be about performance but it's also about that producing element.

When they carry out a project, participants are often given a tour of the theatre revealing the variety of professions involved amongst the thirty-eight staff. Again, like her predecessors, Lloyd talked about wanting to inspire, to empower and to challenge young people and allow them to enjoy making theatre, to improve their sense of self and their relationship with society:

> People remember their experiences at Northern stage, and it does influence their life choices. Individuals come back to us years later saying, 'That was incredible.' And that's what I want theatre to be, that's what I want participation to be, I want it to have an impact…we have got that personal touch in our welcome and we know that that takes time and a lot of commitment.

Rigby, who began her directing career at Northern Stage, also argued that Northern Stage's participation work distinctly enriches the education and skills of young people as well as arts professionals. She gave first-hand testimony to the benefits that she saw the theatre offering to young people: 'One thing I've seen time and time again at Northern Stage is that theatre projects give young people a chance to be something else rather than their defined place within their school or family'. Rigby describes how she felt participation helps to unlock young people's horizons and improves their sense of identity and ability:

> I think there's something about engaging people's imagination and giving them the opportunity to pursue their own creativity and not be worried about what academic markers it's hitting. […] Through that, many young people develop their confidence and their skills.

Rather than implying academic skills do not matter, Rigby is arguing that by releasing young people into a learning environment such as participation, where academic achievement is not a priority, it empowers young people to achieve more and broader skills. This links to the earlier argument whereby we saw that private schools invest heavily in participation work as well as the academic side to give their pupils the social and academic skills which result in them retaining or gaining elite status in society (Robinson, *Exploring Theatre*). More than any other interviewee, Rigby recognised that 'participation was always part of the fabric of Northern Stage' talking

about how it had deeply affected her practice now. However, despite her acute awareness of the distinctive qualities of participation work at Northern, Stage, Rigby was not cognisant of the theatre's long history. When she talked about how the theatre has the ability to engage with teachers and inspire their teaching practice, she was unaware she was echoing the approach of Heathcote and Bolton in the 1970s and 1980s with their Drama In Education practices. Rigby also drew attention to the reciprocal benefits of participation whereby the work at Northern Stage impacts positively on the young people who take part but also on the staff who work with them: 'I think there's something in Northern Stage's approach to participation that is about believing in people who maybe don't believe in themselves and giving them opportunities…it was an experience that changed who I was as a director'.

This thesis has repeatedly argued for the importance, and distinctive nature, of a tacit transfer of knowledge in relation to participation work at Northern Stage; it emphasises the value of a hauntological approach to studying the theatre. Staff members have directly passed on their values, understanding and practices regarding working with young people to those who work around them and who succeed them, but this has not happened consciously. It is not something that staff are aware of giving or receiving but the shared principles for this work, derived from their predecessors' activity, became apparent from the interviews conducted for this thesis. We have also witnessed how influence also reaches beyond the organisation. It goes beyond the examples of Whyman, Rigby, and Harrington who directly spoke about applying their learning from Northern Stage to other cultural settings. For instance, Lyddiard talked about people in the ensemble at Northern Stage who went on to develop young people's work elsewhere including Ed Robson (who now runs Cumbernauld in Scotland) as Associate Director and Richard Gregory (now artistic director of Quarantine).

The example of Northern Stage's participation work speaks to the topic of inherited theatre cultures and their role in maintaining theatre identities. Carlson's exploration of *déjà vu* within theatre, shows the powerful interaction between memory and theatre – albeit with a focus on audience reception rather than participation (*The Haunted Stage*). Personal anecdotes now often sit alongside official documented records to create identities and anecdotes from theatre professionals fulfil an important job to frame and organise the relationship between memory, people, and objects at a theatre (Monks 148). Within a theatre, people add to and pass on stories

which serve to build up histories and hierarchies and establish or reinforce their narrator's position in relationship to them, as implied within Haslett's vignette of Live Theatre (289). Her analysis of their fortieth anniversary production shows how a theatre and its staff can actively want to create narratives that place them within a hereditary tradition (276). The irony at Northern Stage is that although within the interviews I perceived a strong inherited tradition, the Participation staff themselves were not consciously aware of their inherited ethos and practice.

7.4.5 Summary

At Northern Stage there has been a distinctive direct line of continuity. Since 1983, each member of staff has taken on a participatory role themselves in the department before then assuming a leadership position. It is akin to an apostolic succession in so far as each Participation manager has inherited the role from their predecessor and gone on to hand it on to a successor within their team, with a shared belief in the value and purpose of their work. This chapter highlighted the shared themes that have been influenced by an inherited practice or historical culture at Northern Stage. Inherited theatre cultures are not unusual but the lack of awareness about this at Northern Stage, the tacit way in which it has developed, is notable. In their interviews the speakers themselves did not remark upon any importance on learning from each other or building upon inherited practices. Bostock saw the education team that followed him as the start of a new era, far removed from TIE. Similarly, Harrington felt that Participation had moved away from the work that he led. Equally the current staff I interviewed paid little homage to their predecessors, and none except Bostock referenced Heathcote and Bolton's involvement. Nonetheless, the content the interviews and the direct successive handover from the theatre's TIE pioneers in 1983 to the present-day staff in 2017 clearly signals a powerful golden thread of continuity within participation work with young people at Northern Stage.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

Throughout this thesis I have argued that Northern Stage has an important history and that its work with young people is of note; it is a history that has been overlooked by the theatre itself as well as by academic literature. The theatre's messy, non-linear history, with multiple name changes, location moves and different artistic directors who each introduce a new dimension has masked its identity. Yet the research for this thesis demonstrates that the theatre's participation work with young people over fifty years provides a golden thread of continuity with significant impacts on organisational and individual identities. Heathcote's statement that 'It is the past that seeds the action of the future' has proved prescient for Northern Stage (qtd. in Matusiak-Varley 300).

There have been three key outcomes from this Collaborative Doctoral Award: the creation of a Northern Stage archive at Newcastle University; a greater understanding of Northern Stage's history as regional theatre; and scholarly recognition of the importance of Northern Stage's participation work with young people.

Northern Stage has focused with such force on delivering in the present and planning for its future that it has not reflected on its history. Indeed, at times, it has actively denied that its past has any relevance to its future. However, this thesis has shown a strong, positive hauntological aspect to the theatre, specifically regarding its participation work with young people. Indeed, its links with pioneers of participation, including Heathcote, are a significant part of Northern Stage's identity and influence. Practices and ideas have been honed and handed down through successive participation leaders both consciously and tacitly over several decades. Young people's participation has played a critical role in shaping the identity of Northern Stage as an organisation, as well as the people who have engaged with it, for over fifty years.

This thesis has provided one of the first comprehensive historical accounts of the theatre, contesting its official opening date of 1970 by showing the theatre had an earlier antecedent in the Newcastle Playhouse of 1967. Furthermore, the research situates Northern Stage as an

important regional theatre, based in and focused on serving the population of Newcastle upon Tyne.

Producing this history of Northern Stage was complicated by the material storage of its records. It involved identifying documents at Tyne and Wear Archives, Newcastle City Library Local Study Collection and Newcastle University Special Collections as well as a trove of uncatalogued, forgotten material in Northern Stage's attic and in peoples' houses. As a result, its historical records are in the process of being documented and preserved in a new partnership with Newcastle University. This is, I hope, a positive intervention in the cycle of institutional interaction which began fifty years ago, when Newcastle University offered a grant to help build the theatre now called Northern Stage.

Alongside archival and documentary research I spent close contact time with Northern Stage for a year in 2016 which enabled me to observe the theatre's participation work first-hand. It became clear that from its earliest days the theatre held strong social ideals about engaging young people and the observations, and that this vision was still reflected in Northern Stage's work in 2016. This demonstrated the value of viewing participation work in an historical context. The observations and interviews with current and past creators, consumers, and stakeholders of participation activity at Northern Stage showed how emotionally, ideologically, and functionally important participation work is at the theatre. However, Northern Stage's own presentation of itself in 2015 (at the start of my research) made few references to its past, and I observed across 2016 that the messages and methods that Northern Stage used reflected a desire to focus solely on its current operation and programme. Whilst some of the interviewees saw a continuum and connection between Northern Stage's history and current practice, others saw it as a series of separate organisations with different projects and staff. I have argued that despite distinct phases, diversions and interruptions in its history, Northern Stage is still best conceived as one organisation, not least because there are so many similarities in its approach to participatory work with young people throughout its existence.

The research argued that the Northern significance of Northern Stage lies in more than its oft repeated claim to be 'the largest producing theatre in the North East of England' (Northern Stage, "Company Jobs"). A Northern identity is more meaningfully connected to the people involved with the theatre; Northern Stage has a long-held position to champion North East

people and to celebrate their culture as well as seeking to introduce new influences, exemplified by the invitations to Robert Lepage and annual RSC visits. However, it was also noted that Northern Stage operates in a Newcastle and Tyneside sphere far more that a North Eastern, regional one. The significance of being Northern for participation was the value placed in supporting young people to be proud of their North East identities as well as feeling connected to a wider world.

This thesis determined that participation at Northern Stage is best understood as covering a wide spectrum of engagement work, from performances for young people to those that include young people. The example of Northern Stage shows that participation can include all the ways that young people spectate and make theatre. Defining participation as encompassing all the work which is designed to enable young people to be creative, to make and to respond to theatre, does not deny or undermine the diversity and specificity of the range of practices relating to participation within theatre. The range of forms and methods which constitute participation in theatre, and their antecedents in the field of applied and educational drama ideologies and practices, are already well researched. Across a spectrum of engagement young people are afforded varying degrees of agency, and it is this agency which echoes White's conclusions regarding the nature of people's participation; an ability to affect the drama (195).

This thesis demonstrates that Northern Stage's historical reach and the ties that it had to key agents in the development of TIE and DIE practice (specifically Heathcote, Bolton, and O'Toole) give it a place within a national history of theatres work with young people which has hitherto been overlooked. It shows that there is a continuity and cohesion to Northern Stage's participation work that makes it a valuable case study. Drawing heavily on the antecedents begun with the Theatre in Education movement, O'Toole, and its TIE company Stagecoach in 1969, Northern Stage continued to develop its participation work with support from Heathcote and Bolton and their Drama in Education approach in the 1980s. Indeed, these are practices which continue to resonate in its participation work in 2016.

Whilst this thesis presents evidence about the quality and importance of Northern Stage's participation work, it is important to acknowledge that at Northern Stage, as at other theatres, opportunities for young people to engage are under pressure. Opportunities to participate are

increasingly restricted to privileged demographics due to factors both within and outside of the theatre's control, involving social, cultural, and economic capital (Savage 49, 165). The rhetoric of government policy encourages widening participation, but a restrictive funding ecology and a lack of universal arts education in England appears to have put pressure on the ability of theatres to meet expectations. Moreover, as evident in the case of Northern Stage, a theatre's hierarchical structure can inadvertently lower young people's status within its own programmes, by separating work with young people aside from their main artistic output. This conflict between the aspirations of participation and the ability to achieve goals has implications for the future of this work both at Northern Stage and more broadly. It appears that although young people are a key component in theatre provision, they remain a marginalised and an increasingly privileged one. The reasons for this appear trifold: a lack of co-ordinated, long-term research on combined approaches to participation with young people, approaches with the theatre sector and a cultural education policy approach which (unintentionally) disenfranchises young people and is at odds with the private sector's provision for young people.

Northern Stage's relationship with its oldest funder, Newcastle City Council, has changed from a shared vision and ownership of the theatre to something which is more arms-length and transactional, focused on instrumental gain than artistic endeavour. There is less financial and ideological investment from the local authorities in 2016 than at any time since 1967. In the 1970s all the local authorities in Tyneside made an annual grant to Northern Stage for a free-to access schools programme which employed sixteen core staff (plus guest performers) whereas in 2017 there was no guaranteed local authority income and there were three core staff. With limited financial resource the criticism that theatre only reaches the privileged, who already have financial and social capital to access it is unlikely to be reversed.

The case study of Northern Stage shows that participation has a high impact on those involved, whilst acknowledging the theatre's challenges in reaching out to everyone. Its intrinsic values of enjoyment, creativity and empowerment deliver powerful instrumental impacts for citizenship and business operation. Furthermore, the interviews with participants demonstrate clear, and consistent impacts on their sense of self, their skills, and their well-being from their engagement with Northern Stage, regardless of the project or the date that they participated.

Although many places create participation projects that have impact, it is the fifty years of developing projects with high profile leaders and a range of young people across all ages and backgrounds which marks out Northern Stage as special. The testimonies of people about the impact that this work has had on them, both in the immediate term and years later, presents a significant collective sense of value. This case study of Northern Stage argues for more longitudinal analysis on the active historical legacy of participation work. It indicates that impact is best analysed, not on a project-by-project basis but, as a continuum of analysis across the spectrum of provision across years. Partnerships between universities and theatre organisations could aid this by ensuring that evaluation is carried out at arms-length, and that information is properly collected and stored in purpose-made archives which can be reflected upon by practitioners and academics. This study was necessarily retrospective but ideally a further study would consciously record information about impact with controlled groups over time from the outset. Then impact can be evaluated over years rather than only allowing people to respond immediately after their experience. The young people and staff that I spoke to were still reflecting upon and translating their participation experiences years and decades afterwards and very few studies capture that longevity or depth of impact.

The interviews with participants argue for valuing the intrinsic benefits of participation as their accounts attest to the infectious pleasure that they have gained from hands-on engagement in the participation programme at Northern Stage. The reaction from participants was universal across those interviewed, whether they are now in their sixties reflecting on their experience, or in their teens responding to the moment. They repeatedly stated that they felt empowered through the creative process at Northern Stage. Together they produced nearly fifty years' worth of testimony of positive experiences. Wellbeing impacts from participation were clear with participants talking about developing a deep sense of confidence, respect, empathy, safety, and feeling that their voice is listened to and valued. In addition, they valued the stagecraft skills that they gained, including developing drama and public speaking skills. They identified social skills that they felt Northern Stage gave them around gaining friends and acceptance and the ability to access a safe, comfortable venue. There are some fundamental shared ideologies and approaches that have emerged in this study in relation to the artistic merit of participation work and its ability to empower and value young people as citizens. Few organisations remain static over

such a length of time and at various times the focus at Northern Stage has shifted from early years to young adults, and from formal education to community work. Projects have happened both inside and outside the building. There have been different ideas and practices, yet the benefits that young people ascribe to their experience remain consistent. The experience of participation enabled people to be more 'considerate' towards others both alike and different to themselves. Bostock noted 'that it could be their way of altering everything about their lives in a positive way'.

In many ways, the interviews with staff mirrored the responses of participants, making it clear that there is a distinctive nature to participation at Northern Stage. This is characterised by the ability to seize opportunities and to take risk, to conduct participation work with the same production qualities as other performance work, to let young people lead work and to invest in training and developing the next generation of North East theatre makers. The strong and influential nature of participation at Northern Stage has been a result of tacit inherited practices, handed on by successive staff. The core value of putting young people first, listening to them, respecting and empowering their voices appeared in all of Northern Stage's Participation leaders' interviews and is reflected in what the young people said about their experiences. As Bostock observed, 'The attitude we had was, that you are who you are; how can you be the best that you are within our community. Your voice matters … we need to know what you think'.

Northern Stage's distinctive quality in its approach to working with young people across time deserves recognition because although participatory practices are increasingly ubiquitous in society, not all practices are high quality. As early as 1997 Matarasso established that just because an organisation wants to do participatory work it does not translate into instant success (*Use or Ornament?*). Projects which are poorly planned, tokenistic or lack the necessary staff skillset struggle. However, the time spent studying Northern Stage for this thesis, indicated that the theatre has delivered some outstanding examples of participatory practice and showed that they have a longstanding expertise in this field, which others might learn from.

The qualities of effective participation that Northern Stage have demonstrated for fifty years include hands-on engagement, empowered involvement, young people centred/directed work, a flexible and responsive towards young people, high production values and professional input. Northern Stage's expertise comes from decades of tacit reiterated and reflective

knowledge transfer, which signifies an active historical legacy. The transfer of skills and ideas through generations of participatory leaders has been both conscious, in so far as staff have mentored their successors, and tacit, whereby people come into the organisation and are subliminally affected by its culture and therefore not directly aware of their antecedents. Even those who denied the role of history, or any continuity of practice, revealed that they were informed by historical practices by their reference to them or their reiteration of things that had been said or done before.

The active historical legacy of participation work at Northern Stage for over fifty years is what contributes to the positive impact of its participation work and its broader influence. Pioneers in young people's work associated with Northern Stage, including O'Toole, Bolton, and Heathcote, went on to influence the approach of both Northern Stage and of other organisations around the world about how best to engage young people in drama. In particular, the ideas around handing over responsibility to a young person to direct the drama and responding to their ideas without having a fixed end point is something which features prominently in 2016 practice at Northern Stage.

The participation staff at Northern Stage have the confidence, inherited knowledge, and depth of experience to trust putting young people at the fore of their work. They start from the young person's position and perspective, just as their predecessor Heathcote did decades earlier. Observations and interviews with current staff and participants reflect this and the literature review identifies its historical antecedents, such as the BBC film footage of Heathcote in a workshop, which drew parallels with 2016 practice (British Film Institute, "BBC Omnibus"). This confidence, experience and trust in the young people is evident whether Northern Stage are working with under-fives or with thirty-year olds, and the sense of worth that it gives both the young people, and the staff, was palpable. It is why writing or reading about participation is always going to be a weak substitute for seeing it in practice because it has a visual, visceral quality which is hard to translate into words.

The interviews with artistic directors and participation leaders revealed their vocational drive. They are artistically enriched themselves and value the opportunity to listen to young people, to give young people a voice, to teach them drama and life skills. This commitment was also evident in the clear emotional attachment staff felt to the organisation and their desire to

ensure that their work had the same professional standards as main stage productions. Furthermore, the interviews with artistic directors and Participation staff showed a shared perspective on participation's role in creating confident empathetic citizens, highlighting its social value. The artistic directors are clearly central to the role of participation, its status, and its methodology, regardless of whether these directors are directly involved in its delivery or not. The interviews also demonstrated, perhaps more surprisingly, that the artistic directors were themselves significantly influenced by participation work, young people and the participation staff.

The variety of different perspectives gathered during this research show that the theatre's identity has changed over time, but that work with young people has always been a core part of it. The positive outcomes for both staff and young people are consistent even when the delivery methods alter, or the title of the department changes. The participation work embodies consistent key principles about valuing and empowering young people as citizens and as artists, offering enjoyable and accessible experiences which represent a right to access professional theatre at a formative stage in their lives. The young people who are empowered through these experiences go on to inspire and influence the staff who engage with them.

Northern Stage has a continuous fifty-year history of working with young people, but the story of this work has lain hidden in archives and memories and so the importance and impact of the historical continuum of their approach has been underestimated. This lack of reflection and recognition is because the theatre itself has not had the resources or impetus to collect it. More than this, participation has often been an adjunct to the other artistic endeavours of the organisation and nationally participation work with young people struggles to gain status within theatre studies and practice (ArtWorks Alliance *ArtWorks: A call to action*). My interviews with practitioners and participants have provided the missing reflexivity which demonstrates that continuous deep impact on young people's sense of self, their skills, and their wellbeing as well as on that of staff, the organisation, and the cultural ecology of Tyneside.

This thesis demonstrates that for over fifty years young people's participation has played a distinctive role in forming the identity of Northern Stage, the people who work there, those who invest in it and the people who participate. Northern Stage's participation work may be informally known as the Glitter and Glue department as a joke, but it can claim kudos from the

title. It has provided the 'glitter' in the form of the pleasure that participants and staff gain from the work, but it has also created 'glue' which has formed a strong bond between staff, participants and the organisation which has shaped its identity. This research, which advocates a narrative approach to collecting evidence and presenting a longitudinal picture, holds wider implications for practice and research in this field as well as establishing the important social value of the arts in young people's lives and the lives of those who work with them.

The research that is presented in this thesis on Northern Stage allows for several recommendations for the study of (and the positioning of) participation work with young people. It proposes that participation is most usefully considered as encompassing the spectrum of ways in which young people engage with theatre. It is important that theatre organisations and academic researchers consider how the language and positioning of participation work reflects upon its reception so that we can better appreciate young people's participatory work as an art form rather than an adjunct activity. In addition, longer term, longitudinal analysis regarding the impact of participation is needed rather than the current tendency to produce project-by-project reports. Furthermore, as well as noting the impact on participants, future evaluations need to acknowledge the impact of participation on the organisations and the people who deliver it. Indeed, originally this thesis was going to focus on the participants themselves as the main point of interest until it became apparent that Northern Stage's participation work has had a hugely profound impact on shaping the attitudes and practices of both staff and the organisation. The research indicates that traditional dichotomies around intrinsic and instrumental value are not useful regarding the study of participation; intrinsic values around enjoyment, wellbeing, creativity, and empathy invariably deliver instrumental value for society and citizenship. Furthermore, a distinction between education and enjoyment is unhelpful because successful participation delivers both. It is understood that from well-devised, enjoyable participatory experiences, young people will learn new skills and outlooks. If we are to realise equality of access then state education and the culture sector need to offer parity with the high level of provision that exists in private education, so that all young people are offered multiple opportunities to engage with theatre. Participation has the potential to offer social, creative, business, and civic benefits for the participants, the organisation, staff, and the society in which it operates.

Overall, through hereditary tacit knowledge, Northern Stage has shaped the field of participation through the vocational drive of those who manage and deliver young people's engagement. Nevertheless, the organisation has struggled at times to achieve its ambitions and has not recognised its major contribution in the field of young people's work. As the first study of its kind on Northern Stage, this thesis has presented substantial new information about the theatre, established that its subject matter is worthy of academic study and presented wider implications for evaluating the social value of the arts in young people's lives. The example of Northern Stage demonstrates that a theatre which invests in succession planning and training staff to conduct participation creates a strong identity and quality for its work with young people.

Theatres benefit from collecting, sharing, and reflecting on their historical practices in partnership with academia. This Collaborative Doctoral Award between Northern Stage and Newcastle University is a testament to this type of shared understanding and knowledge in action. As such the thesis concludes with an invitation to further research and reflection on this theatre and its practices.

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Appendix 1: **Northern Stage's Participation Programme 1969 - 2016**

Details of the content of these productions and participatory workshops with photographs can be found within Northern Stage's own participation files at the theatre and in the Chris Bostock Archive (uncatalogued). Both are due to be archived within the Northern Stage archive at Newcastle University Special Collections on the completion of this thesis.

This is not a comprehensive list, but it is as comprehensive as was possible to record at the time of writing, using the available sources. Moreover, it does not include the Christmas Shows and some family shows which the participation team have been heavily involved in creating for the past 50 years (these feature in Appendix 2, a chronology of plays at Northern Stage).

1969 Stagecoach Theatre-in-Education company formed.

1971 CP Taylor employed as a literary associate.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight directed by Michael Bogdanov – a mixture of play, panto, review, circus and musical.

1972 Stagecoach integrates into the Tyneside Theatre Company who are leasing the University Theatre.

1974 *Traditional Story from Japan* (for ages 7-9)

Life of Galileo (CP Taylor play)

Social Reform (for ages 9 – 11)

1979 *Tommy Whittle's Secret* (Lambton Worm project for 6–7year-olds)

1980 *Time Please* (alcohol abuse, Secondary)

Shipwright's Tale (Primary)

Labour for the Lord (child labour, Primary)

Play Shadows

1981 *Geordie's Lamp* (safety lamp invention, Primary)

Watchspring (time, Primary)

Angelo (Primary)

Prejudice (the abuse of power, Primary)

What Now? (Choosing a career, Secondary)

The Media Show (Secondary)

1982 *Ivor and the Unforgettable Journey* (different countries, different cultures for Primary)

Spectrum Spotters (about significance of colours for Primary)

Tomorrow Belongs to You (power and political control)

Aggie's Dump (Primary)

Girls are Powerful (Secondary)

Dying for a Living (about Trade Unions)

1983 *Taken for a Ride* (evaluating local services, Primary)

Fed Up (food politics, Primary)

War and Piecework (shipbuilding during the Falklands crisis, Secondary)

1984 *Wappo's Gift* (Pre-School)

Brainstorm (exploration of the senses, Primary)

Jagg's Fair (inheritance, Primary)

The Change'll Do Me Good (P.S.H.E, Secondary)

1985 *Families, Friends and Strangers* (Pre-School)

Tales of the Food Giants (food production and distribution, Primary)

No Man's Land (British Society WWI, Primary)

Smugglers (a young woman on the run, Secondary)

Lives Worth Living (mental health disability between siblings, Secondary)

1986 *Why Do Bees Buzz* (Pre-School)

Treasure Trove (social responsibility, Primary)

It's Only Natural (fascism and sexuality in Nazi Germany, Secondary)

1987 *The Enormously Big Weed* (Importance of plants and animals, Pre-school)

Soap Gets in Your Eyes (gender stereotyping, Primary)

Workforce (multi-national companies, Primary)

The Other Woman (role of women, heroism and war, Secondary)

1988 *Fishy Tales* (Pre-school)

Says Who (making and using rules, Primary)

Out for Justice (Burston School Strike – priorities in education, Primary)

Then They Came (a dramatic poem about hope and oppression, Secondary)

Growing Pains (Julia Darling Play for TIE)

1989 *Out of the Blue* (Pre-school)

My Mother Told Me (relationships between the young and old, Primary)

Fight for the Forest (ecological issues, Primary)

One Step at a Time (Great North Run and fundraising, Secondary).

1990 *Trouble Under Foot* (Pre-school)

Passport to Paradise (Solving a missing person's case, Primary)

Choices (SEN)

Last of the Lucky Ones (racism, Secondary)

There is then a gap between the Tyne and Wear Archives records and papers found at Northern Stage within the Participation Department's filing cabinet which were used to draw up the following list.

1992-1999 Drugs programme – *Nothing Exciting Happens Round Here* and *It's All Part of Growing Up* (in partnership with Newcastle Drugs Prevention Initiative)

1993 *Animal Farm* (participation programme to accompany production with 2,000 young people)

1996 *Long Line* (a partner project of workshops to go with the production of Tom Hadaway's play of the same name)

Nest of Spices (109 workshops with 1000 people age 13+ about employment and futures. Together with a production at the old shipyard in Wallsend. Described by Kate Bassett in the Times as 'extraordinary site-specific event')

New Directions (presenting developing artists work)

Wasp Factory (made during the Barrow in Furness residency)

1997	*Barrow in Furness* (residential project working with 25 young, elderly and unemployed people, includes testimonies to life changing experience).
	Eating the Elephant (project with Julia Darling and Ashton's Company about perceptions of cancer)
	NE Choices (drugs programme)
	Thief of Lives (worked with 25000 young people. A new Writing North collaboration. Programme notes say that "Northern Stage was established in 1989" but no further context)
	Transitional States (young people's group performance)
	Twelfth Night (video project partnership with Tyneside Cinema to support Lyddiard's production)
1998	*Roadkid* (Following Clockwork Orange production in 1995 worked with youth clubs in Sunderland)
	Tell Me (production and family project in Stockton on Motherhood)
1998-2000	*Creative Laboratory* (funded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, developing artist associates).
1999	*Arts Train*
	Angelic to Alnwick (reworking of 1001 Arabian Nights told with 11 Storytellers from the Middle East, a collaboration with Danish theatre company Betty Nansen Teatret)
2000	*Ballroom of Romance* (workshops in rural Northumberland culminating in performance back in the Playhouse)
	Film Lab (a creative hub for regional film makers)
	Idiot Bar (participation production)
	Magic Map (under-fives show. Includes analysis of attendance and employment)
	Street Life (work with homeless young people)
2001	*Neverland* (participation project to accompany Christmas production of Peter Pan)
	Nineteen Eighty-Four (partnership programme to accompany the Northern Stage production including a youth conference, schools' workshops and citizen artist Happenings)
	People Factory

Unarmed Teenager (Northumberland Health Action Zone joint project on sexual health and family planning. One project that is catalogued as not going very well)

2002 *City of Sonnets* (co-production with Title Productions for young artists and graduates focusing on Shakespeare's sonnets)

Creative Partnerships Washington Residency (Washington School and Oakly Primary exploring Greek Myths).

Doublethink (youth conference for 14–25-year-olds inspired by the performance of Nineteen Eighty-Four. A participant is quoted as saying 'Doublethink enabled me to recognise ways in which I could empower myself within society' and 'theatre is a good way to discuss issues')

Metamorphosis

2003 *Blue* (with Teesside University)

Elves and the Shoemakers (production accompanied by a participatory project called *Bigguns* with nurseries in Education Action Zones)

Gypsy (festival with four companies from across Europe – Germany, Hungary, Romania and Spain about citizenship and challenging stereotypes)

New Opportunities Fund (Greenfield drama workshops years 9 and 10, Lemington First school, Kenton School, Marden High School year 7, 9 and 10)

Scissors, Paper, Stone (partnership with psychology department at the University of Northumbria)

2004 *Blaze* (Community opera commissioned by Creative Partnerships including 100 performers from Teesside schools and Corus steelworkers and an audience of 1,800 across 5 nights of performance in Darlington Railway Museum)

G6 Subrosa (to accompany production of *Homage to Catalonia*. Participants repeatedly said 'it has opened my eyes not only to world issues but also to performing styles')

InterACT (training placement scheme with Northumberland Theatre Company)

Saltwell Park Under 6s (school workshops)

Science Strikes Back

Screen on the Green (providing live entertainment to accompany films in Leazes Park, Newcastle)

TEDCO (enterprise in education project, studying a cultural industry company)

2004-2006	*Not What I had in Mind*
2005	*Human Topiary* (working with five secondary schools in Gateshead. Linked to *Son of Man* production)
	How the Sea Came to be (Primary)
	River Festival (three primary schools and one secondary)
	Sandhill School and Farringdon School (residencies)
2006	*Arts + Kids*
	Big and Small (helping primary children transition into secondary education, which continues annually)
	Great Expectations (What Larks! The Game of Expectation was a Northern Stage game-show style project inspired by themes and characters from the production)
	On Top of the Toon (British Council project with young people from the Netherlands and Newcastle teenagers at risk of exclusion)
	Norcare (dance movement sessions for 16–19-year-old drug users)
	Novocastrian Philosophers Club (in partnership with November Club)
2007	*Take the Lead* (young women's project)
	Traces (eight-week performance group for young people over sixteen inspired by the Christmas show Great Expectations)
2008	Newcastle College (drama workshops led by Mark Calvert, linked to *Look Back in Anger* production
2009	*Happiness* (People United co-project. A community engagement project to respond to the question 'what is happiness?')
	One Small Step (partnership with Artiscam and Newcastle Primary schools)
2012	*Truce* (Northumberland, Durham, Middlesbrough and Sweden, for young people aged 10 – 21, part of the Juice festival for the 2012 Cultural Olympiad)
2013	Arts Award
2014/15	Open Stages autumn and spring clubs for young people
	Manifesto for a New City
2015/16	*North*
	Summer School

	Big and Small
	Young Company
	Dream (with the RSC)
No Date	*Chorus*
No Date	*Include* (getting young people into mainstream education)
No Date	Kenton and St Wilfred's
No Date	Location NW (filmmaking project with Newbiggin Hall Estate and unemployed adults)
No Date	*Voyage* (collaboration with Teesside Education College)
No Date	*V* (Toni Harrison poem, 6 older men from local community and NS actors)

Appendix 2: **Chronology of Plays 1970- 1987**

1970/71

- *Bartholomew Fair* by Ben Johnson.
- *Old King Cole*, 'a pantomime for today's young people'.
- *Hay Fever* by Noel Coward (directed by David Scase who was a founder member of Theatre Workshop. Visited Newcastle Playhouse in 1968, then appointed Resident Director 1969 for one season. Left to go to Belgrade. Appointed by the University as Design Consultant for the new theatre).
- *Here There and Everywhere*. 'Stagecoach (Theatre In Education company) presents a daily 1 ¼ hr participation adventure play for 5–8-year-olds in the Gulbenkian Studio Theatre during Christmas week.'
- *Prisoners of The War* by Peter Terson. Commissioned for the theatre.
- *Hadrian the Seventh* by Peter Luke.
- *Jo Lives*
- *You Never Can Tell* by George Bernard Shaw.
- *Slip Road Wedding* by Peter Terson. National premiere directed by Gareth Morgan.
- *The Grace Darling Show* (poor attendance and reviews)
- *Under Milk Wood* by Dylan Thomas, 90% attendance.
- *Twelfth Night* by William Shakespeare, 90% attendance.

1971/72 A budget of £120k with 51% earned by the theatre and 40% grants

- *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* – 'a mixture of play, panto, review, circus and musical' according to the Journal 10.12.197. Directed by Michael Bogdanov.
- *The Second Shepherds Play*
- *Play Strindberg* (transferred to the West End) by Friedrich Dürrenmatt.
- *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* by Tom Stoppard. 85% attendance. Sid Chaplin writing in the Guardian 12th February said he didn't like Stoppard's play but called it a "first rate production" and wrote a letter of praise to Artistic Director Gareth Morgan.

- *Faust* (considered an unusual production as the audience was encouraged to move about)
- *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett.
- *The Cherry Orchard* originally by Chekov.
- *Antigone*, originally by Sophocles.
- *Dandy Dick* by Arthur Wing Pinero.
- *Under Milk Wood* by Dylan Thomas (revival) with 70% attendance (the national average at this time was 60%). Directed by Michael Bogdanov.
- *Oh, What a Lovely War* by Joan Littlewood. This was the first regional production.
- *The Baker, The Baker's Wife and the Baker's Boy* by Jean Anouilh. British Premiere with good national reviews. Directed by Gareth Morgan.
- *The Threepenny Opera* by Bertolt Brecht.

1973/74

- *The Thwarting of Baron Bolligrew*, a family show.
- *An Italian Straw Hat* adapted from the original by Eugene Labiche and Marc-Michel.
- *Tonight at 8.30* by Noel Coward.
- *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare.
- *Lost yer Tongue?* By Peter Terson. Subsequently made into a film in 1975 by Mike Newell.
- *The Three Sisters*, originally by Chekov.
- *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat* by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice (an early regional production).
- *Byker Byker* by Phil Woods. George Irving was one of the actors.
- *A Colliers Friday Night* by D.H. Lawrence.
- *Cyrano de Bergerac* by Edmond Rostand.
- *Rock Nativity* a musical by David Wood. A world premiere, commissioned by Cameron Mackintosh and Veronica Flint-Shipman. Sting's band provided the music.

1983/4

- *The Mummy's Tomb*, by Ken Hill with 56% attendance.

- *Katie Mulholland* (Catherine Cookson adaptation) with 99.62% attendance.
- *Henry IV part I* by Shakespeare with 77.2% attendance.
- *Hiawatha* 80.2% - National Theatre production recreated with same director (Michael Bogdanov) set, costume and several cast members.
- *Yellow Rain* by Ken Hill. A national Premiere with 35.7% attendance.
- *Nightmare Rock* by Kevin Williams. Premiere. Slapstick musical. 57.6% attendance.
- *Strippers* by Peter Terson. 82.4% attendance. It went on a national tour and became a West End production.
- *Jagg's Fair*, Theatre in Education production, 66% attendance.

In addition, 2 weeks of student plays, 5 concerts by Northern Symphonia, 3 lunch performances, 18 one-night lettings, a full week letting, 67 foyer concerts and 3 weeks of performances for children by Theatre in Education company.

In total there were 341 performances/ events with just under 100,000 attendees.

In 1983/84 John Blackmore was appointed Theatre Director, Ken Hill joined as Director of Productions and Arnold Elliman as General Manager.

1984/85 This season was most successful since its foundation with an average of 87% capacity and three world premieres.

- *Phantom of the Opera* by Ken Hill with 45% attendance.
- *Andy Capp* by Alan Price and Trevor Peacock. A musical with 92% attendance.
- *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller with 83% attendance.
- *Rents* by Michael Wilcox with a 52% attendance.
- *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*, a Christmas production with 92% attendance.
- *Passionaria* by Pam Gems with 20% attendance but very good national reviews.
- *The Pirate Queen* with music composed by Brendan Healy and a 26% attendance.

1985/86

- *Hotel Dorado* by Peter Terson with 34% attendance.

- *The Gambling Man* 87%, an adaptation of Catherine Cookson's novel. It broke box office records before the script was even finished.
- *All My Sons* by Arthur Miller. 58% attendance.
- *Edmond* by David Mamet with 33% attendance. It represented a European premiere produced in partnership with the Royal Court Theatre.
- *Voyage of the Dawn Treader* adaptation of C.S. Lewis novel with 84% attendance.
- *The Genius* by Horace Holley with 27.5% attendance.
- *Little Shop of Horrors*, a musical, with 97.3% attendance.

1986/87

- *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams with 63.8% attendance.
- *Why do Bees Buzz*, a preschool show with 90.03% attendance.
- *The Silver Chair* based on C. S. Lewis Narnia series. Music was composed by Brendan Healy, and it had 94% attendance with extra shows added.

The Theatre in Education group was very active and put on a national Youth Theatres Festival, Dance theatre workshops, schools' performances, and a participatory programme for playgroups.

This archive record at Tyne and Wear Archives appears to stop at this point. The rest of the material was missing and ultimately, I found it was still housed at the theatre, uncatalogued in storage boxes. Having arranged a transfer to Newcastle University Special Collections, I left it to be catalogued by an archivist recruited for the purpose and have not been able to revisit it in detail to continue the production list.

Appendix 3: **Northern Stage: A Brief Timeline**

1962 **The Flora Robson Theatre** opens in 1962 on Benton Bank, Jesmond, Newcastle. Whilst there are several sources which support this, one source suggested that this theatre opened on the site of an old cinema, the Dinky, which was built in 1928, but I have been unable to corroborate this. The opening play was CP Taylor's *A Went Tae Blaydon Races*.

1967 On the twentieth of February, the Flora Robson Theatre became the **Newcastle Playhouse,** and the actor and director John Neville was appointed to manage it through the Nottingham Theatre Trust. In March it staged CP Taylor's *Bread and Butter*, which was published by Penguin the same year and went on to be staged around the world.

1968 **The Tyneside Theatre Company** is founded and takes ownership of the Playhouse (this is the company that evolved to become Northern Stage). In May Director John Neville resigns from Nottingham and Newcastle after a public feud with the Arts Council. However the Chairman of Newcastle City Council made it clear that it was their intention to give the city its own civic theatre trust and director. This was the same year that the King of Norway opened Newcastle's flagship Civic Centre.

A commission to stage a play by local playwrights about local issues that affected ordinary people led to *Close the Coalhouse Door* by Alan Plater, Sid Chaplin and Alex Glasgow. It became a defining production, revived twice by the Company in 1973 and 2012 to sell-out audiences.

1969 Newcastle was an early adopter of the Theatre in Education (TIE) movement. *Stagecoach*, its TIE Company, was formed in 1969. Since then, the theatre company has run a youth programme and each year has created Christmas shows for children.

Ann Stutfield is recorded as the Artistic Director although there is no date for her appointment.

1970 On the thirtieth of November 1970 **the University Theatre**, designed by the architect

William Whitfield, opened in Newcastle upon Tyne on the site where Northern Stage now sits with a production of Ben Johnson's *Bartholomew Fair* with Ann Stutfield as Artistic Director. It was established using funds from the University through an anonymous benefaction, together with grants from the City Council, The Arts Council of Great Britain and Northern Arts.

1971 Gareth Morgan from the RSC was appointed Artistic Director and Michael Bogdanov as Assistant Director. Programmes from this period carried the following message.

> The Tyneside Theatre Company aims to present a team of the highest calibre and standard with the emphasis in the main University Theatre equally placed upon classical revival, new plays by established authors, and programmes of local specific interest, and in the Gulbenkian Studio Theatre rarities and programmes of an experimental nature. The company endeavours to interest Tyneside in the best of international drama both old and new, and to encourage local writers to identify themselves with the University Theatre as a regional centre of repertory in the North East.

1972 *Stagecoach* the TIE Company merges with the Tyneside Theatre Company.

1978 The theatre changed its name to the **Newcastle Playhouse**.

The Tynewear Theatre Company is formed after the demise of the Tyneside Theatre Company. Initially based in Sunderland they moved into the Playhouse to become a 'building-based repertory company'.

1979 Tynewear Theatre Company provide the director, costumes and sets for Newcastle Theatre Royal's Christmas Pantomime *Cinderella*.

1983 John Blackmore appointed Theatre Director. Ken Hill (Joan Littlewood's close associate from Theatre Workshop) joined as Director of Productions and Arnold Elliman as General Manager. Chris Bostock appointed as manager of the Theatre in Education for the theatre.

1984 The theatre sells the rights of Ken Hill's *Phantom of the Opera* to Andrew Lloyd Webber. A note in the board papers Minutes of the Tyne and Wear Theatre Trust held on 22 November 1984: 'The Director also reported that Andrew Lloyd Webber had bought the script of "Phantom of the Opera" and therefore no residual rights would accrue to the trust', at a time when the theatre faced increasing financial problems.

1986 Board papers indicate increasing tension between the University and the theatre company as the lease is due to be renewed at £27,000, and the Playhouse electrics need replacing. 1985/86 was the most successful season for the company with attendance at 86,004 boosted by nearly sell out productions of an adaptation of Catherine Cookson's *The Gambling Man*, a Christmas family adaptation of C.S. Lewis' *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* and *Little Shop of Horrors.* The national premiere of David Mamet's *Edmond* saw audience attendance at 32.8%, however. At this point the company received an Arts Council grant of £338,000 and a Northern Arts grant of £225,600.

1987 The company moved to the **Tyne Theatre and Opera house** following major financial concerns and conflict with the University, which saw it end its lease with the Playhouse on the thirtieth of September. The Playhouse then began to operate as an independent commercial venture, hosting visiting productions. The Tyne and Wear Theatre Trust becomes the Tyne Theatre Trust. John Blackmore leaves as Director following internal disagreements and Andrew McKinnon takes over. The Theatre in Education November minutes say that they are moving to the Tyne Theatre and Opera House to 'endeavour to bring the main house and the TIE closer together'.

A co-production with Live Theatre of Tom Hadaway's *Yesterday's Children* was premiered with 88% of tickets sold, but it was not approved for touring due to the regional focus of the script. Live Theatre and the Tynewear theatre company fell out. The children's production both of *Peter Pan* and *The Enormously Big Weed* did very well and compensated for the losses for other productions. However overall ticket sales were a struggle and the Arts Council reported that they would not fund two theatres (Theatre Royal and the Tynewear theatre company) with static numbers. At this point the Arts Council's policy was to fund theatres that brought in the most revenue.

Terry Deary, Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton, nationally renowned for their work in theatre and education, were on the drama advisory panel for the theatre company.

1988 The company fall out with the Tyne Theatre and Opera Trust and face a £300,000 deficit. They move to Newcastle Arts Centre on Westgate Road as a base for administration but not for performance. They become solely a touring company. The Theatre in Education workshop continued to go into schools and to put on shows in the Discovery Museum until they also relocate to Westgate Road.

1992 The theatre company return to the **Playhouse** under the directorship of Alan Lyddiard after agreeing new terms and conditions with Newcastle University. The company are now called **Northern Stage** and establish a distinctive ensemble approach to their work. Tony Harrington becomes the Director of Outreach and Education, having previously been part of the TIE team.

Over the next decade, led by Lyddiard, Northern Stage at the Newcastle Playhouse forge a national reputation as an ensemble company inspired by the Maly Theatre in Russia. The company consciously developed strong links with European theatres and practices in preference to developing ties with other UK companies.

The TIE company no longer operates separately as a result of Lyddiard's vision for ensemble working and as a result of reduction in local authority grants for education work.

Productions including *Animal Farm*, *Clockwork Orange*, *Black Eyed Roses*, and *Ballroom of Romance* developed strong collaborative relationships between young people, local communities and the ensemble.

The organisation grows but so do financial tensions with the Arts Council and local authorities (in 1994 the Arts Council of Great Britain was replaced by National Arts Councils, including Arts Council England).

2002 Kylie Lloyd takes over young people's participation management after Tony Harrington leaves, having already worked with the company.

2006 Following a £9 million refurbishment and the appointment of a new artistic director, Erica Whyman**, both the venue and the production company became called Northern Stage**. The education and outreach work with young people becomes Participation. The participation department develop their own large-scale projections aside from main stage shows such as *Out of Toon* and the *Happiness* project.

2013 Lorne Campbell appointed artistic director after Erica Whyman moves to the RSC.

2015 Arts Council England award Northern Stage National Portfolio status, continuing their core funding of the organisation as part of the regional and national landscape of publicly cultural institutions.

Appendix 4: Table of Name Changes and Locations for Northern Stage

Dates	Location	Venue Name	Artistic Director	Participation Lead	Theatre Company	Management Company
1962	Jesmond	Flora Robson Theatre				Newcastle City Council
1967	Jesmond	Newcastle Playhouse	John Neville		Nottingham Playhouse	Nottingham Theatre Trust
1968					Tyneside Theatre Company	
1969			Ann Stutfield	Stagecoach founded by Paddy Masefield		Tyneside Theatre Trust
1970	Newcastle University Campus	University Theatre				
1971			Gareth Morgan	Stagecoach merges with Tyneside Theatre Company		
1978		Newcastle Playhouse	John Blackmore	TyneWear Theatre in Education Company (Chris Bostock)	Tynewear Theatre Company	Tyne and Wear Theatre Trust
1983						
1987	Westgate Road	Tyne Theatre and Opera House	Andrew McKinnon	Tyne & Wear Theatre in Education (Chris Bostock)	Tyne Theatre Company	Tyne Theatre Trust
1988		Newcastle Arts Centre (moved address on same street)				
1992	Newcastle University Campus	Newcastle Playhouse	Alan Lyddiard	Tony Harrington	Northern Stage Ensemble	
2002				Kylie Lloyd		
2006		Northern Stage	Erica Whyman		Northern Stage	Northern Stage
2013			Lorne Campbell			

Appendix 5: **Consent to Participate in Research**

Title of Study: The Social Value of Northern Stage.

INVITATION

My name is Amelia Joicey, and I am a collaborative PhD student researcher funded by AHRC (Arts & Humanities Research Council) in the School English Literature, Language and Linguistics at Newcastle University. I would like to invite you (or your child for participants under 18) to take part in a research study investigating the social value of the Northern Stage theatre.

Northern Stage has been part of the cultural landscape of the North East for more than four decades. However, the impact and value of its work with children and young people has not been fully assessed.

This project will document the history of learning and participation projects at Northern Stage and analyse current projects to see what effect, if any, engagement with children and young people has on the identity of Northern Stage.

I am a PhD student trained in conducting research and will be supervised by Dr Andrew Law at Newcastle University. The University conducts police criminal record checks on all researchers who directly engage with children (including me). Furthermore, my research has been reviewed and approved by the University's Ethical Review committee (www.ncl.ac.uk/peals/) to ensure that it meets ethical guidelines and poses minimal risk to participants.

WHY YOU?

As you have direct experience of shaping participation projects at Northern Stage I believe that you (or your child) are best placed to contribute towards an evaluation of their work, and I would like to work with you (or your child) to discover what that might be.

WHAT HAPPENS?

Your participation will consist of the following, depending on whether or not your engagement with Northern Stage is historical or current.

Interview: Past Employees, Past Participants and Stakeholders only (adults):

I will conduct an interview with you at a time and practical location of your choice. The interview will involve questions that relate to your experiences working at or with Northern Stage.

With your permission, I will record the interview using a microphone and digital recorder. The recording is to accurately preserve the information you provide. If you choose not to be audio recorded, I will take notes instead. If you agree to being audio recorded but feel uncomfortable at any time during the interview, I can turn off the recorder at your request. Indeed, should you wish not to continue, you can ask for the interview to be stopped at any time.

It is important to note that the information you provide may be identifiable in any thesis or report resulting from this study due to your specific role in the history of the company. Shortly after the interview has been completed, I will send you a copy to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish to address.

Focus Group: current participants (children and adults)

An informal discussion between 3 and 7 people from your project midway through joining Northern Stage, focusing on why you are participating at Northern Stage and whether you think the project is improving your life, what alternative activities are available to you and how you think Northern Stage could develop its offer.

The session will last **between 20 and 45 minutes** and take place at a designated time that will best accommodate the majority of participants. It will take place at Northern Stage or a nearby location on the University campus.

I will audio record and take notes during the session. This process is so that an accurate recording of the information you provide is preserved, and will be used for transcription (i.e., writing down what you said exactly as you said it) purposes only.

I would also like to conduct a follow-up focus group session 6-9 months after the project you have been involved with has ended.

All information you provide will be considered confidential and grouped with responses from other participants. Given the format of this session, I ask you to respect your fellow participants by keeping all information that identifies or could potentially identify a participant and/or his/her comments confidential and using first names only.

BENEFITS

There is no direct benefit to you from taking part in this study. However, it is hoped that the research will provide an insight into the value of Northern Stage's engagement with communities and how, if at all, this work can benefit individuals, communities and society.

RISKS

There are no known risks to your health or safety by taking part in this research. You are free to decline to answer any questions you don't wish to, or to stop proceedings at any time. The schools involved will be

given a copy of the session plan in advance. As with all research, there is a chance that confidentiality could be compromised; however, I am taking precautions to minimise this risk.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All current participant's information will be kept confidential. Full names will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study (unless you expressly agree to this); however, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used.

Past employees and stakeholders should note that the information you provide may be identifiable in any thesis or report resulting from this study due to your specific role in the history of the company. Shortly after the interview has been completed, I will send you a copy to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish.

COMPENSATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you will not receive payment in return for your participation, but any relevant travel costs will be reimbursed.

RIGHTS

Participation in research is completely voluntary. You are free to decline to take part in the project. You can decline to answer any questions and are free to stop taking part in the project at any time.

Whether or not you choose to participate in the research and whether or not you choose to answer a question or continue participating in the project, there will be no penalty to you.

QUESTIONS

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me. I can be reached at 07736773848 or email a.joicey1@newcastle.ac.uk

Dr Rosalind Haslett will also be glad to answer your questions about this study at any time. You may contact her at rosalind.haslett@ncl.ac.uk or +44 (0) 191 208 5660

If you want to find out about the final results of this study, please let me know and I will provide you with further information.

CONSENT

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your own records.

I consent to participate in this study through the following means

QUESTIONNAIRE ☐ FOCUS GROUP ☐ INTERVIEW ☐

I am over 18 years old ☐

OR

I am the legal guardian of the participant (if under 18) and consent to them participating in this study ☐

_____ _____

Participant Name (please print) Guardian's Name (for under 18s)

_____ _____

Signature Date

[Optional/If applicable]

If you agree to allow your name or other identifying information to be included in all final reports, publications, and/or presentations resulting from this research, please sign and date below.

_____ _____

Participant's Signature Date

Appendix 6: **Field Work Data Gathering**

Contents

Research has involved conducting 28 interviews with 34 people plus a series of conversations with and observations of staff and participants.

Interviews were based on guidance from the Oral History Society with question prompts but allowing for free-flowing, self-directed content.

The interviews last between 20 minutes and 2 hours.

LIST OF INTERVIEWS

This list differs from those in Works Cited (192) only because I did not cite every person that was interviewed.

Staff: Chosen because of their direct and senior position at Northern Stage in relation to its public persona and its participation work.

1. Amy Fawdington – Marketing Manager – 2011 – present
2. Alan Lyddiard – Artistic Director 1992 – 2005
3. Chris Bostock - Director of TIE from 1983 – 1992
4. Edmund Nickols– Operations Manager 1990 – 2020
5. Erica Whyman – Artistic Director 2006 – 2012
6. Kylie Lloyd – Director of Participation 2002 – 2017
7. Kate Denby - Executive Director 2015 – present
8. Lorne Campbell - Artistic Director 2013 – 2019
9. Mark Calvert, Susan Mulholland, Ruth Jones – joint interview – current participation managers and deliverers in 2016
10. Tony Harrington – Director of Education 1992 -2001

Others: Chosen because they have professional or personal experience of working at the theatre over an extended period or on a particular young person's participation project from ages 11 to 30.

11. Annie Rigby - Cultural Stakeholder - Director of Unfolding Theatre

12. Andrew Rothwell- Financial Stakeholder from Newcastle City Council
13. Participant - North training programme
14. Participant - North training programme
15. Participant - North training programme
16. Participant - North training programme
17. Participant - North training programme
18. Participant, Wilf – past participant
19. Participant, Amy – past participant
20. Participant, Jane – past participant
21. 3 Participants, ages 11–15 Summer School 2016 (start of the week)
22. 3 Participants, ages 11–15 Summer School 2016 (start of the week)
23. 3 Participants, ages 11–15 Summer School 2016 (end of the week)
24. 3 Participants, ages 11–15 Summer School 2016 (end of the week)
25. 3 Participants, ages 16–21 Summer School 2016 (start of the week)
26. 3 Participants, ages 16–21 Summer School 2016 (start of the week)
27. 3 Participants, ages 16–21 Summer School 2016 (end of the week)
28. 3 Participants, ages 16–21 Summer School 2016 (end of the week)

OBSERVATIONS

- Office culture (I had access to a hot desk during 2016). I spoke informally with Box Office, Marketing, Fundraising, Administration, Back Stage crew.
- Shadowing participation staff on projects in the building and in community settings.
- Sat in on 3 whole staff meetings.
- North Programme – observed 3 sessions and performance of *Animal Farm*.
- *Big and Little* – final production family event. Observation and conversations with participants and parents.
- Summer Schools – observation of first and last days for both cohorts. Speaking to staff running it during the weeks when in the building.
- Christmas show-observation and speaking to families on 3 occasions in December 2015 and 2016.
- Informal/ off the record conversations with Arts Council staff.
- Informal/off the record conversations with Newcastle University staff in English department.
- Storytelling event with Chris Bostock.

OTHER MATERIAL

1. Archives – board papers, letters and publicity (local studies collection, Tyne and Wear Archives, Newcastle University Archives)
2. ACE reports (online, author's own copy or Northern Stage copy)
3. Paul Hamlyn reports (online)
4. Business and Operations plans (theatre's own copies)

5. Websites and social media
6. References in wider literature, including books, journals and newspapers

LIST OF QUESTIONS

Note these were the original prompts for areas of discussion. Due to the open nature of the oral history style of interview, people could talk more freely about what mattered to them which consequently led to some naturally covering the topics without prompts or including additional unrelated material. Not every interview used every prompt. However, number 1 and number 17 featured in all. In some cases, questions were added which related to comments made during the interview. My main concern was to check that they did say things about the identity of the theatre and the nature and meaning of participation work.

S= Staff and Stakeholders

P = Participants

1. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE (THE IDENTITY OF) NORTHERN STAGE? (S & P)

2. HOW DID YOU COME TO BE INVOLVED WITH NORTHERN STAGE? (S & P)

3. CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE NATURE OF THE WORK THAT YOU DID/DO? WHAT DROVE YOU? (S)

4. WHERE DID WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SIT DURING YOUR TIME? WHAT WAS YOUR RELATIONSHIP AND APPROACH TO PARTICIPATION? (S)

5. HOW WERE ACTIVITIES SELECTED? (e.g., cost, suitability, theme, age, funding source) (S)

6. WHAT PARTNERSHIPS DID YOU FORM AND WHY? (S)

7. WHAT ARE THE HIGHLIGHTS IN YOUR MEMORY? (S)

8. WHAT WERE THE CHALLENGES OR ISSUES? (S)

9. CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE CHANGES THAT TOOK PLACE TO THE THEATRE/ COMPANY AND PARTICIPATION WHILE YOU WERE INVOLVED? (S)

10. IS THEIR ANY PARTICULAR VALUE ABOUT WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THEATRE? WHAT DO THINK THE CHILDREN OR THEIR FAMILIES GOT FROM PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES AT NORTHERN STAGE? (S & P)

11. WHAT KEY DIFFERENCES DO YOU SEE BETWEEN, BEFORE YOU, DURING YOUR TIME AND NOW AT NORTHEN STAGE? (S)

12. DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING ELSE THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY? (S & P)

13. DO OTHER PLACES OFFER YOU EXPERIENCES THAT AFFECT YOU IN THE SAME WAY AS PARTICIPATING IN ACTIVITIES HERE? (P)

14. DESCRIBE THE ACTIVITY YOU DO HERE AND HOW THAT MAKES YOU FEEL? (P)

15. WOULD YOU COME AGAIN OUT OF CHOICE? (P)

16. WHAT IF ANY EFFECT HAS THE EXPERIENCE OF PARTICIPATING AT NORTHERN STAGE HAD ON YOU? (P)

17. DOES THE NORTHERN IN NORTHERN STAGE MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU? (S & P)

TRANSCRIPTS

The longest interviews were with Chris Bostock the first director of the Theatre in Education (TIE) company in the 1980s and then with the current participation team, both about 16,000 words. Most other interviews were about half that.

The transcripts are peppered with timing inserts to help me find places on the original recordings for clarity and confirmation.

The transcripts are mostly verbatim but with pauses, repetitions and anything which affects the flow of the dialogue removed.

Excerpt examples from the interview with Chris Bostock:

Very often if you've done something you're not the best person to talk about it and so any opportunity I could get to involve the advisors or the teachers in particular to come and speak up, those were the ones or even children to talk about the experiences they'd had and to write about that and I learnt that lesson fairly late that people like stories about events rather than just a report.

Personally – if you ask me how did I enjoy Ballet Rambert's performance that I saw 3 months ago I'm still evaluating it, I was extremely moved by it at the time, I could have gone back and seen it again but there are things that I'm still wanting to know about the delicate balance, about the way people came together [01:19:39] and fine intellectual folks can turn a coin, spin it around and give you an evaluation but I don't think that the majority of art is meant to be responded to instantly.

if you asked me to write an essay the following week on the effectiveness of the work, I can't tell you because we don't know how we're going to respond and that's always been my gripe about evaluation and I want people to say, "how does it feel?", does it feel good

So I'm not coming to it as an intellectual, I'm coming to it as I hope as an educator, certainly as an artist, trying to combine the needs of education and the opportunity of art [01:22:01] to create something unforgettable and I used to remind the actors "this may be the only time that a child is engaged in this way, it might be the only time they have a theatre experience, if that unique experience is the only thing that they have got outside their lives that they can measure themselves with, it values the time and the huge amount of preparation that goes into putting something together"

Stuart who wrote one of our shows, he works on Coronation Street [01:24:32] and just took a change of direction you know, Angie went on to work in television in a big way, to be able to have designers to come in, very good designers, to be able to create some very, very consistently good standard of work

One lad Trevor Fox who's subsequently gone on to work in the West End and everything else, Billy Elliot and a lot of all the Geordie films, he said " I'm a local lad, I've gone and done me

training, gis us a job" I said "I haven't got anything at the moment" he said "why not, I'm committed, I'm local, you need me," which was a good challenge

He couldn't offer them a nurturing which I think our company could, we'd got a base funding, I always made a point of paying above the Equity minimum, everyone in the company was paid the same, there was no negotiating the money, stage manager as well

So, the movement, the TIE movement has been squeezed, strangled because it relied so much on funding, well entirely on funding because it was working in areas that we couldn't charge very much, if we were able to charge so it was very difficult to grow. It was interesting that a lot of experienced people came into the movement, teachers who weren't happy with the classroom came and got involved, nearly all actors who came had been through training courses, most of them specifically in TIE

The only real opportunities that exist now are young people's theatre and I did make a big distinction, I can give you a list somewhere of the difference of theatre and education is, what young people's theatre is, there's some papers. Young People's theatre is young people doing their thing, TIE is educational work for children and then children's theatre is performing for children.

So, one of the advantages we had with the TIE company we invited you to come and live here, in our community and be part of us and although we didn't spend a lot of time socialising together, those times were really important. One actor who came up from London to do a few shows for me, including Christmas shows as well was a Black actor, he's now actually a big DJ in London, Eddie Nestor he came up and he did not like the sharing planning process he wanted a script, but I knew him as a great performer and a man of presence and a lovely guy to be around

Sure if somebody comes in and talks in your accent to you, well you're not aware of it for a start, you take it on board, it was important for the likes of those local people who went away, trained and came back here that they were working in their community for their community and when it came to talking to parents and everyone else around that was a significant dynamic. [*BUT conversely Chris then goes on to talk about the importance of bringing unfamiliar people in.]*

That in order to create a learning situation we've got to be challenged, we've got to create that safe environment where you can say "I don't like what you think, that there" within a context, so that fears, concerns, aggressions, (and other) things can find a place to be expressed and so that you can reach an understanding through practice, through knowledge, through engagement and the images that we create through theatre. That live moment that actually happens potentially creates something that is unforgettable, it needs to be, because that's the nature of our theatre.

A lot of the teachers that we worked with 25 years ago are retiring now, so there's a whole generation, maybe two generations now who haven't experienced it. I think they've lost a voice; I think they've lost an emotional training because our work and drama work of course fitted side by side.

When it came to this alien creature, we discovered she had to do all of those things and she didn't like that at all so what's going to happen? These children took responsibility for her, she was

terrified, her name was boo and she came from the planet Phobia and they had to meet with the doctors, well they were explorers first of all coming on, going through different skills…So, I mean, that's handing over responsibility to a group of children in a special needs school to help this alien who's never going t get home unless they commit to her, unless they care, unless they do something about it? [01:42:13]

I think it's (TIE) distinctive in terms of the way that it could be delivered. The idea of that, teachers could do but to create characters within that and there were 4 of us there around to be able to present it, consistently and to learn from that presentation was something that I don't think anyone else could do

very often the word which teachers would say is that children who are silent in the classroom were the ones who found the most confidence, because they were in a safe space, they were within the drama, and they could open out… If we give children the empowerment of the dramatic sphere as "framing" as Dorothy Heathcote talks about it, they know where they are, where they stand, we know where we are for goodness sake and within the context of a particular story, of a particular drama that's where we need your emotional response and if you're engaged and you know it's safe and you know you can get out of there afterwards and to a certain extent, it's not you, it's you contributing to the drama, people are freed to open up and people are free to actually express themselves in a totally different way.

within play, and it's vital that our small children learn to play [01:45:45] and it's vital that we learn to play and that we know that we can say I want to stop this, I don't want this to happen anymore…I mean there was the story of the Nazi boy and the other lad discovering his sexuality within himself. Within the context of a play it's safe, If I'm asking you about your sexuality and how you're going to express yourself, it's not safe because you have to expose yourself but you can expose yourself in relation to this character and this character can expose itself and you can sit down with your peers and talk to this man in role and say " why did you hit him? Why were you so angry?" and try and work out his feelings. You can be his companion, his challenge, his teacher his opponent safely. If you bring someone in who is for real, it's harder to do because you potentially have got more to lose. In the drama situation, you've got nothing to lose you've got everything to gain so you can only become a helper, an empowerer. Which therapeutically is brilliant to be able to get into that. And in fact, therapists and people do use role play

Ultimately, they have an enjoyable experience because they come into a story, and they share a story

yes, we had a social agenda, but it wasn't our social agenda was going to change the world it was our thinking to empower the audience that was going to allow them the potential to change the world even in a small way. Even if it meant they were going to be more considerate to people from other countries or people of another gender. That is in a small way could be their way of actually altering everything about their lives, hopefully in a positive way. It was a brilliant movement I can't see and I hate to think it [01:50:00] and I hate to say it, I can't see how it can come back again. I can't think how's the educational space at the minute for it to come back again because theatre and education required a degree of autonomy from the individual schools, a degree of vision from head teachers and the ability to apply an educational tool to the work they

were doing. Now because teachers are so physically and mentally overloaded with the burden of the curriculum, younger teachers can't think outside it because they're so busy delivering what they've been told they've got to do rather than the business of education and allowing children to grow. [01:50:49]

for most of your tick boxes, Mr Government, you're not asking me what I feel you're asking me what I know and Theatre in Education went to ask people what they were feeling and what they could do about it. And the value of that is it respected you as an individual, it trusted you as a member of society, it empowered you whatever your age, your sex was, particularly in a society which says you're just a young person, you're just a girl, you just fit into your place there. And the attitude we had was, that you are who you are, how can you be the best that you are within our community, caring, knowing what you know. It matters, your voice matters [01:54:24] and not many children had been told that and theatre in education practice gave young people a voice and said, "we need to know what you think".