

# Putting the Arts in the Picture

REFRAMING EDUCATION IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY



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## Making a Way: Youth Arts and Learning in International Perspective

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In developed and developing countries throughout the world, governments, non-governmental and non-profit organizations, health officials, and educators recognize the challenge of creating a knowledge-based, ‘civic-minded Workforce. Many look to schools to quickly create or adapt existing learning environments to meet the shifting demands of the global community. In advanced nations, formal schooling accounts for roughly 25 percent of young person’s day. Here schooling means the maintenance of key norms: separate roles for teacher and pupil, paced curriculum across selected subjects, and paper and pencil (or scripted) displays of learning. For the majority of children and young people throughout the world, these norms will never be a reality. Hopes that schools will provide a passage to steady employment, good health, or civic engagement are unrealistic. “Making a way” for children and young people living in desperate conditions means just that: developing the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary to meet personal and social needs, often without the support of stable adults, and outside the institution of school.

For the unschooled children of the world, the hours outside of formal education can be an untapped resource for those looking to develop subsequent generations. United Nations committees, development agencies, and local leaders often look for economical means to sustain positive learning situations for older children and

adolescents, particularly in impoverished rural areas and urban zones where many children live on the streets or are heads of households. These youngsters, in particular, are often easy pickings for criminals, rebel soldiers, and global drug rings. In the face of these dangers, it may seem especially odd that learning through and within arts production wins out. The young can find in challenging high-risk arts ventures, alternatives that keep them learning and even earning in socially entrepreneurial ventures that benefit their communities as well. Innovative, intensive, and sequenced opportunities to participate in the arts can translate into sustained learning for children and youth despite the destabilizing affects of politics, natural disaster, and war.

In ways that learning theorists and neuroscientists have recently begun to be understand, children and young people working together during discretionary time can learn to conduct themselves socially, develop personal interests, take their first jobs, and formulate their ideas about what constitutes a satisfying, worthwhile life. The arts provide opportunities for young people to experiment with ideas and put them into action. Given a respite, young people create dramas, stories, and songs. They draw in the dirt and challenge one another to imitate dance moves. In many parts of the world, children and young people find a way into their own youth arts organizations—more often than not designed both to achieve aesthetic excellence and to meet social needs of neglected populations. Without attention from the wealthy nations of the world or international organizations, youth arts organizations remain almost invisible except for the occasional blip on television screens or short features on the international news page. The absence of a place in international thinking has not kept creation of the arts out of the hands and heads of the young of the world. Throughout the world, young people are transforming the cultural commons of their communities using the arts and exceeding the accomplishments of adults.

### **LOOKING TOWARD PEACE**

Young people see the arts—personally and for their societies—playing unique social and educational roles, and they view their work as real, vital, and necessary. In Addis Ababa, Elami, a homeless teenager, is a member of the Aduigna Community Dance Company that grew out of a visit from Royston Maldoom in the 1990s. Maldoom is a world-renowned dancer and choreographer known for his ability to create productions of the highest quality, using novices and populations rarely expected to enter the worlds of modern dance. He is also an inveterate learner, taking every

advantage of opportunities to enter into traditional dance and music in which he has had no previous experience. Royston came to Addis Ababa, brought together scores of street children like Elami, and helped shape the circumstances that brought about the Adugna Community Dance Company. Royston refuses the “street” identity of the children. He says, “I do not work with street children. I work with children.” All the young dancers know they not only have to train, practice, listen, and learn, but they also have to manage the company. In the past three years, they have drawn international attention and hope to become the only youth—run arts organization granted special status and support by UNESCO (Adugna Community Dance Company).

In Soweto, inside a small, whitewashed building on the grounds of a church, a female voice in British English gives direction to a group of young people, ages 9 to 23, gathered in clumps with their instruments. This is the home of the Buskaid Soweto String Project, an ensemble of string players made up entirely of young people from the near by communities. Finally the practice seems to stop, and a buzz of voices follows. From the cacophony comes a recognizable name—that of conductor, Sir John Eliot Gardiner. He and twelve members of the English Baroque Soloists arrive next week, and the fortunate students who are working along side these master teachers for a week will join them in a concert. Some 80 youngsters out of the 2000 that have applied work together to create CD’s, prepare for special regional and national events, and practice strenuously. Music history and theory, the physics of string instruments, and literary texts and musical compositions take place alongside practice and planning. The young musicians develop their own budget for travel, supplies, and the purchase and maintenance of instruments. Founded a decade ago and still led by Rosemary Nalden, a London violist, the Buskaid Soweto String Project grounds its identity and learning to life in Soweto (Buskaid Project).

The existence of such groups in the 21st century follows a long pattern of young people coming together to learn around the arts in South Africa. Films, books, and news accounts came out of the Apartheid years, particularly from Soweto, when the young kept their faith in freedom through dance and theatre work, as well as soldiering. The world-renowned Market Theatre of Johannesburg worked along side The Laboratory Theatre, which consisted only of young actors. These young people helped other theatre groups develop throughout Soweto and other townships across South Africa. By the late 1980s, these groups were celebrated in festivals, such as that taking place annually in Grahamstown.

Even Emdeni, the notorious precinct of Soweto that invented “necklacing”—

killing a victim by entrapping them Within a burning tire—gave birth to a festival-acclaimed theatre named Thabiso ng. This group and others like it in several townships across South Africa study drama in one or more African languages, English, and Afrikaans. The young actors learn to read, speak and act in a wide range of roles they may have never actually witnessed in their everyday world, and organize their daily maintenance, travel plans, and program development. In several years, their work has paid off at national festivals, bringing them winning positions, even in the Afrikaans language portions of festivals. This discipline and commitment to representations of themselves as learners—even of the once intensely despised Afrikaans language—strike outsiders as particularly ironic, since it was the Soweto youth who rallied against the imposition of Afrikaans in schools under the Apartheid government. Their violent confrontations with the police and the tragic aftermath were documented in the musical and film *Sarafina* in the 1980s.

War and military strife that bring violence and unpredictability to daily life for children and youth seem to promote the arts, particularly those dependent on listening. Music in ensemble or orchestra enables organized sounds to evoke harmony without any “taking of sides” through words. The Middle East Youth Orchestra, founded by Edward W. Said, the late literary theorist, music critic, and advocate of Palistinian independence, and Daniel Barenboim, the Israeli pianist and conductor, has brought young Israeli and Arab musicians together for more than a decade (Boustany, 2003). Group instrumental work depends on learning to listen and to interpret as an individual for group achievement. Such is the heart of diplomacy.

Music, perhaps more than any other art form, brings with it religious traditions and ethical positions regarding life, death, and the dramas of love. Occasions of performance often invoke the spiritual and take place in sacred places and within life’s rites of passage. These complex underpinnings of music, whether Byzantine chants, or Sufi music, or Christian funeral oration, find their Way into youth orchestras. Harmony becomes more than the resolution of notes in measures or individual players collaborating in ensemble.

### STAGING THE LOCAL

All strife does not take place between organized political, ethnic, or military groups. The primary strife for the young comes from Within families and in the context of local limits on provision. Here again, however, the young often find ways of learning within the arts to push through and even to surmount local struggles.

Phakama, a group of young people from Britain and South Africa, began in the early 1990s to work together through theatre to examine their common and diverse challenges. The London International Festival of Theatre (LIFT) is a London-based group dedicated to bringing to attention drama from around the world as a way of stretching ideas and associating with life beyond conventional means. Adhering to a strong faith in the importance of putting young people's voices and leadership in the lead toward such pursuits, LIFT helped initiate Phakama. Trained in running workshops, creating site-based theatre, and including non-trained actors into their productions, Phakama's young members have worked in England, India and South Africa.

Core members of the group convene in unlikely locations for theatre and encourage local youth to bring key issues in the lives of their community into script and performance. For example, in 2000, in a town in northern South Africa, youth from several South African regions joined with Phakama veterans from London to create a drama around women's issues. Violence, AIDS, abandonment, and deprivation became themes of the piece, but grounding the production was the sheer amount of labor performed by women that determined the ongoing life of the village. Staged in two houses across the road from one another, the production brought "audience" members into the first house and its garden, and across the road to the second home. From the garden trees hung verses of songs, poems, and sayings that reflected the women's work, and the audience was invited to examine, perform, and consider each of these. The town police stopped traffic on the road and joined in the (literally) moving drama, which ended in song and dance linking men and women, young and old.

Phakama performed at the opening of the museum on Robben's Island off the shore of Cape Town, drawing on the notorious history of its prison, its residents, and its memory. But Phakama youth do not wait for such celebratory or one—occasion-only opportunities. They work in hostels for youth seeking asylum in England to produce theatre that educates social workers, educators, philanthropists, and the general public about who they are, what they have come from, and Where they hope to go (Phakama Project).

In Melbourne, Australia, a group of young people whose families have endured the hardships of refugee camps and years of waiting and hoping for transition, work through theatre in the Horn of Africa Community Association. After a decade or more in refugee camps created through ethnic rivalries in Southern Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia, these immigrants, who finally gained entry to Australia in the 1990s, faced

unexpected struggles within their own families. Strong expectations about the division of labor along gender lines separated mothers and fathers from their children. Australian schools had little in common with the “schools” established in the refugee camps or with the traditional values parents held onto for their children.

Bridging century-old rivalries and hatred from their homelands, the elders of the four nations created the Community Association, primarily to centralize information for Australian authorities. However, the young soon took up the model of collaboration and moved it into the arts. They created a theatre group to identify cross-generational crises and to educate school personnel and families. The plots of their productions lay in real incidents. The drama of their stories unfold in theatre-talk sessions in schools, churches, and community centers, opening conversations about tough matters for survivors of refugee experience.

The young of the Horn of Africa Community Association also take responsibility for after-school homework clubs in their community churches. Each session begins with rituals from the four ethnic groups—songs and other forms of representation of traditional and contemporary arts that cut across the warring histories of their parents. Mixed with the serious work of cross-age tutoring for homework in these sessions are fashion shows, hair styling, and exchange of popular music. Adolescents who barely remember their days in the refugee camps have no misconceptions that their younger siblings want and need to be brought into the 21st century culture of Australia, their new homeland. Knowing the arts and interpreting through the arts can help cut across barriers of philosophy, taste, and cross-purpose hopes between the young and the old. The arts also ensure belonging and becoming within an entirely new cultural world.

Such groups find their support in unlikely sources. The Finnish embassy currently supports the Adugna Community Dance Company in Addis Ababa. Some individual members now find sponsorship to continue further training in dance and arts management in England, with expectations of bringing their knowledge and skills back to the full group.

Contrary to the usual models of transmission, where adults view childhood and youth as preparation for adulthood and a future, the young in the arts learning organizations recounted here see the future as now and themselves as real contributors. Some have little or no access to formal schooling, while others clearly have excellent formal educational opportunities, but choose learning environments in the arts that come along with high risk and deep experience. The young people working in these

organizations invariably have taken matters into their own hands with the help of supportive adults. They rise to meet social needs unaddressed or even opposed by their national or regional governments. And they choose to do so through the arts. In India, a group of street children in the Mumbai train station assails a passing woman, clearly a member of one of the elite castes. She learns that a member of their group has just died alone, and the children issue a plea for her to find ways that they can, under such circumstances, call for help “so none of us will die alone.” Thus, Child Line, a toll free number available in scores of regions across India was initiated. Through the decade since this incident, Child Line has evolved into a training program for street children who themselves handle the phone lines when other street children call in for help. The children, trained by social service Workers and in the geography and demography of their region, then call the service or agency they judge to be appropriate. At their insistence, the children themselves are the public face of Child Line. They work with adults to produce booklets that make clear their origins, purposes, ways of operating, and means of evaluating their work. When, a few years into their development, government administrators insisted that some evaluation of the work of the group must be done, the children met his insistence with their own mandate: train us and we will learn and tell you what is happening (Childline Foundation India). Throughout the work of Child Line, the children have included art as the preferred way of representing themselves. They created a logo, helped design the booklets that explain their philosophy, mode of action, and expectations. By the end of the 1990s, local government ministries had determined that their incorporation of Child Line into the governmental infrastructure surrounding child services could provide secure funding and a broader reach for the group.

When the Ethiopian government could not or chose not to address the needs of hundreds of street children and the rampant spread of AIDS in rural areas, young people moved in through the arts. The Awassa Tukol Vocational Training and Arts Center developed their AIDS Education Circus to help meet the dire need for AIDS education that could reach rural areas. Again, the performers are homeless young people who are self-sustaining, and again, the group began through the initiative of the young themselves (Awassa Children’s Project).

Two features mark the development and maintenance of youth arts organizations that develop around the world: recognized social need, and local youth leadership. In impoverished, war-torn, or AIDS-ravaged areas, where there is ethnic strife and limited access to education and employment, youth arts groups emerge. These

organizations direct themselves toward excellence in the arts, to be sure, but they also remain grounded in the impetus of their origins—social needs. Because the needs they address are not high profile, they use their arts excellence to raise the profile of the social needs they see behind their work. The latter fuels the recognized need and applied energy of the youth in areas such as financial management, security, health education, and organizational learning. Their needs for learning, as well as their means, differ markedly from those of students engaged only in formal education. They must take initiative. They must see needs. They must assume responsibility for the future of the organization. The school district office, United Nations peace-keeping force, or International Red Cross office down the street or road, will not pay their rent or the salaries of the professional artists who work with them.

### **THE NEW WORLD OF WORK**

During most of the two hundred year history of formal schooling in the Western world, the young have been prepared within schools to enter manufacturing jobs composed largely of repetitive tasks to be performed in standardized ways for standard products with predictable modes of operation. The 21st century world of work consists primary of knowledge industries that value innovative approaches to work, establishment of new standards, and production of creative products and services.

Organizational innovation, new standards, and imaginative services and products come, more often than not, in youth arts organizations with a commitment to social responsibility, including social entrepreneurship. This acknowledgment does not diminish the need for aesthetic excellence, but exists alongside educational and social goals. This philosophy springs from the sad reality that the causes for which they work and the needs they see within society cannot depend on charitable handouts from adults in power. Such handouts have, in the experience of many of the older youth, evaporated at critical moments, come with a high price of authoritative rule, and curtailed or censored the energies and outcomes valued by the young. Therefore, young social entrepreneurs stress innovation and resourcefulness in order to create social value. They want to sustain their work without a full dependence on adult leadership and charitable funding. The descriptor “full” here is significant, for all youth organizations count on adults who are critical advocates, advisors, mentors, professional artists, and fundraisers, and even the most entrepreneurial of youth organizations must rely in part on philanthropy, governmental funding, or the char-

ity of wealthy individuals or established businesses. Some young people characterize their relationships with these benefactors as a symbiotic one in which adults get access to the energy and creativity of youth while the young gain the benefits of experienced, attentive, and caring adults.<sup>2</sup>

In Lund, Sweden, over two decades ago, the city decided to tear down an old dairy, now very close to being enclosed within the extending city boundaries. Young people joined to protest the destruction of the historic building and to call for its transformation into a cultural venue for young people. Over the years, “The Dairy” emerged as the most sought-after concert venue in Sweden. Big names from abroad, such as Miles Davis, preferred to play in Lund because of the extraordinary facilities—acoustics, equipment, and crowd control. Regional groups, such as The Cardigans, found The Dairy a place where young concertgoers brought a depth of knowledge of the music as well as appreciation to performances.

The Dairy has, in the past decade, been the site of regular lessons and concerts of at least four different types of music—jazz, rock, folk, and classical—as well as a film venue. The theatre’s film section is open for foreign films, classics, and special film festivals. A collaborative committee of young people and music and civic experts govern scheduling of concerts, ensuring equity in scheduling across the four types of music. Young people can come to The Dairy with their friends and find seventeen soundproof rehearsal rooms, several with musical instruments they can borrow for practice. Local music teachers schedule the rehearsal rooms for teaching, and The Dairy collects a portion of the fee for lessons offered. These fees and concert income supplement an annual budget from the city of approximately \$250,000 (Heath, 2002).

The Dairy reflects a growing trend among youth-based arts organization around the world: social entrepreneurship. The group brings in money from its concerts and films, but it also serves numerous social needs in the community for a range of ages. Over the years, The Dairy has come to serve as the major apprenticing location for aspiring producers and agents of music. Young musicians start out at The Dairy, but they often go on in a range of fields of music, from acoustical engineering to specialized study in a single instrument. Moreover, because the young people who have worked within the organization over the years gain experience in finance, security services, building and equipment maintenance, lighting and technical design, as well as promotion and publicity, they can move on for further study or jobs in other cities. Several years of experience at The Dairy stands out on any résumé.

Social entrepreneurs working through arts organizations have been around for centuries, generally springing up in greatest abundance at times of central institutional change or uncertainty. From the miracle plays of the medieval era to folk theatre in the farm workers' movement in California in the mid-twentieth century, artists across ages have addressed social change and the need for their economic independence from status quo powers in the society. The devolution of post-industrial governments that began in the 1990s, as well as international terrorist fears and upheavals within world religions, particularly Islam and Roman Catholicism, at the beginning of the next century, spurred artists, young and old, to see the need for new kinds of community arts linkages. Healing, bridging, and connecting in new ways had to come from sources beyond time-honored institutions.

A growing trend to see youth as troublemakers and criminals, spurred policy designed to control young people in the US. Harsh penalties and detention conditions for the young had, by the end of the 1990s, filled many local jails and state prisons with young offenders. A majority of these had suffered abuse and neglect in their families and had failed to find meaningful learning opportunities in schools. The failures of government and business to match childcare provision with the growth of the female labor force left many children beyond the age of eight either on their own with older friends or in organized peer-group activities. Some were fortunate enough to have families who could pay sports and arts fees for team participation and lessons. Others created their own groups and purposes for coming together, leading to a wide range of outcomes for society—some linked with criminal gangs and others with grassroots community organizations. But these approaches to the “leisure” or non-school, non-family supervised time of the young are almost entirely ad hoc in the US and throughout the world.

Largely absent are innovative strategies to involve young people in creating and sustaining organizations through which they work to meet their own and other's needs. Moreover, children in rural communities in post—industrial and developing nations, grow up with television images of a life very different from their own. They often decide early on that their future depends on moving away from their community of birth. Few governments have formed effective coalitions of business, education, and health representatives to slow this exodus. Inevitably migration to urban zones leads to disappointment, and too often to horrible living conditions, poor health, and drug addiction. Transport stations across Europe and parts of Africa became, in the 1990s, irregular and inadequate havens for young refugees and migrants in search of something better

than they had in their devastated homelands.

During the late 1990s, this coalescence of conditions prompted some international development agency offices of nations such as Finland, Sweden, Norway, and national councils, such as the British Council, to respond. The separation of children and youth from traditional societal groundings and the evident institutional gaps led to an increased attention to the potential of Work in the arts for the young. The European Union and other governmental agencies of European nations looked especially to the socially inclusive powers of theatre, visual arts, dance, and special events, such as regional or city festivals of art, to reach across ethnic, linguistic, and ability boundaries.

Some arts centers, such as LIFT, went further, insisting on the commonalities of childhood across national contexts. But beyond topics and themes of the dramatic arts, LIFT also edged past the usual in expectations of “normal” alignments of corporations and arts organizations. Through the Business Arts Forum of LIFT, this group reversed the usual expectation of corporate support for the arts. Instead, LIFT, with the help of Phakama, their affiliate youth arts group, brought corporate representatives into the heart of the theatre through seminars, direct experiences with visiting theatre companies, and site-specific works in London. In doing so, they convinced corporations that the kind of learning associated with the arts is necessary within their businesses to activate creative connections, innovative relationships, and an understanding of the cultural commons (Rowntree).

These agencies and businesses began to understand that contemporary socialization of the young, especially those between the ages of 8 and 21, differs significantly from the past. Earlier socialization models that required elders to pass on their wisdom and skills no longer work. Today the young learn largely from other young people, and active experimentation is the favored means of learning. The gaps created by the demands of parental work and the demise of social commitments by civic and religious sectors in many parts of the world, call for inventive means of filling the hours and absorbing the energies of the young from middle childhood forward (Heath, 1998, 2000; Lerner, 2001). Neither post-industrial nations nor fledgling new democracies are doing well at holding the young beyond the ages of twelve to fourteen in appealing environments of learning that enable them to see the need to build civic, health, and aesthetic competencies and sensitivities toward a distant and unknown future.

## NEW WAYS OF LEARNING

These social conditions put peer learning, or pre-figurative learning in Margaret Mead's (1970) term, out in front of traditional forms for most of the world's older children and adolescents. Current work in evolutionary biology and the neurosciences increasingly examine the complexities of ways the young learn without verbal instruction (Steinberg, 2001; Rogoff, 2003; Herzog). Social scientists are learning how youth actively engage in shaping and directing their own learning environments. Studies in the neurosciences and medically informed theories of adolescent development suggest that learning takes place optimally during puberty and maturity toward adulthood through active movement, direct experience, and high-risk, engaged-role learning. juveniles may well be genetically programmed to perceive and experience their environments in species- and age-specific ways in forms far more deeply embedded in the neural infrastructure than previously recognized (Boyer, 1998; Hirschfeld, 2002; Turner, in press).

Current studies of the evolution of socialization lend further support to the idea that direct experimentation through active involvement may be the preferred means of learning for youth from a neurobiological standpoint. Sociocultural and economic conditions underscore the need for putting these means into action (Singleton, 1998). The marked decline of time engaged in joint creative work with adults, foreshadowed in post-industrial national trends toward full employment outside the home by both adults, is rapidly spreading internationally. Moreover, in those parts of the world where information and high technologies dominate both leisure and work, actual physical involvement in project-based extended learning opportunities appear less and less in the play of the young. Implications from this decline in manual work are under examination by scientists across the neuroscience disciplines (Wilson, 1998).

In the cases of orphans, refugees, and asylum-seeking youth, their socialization has been almost entirely through their peers and without opportunities for side-by-side learning or apprentice-like experiences with caring adults in stable relationships. Direct roles in active learning, often at their own initiation and under the modeling influence of peers, provide information and skills for transformation into knowledge. Such learning, facilitated by the mobility of youth around the world, has to be portable. Skills and information learned must be taken beyond the immediate context of experimentation or access to role modeling.

Perhaps nowhere are the intricacies of this pattern more evident in highly visible ways than in the skateboard groupings that develop in urban areas. No instruc-

tion from elders comes with the high risks these young take, but they constantly bring in younger members, reshape their environments, and find ways to create their own rules to work around civic authorities. In those cases where civic leaders have brought the young into their planning for safe, challenging, and artful centers, the move to organizational learning, budgetary concerns, and health and safety rules has come to be shared by the young. Hence, they have been able to gain skills that move with them as they grow out of skateboarding and into other kinds of entrepreneurial high-risk ventures. In a number of highly creative civic efforts to work with and learn from youth, skate park creation has been a project tightly integrated with community arts. Essential in these projects is the possibility for young people to remain engaged over an extended period with adult roles for themselves and apprentice-like learning opportunities alongside professionals such as architects, physicians, police, civic officials, contractors, and artists. These learning provisions, created always in arts learning that works toward real creative products, projects, and performances, contrast with the highly segmented, short-term, sporadic task assignments the young who work in fastfood jobs receive (Tannock, 2001).

### **WHAT DO THEY LEARN?**

Finding substantial evidence of “transfer” from practice of the arts to other specific skills calls for segmenting any art into small bits hardly recognizable as “art.” There is precious little evidence to support claims that learning within the arts can be the cause of narrow educational ends, such as boosts to scores in mathematics tests.

Meanwhile young artists themselves argue that increased self-satisfaction, confidence, skills in collaboration, and deeper knowledge of resources beyond their immediate environment come as the young work through extended high-demand projects in the arts with professionals as colleagues and critics (Heath & Smyth, 1999). But such reports, along with any evidence that the claimed benefits have holding power, come only when the learning environments in which the young create art carries risk, meaning, and purpose to the participants. The learning that comes from these broad strokes of environment cannot be cut into discrete measurable skills. However, from the few longitudinal studies available, we know that estimations of quality of product and process and competence in collaborative inquiry and critique stay with young artists, gain a cumulative effect, and find their way into other roles when arts organizations ensure that their membership can move from beginning

through intermediate to advanced learning (Heath & Wolf, 2004). Added to these levels of advancement in their chosen art forms are the leadership, fiscal management, and planning skills the young gain.

Youth working through the arts in their communities play strong leadership roles, they identify social needs, but even more important, they keep up a steady call for sustaining community, organizational, and governmental response. Of primary importance to young people working in the arts across national boundaries are issues related to health, environment, social justice, and human rights. In their efforts to chip away at these broad areas of human need, the young consistently work toward improving communication, protection, and learning opportunities for even younger children, the disabled, and others often overlooked in societies of great need. The organizations considered here do not focus on the usual after-school activities. Moreover, casual observers are unlikely to regard their activities in any way that might appear to support schoolwork (Maira & Soep, *in press*). Their importance lies in the fact that they reflect organizational adaptation by young people who want to learn particular art forms and see these as their way of responding to social needs. In effect, these organizations are the unintended consequences of a coalescence of global and local factors that shape the everyday lives of older children and young people well into their twenties. Into these often desperate situations, the young, invisibly at times, are stepping forward with the arts in many places and numerous ways to fill institutional gaps, undertake social entrepreneurships, and develop hope, and sometimes environments, for healthy living and for their own learning.<sup>3</sup>

The organizations mentioned here represent only a small handful of those that exist around the world and adapt to local conditions through the savvy leadership of youth working with supportive adults. They identify needs, work together toward long-range goals, and establish opportunities for others to learn. For all of the children of the organizations noted in this chapter, achieving wealth is highly unlikely. For many, a job that provides minimal support for a family of four is not possible. For some, escaping either violent death or a slow dying without healthcare may be their luckiest break in life. Perhaps the most lasting gift of learning in the arts comes from the adaptive stance upon which the arts insist.

Learning in the arts is all about adaptation, creation, innovation, and maneuverability. In the study of human development, we know relatively little about adaptive learning—which develops through habituated gains in seeing and judging responses needed to change circumstances. Such adaptation is often thought of as “transfor-

mative learning,” and such adaptation comes most often in the human life cycle when tragedy or the highly unexpected descends. Western literature is filled with the pathos of failed adaptation. Narratives, from folktales to opera, depend on audiences’ continual fascination with Ways to find the means to work through the unexpected turns in life for which there is no curriculum or set of ready skills. The arts (as well as many forms of play) enable anticipation of the need to handle life transformations and keep the human psyche intact. Responses to transforming experiences, particularly those regarded as traumatic, are met in the post-industrial World with an assertion of the need for counseling or other forms of professional help. Rarely is such help possible or available when most needed, even in situations of relative economic plenty. In most parts of the world, such forms of help are never available.

Osman Bah (2004) was a child soldier in Liberia. “I can’t remember anything until I Was five years old. Then What I noticed was war.... I have spent all my life fleeing.” Osman made his way to London in 2003, after every member of his family had been killed. He had been forced into the army to “liberate the people of Liberia,” and his own killing as a soldier began as he and other boys and girls were marched across Liberia. “It hardens you, makes you feel high, and cold in your mind. Some of us had soft minds, soft spirits, and sympathies. But when you take these drugs, you don’t have any regrets. You kill a person like killing a small chicken.”

After months of soldiering, Osman was captured inside Guinea and then allowed to escape and flee. He managed to find his Way into the back of a container ship that eventually brought him to England. There he became a refugee under consideration for asylum status. During his time of transition, the Phakama youth theatre of LIFT began a yearlong project working in London with asylum-seeking children and youth waiting to learn their future. juggling, singing, dancing, working with pyrotechnics, and creating visual arts brought communication among the young, even when they had no language in common. Weekly, they worked through stories, mime, drawing, drumming, and dance to create a drama to be presented in May of 2003. Osman became a leader within the group and a spokesperson for the work of their program. In early 2004, he won approval to remain in England from the Home Office. Today he Works in Leeds helping to create a youth theatre group through cooperation with Phakama’s older members.

Osman explains: “Through the [Phakama] arts project, I met a boy called Mohammed, from Sierra Leone. We found that we had fought on the same border be-

tween Sierra Leone and Guinea. We found out that we had even crossed the river at the same place. I was asked to talk to him. I told him to think about his future. Don't think you are a nobody; give yourself a chance; keep on thinking courageously" (Bah, 2004). Osman's work with Phakama captures the core of adaptive learning possible through the arts, bringing the past, as painful as it can be, together with plans and hopes for the future for himself and for his peers. Youth arts are "giving a chance" to Osman and many other young people like him to learn and to adapt to a world that offers them little in the way of chances. Their stories give us a chance to see the potential of the arts to help meet the challenge of youth internationally.

- <sup>1</sup> Numerous publications explain the concept of social entrepreneurship, often within the broad frame of social responsibility from the corporate sector or for the special purposes of venture philanthropy (Dees, Emerson, 8: Economy, 2002).
- <sup>2</sup> For case studies of two US-based social entrepreneurships, see Heath 84 Smyth, 1999, a resource guide accompanying a documentary film, *ArtShow* that portrays these two cases. See also the two business cases written for the Graduate School of Business, Stanford, by Smyth on Artists for Humanity (Boston, Massachusetts) and The Point (South Bronx, New York), two socially entrepreneurial youth organizations. See also Miles, Pohl, Stauber, Walther, Banha, 8: Gomes, 2002).
- <sup>3</sup> For further discussion of institutional gaps and their effects on the young, see Heath, 2000; Perret-Clermont, Pontecorvo, Resnick, Zittoun, 8: Burge, 2004). The context of these gaps and the role of risk in the end-of-century period are further addressed in Beck, Giddens, & Lash, 1994).

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