Entertainment in the Performing Arts

Alice Marshall (Vale)

ENTERTAINMENT IN THE PERFORMING ARTS

Alice Marshall explores the question 'What do you think entertainment is?' by challenging the reader to consider and form their own views through the provision of interviews, professional opinions and researched topics.

Entertainment in the Performing Arts explores a range of sources to enable the reader to develop their own knowledge and understanding of what entertainment equates to. This book provides helpful starting points, including a range of perspectives from interviewed artists, to allow the reader to begin answering this key question for themselves. Throughout the chapters, the reader is presented with guided tasks to allow full immersion in the topics discussed. The author explores why we have an inbuilt need to entertain and be entertained, navigates the reader through the technological enhancements that have altered how we do this, discusses how audience gratification is not always key in entertainment and, furthermore, aims to expertly decipher what the word 'entertainment' specifically means.

This is an essential text for students of performing arts courses, artists aiming to develop their understanding of their practice and for those with an interest in entertainment.

Alice Marshall (Vale), Performer, Choreographer, and Academic of Dance, is known for her diverse work and collaborations. With a keen interest in fusion of art forms, Alice explores this concept with a variety of professionals, students and advocates of the arts.

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*For Elizabeth Chamberlain, who first showed me
the joy of dance.*

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INTRODUCTION

Take a moment to consider your day-to-day life and how you pass your time, would you consider any of this to be entertainment? Would you take time to dissect it and work out why it entertains you? The answer is most likely 'no'. Who has the time to work out? Why watching stressed people bake cakes is so engaging? It just is. So why is this book doing precisely that, asking why, and how, we entertain? I am taking you on a journey of consideration to help you deepen your own understanding of your work and others. Understanding the category of entertainment that we are so often put into will not only provide more questions but also deliver some answers.

As entertainment comes in a vast array of genres, this book will focus on areas that are considered visual performing arts. This will allow for deeper detail and discussion, which, in turn will hopefully provoke other genres to take on the same topic of conversation. As creative artists, there is an element of curiosity with regard to the question of 'what is entertainment?' You would not be in this field if it did not intrigue you, whether this is to disregard the findings or to utilise it, it most likely sparks intrigue for you. Whatever genre you specialise in there are said to be similarities when looking into this topic, but how it is expressed and used can vary widely. This is why during the course of reading this book you will not just hear my opinions, but also those of artists from across the genre of live Performing Arts.

This exploration is highly individual, and you will find yourself on a journey of agreement and disagreement as you read. But these chapters will allow you to question your practice, the practice of others, and ultimately why what we do is wrapped up in the neat package we like to call entertainment. This book is designed to make you, the reader, consider the question 'what do **you** think is entertainment?' Whether you are a creator, or an observer, everyone has their own opinions on what equates to entertainment. By presenting a few starting points,

and a range of opinions, you will be able to start answering these questions for yourself. But before you hear these thoughts, consider what your standpoint is now.

Reflect upon what you consider entertainment to be. Write it down and keep it safe for we will return to this sentence at the end of our journey.

My own practical research has led me to conclude that any visual work created with an audience in mind will generate entertainment in some way, whether this was the intention or not. But what is entertainment? What are the key components that result in entertainment? And why do we need to be entertained? These questions will not just be answered by myself, artist interviews are woven into the bulk of the chapters to allow for a range of viewpoints. Small- to medium-scale rather than mainstream artists generate the bulk of the case studies as this allows for a zoned approach to the questions. Small-scale work often has a 'risk-taking' method as it does not always have to meet mainstream demands, therefore the idea of artists questioning their own work and the meaning of entertainment will allow for a deeper answer. Throughout this book, I will refer to them as our 'resident artists' and pull on their knowledge to try and build an understanding of the industry we work in. But to fully comprehend their musings it is important to understand their background. Read on to find a little more about each of our Resident Artists.

Amit Lahav | Director of Gecko Theatre

Amit is Artistic Director and Founder of Gecko Theatre. Israeli born, he grew up in London, where a passion for theatre and dance grew. Subsequently, he trained with theatre and dance artists such as Lindsay Kemp and David Glass and worked in South East Asia for four years as a facilitator, making theatre for and with street children.

This led to him developing his own company and methodologies. His emphasis on emotion, physicality, metaphor, breath and musicality has created the bedrock of what Gecko Theatre is. His shows are created in the United Kingdom using an international cast and then tour the world. Amit Lahav has developed a unique language of training, performance, devising and teaching and these methods are used by the company as Gecko continues to generate relationships around the world (Gecko Theatre, 2021).

Having created seven critically acclaimed Gecko shows, Lahav has built a reputation of success both nationally and internationally. His works include *Taylor's Dummies, The Race, The Arab and The Jew, The Overcoat, Missing, Institute and The Wedding*, all of which have toured nationally and internationally.

'In 2015, Amit created and performed in The Time of Your Life, which was broadcast live on BBC4 as part of Live From Television Centre' (Gecko Theatre, 2021). This showcase of his work amplified his audiences and showed the importance of what he does through his company.

Rob Vale and Matt Vale | Illuminos

Illuminos are brothers Matt and Rob Vale, who for over 10 years have been creating visually inventive, memorable projection artworks and experiences. With

training in fine art, music and lighting design, the pair amalgamated their talents to form Illuminos. Their works range from very large-scale illumination to small-scale imagery, but always working to create something unique and specific to location and viewer. Formed around a principal of People, Site, Animation, and often combining elements of installation, dance, theatre, pyrotechnics and music, each project that they approach develops from an exploration of the emotions of an environment, aiming to capture the essence of a place, space or feeling as a shared moment of time.

Their large-scale projection artworks centre upon a deconstruction of video as screen and narrative, exploring the potentials of whole building time-based work to interact with viewers en masse, morphing and reclaiming urban and rural spaces. By using light, sound and projection, the actions of collaborators can be fused together to bring a space to life, and to allow audiences to view it in a new light. Multi-screen imagery matched directly to architectural features and composed soundscapes allows them to build large-scale dramatic works from small beginnings, fusing actions and movement together into visual and aural film works that are full of excitement and wonder.

Whilst their work incorporates new digital media and complex equipment, they are interested in combining these new technologies with notions of the curio, the Victorian penny machines or Edwardian Automata, visual wonders and spectacles that amused, engaged and intrigued. Works such as Illuminating Shakespeare (Stratford), Jingwei and the Ocean (Liverpool) or Momentous (Leeds) seek to recreate and elevate this visual experience for the contemporary society through digital means (Illuminos, 2021).

Sarah Brigham | CEO/Artistic Director Derby Theatre

Sarah Brigham is CEO and Artistic Director of Derby Theatre. Originally from Hull, and very proud of her Hull accent, Brigham stayed in Yorkshire to train at Bretton Hall, which led to her working as an actor in theatre, radio and TV. As her career grew, she realised she wanted to understand the business from both sides and subsequently worked for a small theatre company which allowed her to learn about funding, partnership and using the young audience's voice. This experience moved her career towards directing and running a company or building. (Derby Theatre, 2021) Sarah's journey saw her be Associate Director at Dundee Rep and then Artistic Director of The Berry Theatre, leading to the same role at The Point in Eastleigh.

Appointed at Derby Theatre in 2013, Brigham has developed the company from a traditional producing house to a theatre which puts civic engagement and learning at the core of its mission. Since 2013, she has led the company to become a National Portfolio Organisation (also receiving a significant uplift in funding for recognition of the work), win various awards (*Times Higher Education Award, UK Theatre Award, Highly commended as Regional Theatre of the Year and The Guardian University Award*) and win much recognition for their bold productions. Sarah has

been named in The Stage's 100 most influential people in theatre for four consecutive years (Brigham, 2021).

Paul RW Jackson | Dance writer

Paul RW Jackson trained in music and dance and has worked in both professions internationally. He has written extensively on dance and music and is a regular contributor to *Dance Now*, and in 1997, was awarded the *Chris de Marigny Dance Writers Award*. He is the biographer of Oscar winning composer Sir Malcolm Arnold CBE and of the founding father of British contemporary dance Sir Robert Cohan CBE, with whom he worked closely for the last 15 years of his life.

Now retired, he was previously a reader in Choreography and Dance at the University of Winchester and had worked professionally in the dance and music industry for over 35 years. After obtaining a BA Hons in Performing Arts from Middlesex University and a 'Master of Music with Emphasis in Dance' from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, his performance career saw him work with companies such as: Gordon Dance, Gravity, Nonesuch and Artlink and has helped develop roles for artists as varied as Rudy Perez, Lonny Gordon, Gus Solomon Jr and Walter Nicks. As a pianist he has worked with the Nevada Symphony Orchestra and as an accompanist for most of the major figures in dance, including Martha Graham, Robert Cohan, Merce Cunningham, Siobhan Davies, Viola Farber and Richard Alston.

Jackson has choreographed over 35 works which have been performed in the United Kingdom, Europe, and the United States. Also, previously a member of the education teams of London Contemporary Dance Theatre, Extemporary Dance Theatre and Ballet Rambert, Jackson has a keen interest in the education of Dance, which led him to creating the under-grad dance courses at Northumbria University and later the Winchester University (Paul Jackson, 2021).

Rebecca Johnson | Writer/Director

Rebecca Johnson is a London-based writer and film director. Initially graduating with a Fine Art degree, she became interested in community filmmaking. This interest was her focus for more than a decade, in particular working with the youth community in her Brixton neighbourhood. Numerous short films were produced by Johnson in this period, including 2009's multi-award-winning *Top Girl*. This film played at more than 30 festivals, including Berlin, Los Angeles, Rotterdam and Clermont Ferrand.

This led to Johnson embarking on her first feature, which was released in the United Kingdom to widespread critical acclaim. Her debut feature *Honeytrap* premiered at the London Film Festival 2014, resulting in Johnson being nominated for the *Best British Newcomer Award*.

Honeytrap was showcased overseas and had its US premiere at SXSW in 2015. This led to further screenings at festivals including Montreal and Urban World in New York. The film secured US distribution with Ava DuVernay's Array and can

now be found on Netflix. Due to *Honeytrap's* success, Johnson's career continues to develop, and she is now working on her own TV and film projects whilst directing episodic TV in both the United Kingdom and the United States.

Named as a *Screen International Star of Tomorrow* and mentored by Paul Greengrass under the *Guiding Lights scheme*, it is no wonder that Johnson was named as one of Hollywood's top 30 rising female directors on the *Alice Initiative list* and subsequently selected for the *BAFTA's Elevate Programme* (Rebecca Johnson – United Agents, 2021).

Our resident artists provide a spectrum across the Performing Arts and with each still generating work, this offers us an informative and up-to-date discussion. Earlier I have provided the highlights of each of these individuals but do research more deeply into them and their work as this will allow you to understand their musings in this book in more depth.

How to use this book

Although I encourage you to read the entirety of this book, each chapter is designed to be read in isolation allowing you to delve into the areas that initially intrigue you the most. Once reading into these areas, you may find you are inspired to read further as each component is unavoidably affected by another. Comprising four main discussion points, Chapters 2–5 will cover the topics below:

> *What is entertainment? Through the lens of visual performing arts*
> *Why we need entertaining?*
> *Entertaining the modern brain*
> *Are artists always striving to entertain? Process vs. outcome*

These four key areas of debate provide an array of viewpoints but are infiltrated with a reader task-based participation. Each chapter has within it moments where the reader is asked to consider a stand point, or to try out an approach within their own practice. Each of these tasks will be noticeable by the layout below:

TASK

Description of task

You can of course ignore these interactions and continue reading, but if you are a practising artist and want to build your knowledge then these tasks are designed to guide you, not torment you. I would recommend having a notebook at hand if you are partaking in the tasks, this way all your musings and explorations are documented in one place which you can utilise in the future. In addition, take the time to delve into the sources I mention or are outlined in the bibliography.

These sources have helped me with understanding the world of entertainment, but they will also provide you with further viewpoints and debate.

Each chapter has its specialism and as previously mentioned, you are at liberty to dip in and out as you please. The development of ideas does have some connection from each chapter to the next, and the tasks do build on previous ones at times. If you are wanting to embrace the full extent of this book, I recommended you read the chapters in order. If you have already thought about this topic in depth before and are looking for reinforcement or a re-spark to a debate, then the points below outline key areas of discussion in each chapter to help you with your navigation.

Chapter 2 starts off our exploration by looking at what could be perceived as definitions of Entertainment, and how we can agree or disagree with them. This being a subjective topic it will ultimately conclude with an array of answers. Our artistic pool of resident artists will share their thoughts too, and touch on the taboo of 'creating work to entertain'. The potential misconception of what entertainment is and the unfortunate response from others if you are seen to be 'selling' your work adds to the diverse interpretation of what entertainment is. These ideas will be collated to help you achieve a task of definition before we delve into the next stage of understanding *why* we need entertaining.

The premise of the next chapter is to cover the basics of the human need to entertain and to be entertained. Pulling on knowledge gained through research of neuroscience and of the psychology of aesthetics, you will be provided with fact, relatable research and musings. This will allow you to cross-reference these findings with the subject-specific discussions that were sparked in the previous chapter. It is important that you, the reader, has a basic understanding of the human need for entertainment, however, an overview will be provided in Chapter 3, with reference to publications that can help deepen this knowledge if you desire.

After gaining some basic knowledge of why we innately seek out entertainment and create it, Chapter 4 will bring to the forefront the ever-changing needs of humans, and how the modern brain is potentially oversaturated with entertainment. We will explore ways in which the brain can be kept engaged through live performance work with suggestions and examples from our resident artists. In response I will guide you to ask questions in relation to this about your own work and creative ideas, in a productive and analytical way. An area to be discussed in depth will be the use of digital interfaces as this is not only a key practice of mine, but also a huge factor in our day-to-day lives thanks to smart phones and easily accessible software. In addition, I will touch on the recent COVID-19 pandemic and how the implications of the way we have had to live through 2020 could potentially have a lasting effect on how we seek entertainment and how we create it.

Once we have considered the modern brain and the audiences we will encounter, we will zone in on the debate that having work defined as entertaining is often a result of the outcome and audience reception, but sometimes the process the artist has been on is what excites them more than the result. This discussion is prevalent amongst devising artists in the Dance and Theatre world, as a long process of research and development is often the precursor to a piece of work. Using

discussions and thoughts from interviews with artists in these fields, you will see how some wish to concentrate on the process of their work, therefore the outcome (whether it will entertain) is not always a factor. 'Entertaining' is also sometimes considered beneath those trying to generate 'meaningful work'. Therefore, is work always created to entertain, or is it produced purely as a side product of a process?

These thoughts will then be compared to those whose genre is not Dance or Theatre and you will witness different opinions. Are we seeing parity, or are we faced with different media focusing their attention more on either process or outcome? The chapter will raise questions and debates around this topic and guide you to consider your personal viewpoint. A series of reader-based questions is woven into the chapter, allowing you time to consider and reflect.

As this book concludes, it is hopefully a stepping stone for further conversation, and permission to hand over the debate to the reader to explore in avenues that you see fit. At no point does this book pretend to provide a definitive answer to what entertainment is or allude to having a formula for a successful piece of work that will entertain. I am providing you with ammunition to push the boundaries further and question your practice to enhance development. You may well be left with more questions than you started with, but this is what makes our field of work so exciting.

Before we can embark on the journey of Chapters 2–6, we need to take a moment to consider what sort of Artist we are, or what sort of Artist we *think* we are. As previously mentioned, you will encounter tasks whilst reading this book and as a lecturer I will often start a semester with an undertaking that helps an individual better understand themselves and their practice. It paves the way for deeper exploration and consideration, which we often do not take the time to do. As this book is about taking time to ponder, I challenge you to do this task, resulting in a more rounded understanding of yourself and your work.

TASK

What you will need	What to do
– Pen and paper (or digital equivalent) – A quiet space	– Answer the questions a–d as **quickly** as possible – Do not over-analyse – Take time to consider your answers for 1–4 – Remember no answer is incorrect

Questions

a. Is a circle just a circle? Why?
b. Is a space just a space? Why?
c. Is a creation just a creation? Why?
d. Did these three questions just allow a side of you to escape you were not aware of?
1. What is your specialism?
2. Do you cross over into other specialisms, what are they?
3. When you create do you know your aim?
4. Describe your practice in three words.

How did you do? Surprised by your answers for a–c? In an attempt for openness and connectivity, I will share my own answers with you.

TASK BY ALICE MARSHALL

a   Is a circle just a circle? Why?
No, a circle has infinite possibilities. It is continuous, it is smooth, it is categorised and it will never stop being a circle.

b   Is a space just a space? Why?
It depends on the space. A space that is designed to be just empty space is spacious, and a space. But a theatrical or instillation space has endless possibilities. But does this space have a spectator? As soon as it does the space becomes what they desire it to be. A space is more than space.

c   Is a creation just a creation? Why?
Is creation of life just a creation? Creation of life is the start of an unmeasurable journey. Therefore, any creation has the same parameters and possibilities.

d   Did these three questions just allow a side of you to escape you were not aware of?
I was not aware I felt that creation was unmeasurable and that I felt so passionately about a circle. These questions were easy to answer as I was not allowed to over-think, but on reflection I question why I answered in the way I did.

1   What is your specialism?
Dance. Specifically choreography.

2   Do you cross over into other specialisms? What are they?
I crossover into digital projection and physical theatre.

3   When you create do you know your aim?
I will have a starting point, a stimulus or a theme, but I often will not know what my aim is until I have begun a deeper process. I can reflect and be able to answer this honestly now, but in the flow of a project if asked, I would always say I know exactly what my aim and outcomes are to be. I have a stubborn nature to my creative practice, and this can be both a help and a hinderance.

4   Describe your practice in three words.
Energetic, structured, entertaining.

As with every new cohort I encourage you to do this task. As aimless as it may feel, you will find that further down the line it has allowed for you to zone in on what is important to you. The closer we are to knowing our own artistry, the closer we are to knowing what we want to do with it. Defining the concept of Entertainment is an enormous task, but we are now one step closer to opening

that door by peeking through the window into our own thoughts. By sharing my own answers with you, I hope you can start to understand what kind of artist I am too, and with this ammunition you can begin to build a picture of my style and preferences. In the same way I have shared, share your answers and debate them with others as this will equally allow growth on other levels. 'Great thinkers throughout the ages . . . have struggled with the whys, hows, and wherefores of consuming drama, comedy, sports, games, and other forms of divertissement and recreational engagement' (Bryant et al., 2021, p. 4). It is a vast topic and without sharing opinions we are limiting our exploration. For this exact reason is why I have invited an array of Artists to share their thoughts with us in this publication, Artists that are established in their careers but are happily still questioning their work and the world of Entertainment. Breadth and honesty will build an interesting read to start a further debate. This is a journey for us all, and we must start at the beginning, and what better place to start than with trying to find a definition.

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2

WHAT IS ENTERTAINMENT?
THROUGH THE LENS OF THE VISUAL PERFORMING ARTS

We live in a world where we endeavour to place aspects of our life in boxes or categories. We have our work, our home life, our hobbies, our chores. We continue this ethos when we want to define more intricate parts of our lives. We as humans like to provide definitions. They keep us informed and provide order in a sometimes–chaotic life. Therefore, the word 'entertainment', which many of us see as a category, is calling out to be defined.

So, how would *you* define entertainment?

TASK

Take your pen to paper and follow the below instructions:

- List three words that describe something entertaining.
- From this form a one-sentence definition that defines 'entertainment'.

* Remember there is no right or wrong answer here, be bold. *

As you stare at your self–made definition, are you surprised by the words, or is it exactly as you expected? This chapter will provide some insight into how entertainment can be defined, and your challenge is to see if, when presented with these thoughts, your definition changes or stays the same.

Any definition derives from an amalgamation of elements that, when added together, results in clarity of a defined form. Therefore, we must start to break apart

what is currently acknowledged as a definition, and what those components are. Seeking definitions for the English language leads us to the Dictionary, a source that I endlessly advice my students not to use for academic written work. But I feel in this instance it will provide us with a 'no frills' starting point:

> The action of providing or being provided with amusement or enjoyment.
>
> *(Fowler, 2012)*

Amusement, enjoyment. Words that if attributed to any of my work would make me extremely proud. So perhaps we have found our first two components. Were these words within your own definition, or maybe words that have a similar meaning? You could also completely disagree with this definition, and that is exactly why this minefield is so exhilarating to explore. It is a commonly used word but as McKee et al. (2014) say, the term 'entertainment' is used and accepted globally but there is no clear agreement about what the definition truly is. Individuality is the reason it is so hard to define. What is entertaining to you may not be entertaining to me, and when we look at this definition through the lens of just the visual Performing Arts world it is perhaps prudent to use the word 'engagement' rather than 'Entertainment'.

Often Artists feel that Entertainment is not terminology used in conjunction with their work or industry, and what they are far more invested in is the engagement. This can be on an array of levels: engagement of an audience, engagement of the artists within the process. But what it does make us consider is how we would perhaps define this word within our practice? Digging into this area may help us understand 'entertainment' in a whole other light.

TASK

Put your pen to paper and answer the below:

- List three words that describe something engaging.
- From these words form a one-sentence definition.

How did your answers differ to the task where you were considering the word entertainment? Perhaps what you have defined here could be moulded into your initial definition. The component of entertainment that is engaging is of extreme value, meaning it should not be left unconsidered. Sarah Brigham (2020) discussed that she wishes to entertain through her Theatre work, but the key aim is engagement rather than entertainment.

> Sometimes when you watch a really great play it's really hard! It pushes you to think in new and different ways, it provokes discussion, maybe even

anger. . . . But you enjoy that intellectual challenge. Sometimes it satisfies in a more traditional sense – you feel uplifted and that's great too.

<div align="right">*(Brigham, 2020)*</div>

Similarly, to Brigham, I feel that if my choreographic work is engaging, I am producing entertainment, and when interviewing those contributing to this book, the word engagement was used time and time again. But we need to ask ourselves how and why these words differ. Both can be interpreted in an array of ways, and yet again it falls to the individual. Their wants, their interpretation, their connection. In this book we are only looking into one very small area of entertainment, the visual Performing Arts, so perhaps we can find some parity on a smaller scale.

Defining entertainment and engagement

Defining something whether it is vast or small is subjective and often changes as your life and work shifts through time. Interviewing our Artists prior to and during writing this book has captured their thoughts on the topic in that moment of time. As this is an ever-changing area of discussion, these artists' views may well shift, but for the here and now let us dive into their analysis and see if that can start to help you define entertainment even further for yourself.

Paul Jackson's background is primarily in Dance and Music, but as we discussed the possibility of there being an industry-wide definition his response proves how individuality will still play a huge part even in a focused area of entertainment.

> I think in all art forms something entertaining is trivial and light-hearted and this is certainly how it is used in popular media. So, in art Beryl Cook's paintings are entertaining and fun as are say Mackenzie Thorpe's and they are not considered high art in the way that Tracey Emin or Cy Twombly would be. In music a composer who writes film music i.e. for the entertainment industry will struggle to be accepted as readily as a composer who only writes absolute music. So, Korngold, or Arnold or Williams are seen as less 'serious' than peers who did not write film music. It is here that the confusion arrives. The antonym of 'entertaining' is 'not entertaining' not 'not-serious'. That is the antonym of 'serious'. Andre Previn struggled to be accepted in the classical music world because he was tarred with having worked in jazz and Hollywood and Broadway, parts of the 'entertainment industry'. So too was the rock musician Frank Zappa. In dance Agnes de Mille longed for a reputation as modern choreographer but is remembered as the choreographer of Oklahoma, oddly that didn't happen to Hanya Holm who created much Broadway choreography but is still accepted as a modernist. Mathew Bourne, in his early days, because his works were entertaining amongst a mountain of depressing physical theatre works was seen as frivolous and light-hearted, only in more recent enlightened times is his work viewed more positively. So yes, entertaining is light-hearted fun, frivolous and frothy and not capable of plumbing the depths of the human condition, which is sad and wrong.

> The Vicar of Dibley ostensibly a comedy show had story lines of great pathos and depth covered in the guise of entertainment.
>
> *(Jackson, 2020)*

Jackson has opened our eyes to the conventional way of thinking about 'entertainment'. How many of you used the words *light-hearted* as part of your initial definition? It is a natural avenue to venture down. What the average person recognises as entertainment is often a thing that provides a pleasurable distraction from more pressing matters (Maltby, 2003), and *light-hearted* is certainly a tool that will do this. But this pre-conceived idea of what entertainment is creates an unfortunate taboo around the word, which we will explore later in this chapter. For the purpose of trying to find a definition, let us shelve the idea of 'light-heartedness' for now and zone in on specific genre-based realisations.

Rebecca Johnson, as a Film Director, sees the definition of entertainment initially influenced by the marketing of the film.

> A film has to be fiercely marketed to find its audience which means encapsulating genre and tone very succinctly in a single poster image and title. Common ways to communicate a film's entertainment value are through action images or images which convey strong emotion, e.g. characters in extremis.
>
> *(Johnson, 2020)*

What Johnson is alluding to here is the view that we can perceive a piece of work's entertainment value before we even experience the work. The bold posters and trailers of the *Avenger* movies in recent years are so full of colour and high-quality special effects that you are immediately taken to a place of security and expectation that that film will entertain you. These films also have a legacy to them as they are produced by *Marvel Studios* and Marvel has proved over the years that they create high-quality work. There is something to be said about credibility via past work and review that will make the prospective audience believe they will have a guaranteed ticket to being entertained. Therefore, in these instances, is the definition of what is entertaining different? Does it alter depending on who is delivering the engaging experience?

Sarah Brigham, Theatre Director and Artistic Director of Derby Theatre, feels there is parity between an expectation of what you may observe to gain entertainment, and who that experience is being generated by.

> Take *The Curious Incident of a Dog in the Night-time* by the National Theatre, an adaptation of a successful book, if another theatre company had done a version of it, and National did it really well, would it have had that massively wide appeal, would it have been as acclaimed . . . probably not. People will see it because it is National Theatre, they have an expectation that it will be entertaining. In olden days of Rep it was the reputation of those actors that brought in the audience and brought in the appeal. Engagement now comes through marketing and relationship now Rep is diminishing.
>
> *(Brigham, 2021)*

The Curious Incident of a Dog in the Night-time production Brigham mentions was a hit before it began with the entire season sold out before it even opened, and this was despite a three-star review in the Guardian which did not speak well of it. The reviewer felt its emotions were masked by special effects which in turn were repetitive, and the repetition was also found in the dramaturgy which Croggon felt did not enhance the work. The review highlights the good acting and design but ultimately felt 'the adaptation was effectively an animated book, rather than a translation into theatre, and so plays heavily towards audience expectations rather than surprise' (The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time: Review, 2018). Playing to audience expectation is how the company has kept afloat all these years, and the fact this production was a hit before it began brings us back to the point that reputation will take you a long way.

The National Theatre has a huge reputation built from years of Rep, as Brigham mentions, but has managed to keep this credibility by continuing to generate enticing work once Rep started to become a thing of the past. We could argue that this continuation of high-quality productions has been achieved because they are attracting funders, designers and artists of high calibre because of their history. These collaborators wish to be accredited with a credible company. This relationship that Brigham mentions is key, and if you can market that well, this strengthens your already strong status and continues to feed into the audience's expectations of satisfaction. In this instance one could have a definition of entertainment as 'a piece of work generated and produced by reputable companies and performers.' This clearly outlines what Johnson and Brigham have observed are attributes that an audience will conclude is worth watching. But we could argue that maybe what is key in the successes discussed are in fact at the first level of the creation, the collaboration.

Having more than one artistic brain involved with the process of a piece of work is extremely common in our field. I am a Choreographer, but my choreography could not materialise without my collaborating with dancers, lighting designers, musicians and designers. To have our ideas fully realised needs collaboration, so are we right in concluding that a definition of entertainment must have the word 'collaboration' within it? For some, working alone is what drives them, but can an artist ever truly work alone? Even one that actively avoids working with others has to showcase their work at some point, and that showcase often has to be organised by another, or if not, an audience will then interact, which in itself is a form of collaboration. Rob Vale with his brother Matt Vale produces large-scale video projections for an array of events through their company Illuminos, and this naturally results in an array of individuals and companies joining together to make large-scale outdoor work occur.

> In our work that is so often collaborative, the act of defining what form this entertainment takes is a huge part of the work, trying to bring together different creative approaches into a coherent whole, that hasn't been mixed together to produce a dull grey, but instead holds within it all the original colours as a new and wonderful palette.
>
> *(R. Vale, 2020)*

Successful collaboration is hard, and what Vale is alluding to here is that if you allow each creative contributor to have enough space to realise their ideas, then when they are brought together, be it at final form or discussion form, there is more chance of developing a coherent piece of work. If they are thrown together with little thought, the palette becomes murky and consequently not entertaining. The form of 'the entertainment' is what Vale mentions will keep all ideas aligned. This often comes in the shape of an initial brief, or in Illuminos' case a specific building that they are to project onto. From such outlines, the creative team knows that it is to be an outdoor light festival celebration, or an opening ceremony of a sports event or a projection onto a clock tower. Categorising in this way makes the task of collaboration easier but having one person who oversees all the creative elements is what will make this successful. Often this is the role of a Producer in film work or live theatre work, but also maybe the role of a designated lead artist. With my own work my producer will make sure there is parity across the board, while I as Artistic Director will dissect the work to make sure it is still creatively what I desire as the lead artist. Making a piece of entertainment that is successful and engaging will have such scrutiny behind it, so the use of collaboration is perhaps a key aspect of a definition. Defining entertainment with consideration to interdisciplinary approaches could read as such: 'Entertainment is the outcome of a collaboration that showcases an array of talent and genres resulting in a unified piece of work'.

   If we are to truly measure entertainment and engagement and try and define it, then consider the audience's role in this. For something to be entertaining, it must be observed so that this label can be attributed to it. You could say an unwatched, or unobserved, piece of work stays absent of interaction so unable to engage is therefore not entertainment. With this theory in mind, perhaps the definition we seek is one that acknowledges the importance of the audience's role.

> 'Entertainment' is a very broad and complex term, but for us it sits some-where within what I think is its original meaning – to hold together; to take a group of people in a given moment and have them think only of what is happening there and then, awe, wonder, spectacle, to captivate, hold their gaze, bring them together in a collective shared moment that stays with them long after it has gone.
>
> *(R. Vale, 2020)*

Vale draws attention to the vastness of the term but builds on his idea around col-laboration being a key element, that we explored earlier, and analysing the col-laborative nature one has with the audience, one that brings them together in a collective moment of unavoidable engagement. Herd mentality will allow for most large-scale entertainment events to be far more exciting than they would be if observing on your own. The sentiment felt by a crowd is exaggerated due to the heightened feeling of the individual which is contagious. These emotions are felt as approval which in turn surges the overall audience engagement and increases the force of the enjoyment (Le Bon, 2017). Therefore, to evoke such a catalyst of

events, entertainment must be designed to bring a crowd together for this shared experience to evolve. Looking back on our discussion on how marketing, credibility and collaboration will draw in audiences, we could say that these factors must occur so that a crowd will arrive in one place at one time and spark the inevitable contagious feeling of unity and enjoyment.

> There is received wisdom in the Theatre world that if something is 'entertaining' then lots and lots of people will want to see it, therefore lots of people are engaged with it. But then some of the most entertaining work I have seen hasn't brought in a massive audience. It was still entertaining though because it had sat with me for a long time afterwards.
>
> *(Brigham, 2021)*

Brigham emphasises the importance of large audiences and highlights the shared knowledge that if something is considered entertaining it will then attract large audiences, which allows for the group mentality reaction to occur, heightening the entertainment value. Her view, however, is that although this received wisdom is true on some occasions, there is work out there that is just as entertaining but did not bring in large numbers. If a piece of work stays with you and you leave feeling entertained, then there is perhaps no reason to need that crowd mentality that may heighten your experience. A singular experience can be just as gratifying, but it is an experience, and one shared with the performers/or creators of the work. So, we do fall back to that shared experience notion, but on a smaller scale. It would seem to be truly entertaining a product is not just an experience it is a shared one. A definition that highlights the importance of this, be it on a small or large scale could be 'Entertainment is a product that is a shared experience for both the observer and the creators'. This definition focuses on the experience, which is a by-product of building a relationship, which Lahiv considers to be a key ingredient of entertainment, but 'it is just one component; it doesn't constitute the whole experience' (Lahav, 2020). We may be finding definitions, but each seems to have one focus, which on reflection is affected by the focus in the previous definition. What we are learning is that such a definition is multi-layered.

Through my conversations with some of our resident artists, we have pinpointed three definitions:

- Entertainment is a piece of work generated and produced by reputable performance companies and performers.
- Entertainment is the product of a collaboration that showcases an array of talent and genres resulting in a unified piece of work.
- Entertainment is a product of a shared experience for both the observer and the creators.

All have importance in the defining of Entertainment, but let us try and compress these ideas.

> **TASK**
>
> Put your pen to paper and do the below:
>
> • Taking the above three statements, condense them to generate one sentence using all the characteristics discovered.

Certainly not an easy task, and perhaps these are not areas you consider to be important in this definition. But you can agree it is and will be layered. For me a combination of the above would materialise as thus:

Entertainment is an interdisciplinary collaborative work from reputable artists, which results in a shared experience for all involved.

This amalgamates all that we have discussed, but it cannot be definitive due to the nature of the genres that generate entertainment. It is ever-evolving, ever-changing and therefore cannot fit within one definition forever.

> It means something different to every person. If entertainment is essentially 'activity that you enjoy' then it can be a political argument for one person and a song and dance for another.
>
> *(Brigham, 2020)*

Naturally as individuals we seek and observe different things, and this is why there is such an array of entertainment out there, or we may be entertained by the most obscure of things as Brigham mentions. It is down to the individual, and 'what holds the gaze of one might actively repel another' (R. Vale, 2020). Personally, I cannot help but be entertained when watching people fall over. That person falling had not collaborated with reputable artists or thought long and hard about the shared experience of the observers, they simply fell over and unfortunately someone was there filming it. This type of engagement, apart from showing my slightly callous side, highlights that something unexpected can be funny, and this is an ingredient of entertainment. What we need to use from our exploration into definitions is to find the components that result in collaboration, reputation and creating a shared experience. These will be more useful to use as creators, for acknowledging tools that entertain will enhance our work, and ultimately, our audience engagement. As Lahav mentions, entertainment is just one aspect of a larger aim 'which is to connect and provoke an audience into re-imagining the world or themselves within the world' (Lahav, 2020).

How to entertain an audience – personal case study

As artists we have an interest in how others work and create, this intrigue will help us build our own practice, and reflecting upon finding ingredients that will

make work entertaining is an avenue we can now dive into. In my own work I have purposefully sought to find a way to entertain a non-dance audience. This has consequently resulted in finding a formula that works with respect to human engagement through Dance. The most basic element that I use within my work to hold the audience's attention is human characteristics. We, as humans, recognise body language. We learn to read this before we even learn to speak. It is built-in and provides us with a base understanding to allow for interaction and social understanding. If I were to have a dancer in the space hunched over, head hung low, with their arms wrapped around themselves, the observer would immediately react to their sadness or despair. No words need to be exchanged, but the audience is already feeling something towards this figure. Engagement with a connection has occurred.

Characterisation can occur on many levels. It can range from a suggestion of a character right to a caricature of a stereotype. Choosing where you want a piece of work to lie comes as part of your research, but often for my work, I felt to portray characteristics to their full potential, I needed a story. A story or a loose narrative provides the audience with another line of support to help them connect with what is being presented. Connection is something we strive for as it will lead to engagement, which we can argue is an audience member being entertained.

Stories are in the very heart of society and engage humans. In my work I want to engage every audience member, every character, every human, what better way than to bring a story to life. The Ancient Greeks knew how to tell a good story, so I took one of their most well-known limit-pushing stories, 'Icarus', and used it to push the boundaries of fusing many art forms into a narrative family-friendly touring multimedia production. I took Dance and Digital Projection and married them with the harmonious wonder of music. The work demonstrated how projection can create the illusion of height and weightlessness, with imagery dictating the movement, and how the movement can dictate the imagery when the journey reverses, all seamlessly fused together by the constant of the music, resulting in a narrative. A formula emerged that can be utilised by many art forms. Take two forms, divide them by a third and a clear desired result will be born, in my case – narrative.

Could we take Figure 2.1 to make a formula for Entertainment? Perhaps your original definition had just three words, with one being a constant and the other two being harmonious with one another. Not a traditional formula, I know, but it does open the possibility that not just one notion is going to entertain us, it is always a cocktail of components.

$$\frac{Movement + Digital}{Music} = Narrative$$

FIGURE 2.1　A formula. Movement + Digital/Music = Narrative.

Using digital projection in *Icarus* was my experiment into the engagement of a 'modern brain' – more of which we will discuss in Chapter 4 of this book. I found that adding another art form into the mix provided a wider array of tools and devices to use to build the story and the characters. It also provided a new way of working during my process, allowing the imagery created be part of the movement, and to generate the choreography. Digitalisation is a widely recognisable form of Entertainment, therefore for me it was always going to improve my work and became a key component to my self-devised formula.

During the process of this work, I discovered a formula, but equally I knew that the characters were going to play a large part in the engagement of the non-dancer audience that I was seeking. Characterisation is a key factor in Brigham's work too as she believes that if you play to the truth of a character 'the audience will recognise in that character their own reflection, or the reflection of someone they know, and then that is what will hook them in' (Brigham, 2021). This draw is key in many artists' work but never more so than when you have a story to tell. My production followed the story of Icarus and his father Daedalus. Key words were attributed to each to generate a character profile that then in turn could be turned into a movement profile.

	Characteristics	Movement profile
Icarus	Naive	Openness/Movements that mimic
	Reckless	Off balance/Daring lifts/Limitless
	Young	Skittish/Fast-paced/Ever-changing directions
	Stubborn	Contained movements/Back turned
Daedalus	Protective	Engulfing/Large movements
	Innovative	Intricate movements/Consideration of space
	Risk-averse	Timid/Methodical
	Powerful	Expansive movements/Sustained

Reverting to my point that physicalising body language can engage your audience by creating an understanding of a character, you can see how the above allowed a movement vocabulary to emerge that would be readable. Icarus' movement was the opposite to Daedalus' which allowed for an even clearer vision as they each accentuated the other. But most importantly, they were recognisable, and this allowed for the audience to understand, connect, engage and ultimately be entertained.

Reflecting upon my own process and research, I conclude that to make a piece of Dance-work entertaining and engaging it needs to have a story, recognisable human characteristics and an unpredictable fusion of art forms. This is my formula and is not one that I consider correct or law across the board. But it does provide us with a few more words to add to the 'entertainment' definition pot: narrative, recognisable, unpredictable and a spectacle. Words that I consider are key features within my work that audiences have found entertaining. As an artist my perspective

is focused on the world of dance, so to fill our definition pot even higher, let us examine our resident artists work and how they approach entertaining.

Defining entertainment through your own work – our resident artists dissect

When in conversation with our artists, the question of what they consider to be key features of a piece of entertaining work often came to the forefront. As you can imagine, there were a range of answers, but below I have gathered key words and phrases that arose.

Observe Figure 2.2 on page 22 and consider your own standpoint on these statements.

A gorgeous array of descriptions that spark imagery and satisfaction. Seeing these ideas in a bite-size way really emphasises the complexity of trying to generate work that will entertain, but it also shows the breadth and individuality that can be explored, and for an artist this is extremely exciting. I believe in learning from example as it justifies people's opinions. I always encourage my students to research into artists that think and behave in ways they wish to aspire. So let us dive into the minds of our resident artists and see how their descriptions above materialise in the examples of their own work.

Rob Vale (with contribution from creative partner Matt Vale): Illuminos

Rob Vale's work through Illuminos is one with spectacle at the forefront, and with reviews that describe their work as 'digital alchemy', 'memorable', 'outstanding' and 'moved to tears', it would seem they are achieving their aim to engage the masses (Illuminos, R. Vale, 2018). So how do they do it?

> It's all about holding the gaze and engaging the viewer or participant. So, a huge variety of approaches can as it were 'entertain', but really that's about how engaged those watching or involved are – how much you've connected with them with what you've made. With our particular work, we are frequently creating visual spectacles that are large scale – building sized events. So, our work can 'wow' an audience initially through its sheer scale, and then in its transformation of a space or place that is already known and is revealed or transformed in a new light. A town hall becomes a giant animated clock or magician's theatre, a tower block transforms into a magical forest, mermaids swim through windows and lava pours from turrets. We talk a lot about the sense of wonder, of that feeling that we remember from childhood of the illusion, the magic, the 'how did they do that?' moment, that through our experience we find adults still crave as much as their children. Sound and vision working together also impact greatly, that swell of sound as a big moment occurs, a feeling of a whole space animating itself just for you.
>
> *(R. Vale, 2020)*

generous
(Lahav, 2020)

holds the gaze
(Vale, 2020)

Careful pacing of work
(Jackson, 2020)

challenge of character
(Johnson, 2020)

whole space animation
(Vale, 2020)

playful
(Lahav, 2020)

**Key features that
make work entertaining**

humours
(Lahav, 2020)

presentation
(Jackson, 2020)

sound and vision
working together
(Vale, 2020)

universal humanity
(Johnson, 2020)

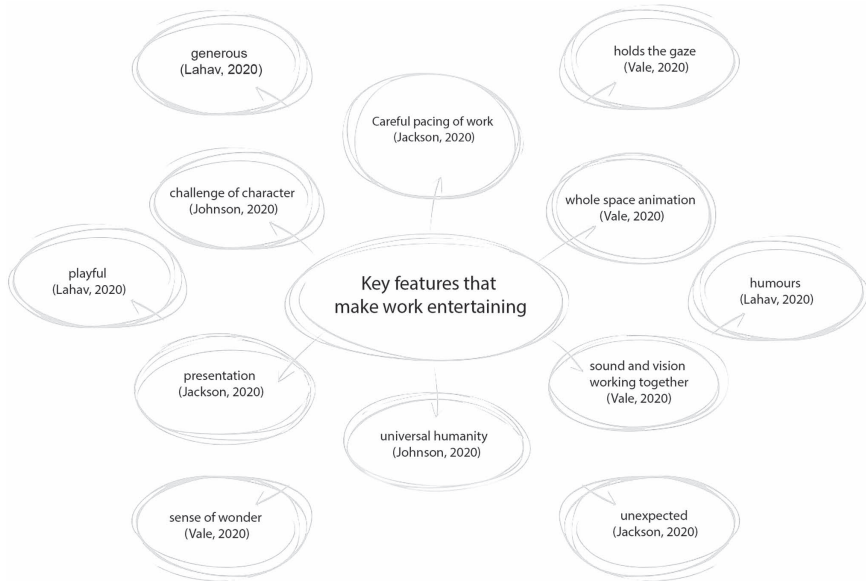sense of wonder
(Vale, 2020)

unexpected
(Jackson, 2020)

FIGURE 2.2 A thought shower of key features that the interviewed artists consider to make work entertaining.

Vale clearly has the audience experience at the heart of what he does, and to make their projects entertaining, he commits to making work that moulds that experience. Three key strands that are linked to establishing boundaries and then breaking them have come out of our discussion which he sees as vital to his work:

- Creating a 'wow' factor
- An illusion of magic
- Your senses being stimulated

In his work that 'wow' factor comes from the scale on which they work. *City of the Unexpected* in 2016 saw Illuminos collaborate with National Theatre Wales, Stage Sound and director Nigel Jamieson to bring to life the City Hall in Wales celebrating the Roald Dahl centenary (Illuminos, 2021). The largest arts event ever undertaken in Wales attracting over 120,000 people, and with their projection event closing the activity it certainly made you go 'wow'. Candy cascading down the building, with it melting away as chocolate, to finally transform into a large mechanical illusion made purely of sweets was nothing but magical. The illusion they generate captivates and engages and whisks any audience member back to a more innocent time of magic and wonder. All this is encapsulated by Illuminos' ability to stimulate your senses. Obviously, their work is a feast for the eyes, but as Vale mentions, the soundtrack adds that extra layer that makes their work so successful.

The music and sound are created by Matt Vale, brother and co-artistic director with Rob Vale of Illuminos. Although music on its own is not a genre we are looking into in this book, it is an art form that is used by a large majority of performing arts products, most noticeably in Illuminos' work. In conversation with Matt Vale, I asked if he intentionally composed sound-scores that would engage an audience:

> It depends on the visual palette of the work. If the visual is more abstracted the audio is too, and less diatonic (melodic and harmonic). These sounds engage quickly, they grab the attention of an observer as it is less melodic. If an audience does not realise there is 'music' then an abstracted approach is better at placing them in a 'feeling' or 'dynamic'. Using electronic sounds that aren't real instruments engages audiences in a less 'feature-film soundtrack' way, this is useful in our work when used alongside 'historic' imagery or simpler animations.
>
> But we must not forget the importance of pacing and rhythm. They play a huge part in keeping people engaged through, for example, long evolving visual passages, again a tool that is useful if the work is less story driven and more abstract.
>
> *(M. Vale, 2021)*

Subtlety would seem to be the approach Matt Vale uses when composing for their digital spectacles. Subtlety that leaves room for interpretation and opens doors for possibilities. This approach complements the more obvious video projections and would seem to be a winning combination. Illuminos make their work entertaining by creating a desirable atmosphere that is full of awe and wonder. With the overall experience being at the forefront of what they do, the multi-layered approach is ideal for large-scale events that leave an audience excited and wanting more. Breaking boundaries with unpredictability and subtlety is a winning formula for Illuminos and highlights how these elements can be perceived as entertaining.

Rebecca Johnson

We now go from spectacle to intricacy. Rebecca Johnson's film work focuses on realism and has grit to it, so it is no wonder that when in discussion with her about her approach to entertaining, her methods focus on meaning and moral:

> I find a huge breadth of films entertaining to watch but I have certain themes I return to as a filmmaker. When you're going to spend thousands of hours creating a film, you need to find a subject you can continue to mine. It's needs to be something where you keep discovering new facets and avenues of exploration over time. I like working with the challenge of characters who operate in moral, grey areas, particularly female characters, as I did in my feature HONEYTRAP. HONEYTRAP tells the story of Leila, a fifteen-year-old girl who sets up the boy who's in love with her for a gang murder. It originated from a real case, but I fictionalised it and created my own

characters, based on over a decade of working with young people in South London, where the story is set. Not everyone will know where the story is going from the start, but I worked on the basis that many people would, because they were familiar with the case. I started the film with a flash forward to the end and then took you back to the beginning to see how Leila got to where she did. It was a difficult balancing act to create a character who was both a victim and an agent. Leila made choices and even sacrifices in a perverse, tragically confused way. I needed you to feel the greater tragedy of sympathising with her rather than just condemning her. I needed you to understand her confusion, be right in it with her while at the same time inwardly screaming at her to stop, to turn back.

I like taking on material like this because it challenges you to empathise with people you would probably not have before you watched the film. So, your perspective shifts during the time you view it. Film can connect us with people who live very different lives and face very different choices. It can create a sense of universal humanity – and that is a tremendous power for good.

(Johnson, 2020)

Johnson's approach to creating work that is entertainment is via human connection and empathy. In a similar way in which I described my own artistic desire to use characters, Johnson strives to use characters that are recognisable but perhaps extreme cases that we in our daily lives do not encounter or wish to ignore exist. When watching Honeytrap, it is hard not to empathise with the characters that you know are in the wrong, the way Johnson presents them shows their humanity and vulnerability, and this is so compelling. The Guardian's Peter Bradshaw (Honey Trap: Review, 2015) agrees that the urgency of the work really hits you with a powerful punch. A punch of shame for the lack of trauma in your own life, and a punch of compassion forcing you to want to do more for those vulnerable in this world. This is not entertainment that makes you laugh or gasp in awe, it is entertainment that resonates, that sticks with you, that makes you question morality. Johnson's use of characters with moral, grey areas and truthful artistry is intricate and draws the captivated audience into a world they may well have wished to ignore. Truth is at the bottom of her approach and truth is something we can all connect with. Many of us perhaps seek out entertainment to hide from the truth, but a medium like film generally has realism at its core and directors like Johnson are there to keep us entertained by beautifully sculpting this innate connection we have with the truth.

Amit Lahav

From the truth to the embellished truth. Amit Lahav's work through Gecko Theatre often has humanistic stories at the centre of the production. But his multi-layered physical theatre style is one that brings you in and out of realism in an enchanting way.

If you don't engage the audience in a playful way, in a humorous way, in a generous way, they probably won't go where you want them to go.

Khalid coming out of the suitcase in *The Wedding*, for example, is very entertaining and very playful. At that point in The Wedding, it's incredibly important to relieve and release the audience at that point of high tension. They need an outlet, a point at which they can lean forward and say 'it's okay, we're in safe hands here'. The 'entertaining' aspect of Khalid's journey is also the gift that calls for an empathetic response to his plight later in the show. When Khalid is being exploited and abused, the audience is going to be on his side.

In every scene of The Wedding, you can pick out one part of it and think: that's the entertaining bit (whether it's the soundscape, the lighting, the use of language etc). There is always something on the plate for people to tuck in to, and this enables us to then take the audience to dark, intense, and sometimes confusing places.

Audiences might *just* be entertained by our shows, and if they are just entertained, that's okay. Perhaps it's not everything I'm hoping for but still, that's okay!

(Lahav, 2020)

In a similar way to Johnson's work in *Honeytrap*, Lahav's *The Wedding* explores the complexities of human nature, but rather than present truth and realism, the work uses playful choreography and staging to pull you from the real and let you go on a much-needed embellished moment. Lahav uses his work to debate serious themes and scenarios, but as he describes he keeps the audience entertained by playing with reality and pushing them from high tension to playfulness. This ping-pong approach is evident in all his work and is one of the reasons I personally am so compelled by them. I never know what avenue he will take us down next, and whether he is going to make me laugh or cry. This unknown is exhilarating and complements the many layers of collaboration his shows have.

Previously, we discussed collaboration being a key word in the definition of entertainment, and Lahav explains how he works to have so many layers that any audience member will find an element they can engage with at any given time. He does not use this collaboration to simply entertain though, he sees it as a tool to captivate and then he can pull them from their safe space to a dark and unnerving section, before popping them back to the place where they can latch onto what compels them. Perhaps a risky approach, but certainly one that works due to his clever direction and thought-through collaborations.

Gecko's work often is not what you expect to witness when first reading the marketing for the production, and in conversation with Lahav it would seem 'just to entertain' is not what he is striving for. A handy side-product perhaps, but he wants to transport and provoke the audience. Arguably these aspects are elements of entertainment too, but not the commonly considered definition of light-heartedness, they are elements that derive from a place of deeper understanding with respect to what entertainment can be. Lahav's work is always a marvel and a masterclass in collaboration of art forms, and his awareness of what the audience experience should eventually be is what makes his work so engaging. Attention

to detail in theme and process bends Lahav's audience to his needs, and the use of playfulness and humour captures them so he can then take them down an unknown path. This I would describe as 360 entertainment.

Sarah Brigham

Brigham's work, like Lahav's work, is mainly theatre based. So, the use of collaboration and intrigue are at the forefront of what she does too. But the difference between these two artistic directors is that Brigham also runs Derby Theatre in the United Kingdom. Her own work is not the only work to be shown, and in fact Lahav's work has been to Derby Theatre on countless occasions. Therefore, to provide variation to our examples, Brigham and I discussed what kinds of work she looks to book and what is the key element that she considers makes them entertaining.

> When you are running a venue, you are doing two things. There is you as the artist, which is going to want to engage, inspire and excite artistically. Then there is you as the businessperson, saying 'I know that title is going to sell' or 'that's on trend at the minute, so it is going to bring people in'. So, you are balancing those two things all the time in terms of what you choose to showcase.
>
> When you choose something, whether it's a big piece of heavy drama or whether it's a piece of light comedy, in terms of the terminology of entertainment, you are of course thinking about the key thing which is about how is the work relevant?
>
> We had a production of *One Man, Two Guvnors*, which is a farce, and it is about showing up stereotypes within our society that we all know to be true. I knew that play would engage and entertain people because they would find it funny, and through that, they would come to a realisation about something bigger.
>
> Then when you are looking for a big drama, I suppose it's not dissimilar. It's about showing something that we know to be a universal truth. It will engage people and therefore they will find it entertaining.
>
> *(Brigham, 2021)*

Brigham pinpoints the use of truth being a factor she looks for in work. Johnson focused on this aspect too but was coming from the angle of truthful representation, whereas Brigham is commenting on universal truth recognisable in exaugurated forms. A farce will amplify scenarios and characteristics that we can call to mind, to allow the audience to ridicule the norm. *One Man, Two Guvnors* is no exception with stereotypes emerging of gangsters and the upper class, all wrapped up in a convoluted plot that relies on disguise, deception and comedy. The story certainly would be unbelievable if we thought it to be truth, but the truth lies in the nod to society and characters that we can identify in our own lives. This will capture an audience because of the relatability, this is a key element of great entertainment and if the audience feels an emotional connection with a character or scenario, it will result in more engagement and investment in the work (Del Vecchio, 2012).

This investment is what Brigham is aspiring to instigate when she mentions capturing the audience through farce to ultimately have a realisation about something bigger. Themes in *One Man, Two Guvnors* such as jealousy and loss are used in jest but have deeper meaning allowing those that wish to reflect the opportunity to do so. Programming a piece of work like this is twofold for Brigham. It is a widely acclaimed play that many know is a comedy, so this will draw in a profitable audience. But it is also a well-scripted and layered play that can open avenues the audience had perhaps not realised it could. She is upholding the side of her job that is to keep an income stream coming through the theatre door but is also satisfying her artistic integrity as it is a production that is of a high quality and allows for artistic decision and variation.

Brigham finally mentions that if an audience is engaged, they will be entertained. Running a theatre has one main goal which is to showcase work that audiences will pay to see. In this chapter, we are trying to identify what is entertaining so that we can understand what audiences will engage with, and Brigham's job at Derby Theatre has the same objective. It is refreshing to hear her say that comedy is entertainment, but so is drama. The taboo around the word entertainment can sometimes make us believe anything with a deeper meaning is not going to be put in that classification, or it is too 'above' such a status. This unfortunate perception is historically one of hierarchy with entertainment being seen as sinful and therefore more lowly than profane art (Bratton et al., 2003). Brigham is allowing her venue to be seen as entertaining her audiences, but making the programme varied enough that an onlooker would not incorrectly presume entertainment is one type of product.

For me this is why defining entertainment is so important. Lahav and Brigham's influence in the theatre world allows them to be part of the redefining and re-educating of the perception of entertainment. As artists and readers of this book, we can reflect upon the vast examples and ideas that we are exploring that constitute entertainment and start to re-align our thoughts and those of others too. A definition is never indefinite, but it certainly can be a tool for further exploration and innovation.

Paul Jackson

From complex layered Theatre productions, we move to focus on the genre of Dance which can often be simpler in presentation, so potentially harder to use a wide range of entertaining tools, if the choreography is the main aim of your showcase. Jackson's specialism is Dance and his thoughts on what not only makes a piece of choreography entertaining offer parity to what has previously been explored, but also provides us with three clear approaches to trial in our own work.

> It is about careful pacing of a work. Too much fast movement is as wearing as too much slow movement but a careful pacing of the two and the gradations between will make time pass quickly and hopefully the work will be entertaining.

> The unexpected helps as well, take early Cunningham work such as *Summer Space* or *Antic Meet*, one never knows what will happen next, they are unpredictable, and one is engaged throughout, and they are over before you know it.
>
> The presentation by the performers is important too, no one would ever say that work they found entertaining was performed by performers who looked bored or not engaged. An unengaged performer is enervating for a viewer.
>
> *(Jackson, 2020)*

For Jackson, carefully paced, unpredictable choreography performed by engaged performers will result in an entertained and engaged audience. With an extensive career Jackson has been involved with and observed many pieces of dance work, in particular those of Bob Cohan. These years of observation have allowed him to very succinctly articulate what factors are at play when you are captivated by a piece of choreography. These are simple tools to use, and ones that I feel can be utilised across the genres of performing arts. If we generalise each of Jackson's points, you can see how they can be applied.

Careful pacing

Your work can ebb and flow. Have moments of reflection and stillness, then moments of chaos and turmoil. Try and avoid swapping and changing too often, but allow each scenario to blend into the next, but avoiding a monotonous approach that can lead an audience to a place of disengagement.

Try and draw the journey of your piece of work. With one line start at the beginning of your piece and let the wave go up and down in terms of predicted pace. Is the path varied enough?

Create the unexpected

Pick the unpredictable route, or outcome of your work. If you are working with characters make decisions that are against their pre-conceived stereotypes, or let your audience be led down a path of safeness, to only be pulled from it via chaos. In addition, use unexpected designs or special effects that will shock the audience. Similar to the pace of the work, you want to keep them on their toes so that the work is harder to predict.

Performers who are engaged with the work

Cast your work appropriately, but ultimately allow the performers to have ownership over the work. This can be done within the process, or the final realisation could have elements that are realised by them and not set. This ownership will lead to investment that will read as engagement to an audience member.

Perhaps these instructions are most useful for work that is performed, rather than work that has a static end product, but from the above I encourage you to start to apply them to your own creative work and thoughts. Ultimately, all that has been described is stopping the audience's attention from wandering and is validating the experience by a shared investment from both the performers and the audience. Jackson's analysis has allowed for an example that is unaffected by theme and intention and looks at the mechanics. In our own work, it is good to reflect in this way as every piece of work that is created is just building blocks that come together to make a machine that ejects entertainment.

We have dissected the thoughts of our artists, and it is becoming apparent that what is considered to be entertaining is vast, and that quality is often at the base of what defines something as such. If a piece of work is of a high standard then there will be elements that any audience member can engage with. This can be said of any piece of work or outward facing product in most sectors, if enough skill and thought has been applied then it will grab the observer's attention. We will discuss quality in more depth later in this chapter, but by providing you with artist-led case studies you can begin to piece together parity and thin down the infinitely diverse approach to entertaining that goes wider than just producing 'good work'.

Four unified phrases, which are tried and tested in generating entertainment, have emerged from our foray into the minds and work of some of our artists, and highlight approaches that can be utilised in creating work.

- A display of truth
- Unpredictable and unexpected
- Well-structured
- An all-immersive experience

These ingredients feed into our previously outlined definitions. A display of truth and an all-immersive experience link to the definition we penned about entertainment being a shared experience. Truth is a tool that we can all relate to as we live in a world of truths. Most often if a recognisable feeling or situation is portrayed, we have experienced it, as have others, and that shared past experience brings the audience together. It being all-immersive in the same instance cannot but help that experience being heightened. The ingredients of unpredictability and a product having a sound structure feeds into our definitions that looked at collaboration, talent and reputation. To be able to successfully use unpredictability within a work you need to be practised at it and having a structure that ebbs and flows is the careful management of an array of artistic fields. Talent, which in turn leads to reputation, allows for an effective use of these approaches. As we bring these ideas together, the task of defining entertainment starts to feel less gigantic. You can begin to see how each idea links to the next, and this is due to us all having the same goal: to entertain. But this word 'entertainment' has many a connotation, and it has even been considered lowly. Admitting you are creating work to generate

entertainment is becoming increasingly hard to do, and this is due to the taboo around what entertainment is considered to be.

The taboo around the word 'entertainment'

Trying to define what constitutes entertainment via artistic work allows us to see how we can entertain and engage. But the word itself is not widely used in our field, with engagement being a preferred option. Why is this? Since the invention of the television that is perceived as entertainment has shifted. Historically, the entertainment industry was used as a propaganda tool in most America–related wars (Slide, 2007) and this segued into advertising and commercial gain. The use of branding and marketing to promote and fund has left a society that is inundated with a flashy and budgeted approach to entertainment. Reality TV, soap operas and even pantomimes have become commercialised and produce work that can be seen as valuing quantity over quality. These forms of engagement have their place and certainly are enjoyable, and to a level addictive. 'The media create expectations for us, so ordinary life seems increasingly boring and we grow more dissatisfied. Thus, we crave more of the media's sensational entertainment' (Winter, 2002, p. 38). But these types of 'fantasy' can be seen as 'trashy' and 'dumbed down', which devalues the word 'entertainment'. Therefore, if you as an Artist say you wish to entertain your audience, there is a certain amount of snobbery that you are met with due to the misconception of what is now considered to be entertainment. Historically, the underlying problem has been the arts not affording benchmark status in their own right, therefore relying on the specifications outlined for other disciplines and practices (Walmsley, 2011). The products of commercialised entertainment are extremely popular, and this approach to engaging an audience is what many consider to be 'entertainment'. Because the arts get 'lumped into' categories, the miseducated see this popular output and presume that any artist that wants to entertain will produce a similar outcome. This subsequently has caused a taboo around the word 'entertainment', which is in turn stopping audiences, and some artists, truly understanding the power of entertaining.

> Entertainment is an interesting concept when it comes to film. It can have negative connotations. In Europe, I think there's sometimes a sense that entertainment means dumbing down, that content which is entertaining cannot simultaneously be profound. But of course that's not true and I don't think that belief holds in the US or in other markets when you think of Korean or Chinese cinema. Entertainment to me means engagement which happens at a sensory and emotional level. But that doesn't mean that there can't be something profound happening beneath that at the same time. And actually, I think the idea that the intellect can be separated from the emotions and the senses is a false dichotomy.
>
> *(Johnson, 2020)*

Johnson acknowledges the unfortunate perceptions of the concept of entertainment, but interestingly highlights how she feels this differs from continent to continent. The idea that something is entertaining if it is dumbed down is, in her opinion, not the case in the film industries in Asia and the United States. Perhaps their audiences are better educated than our own and are aware of the vastness of the term. Or it simply could be language providing them with a broader list of terminology to pinpoint a specific avenue of entertainment, rather than everything sitting under the same umbrella. But the differences between Europe and these continents is a cultural one. We have different cultures so inevitably have different values. In Chan's *Chinese Entertainment*, he outlines how entertainment in China historically came from a place of 'belongingness, personal anchorage, social location and . . . existential well-being' and that 'entertainment was indeed serious business' (Chan, 2014, p. 2). The importance has clearly continued into Chinese modern culture and could be the reason that it is taken more seriously.

If it is simply a case of understanding what entertainment truly is, then perhaps our society needs re-educating. If other cultures can look upon it favourably, then there is no reason why our own cannot. As Johnson says, what we are ultimately trying to describe is something that is engaging on an emotional and visual level, and that layers of profoundness are not to be overlooked. But even in the last century, popular entertainment was a land in which the postmodernist thinker was not welcome (Slide, 2007), so how are we ever to evolve the understanding of this term if the forward-thinking creators are not allowed to push its boundaries. This hurdle can be jumped by re-educating our audience's perception of the importance of entertainment that is more than just easily digestible reality television. 'Broadening access to the arts, whether through audience development, co-creation or participatory projects, can therefore only broaden our knowledge of the conditions and articulations of cultural value' (Walmsley, 2011, p. 99). Participatory community-based projects are certainly on the rise, and we can take these ventures as opportunities to re-shape people's understanding of entertainment. By targeting your audience's development of understanding, you are also building your audience development strategy. Creating a better understanding of what you and your work provide will in turn supply you with a new way of building your audience; this is different to the standard marketing and networking that we have learnt to use over the past few years (Danoff Fanizza, 2015).

So how do we go about doing this? We use interfaces that they consider to be entertainment and subtlety draw them into our definition of it. 'A quality presentation, heightening the "buzz" and making people feel included and welcomed into the place of performance is vital' (Walmsley, 2011, p. 107). Once witnessing our work they will see there are layers and profound thought that they can reflect upon if they choose to, but that we also use imagery, digital interactions and humour, but it is not done in a crude way, this is entertainment on another level. In turn we then re-educate other artists' views on the word 'entertainment'. By showcasing work that we consider to fit this description, and work that is not too commercialised,

other artists may start to disregard the popular culture's influence on the word entertainment, and potentially release the taboo.

These thoughts are idealistic and show a naivety that audiences will want to listen and change their perceptions. It would be wonderful to simply be able to re-educate via just our work. But the deep-rooted misconception of what entertainment is leaves us with a much larger battle than I had initially realised. To deepen our knowledge, let us focus on one area of the performing arts that has potentially seen the largest hit with regard to commercialisation. The Theatre world sees an array of work come through its doors, but the theatre itself is a business and needs to bend to the wants of the audience to survive.

> When I ran the Point, I was propelled into a world where I realised that the art form of dance was heavily considered, it mattered. But in theatre we have come to a place where we have become a little too commercial in some respects. It is all about entertainment, but entertainment in the respect to bums on seats, tick boxes and it can then be thrown away. Come and experience it, but if you don't really remember it tomorrow it doesn't really matter.
>
> I think that is where the word 'entertainment' has been bastardised. But to me Entertainment can be something really challenging. Something that really gets you to think. But I feel in the world of theatre we have got to the place that if the audience are not laughing and joking as they leave the theatre it is not entertaining, so therefore we have not succeeded. This is a real challenge for the Theatre Industry to consider.
>
> *(Brigham, 2021)*

It is considered that many now do not interact with theatre of high artistic quality. The commercialisation of theatre is a concern for many of us, including those of us who may not regularly go to the theatre (Herbet and Leclercq, 2000). The idea that you have only entertained if you are left laughing, or that once seen it can be forgotten is not something we often as artists strive to have occur when generating work. These ideas de-value what we do and the need to tick boxes is the catalyst for this way of thinking. The kind of work that is causing our artistic concern is what is best 'described as popular or commercial theatre – theatre that is recognised for its box-office value rather than for its artistic worth. The plays produced have a combination of sentimentality and farce' (Herbet and Leclercq, 2000, p. 212). These productions are considered to bring in the money, but what do they do for the art form? Does the Theatre owner, or the audience even care about the de-valuing of what is considered to be theatre? Brigham clearly does as she runs Derby Theatre, but when in conversation it is clear she always has an inner battle between 'bums on seats' and 'thought-provoking brilliance' (Brigham, 2020).

This leaves us with a challenge. How can we manage to still be seen to be entertaining our audiences whilst meeting the needs of our venues? It affects not just those producing the work but also the performers, designers and writers. There is a

feeling that writers are starting to feel compelled to write plays that will be 'safe' to ensure 'bums on seats' (Wiltshire, 2015). It is always at the discretion of an artist to choose what parameters they wish to make their work within, but a limitation like this could see the art of the play fading into something unrecognisable, and perhaps no longer about quality. These thoughts spark debate around where to find new and fresh plays if the theatres are programming safe work with a commercial edge, 'where are we to find exciting new playwrights and what we are doing about the clashes in the debate between art and creativity and box office receipts?' (Wiltshire, 2015, p. 131). This debate tends to divide opinion and the side that conforms often is left high and dry. By succumbing to the needs of a venue you run the risk of being considered to be generating work of a lower standard, and with the assumption 'that commercialised entertainment is the *Other* of the art of theatre' (Bratton et al., 2003, p. 8) that snobbery previously mentioned rears its ugly head. There has to be a balance, or at least an understanding that commercialised theatre is not all bad. You can do it well, you can obtain audience numbers through approaches we have previously discussed in this chapter with our resident artists. But the deterrent is the lack of respect from fellow artists that unfortunately comes with 'conforming', or admitting you want to generate work that is commercially entertaining. 'Some cultural critics have argued that theatre is limited by its association with commercialism and consumerism, and that its highly codified theatre practices and intimidating buildings restrict its potential to question contemporary social values' (Govan et al., 2007, p. 7) but I do not see this as true. They are at the heart of the here and now, and sometimes addressing social values can be done subtly, or not at all if you simply want to provide a festive show for children at Christmas. At the end of the day, Theatre exists because the artists who want to write and generate theatre want to share an idea or sensory experience in a room with other people (Wiltshire, 2015). Without this drive there would be no work, so does it really matter what the writer's or producer's aim is with respect to high audience figures, as long as work is being made?

The theatre world shows us how one opinion can shift how a new generation of artists may be brought up to think. The battle between commercialised and quality theatre will be around as long as people see and think of entertainment as light-hearted and disposable. If we are allowed to feel our work is valued no matter what our desired outcome, then we will be able to distribute value across the board. This in turn may stop the incorrect labelling of work and lead to a more unified approach that sees everyone striving for entertainment, because they understand that entertainment can be far more than just a laugh and high audience numbers.

Entertainment is varied and comes down to a question of taste. We have such an array because what one person finds entertaining another may not. Light-hearted work may be exactly what one person desires, where another prefers a crime thriller. If you really question what you find entertaining, you will realise you are breaking away from the tabooed version of what entertainment is perceived as. Paul

Jackson was asked to do exactly this and discovered his likes were more diverse than he had realised.

> When I first thought of the word entertainment, I thought something that was light-hearted and fun but on further consideration I realise that I find a lot of forms that come from diverse disciplines entertaining. I personally loathe Strictly Come Dancing which is entertainment for millions but find Cunningham very entertaining which would be the reverse for millions.
>
> The more I thought about it I think it has to do with time and the passage of time. Time in something I would classify as entertaining goes quickly whereas for something I would not classify as entertaining it would drag on interminably. Interestingly in Valerie Preston-Dunlop's *Dance Words* (2016) the term is only mentioned once under Entertainment Value (pg 551) where Gillian Lynne is quoted as 'Is it getting boring?' Is it going on a bit?' I think this supports my feeling that it has to do with time and the passage thereof, something entertaining time passes quickly, something not entertaining time drags and can often seem interminable.
>
> *(Jackson, 2020)*

Even someone who has extensive knowledge and experience in the performing arts sector immediately thinks of light-heartedness when considering what is entertainment. Is it any wonder that we are faced with this taboo when even those in the field have to pause and think to dive deeper and understand there is more to the word than just a frivolous piece of content that passes the time? Jackson mentions the difference of opinion from one person to the next, of what constitutes as entertainment in terms of product, and what this whittles down to is being sufficiently satisfied with a piece of entertainment that will effectively hold your attention and pass your time.

Time, as Jackson mentions, is a key factor as to how an individual can determine if they are being entertained. I am sure we can all recall a time when we were observing a piece of performance work and we looked a little too often at our watches, or our mind wandered to the ever-growing pile of washing back home. In these instances, we could determine that we were not being entertained. But this will not be because the piece of work had not conformed to what is considered to be commercial entertainment, or that it was not taking you on a whirlwind of personal discovery. It will have not held your attention because it did not spark you, personally. The individual tastes of our audiences is often our biggest challenge and therefore we frequently aim to present them with an array of opportunities to engage in our work in different ways. This is materialised in work that is considered universally entertaining. Take, for example, a hit musical like *The Lion King*. Millions of people have seen this work across the world, and it still attracts new audiences. Why? Because it has a little of something for everybody. An exciting story for the story lovers, vibrant costumes and set for the those who engage visually, energetic and captivating choreography for the movers, heart-wrenching and

heart-warming music for the musical lovers, and all originally from a Disney film which grabs the heart of every inner child. Because of the many layers, time passes quickly when you watch this work, and it is undoubtedly entertaining; I would even go as far to say it is commercialised. It has been layered to bring in money. Does this mean that it is not worthy of our credit? No, certainly not. The taboo here does not exist, because it has gone past the point of criticism, it is a success.

> It comes down to the rigour inherent in the creation of the work. If it's considered, developed carefully, knows what it's trying to achieve, and crucially seeks to engage its audience, then the taboo vanishes. 'Purely to entertain' doesn't really mean that, it's a way of saying all air and no substance, without any depth or resonance – in other words, if it doesn't hold the gaze, it in fact doesn't entertain at all.
>
> *(R. Vale, 2020)*

Rigorous work is informed so will consequently produce quality. A thorough process is sometimes key to the success of a work, and we will delve deeper into the importance of process in Chapter 5 but having a detailed one allows for collaboration and imagination to be at the forefront. With such a process your intention can certainly still be to entertain, the taboo around the word should not stop you aiming for it, you just have to be careful not to fall into the trap of churning out material that is quick and easy to digest.

> If it is light/funny, we can sometimes take less care over it. If you look at Pantomime, in general, although there are still some very good productions, it is a shadow of its original art form. Bit cheap, bit rubbish, rehearsed in two weeks, done for the money. The care hasn't been taken over it because we have gone 'well it's just entertainment'.
>
> *(Brigham, 2021)*

Pantomime is a unique theatre experience in the United Kingdom, and one that some other countries find hard to understand or quantify, it can be as confusing to tourists as cricket! (Hughes, 2014). But it certainly is a cultural tradition, and you would be hard pressed to find a UK resident that has not seen a pantomime of some sort in their lives. But as Brigham points out the need to generate a pantomime to provide Christmas income is fraught in some theatres, leaving little turn-around time which pulls the quality down. These results do not help our argument that the taboo around entertainment is not valid.

   The term pantomime was first referenced in the Roman Empire when describing performers who presented popular bawdy and funny entertainment (Hughes, 2014). This style continued to be attributed with this word, and as time passed, the UK theatre world used it as a commercial product (Taylor, 2007) so this consumer labelling has never really left it. Modern pantomime is driven by 'big names' taking lead roles to pull in the 'ordinary' audience. These can be soap opera stars, pop

stars and even reality TV stars. 'The use of star performers from television or sport personalities creates an intertextual association that reinforce the audience's sense of sharing in the comedic reference to a world it knows' (Taylor, 2007, p. 138). Their names and professions are what are considered to pull in the audience, and the fact that perhaps performing on the stage is not their forte is not always considered. Actors who have trained and built their professional experience can understandably get frustrated with this approach to casting, and in turn we can question the quality being produced if the stars are not trained performers. These thoughts are concerning because Pantomime is a huge part of the entertainment industry so consequently what they produce is considered to be entertainment.

As Brigham mentioned there are Pantomimes produced that are of a high quality with headlining stars that are indeed musical theatre stars, and actors. They also have ample budget to have multi-media interfaces and innovative sets and costumes. 'Pantomime may seem flippant on the surface, but there are often hidden, unexplored depths' (Hughes, 2014, p. 13) and these productions have taken the time to showcase these hidden strengths and allowing for quality work to be presented. If such an attitude could be applied across the board, then perhaps this misconception of 'well, it is just entertainment' may start to fade. But what you want to avoid is losing the essence that an audience craves and to disrupt the tradition that is pantomime; this I fear, is a fine balance.

Similarly, a popular event in the entertainment industry is a firework display. Although these are not sitting within the genre this book is ultimately exploring, they are worth discussing as there has recently been a shift and they are becoming less sought after due to the environmental implications. A study published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* highlighted that a higher level of co-pollutants and fine particulate matter are recorded after a firework display, and these not only pose a risk to our health by entering our bloodstream, but also contribute to air pollution that is a factor in global warming (Mousavi et al., 2021). Because of the heightened awareness of environmental issues, some organisations look for an alternative but an event of the same scale is still required. The brief is the same as if it were a firework display: a spectacle that will grab the audience's attention and in its traditional sense, entertain. So yet again you are trying to find a balance between upholding tradition and allowing artistry to be of importance too.

Large-scale outdoor events are Illuminos' forte and co-director Matt Vale felt it was important to share with me that sometimes you must follow a brief and run the risk of being perceived as just entertaining:

> We frequently create work for the finale of an event, replacing the slot often used for fireworks, so we have to fill that same 'entertaining' role while also satisfying a funding justification (public art engagement or historic reference etc) and also our own artistry.
>
> *(M. Vale, 2021)*

Vale outlines the conundrum they face as artists to keep everyone involved happy. An audience will expect a 'wow' factor that fireworks would have provided, but Illuminos would still want to show innovation and connectivity with the over-riding project. Producing something that is 'just entertainment' is no longer a factor here. Perhaps that is what some may perceive the outcome to be, but there will inevitably be other layers due to the wishes and talents of the artists. It comes down to audience perception.

> It is all about context and audience. Within projection mapping for example, there's quite a lot of work out there that derives its content from quite abstracted start points- isolating areas of architecture, playing with the structures as if they collapse and rise up, black and white lines and colour fluctuations and so on. On one side these might be looked at as explorations of the artistic form, of seeing what the technology can offer, analysis of the compositional possibilities. On the other they could be seen as 'just' light shows- pretty patterns and shiny, gaudy whizzes and bangs.
>
> *(R. Vale, 2020)*

Interpretation of a work will always be vast; this is the beauty of what we do. As Vale highlights, if you are faced with an array of imagery and choose to build a meaning or feeling from it, then that is your choice. Equally if you look at this imagery and view it in the same way as a firework display, then you may not get meaning from it, but you are still being visually stimulated and entertained. Generally, there are very few restrictions on how audiences can interpret live work, but anyone and everyone is invited to do so (Walmsley, 2019). This culture does allow us to start to understand why what is perceived as entertainment has come about. Audiences see what they want to see. You could present an extremely thought-provoking and analytical piece of choreography for example, but if an audience member chooses to interpret this as pretty movements that remind them of Strictly Come Dancing, then that is up to them. Individuals are prone to interpret an experience within the context of their own lives (Radbourne, 2013), this makes it relatable, and digestible, and often funny or flashy work is easier to place within your own scenarios, hence we are left with interpretation that falls into the taboo area that many think entertainment falls into.

> There is a feeling that entertaining works are a sell out and cheapen their related art forms. Good works of art are meant to be difficult! This is very much what the composers Les Six were challenging in the early 20s. They were writing the opposite of the heavy serious Germanic tradition and used in their music popular forms and styles, even though these were transformations of the popular into something else. Because their works were often entertaining, they were therefore 'light' which most are not, try the Poulenc Nocturne's for piano.
>
> *(Jackson, 2020)*

As Jackson is highlighting with his example, it is perception that ultimately defines a work, and even if you are purposefully trying to oppose serious work you are still actively engaging in a purpose-driven process, which with enough talent will produce equally compelling work. Whether or not the observer sees it as such is another thing. Therefore, the taboo around the word 'entertainment' is one we need to disregard as an outdated view. Any work that is engaging is entertaining, it is just a choice of terminology and throughout this whole chapter we have found an array of vocabulary that defines work that audiences will engage with. Let us take these forward when we define our own work and not be ashamed if others feel we are wanting to create purely to make entertainment, we realise this is a miseducated view and any exploration of an artistic vision has value.

Gathering our musings

This chapter is the starting point of our investigation. Many views and opinions have been highlighted along with my own. But they are only musings, they are not fact and should not be treated as such. An opinion is a judgement that is formed from a belief with reasonable fact to support it, and in the case of our artists thoughts they provide examples through their own work to justify their ever-growing thoughts on what constitutes as entertainment. This approach is as close as we can get to a near truth when discussing a topic that is highly affected by subjectivity. Because every view counts, your own opinions I hope, are starting to evolve, and I urge you to not only question your own thoughts but also question those of which we have looked at in this chapter. This helps build a deeper understanding of what is important to you and your work.

So let us gather these musings and see if we can build a terminology that will help us decipher this complex tapestry of what we consider to be entertainment in the performing arts. Initially we looked at how to define entertainment as a whole and discovered three definitions that were built on our artists' experiences:

- *Entertainment is a piece of work generated and produced by reputable companies and performers.*
- *Entertainment is the outcome of a collaboration that showcases an array of talent and genres resulting in a unified piece of work.*
- *Entertainment is a product that is a shared experience for both the observer and the creators.*

Having three broad terms was a useful start, but still too open to pinpoint the definition we seek. This led to a definition that amalgamated all these factors:

Entertainment is an interdisciplinary collaborative work from reputable artists, which results in a shared experience for all involved.

This definition is still an expansive one, but one that provides a reader with an overview of what sort of work is considered to sit within the category of entertainment. What it does not provide, however, is a description of artistic elements and

approaches that will engage an audience. This is when we dissected our artists work and the ingredients they felt were key to providing the outcome of engagement, leading to entertainment. Many elements were highlighted but four approaches seemed to be mentioned across the board:

- *A display of truth*
- *Unpredictable and unexpected*
- *Well-structured*
- *An all-immersive experience*

Now that all we formulated is seen within one space, it may seem easier to generate an over-riding definition. Is there a way to create a description that uses both the outward facing definition and the recognised components?

TASK

Put your pen to paper

- Combine the below to create a one-sentence definition:

  Entertainment is an interdisciplinary collaborative work from reputable art-ists, which results in a shared experience for all involved.
  A display of truth | Unpredictable and unexpected | Well-structured | An all-immersive experience

---

This is a rather hard undertaking for there are many elements at play here. When embarking on this book I knew what some elements of what people con-sider to be entertainment would be, but other descriptions have surprised me, and these final arrays of thoughts are far more detailed and specific than I would have thought. This is why I personally found the task of amalgamation extremely hard, but below is what I finally settled on:

> Entertainment is an all-immersive shared experience created by high quality collaborations, pushing an audience from recognisable truths to the unex-pected in a well-structured display of creativity.

When reading this, it does conjure the image of a powerful piece of work that sits in the field of the performing arts and may even work for other areas of entertain-ment too. But ultimately what it does provide for us is a solid starting point. This chapter is a stepping stone to pushing your own thoughts and ultimately your own practice, so looking at what you generated as an overriding definition from

the components provided, how does this compare to your original definition you created in our first task of this chapter? There may be similarities, but what I am hoping has occurred is that more layers have developed because your mind-set has been informed by example and others' thoughts.

Implementing the aspects of the definition into your work

We now have a definition and an array of off-shoots to reflect upon and put into our own practice. The remainder of this chapter is designed for you to do in your own time and is designed to kick start your process with the intention of 'entertaining' at the forefront. The taboo around this approach has been discussed and I feel we are at a stage where this misconception can be put aside, as the elements that lead to entertainment are reputable. So let us push forward and explore in our own practices how to generate work designed to entertain.

   Below are three explorations that look at these three key areas discussed:

   Truth
   The Unexpected
   Collaboration

Each exploration is left quite open to allow for different genres to utilise them, but a choreographic example is given in each to allow for deeper understanding and clarification. Similar approaches can be taken to look at other areas that we have discovered boost engagement that are not covered here.

Exploration 1

This exploration is designed to help you generate truth within your work, with a focus on characteristics.
   Step 1:
   In your past work, can you define a truth that was portrayed? This can be characters, a story, a moral, etc., but is something an audience would innately recognise and connect with. If one does not spring to mind, then think of a truth that you would like to show in future work.
   Step 2:
   With this truth in mind, I want you to create, in your art form, three different processes that generate three different outcomes that all display this truth.
   Example
   Truth: Sad people wish to be comforted.
   1st approach – Ask one dancer to be static in the space, curled up in a ball. Their task is to only respond when they feel physical touch. The second dancer is to enter the space and improvise with two incentives. 1, to show concern but respectful distance. 2, to succumb to the need to comfort and physically interact with dancer one.

From this improvisation set movements that resonated and allow a sense of connection between the dancers but also one that reads to the audience.

2nd approach – Set one dancer in the space and ask another to physically comfort them. Repeat this exact task with the second dancer removed. The first dancer is to still be comforted, but by an un-present presence.

Refine this motif so that the sadness is readable, and the comforting occurs, but a sense of loneliness is also present.

3rd approach – Give a dancer three movements that you know read as 'sad'. Ask them to perform these on repeat. Use four other dancers to move in and out of the first dancer's space and provide contact in and around the movement. The first dancer is to react to the comfort and then continue with the sad movements.

From this improvisation set the readable moments of interaction and refine so that the sadness is present, but an overwhelming feeling of comfort is being portrayed.

Each of these methods takes a different standpoint on the 'truth' but all portray it. Having an array of approaches allows you to pick the most suitable, or the most engaging, or take an element of each that reads the best.

Exploration 2

This exploration is designed to help you generate the unexpected and unpredictable in your work.

Step 1:

Make a list of three moments when you have been surprised by what has occurred when you watched a piece of work. Define what the unexpected element was.

Step 2:

Take each of the elements and devise a task that would mould them into your own work.

Example:

Three moments of unpredictability I have witnessed in work that I have watched:

- *A character makes an uncharacteristic decision*
- *An unexpected use of an art form is used*
- *My perspective is flipped*

Task 1: Using the motif made in exploration 1 where there are multiple comforters to the 'sad' person, change the task halfway through so that the comfort is suddenly repelled and not wanted, and the movements become more fraught and antagonistic. This will be particularly effective if prior to this the 'sad' person has been continually seeking comfort.

Task 2: Using the fusion of dance and digital, you could explore small projections. Often large-scale scenic interactions are used, therefore a task for the digital artist and the choreographer could be to explore manipulating a projected flower in the hands of dancer. How can it appear and disappear, can the petals fall as it is moved, can the dancer make it come to life?

Task 3: To shift a perspective you have two options, to either shift the action, or to shift the audience. Shifting the action has more possibilities, but for this task we could play with the idea that the audience are watching from above, but really it is the action that has moved. A series of choreographic tasks would be created to explore movement that is on the floor but gives the illusion of a bird's eye view from the front. For example, an improvisation task of: Keep the crown of your head in line with the audience and travel across the space on the floor. This perspective then could be shifted again by reverting to the original proscenium arch viewpoint.

Each genre will have tricks that create the unexpected, therefore it is utilising these and making them unique. These explorations take time and refinement, so do not be afraid if they do not work immediately.

Top tip: Remember to trial them on an audience and collate their reactions. This way you have a clearer view to what is being received as unexpected or unpredictable.

Exploration 3

This exploration is designed to help you collaborate effectively and start to build your own formula of success.

Step 1:

Reflect upon your previous practice and list the collaborations that have occurred. Then next to this, list collaborations that you would like to make happen in the future.

Step 2:

Pick a collaboration from each list, find an artist that fits that mould and set aside a period of time in which there are no rules other than to equally collaborate and generate a small outcome.

Example:

From the lists generated I could pick a collaboration of digital projection as the one I have used effectively in the past, and then use an actor to kick start a collaboration that has not occurred before. This leaves us with three art forms: Choreography, acting and digital projection. In the devising space each element must be given equal importance and each artist must take away a new skill learnt from their collaborators. This 'give and take' approach will generate a unified outcome.

This exploration would be the most time-consuming but could be most rewarding. The important factor is to allow for each collaborator to have the time to interact and be as creative as if they were working on their own.

By delving into this definition in a practical way, you will start to be clearer in what will work for you and your practice. Understanding what entertainment is, and what it can be perceived as is our first step. What has certainly become clear at this stage is that there is an array of opinions as the world in which we are exploring is subjective and keen to push boundaries. Therefore, the place in which we find ourselves is a perfectly 'fuzzy' one, one that learning a few facts about why we seek entertainment would help align our current musings. For if we really wanted 'we can be passive couch potatoes and let it (entertainment) all come to us . . . grab our attention and get high ratings or reviews by being exciting, stimulating and

entertaining' (Winter, 2002, p. 38) and never understanding why. Understanding something will ultimately help you replicate it with more ease.

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3

WHY WE NEED ENTERTAINING?

On this journey of discovery, we are starting to understand the subjective nature of our quest to define Entertainment. But there must be some facts, some reasoning that allows a little less subjectivity in our cooking pot. Why do we desire engagement, why are we continually seeking it and creating it? It comes down to science. Yes, science. To be particular our prefrontal cortex and a nice dollop of dopamine. When our brains are engaged in an activity or scenario that is stimulating, dopamine is released into the prefrontal cortex. This instigates several reactions that ultimately make us feel wonderful. Finding satisfaction through entertainment activates this chemical reaction, therefore we are presented with the first natural instinctive reaction to the need for entertainment. As we dig deeper into this subject, we will find that this neurological occurrence is simply just the start.

The science part

Dopamine is a type of neurotransmitter which is created by the body and used by the nervous system. One of 20 or more major neurotransmitters, it sends messages to different nerve cells and is considered a huge contributor to our unique human make-up, allowing us to think and plan.

Most commonly dopamine is released from the Substantia Nigra and the Ventral Tegmental area. Its journey from the ventral tegmental area is the one that interests us the most as this takes it through the prefrontal cortex on its mesocortical pathway, as seen in Figure 3.1.

This area is where nearly all aspects of cognitive engagement occurs. The brain reaction that we could argue is initiated when entertaining or being entertained.

Discovered in 1957, dopamine was initially linked to physical movement due to research that found Parkinson's disease was caused by a dopamine deficiency. However, in the 80s, Wolfram Schultz's experiments with rats changed this opinion as he discovered that it was linked to the reward centre of the brain. The rats he was
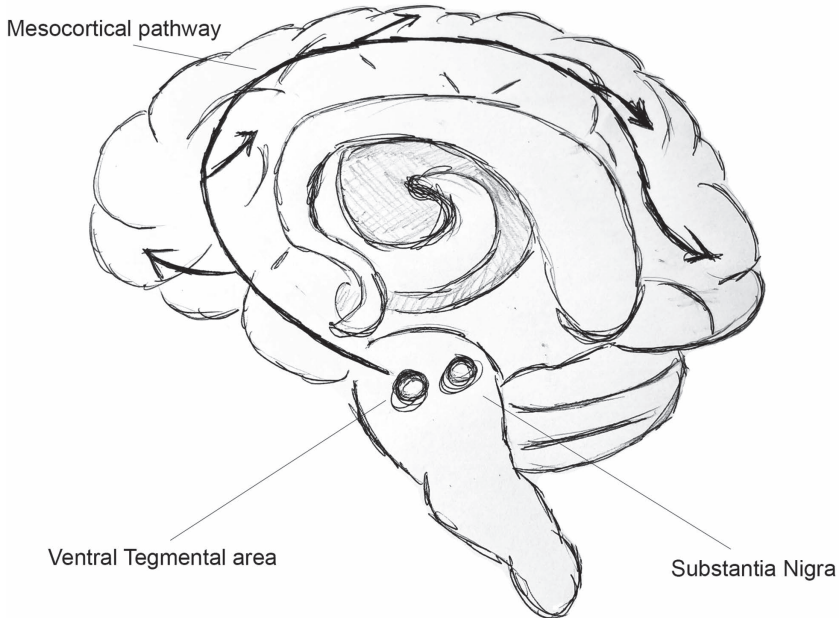
FIGURE 3.1   An image of the brain showing the journey of dopamine from the Ventral Tegmental area past the mesocortical pathway.

observing released dopamine when they bit into a sought after piece of apple. It became apparent that this neurotransmitter related to the reward that was received for an action. An occurrence that could arguably be linked to feelings such as desire, drive and addiction (The Observer, 2018).

Dopamine is often incorrectly linked to the word 'addictive' and is now considered not to be an addictive chemical; it is likened to being a 'red flag' reaction before something pleasurable is about to occur. It warns the brain that it is to look lively and remember the sensation that is about to happen so it can seek it again. Opioids are in fact the neurochemicals that increase pleasure in our brains, a well-known one being endorphin.

Figure 3.2 found on page 48 is an image that has helped me understand the dopamine reaction. The flag is raised, the source of intrigue is found and then the reward is given by whatever the source makes you do, in this instance eat a cupcake. So, for us, the cupcake could be replaced with a theatre performance, a film or another performing arts live interaction. Therefore, the reward would be one felt by the audience or the creator and from our venture down the path of neuroscience, we can conclude that dopamine contributes to making you feel:

Alert
Happy
Motivated

Dopamine	Source	Reward
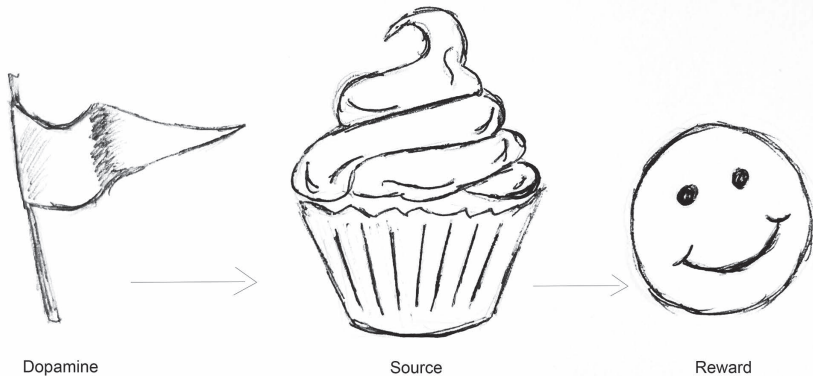
FIGURE 3.2 A flag representing dopamine, a cupcake representing the source of reward, a smiley face representing the joy of a reward.

Focused
Euphoric (in extreme circumstances)

If I received audience feedback that listed but some of these mind-sets, I would have succeeded in my role as the entertainer. It is fair to say that an experience that is stimulating or exciting will produce dopamine in the reward centre of the Brain, and that potential feeling is great enough that we as humans seek it again and again. As we have evolved, we have sought it through more than just food and sex but through the absorption and creation of Entertainment.

Let us dig a little deeper

We can see now that there are chemical reactions at play that make us seek something entertaining, but what we now need to understand is the aspects that keep us engaged when said activity/stimulus is discovered.

Taking us back to basics, we are aware that a key factor that divides us from primates is the notion of conscious imitation. Imitation can be considered a low-level, undemanding form of behaviour, but recent studies (Charter and Hurley, 2005) have found that it is potentially a rare ability that is closely linked to specific human forms of intelligence. It fuels our language, social and interaction skills. The ability to imitate allows us not just to replicate, but also to empathise and understand others' thoughts and concepts, which is a huge contributor to engaging with entertainment.

Developmental and neurophysiological research has concluded that there is common coding between perceived and generated actions. This coding is hardwired into humans (Decety and Meltzoff, 2003) and starts from birth. We are aware that children repeat what adults do and this is a key step to their social learning

abilities, but it is still unclear what the difference is between instinct and imitation, particularly in the animal world (Lieberman, 2002). It is apparent that humans do imitate on a higher cognitive level than, for example, primates, and we can conclude that regardless of instinct, imitation combined with observation is key to learning, in particular learning about empathy and connection.

If you have been fortunate enough to hold a newborn baby, you may have been aware of their ability to mimic your facial expression. This imitative response is now considered to be the start of their emotional learning journey and is triggered at birth. Meltzoff and Moore ran a series of experiments that proved that contrary to the belief that an infant's ability to imitate developed over time and came into play around six to nine months but was in fact a skill that was immediate and started in an area of the body the baby had control of in these early stages, the face.

Meltzoff and Moore's experiments in 1983 explored facial imitation of new-borns that were born full-term (36 weeks' gestation and above), were of normal birth weight (5.5–10 pounds) and had no recognisable underlying health issues. These 40 test subjects, within one hospital nursery, ranged from the youngest at 42 minutes old, to the oldest at 72 hours old. Clear criteria were used to make sure the test was fair:

- Fed within three hours prior to the test
- No rooting or physical signs of hunger five minutes before the test
- Wide eyed, alert and calm for five minutes before the test

(Meltzoff and Moore, 1983)

A further 67 infants began their test but did not complete to an array of interruptions including sleeping, crying, spiting or a bowel movement. A very common percentage of non-completion when working with newborns.

The babies were shown two adult facial gestures of mouth opening and tongue protrusion and were assessed by an observer that could not see which face the adult was showing the baby. The results showed successful facial imitation across the board. These fascinating findings instigated a further 24 studies from a range of independent laboratories and their findings were conclusive. These conclusions linked to an earlier study of Meltzoff and Moore that explored 12–21-day-old infants reacting to a wider range of facial expressions, allowing us to believe the imitation skill develops more quickly than initially expected.

During this test four adult gestures were used: lip protrusion, mouth opening, tongue protrusion and finger movement. No body part or action was misinterpreted by the babies (Meltzoff and Moore, 1977). There were subjects that would identify the body part before the action, for example, recognising the tongue is in action by moving it in circles before protruding it. But the results showed that even with these initial explorations, the baby would always end with the intended gesture, and correctly identify the specific body part being explored. It was as if young children would isolate the body part required before moving it in the way observed (Decety and Meltzoff, 2003). This organ identification, a term coined by Meltzoff and

Moore, and facial imitation allows an infant to combine the observed acts of others and their own felt acts into one common framework. This sense of self via someone else leads to imitation by memory, and a beginning of interpretation to understand when to use the correct facial expression for a particular reaction or scenario.

It is exciting to see that at such an early age we are beginning to imitate in an empathetic way showing one of the building blocks that makes us desire engagement through visual and sensory entertainment. As I explored this topic, it became apparent that this ability to imitate did not cease once past adulthood when the majority of our social learning had been processed. The ability to be self-aware comes from imitational simulation:

> Jolly Humphrey concluded that humans come to understand the inner thoughts and desires of those around them through an introspective examination of their own mental states and processes – a kind of mental simulation of what it must be like to be the other person.
>
> *(Povinelli and Prince, 1998)*

This notion of putting yourself in the state of mind of another is what intrigues me with our understanding of the instinctive need for entertainment. This ability to comprehend a perspective that is not our own is arguably why we can with ease enter into an imaginative situation such as a story. The imitative abilities of our brain allow us to fully immerse in a fictional scenario to the point where we feel we are inhabiting it, and we begin to be shaped by that experience. Ever heard someone say, 'I felt like I was there' or 'I felt their joy'? This is a classic example of imitation leading to immersion, leading to engagement and a sense of reward as your brain releases that all-desired dopamine chain of events.

But as we are aware, not all work created in the world of the performing arts is so clear cut as a story, an element of interpretation is needed to fully engage. This is where looking into an adult's mind-set allows us to see how perception and knowledge are key areas of natural human ability that are tapped into when creating entertainment. We have explored the early years development of imitation; this leads neatly into the development of perception of objects by adults.

On a basic level, we need to know how to recognise and interpret objects in our day-to-day life to navigate and stay alive. Building knowledge through our lives of all our encounters provides us with a well-informed picture book to use when needed. This is better known as 'object recognition' and is a key human attribute. It is a succinct way to allow our train of thought not to over-analyse in a life-or-death situation. By placing an emotion or intent on an object we are more likely to respond quickly. Harking back to our cave-man ancestors it was in their best interest to see a Lion and immediately think 'danger, run'. Rather than seeing a Lion and thinking 'that is a Lion. It is running. It is getting very close. It has sharp teeth, I think I would bleed if it bit me'. Too late, the Lion has found its prey. Survival is always the need and want for humans and this ability to perceive a potential threat is innate. You would be forgiven to wonder what this has to do with entertainment,

but I ask you this: If we are hard-wired to interpret something that we do not recognise by building on what we already know, then the same instinct is undoubtedly being used when faced with a piece of work we need to place our own perspective upon. As German poet and vision researcher Goethe Von Müller (1982) explains, "One only sees what one already knows and understands. Often one will not discern aspects of objects encountered for many years until they become easily visible through maturing knowledge and education".

This maturing knowledge is of interest to me as we delve into how adults are naturally drawn to engaging pieces of artwork. A lifetime of interpreting and placing perspective not only allows for an extremely critical eye, but also means that more than ever everything is far more relatable. Children will, on an instinctive level, assign human characteristic to objects through play (Cohen and Cohen, 1989). Cohen discusses how at 30 months we have the capability to use objects in an imaginative way. For example, a child could be washing a doll with a block (which is a pretend sponge) whilst saying 'you are clean now' and then neatly putting dolly to bed in a bucket (Cohen and Cohen, 1989). Not exactly the correct use of all the objects, but certainly the correct scenario. This ability continues to heighten as we mature, and this is when anthropomorphism and personification can begin to play a huge part.

Anthropomorphism is when we attribute certain human characteristics or behaviours to concepts, objects or animals. Some are more inclined to perceive things in this way than others, but it is a common way of deciphering and interacting with the world. Considering a fox as fast does not necessarily indicate anthropomorphic reasoning, but saying the fox is 'wily' does (Waytz et al., 2010). Personification can easily be mistaken to be described in the same way. There is a margin of difference between the two and the main factor is that personification is considered to be a representation of an abstract quality within a human form. Let us take a literal example of a domesticated cat. If your cat scratches your carpet whilst you are at work, you may start to think they are rebelling in some way because you left them at home. You are assigning a human characteristic to an animal, which is Personification. If you came home and your cat looked at the scratched patch and exclaimed 'this is what happens when you leave me at home!' this is Anthropomorphism, when a non-human starts to talk, act and behave in a human way. Examples in literature are *Thomas the Tank Engine* and the *Cheshire Cat*, both acting in a completely human way when not human. Pixar's short *Lou* (2017) is the epitome of anthropomorphism. The lead character is made entirely of lost and found objects, and yet throughout the whole story he acts and moves as a human would. Our imagination and creative skills allow us to connect to objects and animals in a more personable way. Yet again we are faced with a human ability that distinguishes us from animals. Although they too have sophisticated mental capabilities, this attribution of characteristics is ours alone.

Be it Personification or Anthropomorphism, as artists we can use this inbuilt ability to our advantage, particularly if we are exploring more abstract work. Interpretation is often the desired outcome of such work, and it is fascinating to see

how audiences thrive on this sort of entertainment as they have a sense of own-ership over it due to their own personal understanding of it. Experiments have been executed over the years looking at object personification which can help us understand further into our innate need to be engaged in this way. Perhaps one of the most well-known was by Smith College experimental psychologists Fritz Heider and Marianne Simmel in 1944. Considered ahead of its time, the duo was interested in the processes that occurred when perceiving others behaviour and personal qualities. Wanting to avoid facial expressions as a measure they opted for abstract shapes to be interpreted. Presenting situations and activities without a face and allowing the correctness of the response to not be pre-determined (Heider and Simmel, 1944).

I am going to concentrate on the first of their three experiments where initial reaction was key. The experiment itself, in all three of its manifestations, focused on an animated film (Heider and Simmel (1994) *animation*, 2010) which consisted of four objects: a rectangle, a circle, a small triangle and a larger triangle. The circle and triangles are seen moving in various directions and speeds, whilst the rectangle stays static but with a section that opens and closes as a door would. As a dancer, the movement journey of these objects fascinate me and before we discuss their human-like nature, it is of use for you to envisage the movement pathways. *This footage can be found on online video sites, one of which can be seen in the reference list.*

1 Large triangle moves into the rectangle through the opening
2 Small triangle and circle enter
3 Large triangle leaves rectangle and faces small triangle
4 Small triangle does two fast jabs towards large triangle
5 Large triangle moves from left to right on the spot
6 Large triangle advances to small triangle in two large jabs
7 Circle enters the rectangle door
8 Large triangle jabs small triangle three more times, leaving small triangle on the side of the rectangle
9 Circle fully enters the rectangle
10 Large triangle enters the rectangle, circle goes to the opposite side of the rectangle
11 Circle and large triangle dart from side to side, changing their orientation
12 Small triangle enters rectangle
13 Small triangle and circle exit rectangle
14 Large triangle exits
15 All three do a loop of the rectangle
16 Small triangle and circle exit the video
17 Large triangle jabs the rectangle and splits two of the sides into two

As you can see from the aforementioned text, when described in this rather geo-metrical manner it is quite a dry scenario, but Heider and Simmel's hope was that it would not be interpreted in this way by the majority of the observers. This film

was shown to 34 female undergraduates and they were simply asked to write down what happened in the footage. I am going to share my response in the same layout as above providing a compare and contrast tool.

1   Large triangle walks into the house through the door and closes it
2   Small triangle and circle skip in, circle admires the view and small triangle runs through the grass
3   Large triangle bursts from the house and comes face to face with the small triangle
4   Small triangle attacks the large triangle in an angry way
5   Large triangle shakes his head in displeasure
6   Large triangle kicks small triangle sending them flying, and then repeats after a calculating pause
7   Circle creeps to the house and hides behind the door
8   Large triangle punches small triangle three times, pinning small triangle against the wall of the house
9   Circle tries to help but then runs into the house to seek refuge
10   Large triangle purposefully enters the house, and dominantly closes the door. Circle runs away to the other side of the house
11   Circle tries to escape but large triangle blocks the exit
12   Small triangle cautiously opens the house door
13   Circle makes a run for it and small triangle slams the door in large triangle's face
14   Large triangle smashes down the door
15   Large triangle chases the scared small triangle and circle
16   Small triangle and circle run for their lives
17   Large triangle angrily smashes up the house

I am sure we can agree that this is a far more interesting read, and even from this scripted narrative, your own scenarios of character are starting to emerge. Within the original experiment, such characterisation was evident in the responses from the subjects. If you have managed to see the animation you can immediately sense what the results were. They were highly humanised. Thirty-two described the objects as people, two others described them as birds. But the narrative they all presented varied, with some distinct similarities. Nearly every response described the contact between the large and small triangle as a fight. The direct nature of the movement with the reactive response automatically plays into our subconscious of recognising an antagonistic situation. Most felt that the large triangle had been locked in the 'house'. So, seeing an object limited within another shape makes us see something being trapped against their own will, yet again an interpretation to help us recognise a danger. Finally, the last two similarities had the door being 'controlled' by one of the shapes, not it pushing them, and the large triangle was seen as being the one doing the chasing of the circle. So much assumption and narrative taken from an extremely basic series of shapes shifting in a space.

The way in which the objects were judged is closely connected with this notion of origin. It is thought that this method is useful in 'investigating the way the behaviour of other persons is perceived' (Heider and Simmel, 1944). This, and subsequent studies, were mainly exploring this concept that if we layer such assumptions onto geometrical objects, what assumptions are we placing on other humans? But for what we are exploring this experiment highlights the built-in storyteller that we all instinctively have. It shows that when presented with an abstracted form, we will naturally try and place narrative, characteristics and expression onto the scenario. Therefore, a piece of work that sparks this is going to be entertaining because we cannot help but lock onto it as we are hard-wired to interpret the intentions and therefore connect with it.

TASK

Create your own Heider and Simmel experiment:

- In your art form produce an abstract form. *Dance could be a series of chance-based movements, film could delve into geometrical objects, actors could have bodies in a space speaking non-sensical words*.
- Make sure there is enough 'movement' to be interpreted, but do not create a narrative.
- Ask three individuals to interpret the work and tell you the story.
- What similarities are there in their responses? Were they engaged?

From your results you may find a unified response or a variation, and this is the beauty of working with an audience made entirely of humans. Every brain is different. We all respond differently to stimuli; therefore, this is why we are faced with such a wide range of genres within entertainment, and a wide range of opinions on what is engaging and what is not. Brock and Livingston (2004) investigated this premise and assessed three factors to represent a scale of the need of entertainment:

Factor 1: Drive.
How actively do you pursue entertainment?
Factor 2: Utility.
How useful is passive entertainment (easy to observe) to you specifically and or in general?
Factor 3: Passivity.
How active do you like your entertainment to be?

Take a moment for yourselves and answer the above.
Be honest with your analysis and reflect upon your answers, do they surprise you?

As readers of this work, you are clearly consciously considering the concept of Entertainment and engagement, so your answers are probably a little too informed for a fair study. Brock and Livingston though did conduct a similar test on an array of individuals that had not deeply considered the topic prior to the questioning.

The results from their three-factor scaling experiment showed that men had a stronger drive to be entertained than women (Brock and Livingston, 2004). Men scored higher on the amount they were willing to spend on entertainment, their daily need/desire for entertainment and their inability to function without it. They also discovered an inverse relationship between the need to be entertained and the need for cognition; this being a measure of how much you like active problem solving and critical thinking. From this one study we can already see a basic divide in an audience. You then take into consideration the individuality of each person within the gender groups, and yet again we see another divide. So, on and on it goes. How, as artists, are we ever to generate entertainment that will captivate all? Perhaps this is not our job, and what we can pull from this study is that humans *do* seek engaging activities and the right audience will inevitably filter towards the genre that provides their dopamine reaction to seek more like it as a reward.

As Mertz's *The Body Can Speak* (2002, p. 5) suggests, 'All living things need stimulants to grow. Stimulants for the senses are part of the artist's challenge, Art is a stimulant for living and life'. Entertainment is often seen as a stimulant for making an audience/observer feel an emotion or have an impulsive reaction. Mertz's argument is that it is innate and as human we have no choice but to react to such displays. Having looked at our neural make-up and the ability to imitate, I think it is fair to say we can draw a similar conclusion. But Mertz's choice of the word 'challenge' is what intrigues me. At times the road to engagement can be a challenge for we are faced with audiences that cannot always see the value in the entertainment being provided, even though they have the same ancient neurological instincts. A difference of opinion is always welcome but has to be understood, and for us a good starting point is to reflect upon human nature as far back as is evidenced to see how we as humans have always sought engagement via entertainment, even though the output has varied through the centuries.

How ancient societies valued entertainment

The ancient societies are known for having art and entertainment at the heart of their cultures, and it is accepted that Greek and Roman society thought of manual labour, which included what has become known as fine art, to be an activity suitable only for slaves or those on the lowest social ladder rung (Grant, 2017). But as with any society there were varying opinions on this assumption. As we know, art and entertainment comes in wide range of products, therefore the value of it is often subjective. The Ancient Greeks were forerunners of philosophising why we as humans interact and act as we do, and this led to discussion on elements of interaction that use play, imagination and creativity. Plato and Aristotle had contradicting opinions when it came to the value of arts and entertainment. To put it in layman's terms, Plato did not see the value of the arts and Aristotle did. 'For Plato,

art is always merely an imitation of an imitation, since it represents – in painting, sculpture, acting, poetry or prose – the physical world which is itself but an imitation of the eternal Forms' (Dutton, 2010, p. 31). Aristotle, on the other hand, respected the arts and the variety of work it produced, and felt they allowed the capacity to form independent insight into the human condition.

Looking at an ancient society like the Greeks not only allows us to see how our thoughts have evolved since these times but also opens our eyes yet again to the age-old, inbuilt need for us to entertain – even if it is simply to evoke discussion on its value. We have explored the mechanics of appreciation, and the chemical make-up that makes us seek out creative interaction. But what I propose we now explore is how Plato and Aristotle questioned the value of entertainment. This is the next logical step as it removes us from innate reaction, to logical thought and analysis. We are stepping away from instinct and exploring what happens when we as humans scrutinise the idea of entertainment and art being a 'need'. The Philosophers of Ancient Greek set the precedence for analysis and discussion as a precursor to any instinctive reaction. So, by looking at how they valued entertainment, we are exploring how we as humans value it when we ignore our basic instincts and just stop and think about it. For the purpose of this exercise, I will delve into the opposing thoughts of Aristotle and Plato. But I urge you to research further into other Greek philosophers' thoughts, for example, *Plutarch*, and to delve into the vast opinions of the ancient Romans on this topic. What we are dissecting in this book is just the tip of the iceberg, but it allows you to see how philosophical analysis has led to the evolution of entertainment.

Plato

Plato is considered one of the most influential and important human thinkers in history. Aristotle (whom we will discuss later) was one of his students, and Plato's teacher Socrates, with Plato, are all considered to be pivotal individuals in the development of Western society. Plato mused on many topics but is perhaps most well-known for his contribution to the theory of forms. This in simple terms is the articulation that the physical world is not really the 'real' world, that instead, ultimate reality exists beyond our own physical world. This obsession with reality versus another dimension is perhaps one of the reasons his opinion of some art forms was that they were simply imitation. He felt that art imitates the objects and events of ordinary life (the real world) and on this theory works of art at best entertained and at worst generated dangerous delusion.

In his well-known publication, *The Republic*, he paints his ideal world. He muses on many areas of society and culture, but gives great thought to the Arts, with a conclusion that they are not, on the whole, to be present in his ideal world. He considered Art to be perverse and corruptive, leading individuals to be attached to the wrong ideals, for example, becoming obsessed with matters of the real world rather than eternal forms. An example given is the depiction of immoral behaviour of some gods and humans in both poetry and drama. These characters seemed to the observer

to make their actions moral or even admirable, and this is what Plato disliked, he felt it planted the wrong values. He felt so strongly about this that in his 'ideal world' being described in *The Republic*, it would be against the law to perform such verse:

> It seems, then, that if a man, who through clever training can become any-thing and imitate anything, should arrive in our city, wanting to give a per-formance of his poems, we should bow down before him as someone holy, wonderful, and pleasing, but we should tell him that there is no one like him in our city and that it isn't lawful for there to be. We should pour myrrh on his head, crown him with wreaths, and send him away to another city.
>
> *(Lee and Lane, 2007, p. 398a)*

This very famous extract from his publication adds fuel to the fire of aggravation to any individual who stands for the arts. He seems to be insinuating that perfor-mance, therefore entertainment, is not welcome in his city. Some may read this as arrogance, a sense of not needing 'light' entertainment to amuse them because in his world, musing on life and the many eternal forms are more than enough to stimulate them correctly. Or perhaps it could be perceived as insecurity. Poets in Greek society pre-dated Philosophers. Prior to the likes of Plato and Socrates, Poets had been the ones that held an audience captive and had their voices heard. This was mainly through fictional narrative, but these stories did have moral under-pinnings or lessons to be learnt and there is a school of thought that perhaps Plato's annihilation of Poets in *The Republic* is due to an old battle between the two camps and their desire to be the ones taken most seriously.

Although it would seem from the above thoughts of Plato that he wished to obliterate the arts in his world we often forget that he then continues after the previous extract by saying:

> But, for our own good, we ourselves should employ a more austere and less pleasure- giving poet and story-teller, one who would imitate the speech of a more decent person and who would tell his stories in accordance with the patterns we laid down when we first undertook the education of our soldiers.
>
> *(Lee and Lane, 2007, p. 398a)*

What we can conclude is that he is not suggesting there be no performance of poetry, but a monitored one. A piece of entertainment that meets the values and morals laid down by the initial founders of his world or city. Therefore, we can cautiously conclude that Plato's aggravation with the arts is not the medium itself, but the content. In Books II and III of *The Republic*, this becomes more apparent and materialises itself in his concern with the material made which children would have access to. This intervention is something we do in our modern society too. There is always an overriding concern about what children are subjected to because they have less ability to differentiate real from fiction. Film classifications are spe-cifically for this censoring. I would not want my 12-year-old to sit through a UK

18 classification, as I know a board has deemed the material depicted in the 18 to be graphic or harrowing for someone who is still too young to be able accept it is not reality. On this front, I can agree with Plato's concerns of content but not the banishment of entertainment.

To presume that Plato hated the arts in their entirety and wanted to annihilate them is incorrect. His discussions centre around controlling the output of most art forms, with the art forms that he would banish being poetry and drama; all epic and tragic and comic poetry (Lee and Lane, 2007). He perceived such entertainment as bad for everyone, not just children. He saw the danger lying in our soul. He believed that there was a part of our soul called the Appetitive which seeks out gratification not just good. His view was that dramatisations of plays or poetry allowed this part of the soul to thrive as it found delight in the behaviour depicted in the performances. Depictions such as suffering, or lust, kick-starts unwanted thoughts and makes the rational part of our soul loosen its grip on reality, and therefore what is good. Plato's concern was that the reactions to the drama would then transfer to real life. That we would start to live as if we were in a poem, or on a stage. Morals would be affected, and society would start to crumble. This rash opinion does seem slightly absurd to our modern way of thinking, until we reflect upon his argument with respect to children. We still think in this way when we are considering appropriate entertainment for this audience. We refrain from showing children entertainment that depicts stealing or fighting as we do not want them to imitate this in real life. Equally some people believe watching 'trash' television encourages the wrong idea in adults too. Perhaps Plato's view of content is not so dissimilar to some aspects of our current entertainment world?

From reading Plato's thoughts on what he considers to be of value in the arts it would seem it falls down to content, and we are left with a dilemma in Plato's eyes. We either have an imperfect world that contains art, or have a world that is considered perfect where uncensored art has no place. Where do you feel our current society sits? Of course, we are an imperfect world with art. Plato would probably be extremely disheartened by this realisation, but if we truly reflect upon what the Ancient Greeks have done for the evolution of society, more often than not we place value on the Greek's Art and Culture above their morals, which is the one thing Plato seems to be fighting for with his battle against the arts: the moral corruption of depictions of imagination.

So how does this all relate to why we as humans need entertaining? Apart from his words describing art genres and outputs of his time showing how long we have had entertainment in our civilisations, it is also an example of critical analysis and debate sparked by entertainment. Plato does still seem to realise that we do need entertainment of some type, but a controlled and moral-driven approach is one he favours. The idea of being swayed by what we witness and wanting to seek out more of this immoral behaviour mirrors the science that we looked at earlier in this chapter. He mentions the appetitive soul and the rational part of the soul, and what we can conclude is that what he thinks of as the appetitive soul is the thought that initiates dopamine as it raises its red flag to warn us that if we continue to do,

watch, interact in the way we are we will receive a reward in the form of an opioid. The rational soul is the brain seeking out that reward again by remembering what initiated the surge of dopamine. Now, this dumbed-down version of the make-up of the brain's neuro-ability is perhaps not what Plato would like to supersede his committed thoughts on the soul and the forms of reality and its existence beyond the physical world. But what we can take from this is that even as far back as the Ancient Greeks, the great thinkers were analysing why we seek and create entertainment. Not analysis via biological science, but analysis, nonetheless.

Plato's argument that some uncensored entertainment is bad for us is prevalent to this day. In Chapter 4, I will touch on the age-old argument of television being bad for children's health, but we are still in a society that is fighting against what is perceived as something appropriate to be entertained by. Plato's views of what are acceptable is admittedly rather slim, and we have fortunately expanded our views on what we accept. But there are still arguments at large that consider the 'wrong' forms of entertainment bad for us. Richard Munger in *Changing Children's Behaviours* touches on some of the modern day thinking on why aspects of entertainment can lead to unhealthy lifestyles. He mentions that by the age of 18, the average American will have watched roughly 22,000 hours of television, which is almost double the amount of time they will have spent in education (Munger, 2011) and although this is all not bad viewing, there are accompanying side effects that contribute to the unhealthy outcome. Eating sugary and salty snacks whilst watching television affects their weight and diet and has an impact on their family lifestyles. Family mealtimes may be altered to allow for TV programming or 'it may compete with the time for cooking the family meal, resulting in more ready-made or take-out meals' (Munger, 2011, p. 90). Television viewing on this scale may also replace physical activity and other skill-building leisure activities in and out of the home (Munger, 2011). All of this is unhealthy and is a concern to us when we are considering that we seek entertainment, but sometimes we seek it so often that it is to the detriment of our health. Plato's view that only a few aesthetic forms of art should be pondered upon is perhaps a warning to us that moderation is the key.

Finally, Plato's rants in *The Republic*, in my mind, should not be taken as a disrespect for art and entertainment, but be seen as a validation. He had taken the time to consider and dissect art forms of his time, and is not deluded to think that there are not times in which we are captured and entertained by the 'shameful' behaviour in drama, 'the best among us . . . enjoy it, give ourselves up to following it, sympathize with the hero, take his suffering seriously, and praise as a good poet the one who affects us most in this way' (Plato, 605cd). It was clear to him that there is a want and a need to seek out such performances, or why else would he feel compelled to warn against seeking out the *wrong* type of entertainment? Plato could be seen as an art critique of his time. A review from Plato in The Stage may not have looked dissimilar to his musings on what constitutes appropriate content for what is simply, in his eyes, imitation. As we are learning, generating performative art and entertainment does not always have to be reciprocated with praise. Artists seek out criticism and love to spark discomfort and Plato is articulating exactly that.

For a philosopher that is widely considered to push aside the arts, we can see that although he has his opinions, the arts clearly hold value in his mind, or he would not have taken the time to discuss them. Another example of how innate the need and want for entertainment is, even when a brilliant mind decides it is not suited to his perfect world, he cannot help but still dissect and provide a compromise where such entertainment (be it monitored) is still allowed into the perfect world. It is needed, it is built in.

Aristotle

To be fair to the philosophers of the Ancient Greeks, we must look at a contemporary of Plato's whose opinions on the value of the arts was different. Aristotle was a student of Plato but respected just as widely once he began to share his views on human nature and society. Aristotle is still studied and debated today and his 'thoughts on education have prevailed for over two millennia – they stand as an excellent reminder of the importance of the pursuit of virtues and individual flourishing tethered to the responsibilities of citizenship' (Moseley, 2014, p. 3). As well as education his thoughts and musings spanned a range of disciplines from metaphysics and philosophy of the mind, to political theory, aesthetics and non-philosophical fields such as empirical biology. But as with any great philosopher, his theories have been met with resistance and sparked further thought and debate. One of his most well-known theories was that of 'logic'. He did not believe that the purpose of logic was to prove that humans have knowledge, but that the aim of logic is an expansion of a rational system that allows us to assess the good and the bad when reasoning. It allows us to investigate and classify. Already his core values sound different to that of Plato who believed in an ultimate reality beyond that of the physical world. Aristotle's 'logic' may find good and bad reasoning in this theory. Therefore, we can start to see why their opinions of the arts were different, their values in general were dissimilar.

Aristotle had a slighter broader mind-set on the value of the arts compared to Plato, he respected 'the independent integrity and variety of the arts and their capacity to give us insights into the human condition' (Dutton, 2010, p. 32). Many of Aristotle's personally written documents have been lost, but there are works that we can now access that are an amalgamation of his lectures and notes, one such book is *Poetics*. In this publication, he attempts to explain what he considers to be the basic problem of the arts. His arguments centre around poetry and Greek tragedy and before we progress further, it is useful to consider that poetry in ancient Greek times was akin to theatre and plays. A poet in Aristotle's time may well be considered a playwright in our times. Aristotle describes such poetry as *mimesis* (imitation) and how rhythm and language is imitated in this prose and verse. He is aware that we as humans are drawn to copies of what we know, therefore he can acknowledge that that is one of the reasons we are drawn to entertainment such as poetry and drama. What he was boldly doing in this work was to contradict his teacher's words in *The Republic*. Plato as we have discussed saw poetry and the arts

as misleading and morally corrupt as they were an inaccurate representation, lead-
ing society to perhaps act in the way these characters were. Aristotle attempts in
Poetic to refute that train of thought by proposing it is the sign of an educated mind
to be able to observe an action without accepting it (Aristotle, 2011).

Aristotle focuses on tragedy and then epic poetry to back his argument and
begins to articulate what unites them. He discusses that it is their imitative nature
which draws in and captivates an audience, but all the while preserving the theme
and purpose of the work. At certain stages, he tries to explain the 'anatomy' of
poetry in an attempt to articulate the justification of its value to society, therefore
mankind. He divides the art of poetry into three categories: lyric poetry, epic
poetry and drama (which contains satire, humour and tragedy). In his opinion,
these three all imitate life but differ in three distinct ways:

- How the story is portrayed, that is, acted or read out.
- The morality of the range of the characters.
- The use of music; how they use harmony, metre and melody.

By critically analysing the performative art forms of his time, he is making it clear
to the listener/reader that he can see the value in them because they offer varia-
tion. Plato seemed to see them as one unit, damning them all, whereas Aristotle
was dissecting and finding the nuances that today we know are the factors that
keep us engaged and entertained. As the publication progresses, he focuses just
on tragedy. This was a popular genre in ancient Greek society with thousands of
works being written. Only 33 have survived and are remembered in our modern
culture, all of which were written by the three greats: Aeschylus, Sophocles and
Euripides. Sophocles said that he drew men as they ought to be and Euripides, as
they are (Aristotle, 2011). Here we can see a distinct difference of approach, and
one that rebuts Plato's argument that all characters are representations of lesser than
ourselves. By analysing in this way, Aristotle is explaining how variants occur and
that interpretation of characters is subjective. For example, in comedy, the aim is
to represent a man at his worst, but in tragedy it is to show him as better than in
actual life (Aristotle, 2011).

Although Aristotle still has the mind-set of his peers that there are types of art
that are not thought-provoking, therefore are not worth considering when you
have a brilliant mind, what he is showcasing in *Poetics* is an awareness of the value
of being entertained and the way it can impact on human society. His analysis and
deconstruction of what constitutes a tragedy has influenced subsequent literary
theory, specifically in the Renaissance period. Many of his suggestions were turned
into unwritten law which perhaps restricted the flexibility of evolving drama, pos-
sibly in ways that Aristotle may not have liked. Tragedies such as *Cornelia* and
Racine are said to have been written following the rules laid out in *Poetics* and it can
be seen its influence ran well into the 19th century. This influence his musings have
had on Western culture is fascinating, but one area that I would like to delve deeper
into is his realisation of imitation playing a huge part in the arts.

We have covered imitation already in this chapter and approached it from a scientific angle. By looking at Aristotle's thoughts, we can begin to see *how* we as humans were starting to understand *why* we strive to be entertained, not just instinctively searching for it. This instinct is what Aristotle bases his argument of *mimesis* (imitation) on:

> For it is an instinct of human beings from childhood to engage in mimesis (indeed, this distinguishes them from other animals: man is the most mimetic of all, and it is through mimesis that he develops his earliest understanding); and equally natural that everyone enjoys mimetic objects. A common occurrence indicates this: we enjoy contemplating the most precise images of things whose actual sight is painful to us, such as forms of the vilest animals and of corpses.
>
> *(Aristotle, 2011)*

What Aristotle is alluding to is what we explored earlier, that we are born image-makers and enjoy this imagery. This evidence for him 'can be seen in children's imitative play: everywhere children play in imitation of grown-ups, of each other, of animals, and even of machines' (Dutton, 2010, p. 33). There is an inbuilt delight in the joy of seeing something imitated and playing a part within that imitation. Plato disregarded this imitation because he felt it was often an untrustworthy depiction, but Aristotle had gone to another level of thinking. He was beginning to realise that within poetic performances it was not just a direct copy of a form, it was also an imitation of feelings and thoughts, and this allows the observer to place their thought onto the scenario, allowing for expansion of interpretation. He felt that tragedy was an imitation, not just of men, but of an action and of life, and that comedy is an imitation of people of a lower sort, but not in respect to every physical vice, rather, the ugliness of their actions (Aristotle, 2011). His thoughts on mimesis gave room for audiences to realise that there was more to a piece of work than that what you immediately see. A grotesque character in a comedy is immediately funny due to their physical appearance, but the imitation of their personality and opinions can be far more poignant and be amusing. But amusement was considered by Aristotle to be of great worth.

The Nicomachean Ethics is a publication that is often considered to be Aristotle's best-known works on ethics; consisting of 10 books which are thought to have been a series of lectures at the Lyceum. Within this vast philosophical manuscript, Aristotle touches on the topic of amusement. We have seen from *the Poetics* that he has respect for art forms that allow us expansion to think, but he still has reservations about frivolity and wasting time on being entertained which can be heard in this publication on ethics. He believed that amusement alone will not fulfil our lives, for 'Happiness then stands not in amusement; in fact, the very notion is absurd of the End being amusement, and of one's toiling and enduring hardness all one's life long, with a view to amusement' (Chase, 1847, p. 360). To find true happiness, he voiced that you needed to have ordered your life around developing morals and intellectual virtues, for example, generosity and wisdom. To achieve

this, you must be mentally active, and this is accomplished via debate and thought, not through amusement. Muse means to 'think', *a-muse-ment* can be translated as 'not to think', so even our own language is agreeing with his thoughts on it not aiding deeper thought to sustain mental activity.

Reading these opinions may make us feel that Aristotle was not perhaps an advocate for the arts as we had previously hoped? But he is not saying it should be not sought at all, but that there is more to the equation of fulfilment than just amusement:

> to labour with a view to amusement, is plainly foolish, and very childish: but to amuse one's self with a view to steady employment afterwards, as Anacharsis says, is thought to be right: for amusement is like rest, and men want rest, because unable to labour continuously.
>
> *(Chase, 1847, p. 361)*

He is expressing here that one cannot continuously seek and debate perfection, at times you need to rest, and amusement is an ideal opportunity to do this. But to work hard in order to seek reward in amusement is childish and not an approach that will realise itself in true happiness. These thoughts strike a chord with me for I can see that in modern society we perhaps do the reverse of this. Many of us work long hard days so that we can come home and indulge in entertainment. We are not being childish, we are resting, but perhaps in Aristotle's eyes we are wasting time that could be used to seek true fulfilment. What this demonstrates is how human society has evolved. The range of entertainment in Aristotle's time was limited compared to the vast array of options we have today. Therefore, the way we approach it will naturally be different. We have less time to contemplate life and its meanings. But the use of delving into Aristotle's mind is seeing how discussion on amusement, or we could say entertainment, was being debated long before the entertainment infrastructure we know today evolved. He was accepting, even back then, that it is needed, that in order to fulfil life's goals you need 'down time', you need to indulge in things that provide escapism.

Aristotle's thoughts on tragedy, imitation, and amusement are just thoughts, not fact or science. But from what we have learnt from the start of the chapter, we can see he was beginning to get a true grasp of the importance of Art and being engaged. Plato disregarded it but still took the time to critique it, Aristotle took it to another level, he began to understand it. If in another time he could have been presented with some scientific fact that showed him how we need to find reward and that we need to escape in order to sustain good mental health, he may have expanded his views and allowed for Poets to sit within his inner circle. I speculate, but what we have learnt yet again, is that inbuilt desire to seek engaging entertainment does not even escape the greatest minds. For if we are to really analyse the works of the great Greek philosophers, we can see that they actually were obsessed with art and entertainment, for they were the ones that laid the foundations for the philosophical movement of Aesthetics.

Aesthetics

We have looked at ancient philosophers but not dwelled on what philosophy actually is. Philosophy translated means 'love of wisdom'. In the broadest terms, it is when an individual is trying to understand basic truths about themselves, the world and their connections to this world and to others within it (Deleuze and Guattari, 1996). Academic study of Philosophy follows the same description, if you study it you are asking, answering and arguing about life's most basic questions. This is vast, so the world of philosophy is divided into different genres to allow for specialism of thought, as trying to answer *all* of life's questions at once would be rather challenging. Aesthetics is one of these areas.

   Aesthetics is an area of study that analyses felt qualities and perceptions, or some may refer to it as the study of beauty and taste; the pleasant, artful or positive depiction of a thing or person. Along with Ethics, Aesthetics is part of the Axiology: the philosophy of what people like. It was developed in the 18th century by a German philosopher Emmanuel Kant. Inspired by the work of Greek and Roman philosophers who often engaged in the rhetorical debate of aesthetic perception and their properties, but this was done through a different branch of philosophy that was about defining the parameters of art and beauty. Consequently, the term Aesthetics derives from the Greek word 'aesthesis' which translates as 'perspective'. Having a perspective is having a fundamental choice in your interpretation, therefore we can argue that something that is aesthetic is subjective and plays nicely into the idea that individual taste is what pushes us to create and seek entertainment. Aesthetics is an enormous topic with many variants and many opinions. For the purpose of our exploration, it is sensible to grasp the basics of the theory, but if this is a topic that excites you then delve deeper. At the end of the chapter, I have given some suggestions for further reading as what I am presenting to you here is just a basic starting point.

   Striking up a debate about Aesthetics would lead to discussion that covers natural and artificial sources that have sparked aesthetic judgement or experience. The key factor is to consider how these experiences affect our mind. How does it affect our mood? Does it alter our beliefs? You would also be encouraged to consider why one individual is attracted to an aesthetic experience or object, but another person is not. Aesthetics can be viewed as a critical reflection of just art, but its parameters do expand further than this, 'The best of philosophical aesthetics has almost always aimed at producing dialogue between art, the broad intellectual currents of the time and the history and practice of philosophy' (Herwitz, 2008, p. 3). Reflecting upon these areas together allows the great thinkers of our time to see how each affects the other. As artists we know that often our work is affected by more than just our creative thoughts, therefore it makes sense that within Aesthetics these areas are present. But with respect to our field of work, we are more interested in how we philosophise about engagement and art. An area called *philosophy of art* has evolved out of aesthetics which has allowed for deeper concentrated thoughts on reactions to artwork. This sub-strand looks at how the artist imagines,

performs or creates, and then looks at how the observer enjoys or critiques the work. All of which sounds surprisingly similar to the approach we have been taking in this chapter, the difference being the continued connection Aesthetics has with the concept of beauty.

Beauty was considered to be one of the main factors needed to have a fulfilled life in ancient societies. Beauty combined with truth and goodness were the cocktail that they sought. This often was found within artwork; a beautiful sculpture or painting was revered. But today many artists do not see beauty as an aim and some widely celebrated pieces could be seen as quite ugly (Taliaferro, 2012). We seek more than just aesthetic pleasure, but that appreciation of beauty has not disappeared, and should not be disregarded. I for one enjoy a piece of choreography that has clean lines and suspended movement because it is 'beautiful' to look at. We are still humans, and humans who descend from the ancient societies, therefore an admiration of beauty is arguably innate. This can be seen in other areas of our lives. Moral judgements can so often be based on aesthetics, and if we see a beautiful looking animal that we are told may become extinct due to our actions, we are most likely going to protect it rather than exploit it (Taliaferro, 2012). If we were presented with the same story but with a picture of a mole-rat, we are perhaps less likely to run to its aid. So, this is where we can relate to our exploration of why we seek entertainment. Whether we deliberately try to avoid it or not, beauty is attractive. Aesthetics allows us to dissect this attractiveness and build our own understanding of what we perceive as beautiful.

TASK

Put your pen to paper:

- List three objects you find beautiful.
- List three scenarios you find beautiful.
- Reflecting on the above write one sentence that defines Beauty.

From what you have written, is there a comparison to be made with the description of beauty and your own work? For me I would describe beauty as:

> Symmetrical fluidity that takes my breath away.

Breaking this down it would seem I value symmetry, a sense of flow and a captivating experience for the senses. Reflecting upon my own choreography I can relate to this description. I always favour symmetrical movement or spacing, and I strive for my work to never stop moving. I combine it with digital imagery and staging so that everyone's senses are occupied. Clearly, I value 'beauty' more highly than I had

realised. In the past, physical beauty seemed to be the only criteria that a piece of work could be judged by, nowadays that word has been replaced with 'successful'. Theories have evolved to help us dissect how/if a piece of work is successful and I feel as our next step we should explore these and see how they align with what we have learnt so far about our need to be engaged and entertained.

Three aesthetic qualities

Determining if a piece of work is successful is highly subjective, but through the practice of Aesthetics, three qualities have been defined that in theory make up a successful, or Aesthetic, piece of work if all are engaged with. They have become the bedrock of critique and are as applicable to new work as they are to old work (Baugh et al., 2006). The three qualities are: the literal qualities of the work, the design qualities and the expressive qualities. To provide you with a visualisation of these qualities I want you to imagine a Ballet dancer performing a Port de Bras (slow arm movements). The literal qualities of this piece of choreography are the recognisable form of a ballerina and the performance of traditional ballet move-ments. The design quality is when you look at how well the work is organised, or in this case choreographed. Is there rhythmic and dynamic variation within the movements? Are we presented with an array of Port De Bras movements? Is space used effectively? Finally, the expressive qualities, which are the qualities that convey moods and concepts, can be dissected by asking yourself if when viewing the Port De Bras, did you feel a certain emotion, or connection to the dancer and the scenario? Once these three areas have been analysed you can begin to assess if the work is 'successful'.

These three qualities link to our innate need to seek reward and beauty. For it to be literal makes it relatable and realistic, allowing us to connect. For it to be designed well appeals to our want to imitate things that bring us satisfaction and ultimately reward. Finally, for it to be expressive makes it human. We are fuelled by emotions and observing emotion and expression boosts our own feelings and releases our inbuilt need to seek this feeling again and again. What the study of Aesthetics is showing us, is how even when we try and break a piece of work down to understand why it is art, or why it is engaging, we cannot help but go back to our grass roots that saw us jump for glee when a cave painting seemed to move by the flicker of a fire. It is built-in.

Dissecting a piece of work using these qualities will help us understand why we seek out entertainment that hits key reward centres in our minds. For the purpose of this exercise, I am going to take a piece of work from one of our resident artists. In 2014, Sarah Brigham directed *The Odyssey*, and I was fortunate enough to see it live at Derby Theatre. It feels strangely appropriate to pick an ancient Greek story to help us understand Aesthetic qualities.

The Odyssey is based on a poem of Homer's, an ancient Greek Poet, who was heavily criticised in Plato's *The Republic* as Plato considered his work to be setting the worst moral examples (Dutton, 2010). This potentially immoral tale is the epic

story of Odysseus. You are taken on a 10-year journey of his struggle to return home to his wife and son after fighting in the Trojan War. On this adventure he encounters the wrath of the gods and battles with many a mystical creature. Meanwhile back home his wife Penelope is being inundated with suitors as Odysseus is presumed dead, and many wish to marry her and claim the throne of Ithaca. The play ends with Odysseus proving his identity through winning a contest, slaying all his wife's suitors and finally retaking his throne with the aid of his wife and son. Definitely an epic tale and one Brigham managed to bring into the modern world in the 2014 production. Working with an adaptation written by Mike Kenny allowed for the interpretation to move into a recognisable setting, avoiding unwanted tunics and sandals.

Firstly, we will look at its Literal Qualities, or another term used within Aesthetics is Imitationalism. In Brigham's work you can relate to the scenario you are being presented with. It is set in a time just after the Iraq war, and anyone of my generation will immediately find the signs that make us recognise this is the period. The costumes were your standard army uniform, and the staging 'a rough aesthetic of cable reels and oil drums' (The Odyssey: Review: the Guardian, 2014). These key objects are recognisable and place the piece of work in a present and real place, one that we can recall.

The design qualities, or Formalism, is where in my opinion this production flourished. Brigham used movement, voice and music to bring this story to life, and all of it with enough variation to keep the senses ignited. The expansive set designed by Barney George allowed for the space to be fluid and uninhibited by unnecessary bulk. Live music performed and composed by Ivan Stott showed how a violin, a drum and A Cappella singing can create dynamic variation and curiosity. The composition generated eeriness and joy to accompany the journey of Odysseus. The ensemble of eight had been organised within the space and story to effortlessly morph from human to monster, making it unpredictable and innovative. For example, such a moment was when 'Circe transformed the travellers to swine by stretching stockings over their heads' (The Odyssey: Review: the Guardian, 2014).

The expressive qualities, sometimes known as Emotionalism, were evident throughout this work. With the Iraq war still easy to remember, and the parallels this work had to this time made emotions run high. What Brigham managed to achieve was empathy for Odysseus and his soldiers. Empathy that they had fought a great war, but still had so many battles to overcome before they could become themselves again. For me the monsters and gods that they faced were the monsters in their minds, a representation of Post-traumatic stress disorder. The effective use of characterisation and empathy allowed me as an audience member to fully immerse in this simile and I was left wanting to learn more about these effects, wanting to help others who have been left in this way.

You can see that Brigham's adaptation of *The Odyssey* has met the criteria for a successful piece of work, or even a beautiful piece of work. The study of Aesthetics has shown us that even when we dissect, criticise and question art, we still

come back to the basic instinct reactions we have that make us seek out beauty and engagement. We are driven to see realism as we can understand its imitation, we are driven to see aesthetically beautiful and pleasing design as our brains find that captivating, and we are driven to seek emotional connection because observing emotions justifies us accepting our own. Philosophising around the make-up of a good piece of artwork has not made us think that perhaps we do not need it, it has confirmed that science and aesthetics seem to be agreeing with one another when it comes to what constitutes entertainment and why we seek it.

Final thoughts

Dopamine, imitation, Plato, Aristotle and Aesthetics have one thing in common; they are all key ingredients to why we seek out entertainment in our modern society. By exploring innate reaction, and then individual thought we have discovered how each affects the other. Because one of the main factors that makes us human is our ability to have independence of thought, it would have been naive to approach this topic believing it is purely all down to our chemical make-up that makes us seek engagement through entertainment. By presenting the views and theories of Philosophers, we can see the extent that these musings have affected our world of entertainment too. Our cooking pot is full and almost ready to serve. But as you start to digest all that you have learnt I want to explore one last thought: Why some of us are drawn to create entertainment, and why some of us prefer to observe it.

As you are reading this book you are most likely someone who is driven to create with observation being a pleasant pastime. But if you cast your mind, I am sure you can think of people in your life who do not consider themselves 'artistic' or 'creative', but do enjoy being entertained. Previously, we have learnt that imitation in play is one of the reasons we are able to connect with imaginary stories within entertainment, and this imitation starts at a very early age. As Michalko (2011) explores in *Creative Thinkering*, we are born spontaneous and creative, and we accept and embrace outlandish possibilities. As a child you find a stick and you are able to make this stick into a multitude of things using your imagination. It is a lightsaber, it is a troll, it is a time-machine! 'We were all amazingly creative and always filled with the joy of exploring different ways of thinking' (Michalko, 2011, p. 3). So why do so many of us end up losing that creativity and becoming a member of the camp that just observes entertainment?

Michalko (2011) believes it is down to our education, and that some of us begin to take less risk so that we can conform, whereas a minority continue to push the boundaries and use imagination to seek alternatives. This theory does seem to align with the idea that we are all creative, but we chose to use our creativity in different ways. Someone who works with stocks and shares surely has to be just as creative with the distribution of their investments, as an artist does with their distribution of ideas through their chosen medium. One is working with facts, but being creative with them to allow for investment, the other is working with fiction but being creative with it to allow it to become believable. In my mind we are all creatives.

Creativity in modern society is becoming increasingly valued for its effects not just in the entertainment world. There is recognition that creativity can help our mental health, and with this being an area that is of concern due to the decline in our society's well-being it is no wonder that many studies are starting to emerge that explore this connection of creativity and mental health. In 2010, Stuckey and Noble reviewed an array of said studies, in particular ones that looked at the benefit of the arts for well-being. They looked at over 100 studies and concluded that creativity leading to expression has a positive powerful impact on the participants' health and well-being. They observed that participation and engagement with art forms such as music, dance and writing helped decrease symptoms of depression and increased positive thinking. In some cases, there was evidence of stress reduction and even improvements in people's immune systems (Stuckey and Nobel, 2010).

Being creative it would seem is not just a pastime, it is an essential tool to living a healthy life. So yet again it makes no sense for some of us to be creative and some of us to not be. It is a mind-set, and whether we chose to use our creativity as a profession or not, does not stop us being 'a creative'. Deep down we must know the advantages of engaging with creativity, this would explain why our brains seek it out, and that so many of us use our spare time to indulge in creative outputs. Aristotle, as we have mentioned, had started to see the benefits of interacting with the arts with his musings on it being an adequate form of engagement as a means to resting. Rest is something that we all know benefits our mental well-being, but such a concept had not been acknowledged in Aristotle's time, so are we witnessing one of the first responses in the form of art therapy? A bold statement, but one worth considering when we are exploring that creativity is innately in us all and should be harnessed for our own health.

I feel at this juncture it is safe to say that we have witnessed enough to agree that we innately have the need to watch and be immersed in fiction and aesthetics, and that we have a built-in need to participate in creativity.

> Entertainment provides at least three gratifications: a respite from the anxieties and pressures of everyday life; the opportunity to compare oneself with the demeanour, behaviour, and possessions of others; and a means of keeping up with what is transpiring in the world.
>
> *(Shrum, 2004, p. 305)*

Being immersed both physically and mentally in a scenario or representation is favourable, and as the creative industries develop, this immersion is only going to get more realistic and addictive. Imagine a world with films that are shown in the next enhancement after 3D cinema, can we even imagine what that would be? Or theatres that make work that is specifically targeted at you and about you, this would be exhilarating and a legal way to distort reality. Almost like a mind-altering drug, but completely safe. No wonder entertainment is so engaging and sought after. We crave it, we create it and we are satisfied by it.

Further reading

During this chapter I have aimed to give you a starting point from which to delve deeper. Below are key sources that helped me understand our want and need for entertainment. I give my thoughts on the publications and how they can help you and your studies. I encourage you to seek these out and continue your learning in this fascinating area.

Sources on dopamine

I am certainly not a scientist and trying to understand neuroscience for the benefit of this publication was a tall order. Below are a couple of publications and websites that allowed a beginner to understand the neurological make-up that makes us seek reward.

BBC Bitesize Revision guide: cells of the nervous system, neurotransmitters at synapses

This website was extremely useful as it breaks down the science in a digestible way. I am sure I studied such areas when doing my GCSE's, but it is a while ago and time has filled my brain with other facts. This source provides an overview and introduces you to some key terminology. If you are wanting to start at the very beginning, then I suggest reading these revision pages as a way to create a basic knowledge on which to build upon. From here you will have the foundations to be able to understand more in-depth publications on this topic.

Dopamine handbook. (2010) Edited by Leslie Iversen

This book takes us to the next level of understanding. This is the first single-volume publication to capture research specifically about dopamine. It concentrates initially on its discovery in the 50s and then provides the reader with detailed information on the role this discovery had in the development of modern neuroscience. It explores how dopamine plays a large role in most aspects of behaviour, including, and not limited to, reward, addiction and mood regulation. These facts have been discovered by a pioneering approach that is considered unique in the neurosciences and it has combined and bridged the gap between clinical practice and science.

   The in-depth detail of dopamine's role in reward was of huge use to my research, as this was the area most sought after in connection with engagement via entertainment. I recommend this book if you want to understand this in more depth than what I have laid out in Chapter 3. But it does provide further reading if you are keen to learn the full capacity of what dopamine does and triggers. It is a heavy read and one I would recommend reading in bite-sizes.

Sources on imitation

Imitation is a vast topic therefore easy to get lost in when researching. One of the key reasons being imitation is not limited to one area of study, it crosses from science to philosophy to economics. What I have outlined later are sources that I have mentioned in this chapter, and I feel a read of the whole publication will intensify thought. But included are also sources that are not referenced in Chapter 3 but help build the knowledge of imitation beyond its role in engagement.

Perspectives on Imitation: From Neuroscience to Social Science – Volume 1: Mechanisms of Imitation and Imitation in Animals. (2005) Edited by S. Hurley & N. Chater

Perspectives on Imitation is a volume comprising papers from a range of disciplines that include neuroscience, law, sociology, brain imagery, animal behaviour, computer science, psychology, anthropology, education studies, economics and media studies. The contributors include not only the leading authors of this area of study, but also younger researchers who are given the freedom to comment on disciplines other than their own. The aim of Hurley and Chater was to bring together a wide range of opinions and research to allow it to be accessible across multiple disciplines, something that is sometimes hard to come by. They wanted 'to convey why imitation is a topic of such intense current interest in the cognitive sciences and how important this work is for the social sciences and for philosophy, where it has yet to be assimilated' (Hurley and Chater, 2005, p. 1).

This publication is ideal for helping you understand not only the vastness of 'imitation', but also to see the correlations between disciplines and how this innate response affects so much of what we do and what we are. At times it is not an easy read, and I found myself having to read sources referenced within the papers to help my understanding of the arguments being presented.

Newborn Infants Imitate Adult Facial Gestures. (1983) Andrew N. Meltzoff and M. Keith Moore

This is the paper that accompanies Meltzoff and Moore's experiment looking at the abilities of a newborn when copying adult facial gestures. This study was used as one of my key arguments when discussing the innate qualities of imitation. During Chapter 3, I go into depth about what the study comprised and the results that newborns can imitate adult facial expressions. I recommend you read the full paper as it gives depth to the study and highlights the extraordinary abilities of a new baby. It also explores the possible three mechanisms underlying this early imitative response. These are instrumental or associative learning, innate releasing mechanisms and active intermodal matching (Meltzoff and Moore, 1983). We only explored this study with a respect to imitation leading to appreciation, what the full paper expands upon is a wider use which explores the data that show when a reaction is innate rather than conscious.

What Imitation Tells Us About Social Cognition: A Rapprochement Between Developmental Psychology and Cognitive Neuroscience. (2003) Andrew N. Meltzoff and Jean Decety

This source deepened further my knowledge on imitation both in newborns and adults. It explores that neurophysiological research can see a common link between perceived and generated actions and that this is innately wired into humans from birth. Their musings and evidence suggest that infant imitation provides the foundation for empathy for others via understanding others are 'like me'. This then leads on to in-depth articulation about functional neuroimaging which explores the neurophysiological substrate of imitation in adults. This work looks at how this relates to one's perception of self and other and highlights the importance of imitation in this equation.

Although a lot of what I read in this source was not relevant to that which I was exploring in Chapter 3, I feel it is an interesting read as it shows how the progression of newborn imitation evolves as we grow older. It also reveals how imitation is helping scientists learn about the organisation and functionality of the brain, it is not just a childish response – that it was so often considered to be. This is worth a read if you are excited by the prospect of realising that we are so far from understanding all that our brain can do.

The Development of Play. (1989) D.S. Cohen and D. Cohen

This book is seen on many reading lists within education-based subjects and studies and has had four editions to date. I used this source to gain an understanding of the importance of play and how it links to the research I had read on imitation. This source reminds us that play is a huge part of our development, it helps us learn to speak, cope with others and speak. It also focuses on how it helps our imagination. This was the key area I wanted to explore with respect to my own research, but this book offers so much more if this area of study has intrigued you.

Cohen naturally explores child play and how this is instrumental to our development, and how different sorts of play ignite different responses, but he then goes onto explore how and why this stops as we became adults. His view is that we still hold Victorian opinions that work, and play cannot go hand in hand, and that as adults we should indulge in play more often. This publication states how this idea of play can be re-learnt by adults.

A fascinating read that flows nicely from one section to the next which is easy to understand and reflect upon.

Heider and Simmel (1994) animation [online video]. Available at: https://youtu.be/VTNmLt7QX8E

This video is referenced heavily in Chapter 3, but I would highly recommend watching it in conjunction with reading: *An Experimental Study of Apparent Behavior (1994). Heider, F. and Simmel, M.*

The footage is as described in my work, but please do watch it with an open mind, as you may find personal interpretations occur, and this is key to this work. The adjoining paper provides depth and detail to the experiment and helps you understand the reasons Simmel and Heider felt such an exploration was important.

TOP TIP: I watched the film first, then read the paper, then watched the film again. Each stage provided further interest and questions. See if this is the case for you.

Sources on Plato

The Republic. By Plato

If you truly want to try and understand Plato, then this is the publication for you. As it is an articulation of his own thoughts, there is no better way to immerse yourself in how he debated and mused. But it is vast and hard to grasp as there is so much being discussed at any one time. For my research I focused on his view on the Arts, but there are many other topics that are explored, and I would recommend understanding your own view on the topics before you begin to dissect his, this should provide you with more objectivity. Also remind yourself of the time in which it was written as some values are outdated, but many views and opinions are still relevant to today's society if you dissect it enough to see the relatable elements.

There are publications out there that are designed to help you read *The Republic*, and I would recommend *The Blackwell Guide to Plato's Republic* (Santas, 2008). It comprises 13 essays by a range of scholars and researchers all with the same aim of helping new readers understand *The Republic*. Key things that are covered:

- Provides an understanding of how this is the foundation of the Western culture.
- Explores new ideas centred on themes found in *The Republic.*
- Dissects the philosophical style of the publication: for example, Plato's views and theories on education, justice and knowledge and his opinion on the divine.

The Art Instinct. (2010) Denis Dutton

I will discuss this book with relation to Aesthetics later, but elements of the work were useful when looking into Plato. Key sections to read are pages 31–32 and 115–116. These provide further details and background to Plato and his time. Within these chapters, you can also learn about the influences of other ancient philosophers and begin to piece together their importance to the development of Aesthetics.

This book is fluid and easy to read, and one you should read all the way through if Aesthetics is your chosen research area. I will delve deeper later.

All About Process: The Theory and Discourse of Modern Artistic Labor. (2017) Kim Grant

This source was originally on my list of research for Chapter 5 where we look at process vs. outcome. A very useful publication with respect to that argument, but

what Grant provides in Chapter 1 is an overview of the general views and opinions of the ancient societies with a focus on the Greeks. It provided me with insight to be able to research further into the two key figures of Plato and Aristotle. However, this is just one strand I chose to explore, Grant's analysis of Art's historical root shows how the changing concepts of what is considered artistic process has played a huge role in the evolution of art today. By naming key figures this publication will allow you to find more areas in which to research to broaden your knowledge.

I would also recommend reading the rest of this book as the insights into process in con- temporary art is insightful and thought-provoking.

Sources on Aristotle

Poetics by Aristotle

As with Plato's *The Republic*, this is a key text if you are wanting to delve deeper into the mind of Aristotle. A shorter publication than Plato's and easier to digest in parts. Because it is an amalgamation of lectures notes and student notes, it some- times lacks continuity as these articulations were not designed for publication, so the style and elegance that Aristotle was known to have is perhaps not showcased so effectively in this work. You also may want to have a source that helps you with certain Greek philosophy terminology to assist with the slightly more in-depth sec- tions, but you will find *poetics* manageable and enlightening.

This work may be of great interest to those readers who are interested in writ- ing/producing a story or narrative. The dissection of what constitutes a good story still holds true to this day, and the justifications of the main categories of a good story are interesting to explore.

Aristotle. (2014) Alexander Moseley

This book concentrates on the effect Aristotle's work has had on education. Mose- ley provides an overview of the work of Aristotle which is useful when trying to grasp his mind-set and his reasonings. The book then reflects on these works with respect to education systems today. Chapter 5, in particular, is useful if you wish to compare and contrast Aristotle's thoughts with today's standards, and then it can be related to his opinion of the arts and how they can be used in today's art scene.

Chapter 3, *Fundamentals of Philosophy*, provides great insight into the basics of Philos- ophy and is a useful tool if you are wanting to then research more deeply into Aesthetics.

Sources on the basics of Aesthetics

Introducing Aesthetics: A Graphic Guide. (2014) Christopher Kul-Want

This book is ideal for those of us who do not have a Philosophy background and are wanting to try and understand Aesthetics. Presented almost like a comic, this

is an ideal publication for the more visual and kinaesthetic learners. You will still need to take your time understanding the questions being asked because the topic of Aesthetics is confusing and even a well-designed book like this, struggles to simplify it. Chapters *Art and Reality* and *Art and the Audience* (Piero and Kul-Want, 2014) provide intriguing thought for practising artists, so I recommend you read these sections if the whole book is too vast.

The Art Instinct. (2010) Denis Dutton

Previously mentioned in the Plato section of sources, this book provides an objective approach that helps weave the idea that art is innate. Well written and easy to read, I highly recommend this publication if you wish to get a true grasp of the possibilities that are being explored that suggest creating art and observing art is instinctive.

Dutton explores the idea that the need to create art in some form is evident in every human society, therefore it is not coincidental but evolutionary. An appreciation of a sunset from our hunter–gatherer ancestors has evolved to be an appreciation of a landscape painting or photograph. He delves deeply into the biology of why this is and poses questions like 'why do we value art?' By combining research from evolutionary psychology and aesthetics, this book is a fascinating in–depth read that builds on all that we have explored in Chapter 3.

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4

ENTERTAINING THE MODERN BRAIN

Although we have learnt why we need to be entertained, and therefore why we generate it, the current situation is that we are overly saturated with mediums of entertainment. Many now believe our brains are becoming harder and harder to keep engaged. With just a swipe of a phone we have a world of entertainment at our fingertips, therefore live, visual performing arts need to keep up with this pace. By identifying current trends and observing levels of engagement, we, as artists can create work to suit these needs. But before we identify how to do this, we need to gain a better understanding of why the modern brain is considered to be over-saturated.

During this chapter I will refer to the 'modern brain', this is not an official term, but one I am using to describe brains of today. Brains, or should we say people, who are living in the digital era, who are used to digital interactions and have grown up with the Internet contributing to most factors of their lives. Our current brains are considered to be over-saturated with information and entertainment, but is this an assumption, a generalisation? As you sit here and read this book, you may also have your computer open, your tablet playing music and your phone providing you with constant notifications. You will happily be juggling all these platforms, and on some level be absorbing the information that they are giving you. This multi-tasking approach is what we mean by the modern brain having the potential to be over-saturated. Ask yourself the last time you sat and read a whole chapter of a book without playing some music or googling a reference, or watched a whole film without checking your phone. This fickle way of being entertained is potentially resulting in a generation who cannot keep engaged for the length of a piece of visual performing art.

There is no blame here as we have already learnt that our need for entertainment is so inbuilt that we will always seek more. The difference now is that it is very easy to find it. We learn from an early age how to use digital devices that provide us with aesthetics and profound thoughts. There are now generations of

children turning into adults who have never lived in a world without digital tablets and easily accessible online content. This expansive world of entertainment is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it is diversifying our knowledge and allowing us to have a broad appreciation for many art forms. On the other, it is providing us with too much choice meaning we never fully commit to one thing. Online streaming platforms offer us so many avenues to go down that we often take a tapas approach to watching programmes. This attitude is hard to replicate within a live performance, so subsequently, the live experience is potentially becoming increasingly less sought after as the commitment required is not an everyday occurrence.

Having the ability to always be connected, via Wi-Fi and data, intensifies the above. In the past you went to a venue to be entertained. Now you can be anywhere and find a source to stimulate and engage your aesthetic brain. What we need to consider is, 'is there a breaking point?' Will we reach a place where we can no longer absorb so many different factors, and we will start to desire a slower and more streamlined process to being entertained. My gut reaction is that we will not slow down, we will go off on a tangent. You only need to look a little way into the past to see how people have always considered over-saturation, or in other words, over-indulgence, a common denominator in the evolution of entertainment. But the element that we are indulging in is constantly changing.

Reading a book is considered to be a pastime that is both academic and creative, with an element of sophistication, indeed I spend most of my time encouraging my students to read books. However, this mind-set was not always the case. There was a time where reading a book was one of the few sources of entertainment, and those that spent many an hour doing this were considered to be over-indulging and not living in the 'now'. This way of thinking only began to change when another source of entertainment came to the forefront and started changing how the brain is engaged. The radio, then closely followed by the television, were the next evolutionary steps for entertainment in your own home. Both went through the same ridicule as books, with society having concerns about the amount of time spent listening or watching, and how this was going to have an effect on our children and the future. As *Michael Rich* comments, Television has always been discussed in medical fields since the 40s and is regarded with 'concern, attraction, and ambivalence' (Rich, 2009, p. 109). Such words could be used about the way we feel about digital devices and the internet today, we have simply transferred our concerns. History is repeating itself; therefore, should we not learn from this?

None of these forms have actually ruined our ability to enjoy live performance, if anything they have enhanced and shaped *how* we enjoy live entertainment. It is not about forcing us to be as we were, but for us as the creators to keep up and allow this evolution to continue. So, with the understanding that we are the ones to follow, we need to consider how we can use current trends to our advantage and subsequently how best to engage the modern brain. Social media is an enormous part of what the modern brain engages with daily, so before we delve into how to create work that keeps this brain engaged, it is worth exploring how we can utilise the world of social media to attract audience and start the engagement journey.

Social media

It is rare to find an individual that does not interact with social media in some way in our current society. The easily accessible nature of these platforms and our desire to stay in touch with one another, and spy on the rest, has resulted in an explosion of activity in the world we now consider to be called social networking. But this is not new, many societies have had some form of 'self-technology' where a sense of placing order on one's life can feel fulfilled by participating in it. In the Roman era, the educated classes used hympomnemata books to contemplate life, by jotting down musings or mottos (Mc Mahon, 2019). Not a tool with a sense of structure, just a device to remember things by, not dissimilar to looking back on Facebook via Timehop, reminiscing about things you posted, two, five, 10 years ago. The only key difference is the medium in which it is being recorded on. You are still able to express your thoughts and emotions and reflect upon them, but perhaps in a more public manner on our platforms. However, there are examples through time of more inter-active self-technologies that show the progression of such forms to result in what we have today. Such examples are counselling, psychotherapy and even Roman Catholic confession (Mc Mahon, 2019). What has changed dramatically is that we are dealing with self-exploration and human interaction via a digital platform. The face-to-face human connection is potentially being lost and this was a key feature in the past for such self-technologies. So, we do have to wonder how long will this survive if we are pulled physically further and further apart from one another?

Social media can be accessed through a variety of devices (phones, laptops, tablets, etc.) and once considered to only be for the younger audiences, it has now become a generation-wide pastime as smartphones are more mainstream and connectivity internationally more integral to day-to-day life (Hinton and Hjorth, 2013). Originally an American phenomenon with sites such as *Friendster, Ryze and SixDegrees*, it soon spread globally as it is an addictive form of pastime and many entrepreneurs saw the allure of it. 'FriendsReunited was developed in the United Kingdom, Mixi in Japan, CyWorld in South Korea, Grono.net in Poland, Taringa! in Argentina, StudiVZ in Germany, Qzone in China and many more besides' (Mc Mahon, 2019, pp. 5–6). But the most widely used sites and apps are still produced by America, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, the list is endless. As you are reading this you are most likely tallying how many social platforms you personally use and starting to consider what is the appeal of them. They capture the part of the brain that allows us to be captivated by more traditional forms of entertainment, they are colourful, interactive, subjective and above all involve other humans. No wonder they are as popular as they are, they are engaging us en masse and we keep asking for more. They are starting to affect how we think and how we interact. It has stopped being purely a socialising arena, it has become a crucial part of our daily activity. I am always shocked at how many hours I personally spend on my chosen social media apps. If I did not have a smartphone that tallied my daily amount, which unnerves me and stops my scrolling, then I fear a huge majority of my spare time would be spent in this vein. This clearly influences our

day-to-day lives, and our relationships, those online and off. This does spark debate and an array 'of questions about the changing nature of what is public and what is private, and where work ends and life begins, as social media infiltrates every facet of everyday life' (Hinton and Hjorth, 2013, p. 1). A work–life balance is quickly becoming unmeasurable as the two are merging and although this may potentially affect our well-being, we have to acknowledge the media developments that are occurring because of the speed in which social media is 'taking over'. As Hinton and Hjorth (2013) proceed to say, social media accentuates the changes within the media landscape, bringing it to the forefront of our awareness. Subsequently, it allows for new ways in which to engage and disseminate, and this is a key factor in audience awareness and development when working within the Arts.

Although social media originally started with a mind to enhance personal connectivity, it has become 'a vehicle for popular culture, social media is a dynamic and ever-evolving creature in which use-by dates perpetually loom in the face of the new, novelty practice' (Hinton and Hjorth, 2013, p. 136). We never know what the latest fad will be, and our own opinions posted on such sites have a sell-by date as much as the platform does. It is a fast-paced world, a fickle world, a judgemental world and one that has many pros and cons to it. But it is a world that has taken popular culture, and subsequently the world of arts, on a new tangent and has allowed for creativity in a new light to evolve. Because of social media, artists have been provided with another medium, and another platform to show work on. For the Visual Performing Arts it is an ideal place to develop within. It is a highly visual media, and this plays well into the hands of artists whose outcome and process connect with this. I follow many dance artists and companies on Instagram because I can see them in action, well before they showcase their work in a theatre. I can feel like I am part of their process, but it also allows for my daily intake of aesthetic kinetic imagery. You can see why a majority of artists have embraced social media as a welcome tool. You can indulge quickly in art that inspires you, and you can also ignite others through your own work. New artists are gaining interest more quickly than they would have in a traditional setting as the use of online art communities become more popular. Such communities, deviantART for example, provide a way for emerging and non-traditional artists to have a place in the world, sparking interest and potential financial rewards because they are being noticed outside the traditional structures that are common in the art world (Hinton and Hjorth, 2013).

Artists are also starting to make art *from* social media. It is an obvious device to showcase work on, but by using it as a conscious theme, or as a material from which to generate work, it is providing us with an array of innovative pieces of entertainment. There are artists who have decided to use the power of word and have used Twitter to allow them to cleverly compose 280-character stories. You have the world of TikTok which has seen a rise in choreography generated specifically for this platform, and exclusively created for mass re-embodiment. Instagram is a common platform for artists and film artists, painters, dancers, musicians can all be seen not only showcasing work, but also using the platform to create work that can only be appreciated via the app. Alexa Meade is a visual artist who uses Instagram to

showcase her work. She is known for her painting skills, but not on canvas or more traditional sources, she paints onto humans. She turns the 3D form of a living person into an animated 2D depiction. Her page shows her at work and has moments of brilliance where you feel you have clicked on a painting of a person, a large brush stroked painting with dramatic bold colours, to only receive a shock when the 2D person opens their eyes and moves down an extremely 3D street. Misconception, innovation and a captive audience. All things that her work evokes because it is seen via Instagram. Her work is not dissimilar to the human statues that we see in Covent Garden, but because it is not in the usual environment it has produced a new lease of life. So much so that collaborations with other art mediums have been used by Meade, most popular ones being her work with musician Ariana Grande in her music video *God is a Woman*, and a more politically driven creation saw choreographer/dancers Jon Boogz and Lil Buck painted in Meade's signature way whilst commenting on racial tensions in America through dance.

Social media art is becoming a term within itself, and this is a direct response to the audience's, and artists', modern brain make-up. We live in this way now, so art and culture have to follow this trajectory, or it will be left behind. Xioa, a social media artist, explains to Hinton and Hjorth (2013) in *Understanding Social Media*, that there are four rules to adhere to if you want to fit in the bracket of a social media artist.

1   The web must play a key role in the expression of the art. Not simply marketed on the web or sourced from the web.
2   Your work must involve audience in some way, because social media is a social medium.
3   The work must be accessible to an audience who are outside of the art scene, but it must still be conceptually rich.
4   It 'is about intent – the artist must be able to articulate a reason or purpose of the artwork that then permits it to be examined and validated by others' (Hinton and Hjorth, 2013, p. 88).

We can see that if its own form of art is emerging then social media is clearly an influential factor in how performing arts in general will develop. We have the modern-brained audience and the modern brains of the creatives. We are not content with a traditional performance anymore. With this in mind let us take a moment to consider our own practice.

TASK

Take your pen to paper and reflect upon the below questions:

- How do you use social media within your practice?
- Has it enhanced or hindered your progress?

The idea that every creative has, or should, embrace social media would be a naive response. Not every artist within the arts community has found advantages to this digital social world. There is definitely a mixed response to its importance. There are those who see social media platforms as too commercialised, and a place full of uneducated individuals who are allowed to express their critiques as if they were professional opinions. It is also becoming increasingly hard to differentiate between the producer and the consumer. Those 'trained' artists are the elite, but if they do not showcase themselves via social media then they may not be recognised, and an individual who shows a little talent but posts continually about it will quickly overtake them in terms of popularity. Not fair when it is acknowledged that it takes 10,000 hours of study or training to become a professional. Malcolm Gladwell, whose calculation this is, would be a little deflated looking at the rise of some stars and the relatively minimal hours they have put in. Therefore, the question is how can artists maintain their status without engaging in social media, and if they cannot, what does this mean for the arts, culture and technology? (Hinton and Hjorth, 2013). We have to understand its brilliance, and its allure. We have to dissect not only why the modern brain thrives on it, but also how fast-paced and ever-changing it is. It certainly is not a tool for everyone, but if you are wanting to generate work that will appeal to all audiences, specifically the younger generations, then you will have to understand the ways in which it can be used to your advantage. Understanding it is accepting that this new medium is affecting social development, and by realising this, you will come to develop a better awareness of the world in which we are now living (Hinton and Hjorth, 2013).

Three key things have emerged from my research into social media that I feel every artist should reflect upon so that they can utilise the effect social media has had on our brains:

1   Use the socials to your advantage
2   It is fast-paced – so replicate this in your work
3   Be aware it is ever-changing, and tomorrow there will be a new craze

Using it to your advantage can be in an array of ways. Sarah Brigham uses social media to her advantage with respect to audience awareness, a key factor when running a theatre. But her thoughts do make you realise how simple social media really is:

> What is social media, other than word of mouth? Word of mouth has always been the biggest seller of any theatre show – but now even more so. People want to feel part of something. Social media is word of mouth and therefore is our biggest tool.
>
> *(Brigham, 2021)*

Without word of mouth, the arts world would struggle to evolve and develop. She rightly points out that this will sell your shows. Large companies and Theatres specifically hire a social media marketing specialist so that their target audience can

be reached. So, you may not like using social media, but you can certainly see the advantage it has in pulling in an audience.

All interactive social media is fast-paced. What I mean by this is that the content changes every two seconds, the pace in which you can view the content can be in snap shots, and with each app update, the way you interact with the content changes. Modern brains are getting used to changes on a regular basis. We are no longer in a world where you are happy re-watching a film as it is the one you have on DVD. Life is faster than that and we can now experience something new as often as we want. Use this speed in your work. Have your audience jumping about from one experience or scenario to the next, have them make decisions during the interaction, keep their brains active and engaged. But as I mentioned this ever-changing construct has a flip side, and with respect to social media that flip side is that there will be a new craze before you know it. You have to make sure you do not get left behind. Try and avoid creating work that focus on one current aspect of a social media craze. Dissect what the common themes are within it, and expand on them, for as you analyse each craze and each new platform, you will see the underlying similarities. This is what you as an artist have to tap into if you are wanting to generate work that replicates the allure of social media.

There are great advantages to understanding the world of social media, especially when reflecting upon the modern audience. But as quickly as it emerged, it could equally just disappear. Therefore, we as artists have an obligation to make sure there is always a way for the brain to find entertainment, even when the largest current forms die away. But the lasting effect will not be the content on the social media pages, it will be the effect it has had on us mentally. This is not a factor that will disappear when the apps stop loading. Social media does not seem to be, in general, helping our well-being. As Mc Mahon (2019) discusses, the social media giants need to stop and consider not just how their users use their platform to connect with others, but also how each user is using it to connect with themselves. Lack of personal understanding is hard to eradicate, and if we are left with generations who are unable to connect without a digital interface, we will struggle to generate work that fits within their safe parameters. Awareness of what the future may hold will allow for a deeper understanding of the modern brain, and how we can continue to engage it.

Attention span

As we have learnt when diving into the world of social media, we are faced with far more distractions and variants than we had in the past, and this has led to the view that the modern brain has a shortened attention span. We want to move on to the next thing before delving deeply into an aspect, because this is a replication of our social media lives. We scroll and swipe with little connectivity with the content. Concentrating for a prolonged amount of time is considered by some to be a thing of the past, which could be an issue for those of us working in the visual performing arts where a live outcome between 60 and 120 minutes is often the preference.

But what is 'attention span'? In simple terms, our attention span is the amount of time we can concentrate on one subject or activity. We know that children's attention spans are much shorter than adults. We, over time, develop the ability to stay engaged for longer. But it is an individual calculation, and all our attention spans differ. So let us see what your attention span is:

TASK

Study Figure 4.1 and find the hidden Owl. Set a timer and stop the clock when you are finished.

So how long did it take you to stop looking? This is roughly your attention span. This is an extremely mean brain game as there actually is no Owl to find, so apologies to those who are driven by success and finished this task in frustration. But by having the subject not actually visible is an easy way to measure attention span. A short attention span means you give up on a hard task quickly, a longer one means you persist until there is a result, or in this case until you resign out of sheer annoyance. But is your attention span shorter than that of someone in your age-bracket 15 years ago? There is a school of thought that due to the enhancements of technology and the interactive life we now live, our attention spans have shortened to less than that of a goldfish.
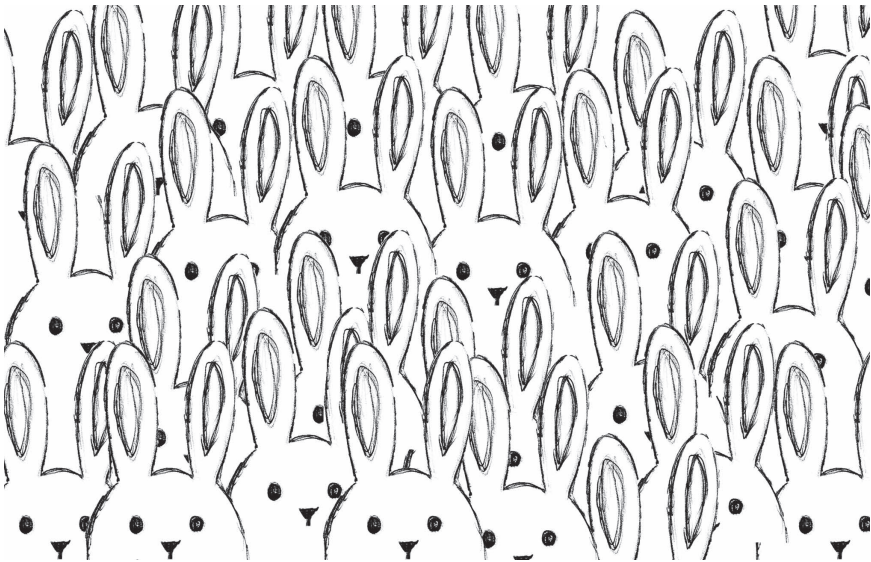
FIGURE 4.1   A crowd of Rabbits stacked top of one another, similar to a 'where's Wally/Waldo'.

In 2015, Microsoft Canada investigated this topic in their paper *Attention Spans: Consumer insights. Microsoft Canada.* Their researchers surveyed over 2,000 participants and used electroencephalograms (EEGs) to study brain activity on a further 112 individuals. Their studies led to data that showed an average attention span of 12 seconds in the year 2000 (roughly when the mobile phone industry became large) and decreased to just 8 seconds in 2013. This is one second less than the notoriously forgetful Goldfish. The paper attributes this decrease to the excessive use of smartphones, and the abundance of material that is easily accessed. It would seem our brains are adapting to the technological enhancements of modern culture and although this seems like a negative change, the study then goes on to articulate a positive change. It would seem that although attention spans are shorter our ability to multi-task has increased. Microsoft (2015) theorise that the decrease of attention span could simply be a side-effect of the increased ability to take in more information in a shorter space of time and shows how the brain can adapt and change. This research is of interest as we dissect the modern brain. It would seem that science has proven we are less likely to concentrate on something for any length of time, so subsequently, this affects how we as artists approach the subject of how to design work that will keep an audience engaged. It could simply be down to the length of the work or is it designing work that is split into segments which replicates the multi-tasking ability that our brain now finds more apt. But one aspect of this study jumps out at me, and that is the acknowledgement that the brain is adaptable and will change. So, if it has changed once, there is no reason why it cannot change again. Attention is a mental muscle; therefore, in theory like all muscles it can be strengthened through specific targeted exercises (Review et al., 2013). We can train our brains to have longer attention skills by following four steps:

1   Choose a focus. *It can be anything but try and pick something that is an everyday focus or activity. For example, brushing your teeth, drinking a cup of tea.*
2   Your attention now wanders. This is unintentional and not planned. *Try and avoid intentionally wandering, this is then just another focus. Let it happen naturally and let this stage happen without consideration to this task.*
3   You notice you are distracted. *Again, avoid planning or choosing to have this realisation.*
4   Having returned to your original state begin to explore your focus/task again.

If re-working attention spans can be as simple as the above, perhaps our challenge as visual performative artists is to re-train the modern brain after the deluge of modern technologies? Through our work we could teach the brain to hold a focus for longer again by replicating the above through our medium. If I was to take my medium of choreography, I could have moments in the work that followed the above structure to jolt the modern audience's brains into concentrating again:

1   The focus is a steady rhythmical piece of choreography.
2   Allow this section to go long enough for the average audience member to be lulled into a complacent state.

3   Interject a motif of movement combined with the music that goes against the rhythms previously experienced, creating a 'jolt' moment.
4   Now having gained their attention again, continue the rhythmical qualities explored initially.

This is potentially a drastic approach, and one that would mean an element of artistic sacrifice would occur to shoehorn in the desired effect. Keeping work short is perhaps the easiest solution to the conundrum we are faced with. Rob Vale's work with Illuminos is often shorter in length than an average play or dance production. Thinking this may be down to their awareness of shorter attention spans I felt compelled to ask him if this was the case:

> Much of our work for outdoor events and standalone projections tends to run at about 10–15 minutes. But this doesn't relate to attention spans or modern brains. Much is made of the idea of a shorter attention span, but I'm never convinced. Films are frequently 25–30% longer than they were 20 years ago – TV series have increased in duration and complexity not decreased. Younger minds will concentrate for hours on Minecraft or Tik-Tok or any number of other activities, they just expect to be able to do these things whenever and wherever and are very nimble in their ability to hold many different streams of activity in mind at once. Our work tends to sit at a particular length because the environment in which it is viewed dramatically affects how long people wish to be there. In winter, outside, in the dark, no matter how mesmerising something is, people get cold, need a drink, get rained on, so there is an unspoken trade between what is offered for them and the atmosphere or environment in which they're experiencing it.
>
> *(R. Vale, 2020)*

Vale's views are interesting to hear, for he has sparked the idea that in reality our attention spans have not shortened, they have just changed in make-up. As in Microsoft's (2015) paper, he is acknowledging the increased ability to multi-task and articulates that it is now more than ever a time of doing things whenever and wherever you like. This is the true battle of a creator. How do you generate work that is varied and active enough to allow the modern brain to stay satisfied? This is a far more interesting challenge than one that is simply resigning to the fact an audience will get bored, therefore, just to make work shorter. Vale continues by outlining a few strategies they use to keep their work sitting in a more fast-paced and varied structure:

> We place a lot of emphasis on rhythm and tempo within the work. People will wait for imagery or narrative to emerge at the beginning of a piece for longer than they might halfway through, there's a flow and connection, like a conductor and musicians, that has to be thought about. We often incorporate elements to follow in the work, characters or elements that journey through

the piece, acting as guides, or empathetic elements, the eyes of the viewer wrapped into the work. All these things we find draw an engagement, but none of them work if there isn't connection to the content itself, reasons for what they're seeing to emerge. Story is everything for us, it is what catches the attention and keeps it to the end.

(R. Vale, 2020)

By producing a well-designed piece with variation, vibrance and vigour, you can, whether you intend to or not, adhere to the modern brain and take it on a journey that will keep it engaged. Vale states that his approach is to produce a structured rhythm that helps the flow of the journey or story. By having elements that jump out that keep the engagement alert he is allowing the audience to stay actively involved with the piece of work. Attention spans are always a key concern of any artist in any time period. As we mentioned before, attention spans are individual, so there have always been certain audiences that need to be kept alert. The fact that it is considered most of us now have shorter attention spans is just another ingredient we can add to our creative pot. Try and view it not as a hinderance but as a challenge.

   Microsoft's (2015) theory was that the change in our attention spans was down to the digital interfaces that we connect with daily. The way in which we now spend free time is often in conjunction with a digital media that we can pause, navigate away from or even delete. Live performance does not have this flexibility to it. As an artist whose main area of outcome is live production, this concerns me for I feel a modern brain is increasingly becoming harder to engage through a live medium. Paul Jackson and I discussed this concern and what measures we can take with this in mind:

> A key thing here is time. With the ease of accessing all types of art in electronic format it is becoming increasingly difficult for the live artist to engage an audience in an extended work. I can't bear the Gollum episodes on Lord of the Rings and will watch on DVD so I can skip them, similarly in music I often will skip the movements that don't engage me, it's great making a play list of one's favourite sections of works. In Live work this is not possible, in a classic work one can steel oneself for the section(s) which engage one less and still come away entertained. In a new work it is hard for the creator who will know their audience is used to skipping or dipping in and out. Let the audience know how long the work is, work in smaller sections, pay careful attention to dynamics, pacing and time. Of course, know your audience too, no one can make a work that will please everyone, but judicious use of time could win you new friends.
>
> *(Jackson, 2020)*

Jackson's view is that of Vale's, by careful planning and clear intentions it is possible to keep your audience engaged, you just have to be aware there are more factors at play in our current society. Yet again this sense of using time effectively is at the forefront. Live performance and what its structure should be, is never set in stone, therefore we are at a juncture where new approaches can be embraced. Re-invention is common in our field, but to re-invent in an effective way you must reflect and analyse what

the original concept was. 'One of the most prominent and recurring definitions of live performance – whether of theatre, performance art, dance or music – is that it is fundamentally ephemeral' (Reason, 2006, p. 1). This word ephemeral used by Reason is innately what 'live' is, it is temporary and short-lived. This is the beauty and uniqueness of it and having an audience which is not used to live performance should not be seen as a deterrent not to generate these experiences.

Consider your modern audience, individuals that we predict will want to skip elements of an experience they find boring, or rewind elements they wish to be absorbed in again. The positive we can take from this description is an audience seeking individual interaction. Audience participation perhaps? This tool is one that is historically despised as it can make audiences feel fearful, or embarrassed, not only on a personal level but also for the creators who inflicted this on their viewers (White, 2013). But it does not have to be participation on a level that we see in magic shows, or burlesque shows, it can be discreet, and it can be effective. If the sole purpose of the tool is to allow for an individual to feel they have an element of control, then strategies can be implemented that do not spark embarrassment. Our modern audience is more than ever shying away from 'spotlight' moments as they are happy hiding in a digital world where infinite possibilities of who you are and what you say can be portrayed. Pulling an individual out of the audience to try and replicate the way they interact with digital mediums is not going to be the answer. Your live performance needs to have physical participation as a group, and cognitive or anonymous participation on an individual level.

Within every medium, there are always different ways of approaching participation but participation on a group level could include, and is not limited to, the below:

- The actors/performers moving in and amongst the audience as they play out their scenario.
- Group decisions: The action leads to the audience deciding on the next stage of the story. Simple tactics can be used like lifting a green paddle for one scenario, or a red for the other.
- A group are asked to interact with the action: For example, hide a character/move props to move the action/ask them to join in with a song.

Interaction will still occur, but you are avoiding the glare of public humility as you are working safely in numbers. This approach keeps the modern brain active as it pulls you back out of your potentially short attention span and re-focuses you, like the exercise where we tried earlier to 'train' our ability to focus for longer. This approach will feel personal to some, but what the digital era has amplified is a need to feel you are in control of a situation. Interaction on a cognitive level is harder, but achievable. You can also invite the individual to participate by interactions that are anonymous:

- Ask your audience rhetorical questions. No answer is required for the journey of the action, but a response will subconsciously be made.

- Ask for anonymous responses. You can use digital interfaces to take a poll, or to articulate responses to a question by posting on a digital blackboard.
- Provide the audience with the opportunity to disengage with the work. Provide headphones or blindfolds to be used when they wish to 'pause'.

This interaction is not compulsory but being provided with the option feeds into the idea that how we perceive and engage with live entertainment is changing and an audience will feel they have control, they will feel 'at home' with the make-up of the work. Essentially accepting an invitation to participate in a live performance is no different to accepting that latest friend request, 'it means accepting an altered social role . . . it means accepting some risk to social esteem, and some risk of (or opportunity for) responding unconsciously' (White, 2013, p. 159).

Although the fear of live performance being less appealing is perhaps felt in some sectors of the Performing Arts community, we have discovered here that live performance has the same essence as many digital interactions that our modern audience is used to. Interaction and control are at the forefront. We make work, on the whole, to be absorbed by an audience so this is an obvious intention. But 'performance only exists in the moment of its creation and its only valid afterlife is in the memory of those who were there' (Reason, 2006, p. 2). A collective experience occurs endlessly on digital platforms, so a modern audience will not shy away from this, but a collective experience that is then gone and only remembered by those present is the difference. This is unique, this is exciting and for the modern audience, not the norm. By articulating that that is the pull, you will see live performance becoming a sought-after addition to their more introverted lives.

Abolishing the interval

One of the aims of this chapter is to explore how we can make the most of the modern brain with respect to our art forms, and it would seem this notion of shorter attention spans, or a want to have a faster-paced experience, is continually being debated. Sarah Brigham's work is mainly in a traditional theatre setting and our conversation around the attention span of audiences and artists instigated a whole other area of debate:

> Once upon a time you could have gone maybe an hour and a half, sometimes even longer without an interval. You can't do that now. Fifty to seventy mins max before they (the audience) need an Interval. We did a production in 2016 of *Look Back in Anger*, which was first performed in 1976, it's three and a half hours long, and it's really wordy. My first impulse was 'I have to cut this'. It was written as a three act play with two intervals; we just don't do that in the theatre anymore. It just doesn't exist anymore. Actually, having one interval is becoming a bit of a luxury. Lyn Gardner just wrote a thing in *The Stage* about how we should get rid of intervals and just do straight through productions. Her thinking being people can't sustain that level of concentration anymore. It would seem times are changing.
>
> *(Brigham, 2021)*

Brigham's view that even one interval is a luxury ties in with the notion that we are at a stage where what we perceive as live performance is changing to meet the needs of the modern audience. Conforming to tradition would seem to be the thing of the past. As Brigham mentions, Lyn Gardner (The Stage, 2021) wrote the article *Don't give us a break – intervals are an outmoded, unnecessary theatre convention* in The Stage specifically on this idea that the interval is no longer required and articulates that it is a concept so old that we have stopped questioning it. In reality it was implemented to allow for the changing of candles in playhouses so that the audience was not plunged into darkness. We do not have this technical issue any longer, and yet the interval has survived. There are obvious benefits to still having an Interval though, and one aspect is a financial one. Those that are running a Theatre or performance venue have more to consider than just the flow of a piece of work, they have to bring in enough revenue to allow for the continuation of artistic excellence. Having an interval allows for a bar to be open, and audiences to spend more than the money they paid for their ticket. I personally enjoy a moment of reflection with a gin and tonic when halfway through a piece of work, it can allow for a deeper understanding of the experience I am a part of. But for others it breaks the flow as they are prematurely pulled from the world they were absorbed in. Gardner (The Stage, 2021) states that she has seen shows that were ruined by an unnecessary interval, simply because in her opinion the venue wanted to increase its ice-cream and bar takings.

There are still other factors to take into consideration that are not revenue based, however. Having a break allows the audience to go to the toilet. A basic human right I feel. It also allows us to stretch our legs and return to our seats in comfort. Sitting for prolonged amounts of time is not in our nature, and no artist or venue would want to physically inflict pain on an audience member. You provide them with an interval, or you produce work that is short enough for an interval to not be required. Having shorter work resonates with the idea that a modern audience is also less likely to stay engaged for a three-act play. Mark Lawson in his Guardian article *Pause and effect: tradition of multiple intervals gets a revival* (The Guardian, 2016) reflects on how he is seeing the theatrical world adapting to survive against the competing challenges of other art forms. 'The perceived contest with TV and film has made theatre become shorter and more fast-paced, with a majority of new plays seeming briefer than a football match and lacking a half-time' (The Guardian, 2016). Witnessing work such as Richard Eyre's 80-minute adaptation of *Ibsen's Little Eyolf*, which had no interval, and then Robert Icke's adaptation of *Uncle Vanya at the Almeida* which Lawson (The Guardian, 2016) is reviewing, which has three intervals, shows that perhaps we have not decided to abolish the interval to allow the modern brain to stay engaged, but that we have generated variation. With such a vast variety of work shown through our theatres, it would be naive to think that one solution fits all. It would also be naive to think that opposition to either approach would not occur. Lawson himself states that due to a generation of one-act plays being presented with three intervals in Icke's work made the 'rhythm feel strange – as if, through the decades of 70-minute single-strip plays,

we theatre-goers have evolved not to need to stretch our legs as often as Victorians did' (The Guardian, 2016).

Gardner (The Stage, 2021) highlights another factor that has led to the disappearance of the Interval, and this is not one instigated by the change in our ability to be engaged, but one that has been instigated by a worldwide pandemic. Whilst writing this book I have lived through three lockdowns due to COVID-19, and I am hopeful we are seeing the last of its hold on our lives. You readers of the future will be either laughing at my ignorance or nodding in agreement that it was nearing the end, but either way, we cannot ignore it as it has played an enormous part on the development of the modern brain. I will delve deeper into this topic at the end of this chapter, but with reference to our current debate on Intervals, Gardner outlines that current theatre productions have eliminated the Interval for health and safety reasons. COVID restrictions mean having many people pass through a small room like a toilet is not possible. The solution being to ask the audience to simply watch the work and then go home. These restrictions have potentially just sped up the abolishment of intervals, as I feel with the need to try and keep audiences engaged, we were on this trajectory anyway. So, if this is what the future holds, reflecting upon the positives of having straight-through productions would be beneficial.

Firstly, it will inevitably produce shorter productions. A piece of work that is observed in just over an hour feeds into modern audiences potentially lacking the ability to stay engaged. Whether you think we have shorter attention spans, or if we just wish to have control and no longer enjoy being under a theatrical restraint longer than an hour, you can recognise that we now are faced with audiences that move at a faster pace of life. The result being entertainment has to move at this pace too. As Gardner (The Stage, 2021) mentions, she does not want to feel like she must watch something in a reverent way, she wants to be a part of an audience that feels alert and alive. Fast-paced work that only concludes at the end will allow audiences that en masse experience they so desire. These audiences will also desire control, so breaking conventional performance etiquette may be another way to attract the modern audience member. The cinema still has extremely long films showing on their screens, but whilst sitting through three hours of the Avengers, we are at liberty to leave that space to use facilities, like the toilet, whenever we like. In a Theatre setting this is currently frowned upon. By eliminating the interval, you are opening up the chance for the more traditional settings to instigate audience autonomy. Allow them to leave whenever they want to go to the toilet, or to grab a refreshment. This is what we do at home when using digital entertainment, this freedom is sought after now, so allow it to occur.

If you are removing an age-old theatre tradition like an interval, then perhaps there is scope to move away from less conventional performance settings too. Outdoor performance has always been popular, especially in countries, unlike the United Kingdom, that have more manageable climates. But we could see a shift of venues emerging in unconventional spaces, like warehouses or even canal boats. Shorter work that can be dropped on any location will grab the attention of our modern-brained audience. It could also generate relaxed performances which

Gardner seeks. She feels that if mainstream venues can become interval-less, then this will change audience behaviour and brush aside conventions that she feels 'benefits neither the art nor the audience' (The Stage, 2021).

The abolishment of the Interval will in my opinion never be across the board. Too many venues rely on it for income, and there are audiences that enjoy a prolonged evening of entertainment. Some need time out of a creative scenario so that they can re-absorb fully after a break. But what we are exploring here is permission to break convention. If we are to keep a modern brain engaged, then this is what we seek. If it becomes acceptable to not have an interval, then think what else could come to the forefront when we are allowed to push aside tradition?

The artist's modern brain

Our discussions to date on modern brains and how to keep them engaged has been focusing on the audiences/observers of our work, but our biggest source of inspiration and creative prowess is our own brains. We are part of this digitally enhanced society too, so strictly speaking we have a 'modern brain'. Therefore, we could argue our biggest tool is also our connection with our modern audience, we too are the modern audience. So, what do *we* want from work to keep *us* engaged?

TASK

Put your pen to paper and answer the below thinking of digital, modern entertainment that you interact with:

- List five aspects of these interactions that are engaging.
- What holds your focus?
- What makes you switch off?

Your answers probably manifest themselves within your work already as we tend to generate work that we would enjoy watching, if enjoyment is our intention. Therefore, we can perhaps let instinct and inbuilt knowledge take hold of the creative reigns here.

Rebecca Johnson's work is perhaps the closest to what we consider modern brains would naturally gravitate towards. Her work within Film has the added advantage of being a digital format but she must still consider how to address this changing audience. Her opinion is that pace, as we have heard many of our resident artists mention, is the key. A fast-paced piece of work will keep engagement heightened, but she has no fear in implementing this:

> I am myself used to consuming vast amounts of film and TV online so I feel I can make creative judgment calls regarding pace.
>
> *(Johnson, 2020)*

She is the modern consumer, therefore she has a grasp on what works and does not work with regard to pace and engagement, for she too will have switched to the next box set if the intricacies of the flow were not holding her focus. This sub-conscious learning will naturally bleed into her own work, therefore kick starting a process that will be informed by, and created by, the modern brain. Brigham also considers that there is no particular change to the way she works with respect to the pace of a modern brain, as it is the pace she has always worked at:

> I think fast tends to be the pace that I already work at. Maybe that's just how my brain works as well. But I think certainly in terms of when I'm work-ing with young people, that need of pace is always there. I wouldn't say I've noticed any difference, recently, in comparison to 20 years ago, but then I suppose I don't do as much work with young people now. So maybe it's just me still chucking out the same old ideas and they are bored senseless!
>
> *(Brigham, 2021)*

Although Brigham is putting herself down here, her work with children proves that her pace and ability to deliver fast-paced processes and work is still engaging the modern audience, and the newest of the modern audience – children. Her Christmas production of Peter Pan (2017, 2018) at Derby Theatre captured the imagination of many a child with words such as 'brilliant', 'amazing', 'funny' and 'very exciting' being used by the young audience to describe what they had just viewed (Derby Theatre, 2017). Clearly Brigham is in tune with her modern audi-ence as the use of music, story and aerial dance in this production captivated them, and the pace kept them engaged until the end. Her openness to the pace at which she normally works, and the fact she feels that there is no particular shift in pace within the last 20 years, suggests two things: Brigham has been ahead of her field for many years and been aware of the pace needed well before others, or a modern audience does not need to have special treatment, and we should continue to devise and produce in the way we know has been successful in the past. As we know, every audience member is different, therefore the way we react to the digitalisation of our time will be different too. Although I feel it is important to acknowledge a shift is happening, you can rest assured that if your target audience is those who think and act in the way you do, then using your modern brain will be sufficient as a means to generating engagement.

My brain (a modern one the same as yours) is very apt at interacting with digital interfaces and this is why I weave digital projection into my choreographic work, but there are times when you may want to engage with a new audience. Creating work for children is sought after currently and they are the epitome of the mod-ern brain. Using them as a stimulus could be your pathway to creating work for a modern brain. We are side-stepping from the artist's modern brain but looking at the artist using a modern brain as a process, for example, using children's brains. A noteworthy example of this approach is a film piece created by ZoiLogic Dance Theatre. This company has a history of working with younger generations and

runs a highly acclaimed youth dance company: FuzzyLogic. Therefore, they have experience in working with children, but the project I want to focus on allows the children to take the lead and be the creative minds.

We Are Holyrood is a short dance film commissioned by the Mayflower 400 programme which was a series of events that were to celebrate the city of Southampton. Holyrood is a community within Southampton and ZoiLogic set out to create a piece that celebrated the area. As the process unfolded, the company began to work more closely with a select number of children from the area and inspired by their ideas and skill sets began to weave together a concept for a film. Watching the 'making of' footage via their website, Zoilogic (2021) shows how closely the film maker and choreographer were working with the children. They clearly were using the children's imaginations to lead, and the result is a beautiful, yet simple, moment in time. The original film was shown to the residents of Holyrood projected onto an outdoor space in their estate. The footage was then shared via Facebook live, where I was fortunate enough to view it.

The final work explores Holyrood via the exciting world of shadows. The children play and seek out their own shadows whilst showing the estate on which they live. Each child has their own movement identity, and the interaction with their own shadows is captivating, for you can see the belief and joy that they have from making a shadow come to life, from interacting with another form of themselves. A form that perhaps they can relate to the identity that they have in the digital world? Spanning the course of a day the change in daylight adds to the artistry, but the over-riding feeling I am left with is a moment of connection and understanding with these children who are so proudly showing the rest of the world their home and their layered identities. This sensitivity would not have been achieved if the ZoiLogic team had not listened to the children's ideas. Because they are young there is an abundance of imagination; always a joyful factor of working with children – but they are also the newest of the modern brains. They are able to give an insight to an artist of what the future will hold, and if moving and interacting with shadows, which are essentially digital projections of ourselves, is a way to connect with the way in which they see the world, then this piece of work shows how beautifully it can be captured.

Yes, we as artists have modern brains, but we are all at different stages of our lives, and we all have different influences. Therefore, we can replicate the wide variety of audiences we can target. Being aware of what engages you personally is a useful tool towards engagement, but learn from other artists, learn from younger generations who are yet to know they are artists. This expansion of knowledge will only enhance your process. You can then begin to formulate how you would best engage the modern brain within your work.

A reflection

We have considered an array of discussions so far in this chapter which explore what the modern brain is and how we may start to engage with it. Before we pin

down key factors that will hold the focus of a modern audience, let us consolidate the ideas we have investigated and how we can utilise them. We have learnt that modern humans are at a point where we can easily be entertained in our own homes, therefore our challenge as visual performing artists is to encourage our audiences to leave this comfortable environment and interact with live performance. The way to make this happen is to identify that which the modern brain is used to and use it. Then with this familiar platform you can manipulate it to suit the needs of your artistic idea. You will be feeding into their comfort zones, and then challenging them once they are absorbed within your work.

Perhaps encouraging people to come and see performances is the hardest test we currently face. You need to create work that is unable to fully realise its potential on a screen. When in conversation with Rob Vale from Illuminos, he states that in his work this is a key factor:

> There is a fundamental difference between work that is on a screen and those that are projected. In screen-based pieces the monitor is a magic window, we peer through it into a land beyond, like Alice peering through the looking glass. But we cannot cross over. We stay in our reality looking out to a place we can't reach. In projection these worlds overlap. The real space we occupy animates, fuses with another, and transforms in the process.
>
> In our work the digital platform enables us to take spaces or situations that the viewer/participant already has a mental image or memory of, and subvert it. This transformational quality is one of the key components in what projection mapping can offer. A familiar building, seen often by the public, can under cover of darkness magically transform. It is a form of mass augmented reality and connects directly to a childlike wonder in all of us. So a civic building in Leeds can become a vast automaton clock, a submarine in a museum appears to submerge under the waves, a teapot's willow pattern comes alive and tells a story. Each time we have an expectation that is subverted, and an audience are asked to suspend our reality, to believe in an illusion.
>
> (R. Vale, 2018)

This escape from reality in an all-immersive fashion is what will make your work stand apart from online forms of entertainment. As Vale states, your challenge is to create an environment that can only be realised when experienced in the flesh.

However, we are not to ignore the online world. Why not use this to your advantage when finding an audience. Create an online campaign that results in the only possible outcome they want to experience being a live one. Keep them engaged, tease them with tasters and trailers, have competitions to win tickets, have an element of your work that can only be understood if you had seen a post from two months previously. All these aspects will feed into what the modern brain is happy doing on a day-to-day basis but will result in an end product that makes them move from their devices and witness a live experience.

As we have discussed the modern brain is used to constant change. It has a fast-paced approach to absorbing information; therefore, your pieces of work will need to be at this speed. By no means am I suggesting you should only work at this pace, but it is worth using it to your advantage. Have an element of your performance that requires your audience to absorb a fact or a key pivotal moment that is in amongst the frantic swirl of activity. Your work can then slow down and reflect on that moment. This way you are using the modern brain to your advantage and at the same time creating an atmosphere that can often be breath-taking.

As we have discussed we are constantly interacting on many levels, therefore your audience is less used to being an observer. Where in your work can you involve the audience? By using them you are keeping them engaged and mimicking an environment they are used to. Within my own choreography I have found that outdoor pieces provide a clear example of how well this can work. *Deuce* (2012), a piece I toured to outdoor festivals mimicked a tennis match. The times when the performers 'played' around the audience and had them holding the rackets to join in themselves were the times we received the most animated feedback. This is because the audience were actively involved.

As Vale (2018) discusses, having human interaction in a piece of work can also create a sense of illusion. This is the epitome of audience interaction and feeds on our idea of allowing the audience to be more than an observer.

> In our artworks, particularly those with interactive elements, we play on this illusory or magical quality. Historically the lines between science, magic and alchemy were far less defined. Audiences would take part in séances, flock to see magicians, go to public autopsies. We do not necessarily truly believe the magic, we revel in the moment of illusion, of seeing the impossible made possible. Crucially we do this in groups, as a crowd, each member supporting and believing, like a congregation. Our projections play with this urge. So an audience member can pull a book on a bookshelf, and Shakespeare's Birthplace appears to open like a dolls house to reveal a moment from that very play. There is both a sense of wonder at how this occurs, and a sense of power that comes from being the person who chose the book. The congregation principle amplifies our individual experience to one that is collective, we share a moment together.
>
> *(R. Vale, 2018)*

Creating a piece of work that allows us to pause and share a live moment collectively is what we as artists can provide for the modern audience. As social as we are online, it can be very isolating, therefore work like Illuminos' is bringing us physically together. In Vale's work there is always a presence of digital projection, is this perhaps why they manage to pull large crowds and audiences? Is this a factor we need to consider as an essential component, how can we use digital interfaces within our work?

By using digital you are creating an environment that is engaging because your audience will expect it. We live in the digital era and a piece of work without it can potentially leave an audience un-engaged or disappointed. So, our challenge is to use it, but in an exciting and thought-provoking way. As Vale (2018) states, for him it is not about replicating familiar digital elements, it is about seeing other familiar aspects transformed by digital.

Using digital interfaces within live work

To grasp a concept or approach I feel it is always useful to be led by example, and an example of a practical nature helps a reader visualise the notion more clearly. The common thread in our discussions so far has been the increase in digital inter-faces that the modern-day individual now uses. Using digital/film work within live work would therefore naturally have an element of parity to the modern brain. As I have mentioned throughout this book, I personally enjoy using digital projection within my choreographed work and to achieve this I work with Illuminos. They have provided thoughts throughout the book but for the purpose of this example I am going to concentrate on our latest collaboration *Icarus*, and how we actively sought to create a work that was choreographically and digitally engaging.

Our main aim was to allow for the choreography to inform the digital and for the digital to inform the choreography. This two-way approach would hopefully blur the lines of dominance and result in a performance that had the audience wondering if one was reacting to the other. I mused on this concept of a happy marriage between the two forms in the journal *Scene* and described our explo-ration as 'a sustained development of dance and digital content in conversation, where the lines between which element leads the other become fractured, and the interplay between control and consequence forms the core ideas within the work' (Vale, 2016, p. 2). This starting point was key to our exploration, but as the process evolved it also became apparent that we wanted to weave the two forms together to allow for relatable imagery to be projected, which in turn would ultimately engage a modern audience. The marriage of the two forms was still important but was a means to an end, which we discovered was a want to captivate our audience.

As with all examples we can only articulate our own experience, and by doing this I am not suggesting this is a failproof way to engage with the brains of today, but I am showcasing elements that had scope to them, worked in some capacity and could be enhanced upon in the future. During the process of *Icarus*, there were four key approaches that replicated elements of common digital interaction and consequently were moments of the work the audience were left remembering.

Recognisable imagery

Previously, we have discussed characterisation and the importance of using recognis-able characteristics to engage an audience. The same applies with imagery. Project-ing recognisable digital images will grab the attention of an audience member, but

the key thing we discovered in this process was that it should be abstract enough to allow for subjectivity. With this in mind, the digital content generated by Illuminos was not realistic, that is, an exact replica of the concept being portrayed. The only time we had a near realistic element was the use of a feather. The feather falling and sparking Icarus' father's ideas to build wings so they could escape the maze was a pivotal moment in our production of Icarus and breaking away from the abstracted content for this one moment allowed the audience to note its importance. Once the digitalised feather had fallen it became a real feather which was the one and only prop used in the work, yet again highlighting its importance. Subsequently, you can see (Figures 4.2 and 4.3) the feather in action, and then its digitalised form as Daedalus sees its potential and starts to make wings. The projected image of the feathers was recognisable but not a photo of a real feather. A recognisable image that was not trying to replicate the exact truth.

Illuminos chose a palette of imagery that was influenced by the style of Leonardo da Vinci's sketches. His sketches are universally known and their style sparks thoughts of invention and innovation. The story of Icarus, although known for its moral teaching not to reach beyond your means, is also a story of advancement and creation. Having a style of imagery that puts the audience's mind in this place was important to us as it helps the flow of the story and the interpretation. This sort of imagery is, however, from a time of pen and paper, and we were wanting to engage the modern audience with the projection. So, the imagery took on the lineal effect of Da Vinci's work, but not the colour palette. Playing with a range of blues to warm yellows, they knew these colours would not only illuminate the space well, but also draw in the audience. Having work that is too colourful and vibrant can replicate more vivacious digital content, and we wanted to avoid the audience feeling they were interacting with a social media site but having just enough digital content for them to feel at home.

Having imagery that was suggestive rather than realistic gave the audience the opportunity to interpret the work as they wished. This is a common want and need when producing dance work as the absence of speech opens the pathway for subjectivity which plays a huge role. In Figure 4.4, you can see a moment in the production where the characters have escaped the maze and have emerged on to the island on which the maze was built. Rather than project the sea and sand, Illuminos took the colours of the sky and land and layered them in the correct order if it were a realistic image. With the accompaniment of sea sounds and a lapping shore, these elements combined to allow the audience to realise the scene had changed and they were on land of some description. How in depth they took this imagery was up to them, but a scenario had been suggested.

Recognisable imagery that could be interpreted was useful in telling this story because it enabled the audience to feel safe in a digital environment with moments of comfort in recognisable forms, but it did not allow them to become dormant. Often when watching TV our minds wander because we let the imagery wash over us and can still know roughly what has occurred. Incorporating content that was subjective kept the modern brain entertained and allowed for thought and innovation of one's own.
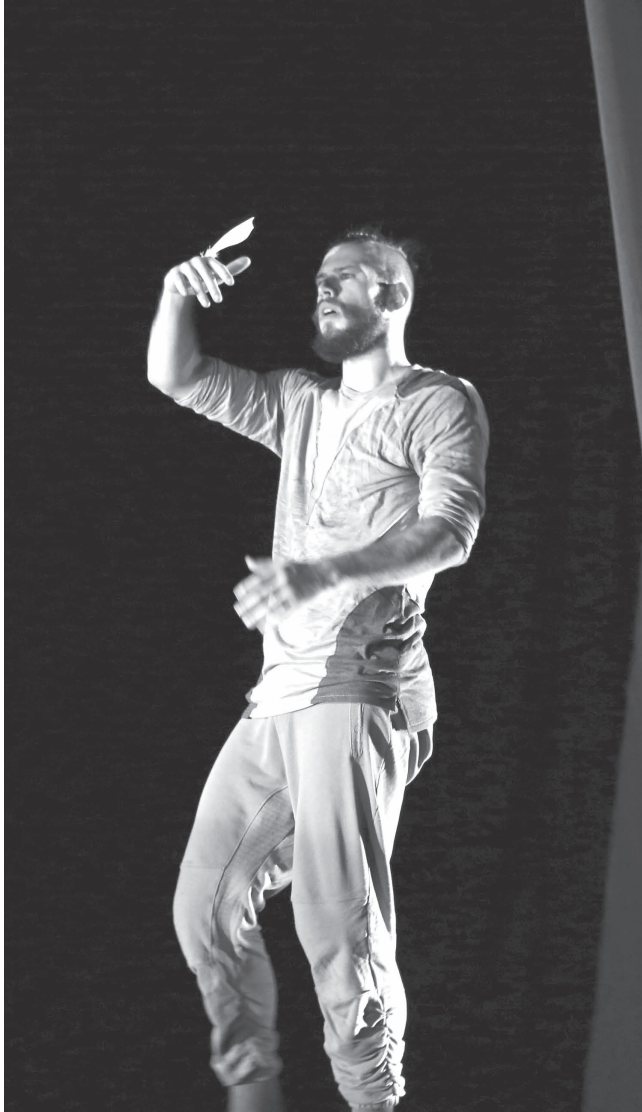
FIGURE 4.2   A male dancer with one arm up holding a feather on the edge of his hand – staring intently at it.

Digital interaction

The Maze was a key feature in this work, and we wanted it to be recognisable but not too traditional. As Illuminos were using the influence of sketches as their stimulus, it seemed relevant to have the maze as lineal as possible. As children we have all played the puzzle in which we must draw a line out of a maze, and this imagery is what Illuminos harnessed as you can see in Figure 4.5.

FIGURE 4.3   A male dancer in a black box performance space, facing two hung gauzes on which are projected two drawn feathers, looking like wings.

Icarus 2016 (Adaire to Dance) | Déda Theatre | Photo Credit: Grey Jackson | Performer: Kieran Shannon

A recognisable image drew the audience in but what this section stimulated was interaction. You can see from the image, the character of Daedalus is seen inside the maze and is observing it to plan the route out. What follows is interaction between dancer and projection moving through the maze's paths to find the exit.

FIGURE 4.4   A group of four dancers surrounded by seven hung gauzes with abstract imagery projected onto them.

Icarus 2016 (Adaire to Dance) | Déda Theatre | Photo Credit: Greg Jackson | Performers: Kieran Shannon/ Alice Marshall/Vicki Heathcoate/Elliot Thompson

To describe such a kinetic moment is challenging, but I feel I best describe the interaction of this section in my article about the marriage of choreography and projection previously mentioned:

> We placed one dancer in the space, crouched down. A maze was then projected from above onto the surrounding floor space. The projection then independently rotated and glided across the floor, creating the illusion that the dancer was moving through the labyrinth. With simple swipes, pushes into and round the floor by the dancer, we were able to give the illusion of control. The end result was to make it look like the dancer was controlling the projection and ultimately escaping the maze. 'When I saw Daedalus escaping the maze I could not breath – it was so captivating. Every swipe moved the maze and Daedalus slowly out of the maze. I could not tell who was in control, was it motion captured?' (*Icarus* audience member, Kim Peddie, 2016). No, it was not motion captured; it was a simple trick of learning the movement of the projection and pre-empting its movements.
>
> *(Vale, 2016, pp. 5–6)*

The above highlights how this moment was created and presented, but in terms of a modern audience it is clear it was captivating, the element of simple interaction

FIGURE 4.5   A male dancer with his back to the audience, with a circular maze pro-
                jected from above over his body and onto the floor.

Icarus 2015 (Adaire to Dance) | Photo Credit: Greg Jackson | Performer: Louis Parker-Evans

was relatable. Swiping and shifting a digital image is the make-up of every touch-
screen Apple device, therefore for our modern brains a comfortable interaction to
witness. It was also a section where the symmetry between a live performance and
a computer game was apparent. I am not suggesting that every modern brain is a
'gamer' but a huge percentage of us do play games on digital interfaces and having a
moment where a 'game' is witnessed sparks attention but keeps it within the realms
of understandable digital possibilities.

A 3D world

When you think of projection it would not be remiss of you to imagine one flat
area brought to life by the imagery, perhaps a large screen like a cinema. We knew
from the outset that the digital content of *Icarus* had to be more than just a back-
drop, it was to be a cast member. Illuminos normally work on large-scale outdoor
projections, where they bring a building to life by clever mapping and planning.
They can keep the 3D quality of the buildings whilst blanketing them in colour and
image. In a Theatre setting, it is harder to find architecture to replicate 3D qualities

FIGURE 4.6   A group of four dancers surrounded by seven hung gauzes with abstract maze imagery projected onto them.

Icarus 2016 (Adaire to Dance) | Déda | Photo Credit: Greg Jackson

unless you build an elaborate set. Our answer was to use traditional gauze, so often projected onto but hung in sails surrounding the space.

As you can see from Figure 4.6 photograph, the layout of the gauzes generated a 3D projection experience. With a projector casting images from above, and then a front projector catching the gauzes, this all-immersive approach helped us achieve our aim of bringing the space to life via imagery and video. The gauzes helped me, as the choreographer to make sure the action was happening in and amongst the imagery. But how did this approach reflect common digital interactions for our modern audience? At a quick glance it did not, digital imagery is often watched via a 2D screen, unless you are using 3D glasses. Making our projection have a 3D quality by layered screens is not something we frequently witness in our homes, or in our day-to-day digital interactions. The reason this 3D approach was one of the aspects we felt reflected a modern audience's digital lifestyle, was the way in which this method can bring their imaginations to life on a larger scale.

When using digital interfaces, in particular when playing on games, there are times where your imagination is so vivid you feel like you are in the action itself. In fact, VR headsets now allow you to get even closer into those worlds with a 360° experience. By having the digital projection cascading in all three dimensions we were igniting the audience's desire to be inside a digital world. Although still an audience member, they could see, hear and almost touch it in real time, and this engages them, this holds their attention. This level of observation takes them

to a place beyond what they could experience at home, giving live performance a desirable uniqueness which ultimately entertains.

Recognisable digital sounds

Whenever working with Illuminos we feel that the music or sound-score is the key component that will hold the digital and choreography together. It is often the component that allows for clever timing to generate the 'magic' of digital interaction. But upon reflection we can see the importance of it with respect to a modern brain because as much as sight is stimulated by digital platforms, hearing is too. So many sounds are recognisable to us because we hear them daily, and often they are not particularly realistic to the activity they are amplifying. Sending an email on most Mac devices results in a 'swoosh', I did not recall sending a paper aeroplane out of my computer, I sent an electronic message, but that sound is so recognisable that played in isolation many would know it is the sound of an e-mail being sent. Matt Vale composes the music and soundtracks for Illuminos and when in discussion he knew that embracing these common sounds is key to their engagement levels:

> Subconsciously we are surrounded by so many sounds in tech that all have functions, it's easy to end up triggering similar responses in a soundtrack. Electronic sounds are particularly used in day-to-day life, often as caricature or cartoon versions of real sounds. For example, the tapping sound on a smart phone is not like a real tapping sound, and the popping sound of notifications is more kin to knocking on a door. I have certainly used this same idea when creating sound effects to emulate 'kinetic' events without them being the 'real' sound of the action.
>
> *(M. Vale, 2021)*

Engaging an audience on a subconscious level is at its most effective when they feel they are in control of their experience. By adding an extra layer, they are not aware they are absorbing, you are heightening their involvement and sparking connection on another level. When working on the sound-score for *Icarus*, we knew the sequence emulating flying needed sounds that would emphasise this journey, particularly as the dancers were never going to physically fly. After a few trials we settled on music reverberations used on games that suggest speed and wind sounds to enhance the feeling of height and flight. These commonly used sounds immediately generated the correct imagery in the listener's mind. As far as we are aware no human has managed to fly without aid, so we have no idea what noise we would make, but generations of superhero films and games have embedded the sound, which is essentially the wind, into our minds and will depict flying even if you are faced with a static image.

   Any live performance is an all-immersive experience, and although we feel using digital interfaces with an array of other mediums will engage a modern brain as it is familiar, the sounds that we use are just as effective, if not more important.

Digitalisation is rarely quiet, sound brings it one step closer to reality, therefore we must try to harness this in our work too.

Using digitalisation in live work has many advantages and is a key area of research for myself. But this cannot be the only answer in engaging the modern brain. Digital technologies and social networking have enabled a wide range of developments that have opened new areas of research and theory (Klimmt and Vorderer, 2021), therefore there are other approaches that are of use that are not replicas of digital visuals to make the audience feel at home. This may not be suited to your ideas and medium, but what I have achieved with Illuminos is the start of a conversation, and work that I know engages and entertains on a visual and kinetic level.

Engaging the modern audience: case-study Sarah Brigham

Dissecting current approaches to engaging the today's brains is a step towards you seeing how your ideas and creative aspirations feed into the future of performing arts. Sarah Brigham's work is featured throughout this book and is a useful case study upon which to reflect at this stage in our discussions. Working within the theatre she is often producing pre-written work in the forms of plays. In the previous case study where we looked at my own work, I am in the fortunate position of generating work from scratch, therefore I can easily implement strategies to engage the modern brain from the outset. Brigham's starting point is often the script, and regularly old traditional ones, and she must find a way to make the already existing work accessible to a brand-new audience.

When working with a script, one solution to make the work more relevant to the modern audience is to adapt it. Previously, Brigham mentioned about cutting down scripts so that they have a shorter running time, this being a tactic which resulted in an increase of modern audience members visiting Derby Theatre. But there is also scope to edit some text and scenarios so that the work has the output that you desire, all the while staying true to the original concept. Shakespeare's work is commonly adapted due to its lengthy scripts and challenging language. Adapting Shakespeare sees a drive to make the work more relevant, to use the ideas in a way that are more useful, to ultimately result in an effective tool to change an audience's perception about their world and themselves (Bradley, 2016). With a multitude of adaptations from those who disregard the language and just use the story, to those who keep as many original aspects as possible but set it in a different time, we are left with options that cover a wide range of audiences. But adapting for the modern brain has its challenges, and you are most likely going to have to engage with more than just script alterations. Brigham's work has led her to see that collaboration is key.

> As an artist, my natural thing is to go to the script and the text because that's my training. But when I do engage with other devices it is really fascinating to see what other layers they offer. I always work closely with composers and

lighting, but when we did Alice in Wonderland, for instance, which was our big Christmas show, which is not trying to tell any big universal revelations, so I had more scope and we worked with Barret Hodgson on some projection. It was interesting to see how it engaged, specifically the younger audiences, but also really exciting as an artist to go, 'oh, we can just do things in a totally different new way'. I think that is really interesting, but I do question if we think we are just doing it for younger audiences? Other times other approaches captivate them too that are maybe not what you would consider for a younger audience. When we do our BSL integrate shows, quite often you get people going, who don't speak BSL, 'I really loved it because it's a physical language that just connected to me'. They don't understand what the BSL interpreters or the performers are saying, this is when it's integrated in the action, not stuck on the side, but they get something out of it because it becomes a physical language that somehow speaks to their brain in a way that maybe projection does for someone else.

(Brigham, 2021)

Brigham's want to listen to her audience allows her to be open to trying different approaches to a text, she is discovering tools that are enabling her to engage with our brains today. Digital interaction in the form of projection was used effectively in her Alice in Wonderland production, adaptation by Mike Kenny, and really helped build that sense of magic and strangeness with an array of images including a 'wacky' school blackboard. But we have already discussed the advantages of this approach, and what intrigues me is her reflection upon discovering aspects of a production that engaged people whom she thought were in the wrong audience bracket for that approach. She mentions the use of British Sign Language in her work and how by listening to her audience, she has discovered that this captivated the non-deaf community too. An accident perhaps but a happy one. The realisation that the physicalising of the story in a different way has resulted in engagement from a wider audience and can make an artist consider how to replicate this in future work. This does not mean the use of BSL, but it could be implementing choreography or movement more regularly because you have found a target audience that engages with this. Our brains are used to constantly moving interfaces and inputting physical language on top of spoken language will ease that thirst for kinetic imagery. But if this approach is performed inadequately, the effect will stop being as captivating.

Casting a play or auditioning for a production is an extremely hard challenge. With a wealth of talent in the performing arts world you must become adept at spotting the right person for the project in mind. Often it is not down to talent, it is down to a gut feeling that that person will bring your idea to life most effectively.

There is something that is undefinable about an actor who can engage an audience isn't there? Whatever you call it; stage presence, charisma, but something where you go 'I just want to watch you, you're so watchable'. I don't really know how you define that, but there are definitely some actors

who you audition, and afterwards you can't really remember them. They were fine, it wasn't that they were terrible, but they just didn't zing out. Then there are others that you realise just stayed with you. I think also it is interesting that it's about different context as well. So we're at the minute making something for outdoors and thinking about the type of actor who can hold an audience in outdoors where there's other distractions going on and they have to draw the audience to them. I think that's a real skill as well. You see some people who are going to be great if it was in a theatre when the lights are down and you are sat and you've got nowhere else to look, but can they hold the audience, when there's so many other environmental factors?

(Brigham, 2021)

Choosing a cast to hold the attention of a modern audience is a key factor; what sort of actor or performer would that be? Brigham loves to work with music and movement as well as script, therefore the actors she casts tend to be multi-skilled and adaptable. Switching from one character to the next in an ensemble approach, which replicates the fast-paced nature of modern society, you need individuals who can do this justice. Actor-musicians is a term that is increasingly being used to describe the next wave of performers. With many leading conservatoires like Mountview, Rose Bruford and Guildhall, having courses specifically for the training of such individuals, it is clear the industry is recognising the shift in what an audience engages with, and a multi-layered performer is one of them. The increase in this type of performer shows no sign of slowing down with agent intake and employment rates soaring in the United Kingdom and more theatres and drama schools recognising its visceral and theatrical appeal (Harrison, 2016). But it is not a new approach, the combination of acting combined with musicality can be seen throughout history, often found in the world of musical theatre. What this new ilk of actor is, is a performer who will complement a concept or an idea with an instrument or voice, rather than stopping the flow of a story to sing and dance about it. So not only are we faced with a change in approach to keep the modern audience engaged, but we are also faced with a change of training and change in what an actor is expected to do. By being multi-layered the performer is far more engaging and with multiple talents the director has more tools to play with.

Brigham's production of Alice in Wonderland, previously mentioned, used actor-musicians to bring the story to life. A Mad-Hatter playing the bagpipes is perhaps not what we immediately envisage when reading Lewis Carroll's original book, but it works as it adds to the layered approach being undertaken by Brigham and the cast. The performers are anything and everything resulting in the 'colourful and versatile actor-musicians becoming everything from punk rockers to a ceilidh band' (The Stage, 2016). Modern-brained audiences that are increasingly adept at multi-tasking, has resulted in the popularity of multi-talented performers. The ingredients of making a valuable piece of theatre is reflecting the components that are considered to make up a modern brain. But does this rule out older audiences from enjoying such productions?

Choosing an approach for one target audience should not hinder another engaging with it. Brigham, in our conversations, dissected the concept of a target audience and how choosing a play for one age-range does not stop another enjoying it.

> Sometimes I am really surprised, and it does come back to this universality, I pick a play for a demographic, like an older audience who are probably white, probably this age etc. But then watch it with a young person and am proven wrong about their engagement. I was once chatting with a young person, and they had come to see one of our big dramas and they had really liked it. I was really surprised. They were 12 or 13 and they just spoke about it really eloquently. So, I think with plays you do tend to go, and yet again this comes from running a building, I don't think when I was an artist I thought in this way at all, but I think from running a building, because you've always got your marketing hat on, you are like, 'who is this audience for, who is going to engage in it?' So these criteria are in the back of your head as you're making the work, although they shouldn't be. But I think if you get the production right then the majority of people will connect to it because of that truthfulness you hope to have in the work.
>
> *(Brigham, 2021)*

We often feel the need to categorise work, and target audience is a large factor of this, but Brigham's thoughts are that if you design a piece of work effectively then it will engage the majority of people. There is no reason why work designed for the modern brain will not engage others, or vice versa. We far too often think that the younger audiences are not designed to engage with the classics, or the big dramas, but from Sarah's experience there are those who are, and maybe this is because it is different, refreshing and a challenge.

> Sometimes you make an assumption that young people just want to play on the phones and see projection and see whizzy things whereas if you take a group of teenagers out into a field, they are just as happy running through the mud. Sometimes you make assumptions about life, and I don't think they're necessarily right.
>
> *(Brigham, 2021)*

These assumptions are not accurate. We would be wrong in presuming that an older audience wants to observe a slower paced traditional piece of work that does not have too many layers and stimulants. They too have been living in the world that has seen an increase of ways in which we can be entertained, they too may have a smart phone they just cannot put down. Equally they may have not engaged with modern interactions but are still engaged by new approaches in live productions. One size does not and should not fit all. To this point we have been dissecting what approaches are most effective in engaging a modern brain, but really are we just dissecting what devices and tools are effective in entertaining any audience full stop?

Assumptions can lead to a narrow-minded process, and by listening to and observing an audience you can learn far more about your next steps than presuming you know what steps need to be taken. Audience feedback is key, and by all means trial and error your ideas, but placing audiences in categories can be a hindrance. A change has occurred in how we engage, this much is true. This change is often attributed to the younger generations, but perhaps it is a shift in all generations.

The era of the pandemic

Whilst writing this book our world was thrown into turmoil by the COVID19 pandemic, I truly hope a thing of the past for those reading this in the future. No predictions or foresight could have anticipated the scale on which it affected us all, but most importantly the world of arts. Being based in the United Kingdom, we first felt the effects on our daily lives when we were forced into lockdown in March 2020, and as I am sat writing this in the summer of 2021, we are still not clear of all restrictions on our interactions and the way we spend our free time. We have all had to adapt to this enforced new way of life, and many artists have seen their practice stop completely for over a year. I felt it was important to reflect upon how this massive change has inevitably adapted our audience's mind-set and also the way in which we now create work. This natural disaster may have just pushed the modern brain to a completely new place.

During this time, we have seen more than ever the importance of digital inter-action. Huge amounts of time in lockdown saw us only able to communicate with colleagues, friends and family via digital interfaces like Zoom and Teams. The enhancements in these fields were boosted by the overwhelming need, and many believe they will continue to be part of our daily lives even when restrictions are lifted. It has made the world a much smaller place and accessing newer audiences overseas has never felt more plausible, but on a digital level. During the peak of lockdown, many dance and theatre companies released full-length productions of their work via online streaming platforms. We all needed extra entertainment in a time where we were only allowed out of our houses once a day. These companies used this to their advantage and showcased their work whilst showing good will and solidarity to everyone across the globe. Video distribution can be not only the potential saviour of theatre and dance, but also a potential threat, with the docu-mented version usurping the long-gone live performance (Reason, 2006). In this moment of kindness to the masses, did the performing arts world shoot themselves in the foot? Audiences could see how easy it was for companies to share these films, so will potentially seek this out in the future as it is an effortless way to view work in and around their own timetable. Expectations have shifted and I predict two camps will emerge: artists who will actively embrace the digital format and take this as their platform, and artists who will eliminate it and provide exclusive live interactions. Only time will tell.

Digital needs have been enhanced during this time, and this will inevitably influence how we interact with the modern brain, but the largest shift has been in

the decrease of our well-being. Being in lockdown and having to socially distance when lockdown ended has made introverts of us all. People have retreated and are starting to only feel comfortable and safe in their own homes. This makes it harder to attract audiences to live events that are potentially in large crowds, and away from their homes. Prior to the pandemic, modern audiences were inclined to seek entertainment at home, but this has been boosted dramatically as for so long this was our only option. We have to be sensitive to this change and accept our approach to attracting audiences will have to be modified, and that it will take time for us to heal. It is unlikely our sector will go back exactly to how it was. Realising this is part of our evolution is a step in the right direction to then explore innovative ways in which we can use all that has occurred to our advantage.

The arts have a fantastic way of surviving because they attract creative thinkers, and creative thinkers will find the silver lining in situations. When the world ground to a halt it was the arts scene that kept going. They saw a new brief and started to create. Luca Silvestrini's *Protein* created a dance for film that could only have been inspired and produced in a pandemic. Capturing the importance of sunlight this new film had 152 contributors from across the world and was created whilst in lockdown. It looks at the importance of daylight and explores through movement the 'Sun Inside' the performer's homes. Silvestrini (Protein Dance – The Sun Inside, 2021) describes that

> While adapting to a new life, we have been searching for and following the sun inside our homes; through windows and doors, in our gardens, front doorsteps and balconies, rays of sunlight have been framing spots of comfort and reflection, creating shadows and other intricate designs.

This award-winning piece of work captured the emotions and needs of the world at that time. An innovative piece that was solely fuelled by the drastic changes we had seen happen to our lives. Perhaps an unthought-of concept to use 152 performers from across the globe dancing in their own homes, until it became the only option? Silvestrini had taken the turmoil and used it to his advantage attracting large audiences because it was current and relatable to us all.

Previously in this chapter, we have looked at the film work of ZoieLogic and the advantages it had in engaging a modern brain. Zoie Golding (artistic director of ZoieLogic) was not one to stand by whilst the pandemic took over our lives, she was going to create. But rather than create video work as she has in the past, she embraced the challenge of social distancing in a live setting. *The Grid Experience* is a COVID-secure participatory event and was designed to start to heal the anxiety we feel with the prospect of sharing our space again as we transition out of lockdown. This shared movement experience was open to all ages and abilities and aimed to reconnect people with others and the spaces they inhabit, whilst improving their health and well-being in a confidence-boosting experience that shared personal space safely (Zoielogic, 2021). Piloted in the Guildhall square in Southampton, this en masse dance piece was the result of multiple online rehearsals with over 64

participants, learning content to be performed live in the square in marked out socially distanced cubes. This grid of colour and movement showed how a restriction of staying two metres apart could be taken as a brief and turned into an event that brought back a sense of unity and community. This was another innovative reaction to the restrictions we were forced to live with, but one that highlighted what we needed to help us come through this to the other side. ZoieLogic had the foresight to embrace the healing quality of participation and movement and I feel more work akin to this will have to be generated, for this may be the way to keep live performance alive as we move into the next phase of modern history.

These approaches to the global pandemic are just the tip of the iceberg. Across the world artists stepped up to the challenge of creating entertainment in unprecedented times. More than ever an understanding of the change in audiences' needs and wants was at the forefront of the creators' minds. Reflecting on the modern brain with this new factor shows us not only the challenges we face in entertaining but also the abundant possibilities we can harness and utilise. The modern brain is ever-changing and in 50 years' time my reflection on what constitutes a modern brain will be outdated. But analysing and discussing it now allows us to take the first stepping stone towards keeping on top of the inevitable changes. Diving into the key areas that I have chosen to pursue in this chapter is just a starting point for your exploration into the brains of today, and the unavoidable evolution of live performing arts. It is now over to you to continue this debate and research and relate it to your own work. Before we delve into the world of process and outcome in Chapter 5, take a moment to answer the questions in the last task of this chapter to see how your current process is affected by what has been discussed.

TASK

Take pen to paper and answer:

- Do you consider your current work to allow the modern brain to be engaged?
- What formula or device could you put into your process and work to allow the modern brain to utilise your creative piece?

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5

ARE WE ALWAYS STRIVING TO ENTERTAIN? PROCESS VS. OUTCOME

As an artist, we understand the notion of a process and how a thorough one will produce an outcome, or a product. Having taught Choreography for many years at HE level I know the importance of allowing young artists to explore ideas and concepts, to let them delve into the world of process so that they can understand who they are and what they want to say through their work. But what we are to explore in this chapter is the notion that having work defined as entertaining is considered to be a result of the outcome and audience reception, but often the process the artist has been on is what excites them more than the result.

A Research and Development phase is considered the norm in most visual performing arts areas and is often the stepping stone to securing funding or sponsors. This time of exploration and reflection is perhaps why we are witnessing such high-quality work, but is it also the reason we are becoming increasingly more invested in the process over the outcome? As this chapter unfolds, I will present the ideas and conversations that arose when talking to our selection of artists. I also urge you to consider where you stand within the process vs. outcome debate. Do you create work without considering how it will conclude, or do you have a clear end point in mind as soon as you start your process?

Definitions

> **TASK**
>
> - When you think of 'process', what two words spring to mind?
> - When you think of 'product' or 'outcome', what two words spring to mind?
> - Using the above words construct a sentence that describes the difference between a process and product within your art form.

Finding a definition can often help us identify what we value and what we want to take from a concept. Here we can delve into the terms 'process' and 'outcome' (or if you prefer 'product'). Preston–Dunlop (2010) suggests that from a chorological perspective, process and product refer to different things at different moments of the 'dance making', both the moment of the performance and that which pre-cursed it. This analysis is one reflecting upon choreography, so I urge you now to reflect upon your own art form and see if it relates, or if more genre-based clarity is required.

TASK

- When you think of 'process', what two words spring to mind?
- When you think of 'product' or 'outcome', what two words spring to mind?
- Using the above words construct a sentence that describes the difference between a process and product within your art form.

You may have found that Preston–Dunlop's articulation suited your way of thinking, or that you see it through a different lens. The object of this task is to help you conclude that although we all go through a process with a final product when generating work, it is all subjective. Every individual has a different approach, narrative and definition. This is why the world of the performing arts is so diverse, and we would not want it any other way.

For me, my definition of process and product is as follows:

> Process and product are the 'chicken and the egg' of generating a piece of work.
> One cannot exist without the other. A product without a process is not an outcome.
> A process with no product is inconclusive, so therefore not a finished process.

Even though I consider one cannot occur without the other, I feel that delving into each area in depth not only will help us identify their importance as solitary terms, but also brings us a little closer to understanding why, for some, a successful outcome is not always their aim.

What is process?

A starting point for us all when generating work is to embark on a process, be it large or small. Process is often that which happens before the production. 'It is the "invis-ible" activity which includes the formulation of a concept and the concept's research through hours of rehearsals, to arrive at a bulk of material' (Preston–Dunlop, 2010).

From a choreography perspective, I will start a lecture about process encouraging my students to consider the questions below:

1   What is your concept/stimulus?
2   What outside factors do you need to consider? (i.e. deadline/facilities available to you, etc.)
3   Does your end product have a desired outcome?
4   Why are you doing this?
5   Who are you doing this for?
6   Can a process you have already been on help inform this one?

Once they have answered the above, I feel they are ready to start a process, or at least start to plan a process. In the world of dance this would mean diving into the studio and starting to explore your idea through movement. Process tasks such as improvisation, Chance procedures, call and response, are just a few ways that can kick start a process. If the choreographer's starting stimulus was *water*, they could start by implementing an improvisational task where different types of water could be explored physically and have it filmed for later reference. They could instruct one dancer to move like rain with key words such as *drop, direct, heavy*. Then another could explore a river, with words such as *meander, flowing, cold*. From this small movement task, the choreographer will receive an abundance of material which they can start to dissect and build upon.

If the choreographer noticed that there was quite a varied movement vocabulary emerging in the two ideas, they may decide to explore one more than the other, delve into the one that intrigued them the most. For the sake of this example, the choreographer has chosen to deepen their exploration of the improvised movement that was generated from the stimulus of rain. They observed movement that had breadth and could see its potential and how to develop it. They could watch back the improvisation and pick out five key movements or phrases. They would then take these into the studio and layer them. Layering could include making a phrase that could be taught to a group of dancers, or to add dynamic layering changing the feel of the work. Or the movement could be turned into a duet. Whatever route the choreographer chooses adds depth, integrity and awareness.

This same process could be done time and time again with different water types leaving the choreographer with segments of choreography that they can start to piece together to make a cohesive piece of work. At this stage I would ask my students to reflect upon the questions I asked them at the start. This brings their process back on track to generate a wanted outcome. Each stage of a process can be re-visited more than once, and this is the beauty of an organic development phase. Although your area of interest may not be dance, I have provided this example as it helps simplify 'process'. It is a series of steps that ultimately gets you to your goal. It is like baking a cake. The recipe and baking is your process, the cake is your product.

I have laid out a process here with no mystery behind it. Admittedly a very simple process that would need more depth to generate professional work, but

a transparent one, nevertheless. Transparency of a process is not however always achievable. Mermikides and Smart (2010) explore this notion in *Devising in process*. They found that practitioners writing about their own work tend to unintentionally mystify it. This can be done in a number of ways, but for example, 'developing a shorthand form of expression where words and phrases have specific meanings, forged from shared training or experience, which can be impenetrable or misleading to the uninformed reader' (Mermikides and Smart, 2010, p. 1). They express that there can be a feeling that making the process too conscious can spoil the magic. This intended mystery around a process may well be due to not wanting to relinquish the 'magic', or simply that the creator is scared someone will unravel the process leading to criticism. As Guy Claxton so eloquently states 'there are a few creative people who fear that thinking about their creative process will make it fall apart' (Sofaer and Watt, 2006, p. 60). This fear is why it can be so hard to truly understand a process, leaving the audience to rely on understanding the product – to be entertained by it, as this is often easier to do.

A lack of coherency within a process is not uncommon and often comes from the fact that so much of our creative thinking is done in our heads, and until the world invents an interface that can depict what we are thinking we have to rely on communication to convey our ideas. It is at this juncture that a collaborative process can often be easier to understand. The process itself has to involve the participants articulating their private thoughts to each other, explaining their intentions and their reactions to tasks and pre-performance concepts (Mermikides and Smart, 2010). But equally a collaborative process can be infuriating, as an old proverb so beautifully states:

too many cooks spoil the broth.

A collaborative process is one regularly found in the devising theatre and dance world. With the increasingly common use of a collective of artists to generate work you will find that a process is often derived from not just one mind but multiple minds. This as you can imagine has huge advantages. If we think back to a ground-breaking collective such as the Judson Church group, if their combined approach had not occurred, the boundaries of performance and dance may well have not been pushed to the limits that they were. Collaboration of a mixture of artistic genres within a process is also not uncommon. Illuminos often work with an array of artists during a commission. They are the ones to generate the digital material, but often they may need an actor or a dancer to film to use as part of the projection, or they may be working with live performative elements as part of the commission. All of which helps build an entertaining and all-immersive experience. But does it cause the process to be complicated?

A collective process often has an individual who is overlooking it all, someone who holds the reigns and allows for many approaches in a process to be managed. In large film productions this is the role of the producer, but budget does not always allow this for some projects. When it comes to a thorough, stimulus-driven process, there has to be a mind in charge, so a process led by an individual artist is perhaps more common in areas of the performing arts that are producing smaller

scale outcomes. If you are not managing a collaboration on a larger scale then you will find the lead artist leads the process, and this singular process I feel is one that is often more self-reflective, and some may say, self-indulgent because their thoughts and intentions inevitably are at the forefront of the process.

Generating and conducting a process on your own is hard work, and one where it can be very easy to get lost. The advantage is that it is your vision and ultimately the outcome you desire is what will emerge. But in times like this it is worth considering the structure of the whole creative process, including a conclusion. These building blocks can often help a collaborative or a singulative process stay on track. In the world of devising, Mermikides and Smart (2010) discovered that for parity you can articulate these building blocks as below.

- Generation of initial ideas
- Exploration/development of ideas
- Shaping of the material into a structure
- Performance/production
- Reflection

I identify with these stages when I reflect upon my own work, do you too? But as Mermikides and Smart state

> It is also important to note that the different stages are not always clearly defined, that they often overlap and that the devising process as a whole tends to be cyclical, as is exemplified in a consideration of how initial ideas emerge.
> *(Mermikides and Smart, 2010, p. 22)*

Every process will not be the same as no two pieces of work are the same. This is why we find the world of performing arts so captivating. So let us now consider the product, the outcome.

What is outcome?

An outcome is the thing we are ultimately striving to create when we embark on a process. Perhaps it is a performance, or just a deeper understanding of a concept. Either way it is an end point, a realisation.

Within my HE teaching, the outcome of a piece of work is often pre-conceived within assessment criteria. Within dance this can dictate whether it is a solo or a group piece, the length of the work, what space it is to be performed in, or even what theme it is to explore. Such regimented restrictions are rare in the professional world. The reason we have these restraints is to train the creative mind. Allow them freedom with limits so that they can understand their creative practice in more depth without getting lost. Something I wish I had at times within my own professional work; parameters to work within. An outcome can be hard to realise if you have not set some boundaries, or if the process was so full there was no time to fully realise any concept.

If we go back to our choreographer who is exploring water, we can perhaps visualise an outcome for their exploration. After their initial research and development, they have decided to concentrate on the journey of water from rain to river, leading into the sea. Here we have a three-part work that shows the cycle of water. At this stage, the creator must consider how they wish to share their work before they can firm up the outcome. Often in dance we automatically presume a dance piece is to be shown on a lit stage. As Preston-Dunlop (2010) points out, we are frequently tainted by the idea that particular processes produce particular things, for example, 'formal' or 'theatrical' dance can be pre-conceived to have a fixed identity of one that is realised in a formal setting. There is no harm in realising your work in this manner, but there are so many variants to an outcome you can at least consider some of them.

Our *water* choreographer has perhaps considered these different aspects and has decided that their outcome is going to be a site-specific film. Each stage of the cycle will be depicted in the setting of the original water source. The first section will be filmed in the rain, the next travelling down the bank of a river, the third at the coast. A collaboration is going to be needed at this stage with a film maker – or perhaps our choreographer is keen to try some filming themselves. Either way they have decided on an outcome making the last stage of the process easier to embark on. They could have easily chosen an array of outcomes including black box performance, live site-specific performance, live performance via Zoom, performed for no audience with just photos to share, etc.; the list is endless, and herein lies a problem. The list is literally endless when it comes to a product, and when one decision is made often this opens another door for another decision. Take our *water* choreographer; yes, they have decided to make a film, but how are they going to showcase that? With a live viewing? Streamed online?

TASK

Put your pen to paper and answer:

- Consider your art form, how many different types of outcome/products can you list?
- Does the breadth excite you or daunt you?

My point here is that at every stage it is easy to get lost, and in my mind, it is even harder if you have a lack of indication of what your outcome is going to be when you are nearing the end of your process. Not knowing what this is going to be can result in an unsatisfactory product. It may not quite fit with what you were expecting because you were forced to conclude and shoehorn it into a finished article. But perhaps this is a juncture you enjoy. At this stage in the development, you realise your outcome is not yet formed therefore you can continue with the

process. If process is something that excites you then this is a fortunate place to be in, but unfortunately, we are rarely blessed with extensive time due to funding, deadlines, space hire, etc. An outcome is an inevitable conclusion, and rarely as artists are we completely satisfied with our end product. We are continually refining our work and building upon what we have learnt from project to project. So, does this mean we are subconsciously always trying to generate work that is entertaining? Is our dissatisfaction fuelled by audience response as well as our own realisations?

Process vs. outcome – our initial thoughts

As we delve deeper within this chapter we will discover where our different artists sit within the debate of Process vs. Outcome, but dissecting the two terms separately was to allow you to make an initial decision for yourself. It is clear from what has been previously discussed that an outcome is extremely rare without some form of process. But a process can in theory never conclude, ultimately resulting in no product, does this mean it is not a valid process?

In my opinion I feel a thorough process will result in a satisfactory outcome. But in my own work I always have the vision of the outcome in the forefront of my mind. I embark on a process to produce a product; I do not start a process for no other reason than to explore. I have an aim and that aim will produce something that ultimately will entertain an observer. This is my own opinion and certainly should not be considered law. Subjectivity is what keeps the arts alive, therefore it is your turn to consider where you stand.

TASK

Consider the questions below and see where you currently stand in the Process vs. Outcome debate.

- When embarking on a process do you always have a vision of the outcome, most likely an entertaining one?
- Does generating an outcome scare you?
- Does a process with no end thrill you?
- Are process and outcome interchangeable, or is one the dominant to you within your work?

Having answered the above will let you see the importance of process and outcome to you and your work. If you found it hard to answer the questions do not despair. Not knowing is just another way of showing the vast intricacies of this debate. You may need to consider it further, or you may need to embark on a new project with these questions in mind. When in discussion, Sarah Brigham

had a very clear opinion on the importance of process and outcome, and she felt this was due to her extensive experience of an array of approaches into the performing arts:

> In my book, process and product are of equal importance. You cannot have one without the other.
>
> *(Brigham, 2020)*

Clear, succinct and to the point. For Brigham the two are not interchangeable but Amit Lahav felt that there is a connection, but one has an overriding importance:

> Process and outcome are often inseparable. Ultimately, it's about the outcome, because that's what you're striving for, but a Gecko show is never finished, and that is due to the fact there are many processes and many outcomes during the life of our shows.
>
> *(Lahav, 2020)*

Lahav touches on the view that a work is never truly completed, which reflects upon the notion of always striving for more that I mentioned previously. An outcome may be your aim, but the process, and the continuing process, is that which will keep it alive. When I generate a piece of work for a premiere, that work will often be toured later on in the year or in fact the following year. I will always bring the created work back into the studio before a tour so that a fresh look and fresh mini-process can be implemented.

   When embarking on said mini-process for my Adaire to Dance production *Icarus* there was a section in which Icarus flies that I was not satisfied with in the original realisation. We re-started the process for this section, and with the injection of new cast members and the satisfaction of knowing how it sits within the rest of the work, I was able to generate choreography that replicated flying far more magically than it had done in its original form. But if I had not completed that first process, I would not have reached this end product. Process is extremely important but yet again I had the pressure of tour and deadlines that pushed me to this outcome. A drive is often key. As Deirdre Heddon and Jane Milling discussed in Mermikides and Smart's (2010) symposium: Has devising within a process in fact now become the new norm? Has the presence of it become a necessary marker of cutting-edge performance? Or is it the inevitable result of an ever-evolving, interdisciplinary world of work that companies are both seeking out or being encouraged into working within?

   It is true that a thorough process is required if you are combining art forms, communication happens within a process, therefore is required to allow all disciplines in the room to flourish. But let us come back to our overriding question of how this relates to *what is entertainment*? A process and an outcome are the potential recipe to make entertainment in most genres. Whether or not you are generating work to entertain is another matter, but an outcome is so often considered 'entertaining'. This was an area of discussion that our resident artists were actively

animated about, so let us dive into their creative minds and hear their thoughts when reflecting upon creating work to entertain.

Creating work with an intentional outcome to entertain

You ask a magician if they are performing their act to entertain, they will most likely respond with 'yes'. Ask a Tennis player if they are playing tennis to entertain, then they are likely to say 'no', it is simply a by-product of their game. They are playing to win. In the world of performing arts, it is naively considered that we are all generating work to entertain. This is perhaps the majority's aim, but perhaps it should not be what we feel must happen after every process has played out. Within the world of dance

> Not all choreographers want to communicate (with the audience) Some say they don't mind if they do or they don't. The problem with that is as soon as a performance is given, with an audience, the expectation of communication is set up.
>
> *(Preston-Dunlop, 2014, p. 10)*

Here Preston-Dunlop expresses her thoughts on engagement through the word 'communicate'. Entertainment is a version of communication via artist and audience, so, the two terms can go hand in hand, but as she points out this is not always someone's aim. By presenting your work to an audience this will automatically start a conversation, whether you want it to be two-way or not. Aspiring to create entertaining work is a way of moving this conversation forwards. When interviewing the artists that have contributed to this book one of the main topics we explored was the notion of generating work to entertain, whether they did this intentionally, and if so, if it was a key aim. Where do you stand?

TASK

Answer the below question as quickly as possible. Do not give it more than a moment's thought.

- Do you create work to entertain? Yes or No

As I have stated previously when creating my own work, my key aim is to entertain. I know my target audience and I create work to captivate and engage them. Three of the artists agreed with me, whereas Amit Lahav from Gecko disagreed. But as always it is not as clear cut as saying *yes* or *no* to an answer so let us hear what each of them had to say on the topic and delve a little deeper into their answers.

Rob Vale on aspiring to make his work with Illuminos entertaining

When asking Vale if he aspires to entertain through his work, I was pretty sure what the answer would be 'yes' due to the nature of his work and I was not disappointed.

> We do aspire to entertain through our work, yes. Somewhere along the line the concept of entertainment has slipped towards an idea of frivolity, of a lack of seriousness, which is perhaps looked down on. The arts will always have to justify themselves alongside the many wheels and cogs of society – health, education, science, politics and so on – interconnected parts that are seen as integral, vital. Sometimes the arts are seen as expendable, somehow less crucial parts of this vast machine. Entertainment even more so. But to us it's the oil that keeps all those parts going. Without it there is a gradual and inevitable entropy to the whole thing, it grinds and grinds until the effort of all those parts is unbearable. We flow through everything, connect and reflect, smooth and sustain, delight and surprise.
>
> *(R. Vale, 2020)*

We touched on this misconceived idea that entertainment is not something to be taken seriously in Chapter 2, and we concluded that it is often down to a lack of understanding as so many experience the industry on a surface level. But as Vale points out above, it does relate to the question of categorising your work with respect to some admitting to wanting to make their work entertaining. If it is a term that is looked down on, then some artists may be embarrassed to admit that they do aim to generate work to entertain. Acceptance is key in many sub-groups of the arts world and conforming to the norm is one way to be accepted. Making work that is taken seriously is nearly everybody's aim, why would we not want that? Time, effort and thought goes into a product so critical acclaim is often one of the resounding rewards.

Vale mentions *frivolity* as a connotation he considers some to perceive entertainment to have, and this frivolous misconception can be seen when discussing the idea of having a creative industries career. Sumaya Hassan-Murphy is a Bristol-based developing artist who explores mixed-media. She shares her views and opinions on art and the world through the online platform *Rife Magazine*. One of her articles '*Really? You want to study that?': In defence of creative careers*, really hit home when Vale and I were discussing this idea of society not allowing elements of our art forms to be taken seriously. Hassan-Murphy fights for the right to have a creative career in her article but sums up the pressure and disregard so beautifully:

> Mustering the courage to pursue a creative career can be an incredibly hard thing to do. It's made increasingly difficult when you have to fight your way through voices in our society, possibly in addition to your own, that attempt to discourage you.
>
> *(Rife Magazine – In Defence of the Creative Arts, 2019)*

Discouragement from even your own inner voice comes from years of society influencing how we should think and behave. As Vale mentions there are many cogs in society, the creative industries being one of them, but time and time again the arts are left having to fight their corner, justify their existence. Hassan-Murphy is making her voice heard, so perhaps she agrees with Vale in saying that there is no shame in one's work and however you categorise it is up to you. Creative thinking requires associations and connections to be made between two or more varying subjects, this in turn creates new categories and concepts (Michalko, 2011). It is an ever-evolving form; therefore, we should consider the term 'entertainment' to be ever-evolving too. Vale expresses that the arts and entertainment can be seen as expendable, and perhaps this is why it is always evolving. It is having to stay alive and the creative minds that look after it know how to mould and re-tune to allow for acceptance in a large society cogged machine, as Vale says it is the oil.

Vale has expressed that he does strive to make work to entertain but has made me, and I hope the reader, see that there is far more at play than just considering your work is there to entertain. Taboos discussed in Chapter 2 along with personal opinions can make us devalue our work. How often have you reflected upon work you have created and considered it inadequate, or to compare it to another's work and let devaluation occur in this manner? At every stage of a creative process there can be opportunities to discredit your own work, but do not let categorisation be one of them. If you consider your work is there to be viewed as entertainment, then that is not an invitation for self-doubt, but a realisation of your wider knowledge of the term.

Vale is proud that he creates to entertain, and his metaphor about entertainment being the oil in the society machine that retains the beauty is like reading a love letter to the world of entertainment.

> We flow through everything, connect and reflect, smooth and sustain, delight and surprise.
>
> *(R. Vale, 2020)*

In this one sentence he is saying far more than his work just entertains. He is saying it generates connectivity. That upon watching the work you are invited to reflect. That by delighting and surprising individuals, they are smoothly sustaining a need and want for escapism and beauty. Who can ever say again that to entertain is just frivolous?

Rebecca Johnson on aspiring to make her work entertaining

Johnson's field is often considered to be fully embedded in the world of entertainment. Our minds jump to films or television when we think of being entertained. So, when embarking on a conversation with Johnson discussing aspirations of entertainment through her own work, it became clear early on that she too strives to entertain.

> I absolutely aspire to entertain through my work. My primary aim is to emotionally engage people but I consider that a vital aspect of entertainment.

> To pace a story well you need to vary pitch and tone, build tension, relieve it with humour, earn emotional payoffs etc. You need to plot an emotional journey which also brings you to intellectual conclusions – and perhaps leaves you with questions too. A story with complex characters and themes keeps you thinking and processing your feelings after the film has ended. To make a film which resonates deeply and stays with people – I couldn't ask for greater creative reward.
>
> *(Johnson, 2020)*

Johnson's main aim is to emotionally engage her audience, which she considers is a crucial component of entertainment. We discovered in Chapter 2 that playing with characterisation is one way she explores this, but what I want to pull from her statement above is this term 'emotional engagement'. Emotion is a human trait that we have considered in Chapter 3 to be one of the reasons we strive to have entertainment, so it makes sense that it should play a role here when trying to explain how we aim to have our work categorised. Clarke (2013) regards emotional engagement as one of the key successes of the Pixar film collection. He states that when he watches these movies, they become worlds unto themselves, entirely self-contained in their artifice yet entirely in tune with how we can really feel and think. Many of us have watched an animated Pixar and found it so relatable. I, upon becoming a mother, connected with the short Bao (2018). The story tapped into my emotions brought on by motherhood, therefore I was captivated and engaged due to this newfound connection. As Clarke says 'When you have that moment with a movie . . . seeing how it echoes and perhaps enriches the vision of how you would like the world to be, it is an epiphany that you never forget' (Clarke, 2013, p. 5).

Emotional engagement can materialise in many ways and Johnson outlines how she strives to create an emotional journey with tools such as humour and tension, but that it is allowing an audience to have an intellectual conclusion, which in turn may lead to questions, which drives her understanding of generating entertaining work. Previously, Vale was reflecting upon the aesthetic of work which can result in delight. Johnson has led us down the path to of cognitive observation and the notion of provoking thought through entertainment. Already we are beginning to see that although both artists aim to entertain through their work, what that is to each of them is different.

Escapism is often what we are seeking when engaging in entertainment, and there is a school of thought that learning and building knowledge is a form of distraction too. By combining the two we are perhaps providing an audience member with a more well-rounded escape. If we present them with an aesthetic feast for the eyes combined with thought-provoking connotations, the mind is truly occupied and that escape from day-to-day life is found. But as McAndrew (2019) points out, acquiring knowledge can take more effort than idly consuming easily accessible entertainment, so there can be some resistance towards work that may be hard or difficult to digest as individual thought needs to occur. We can place greater value on entertainment than knowledge when considering how to spend our free time, but when we find ourselves no longer growing and learning in favour of entertainment,

that is when a potential problem occurs (McAndrew, 2019). This placement of value is down to the individual, and although McAndrew is speaking in broad terms here, I feel he has fallen down the rabbit-hole of feeling entertainment is not taken seriously. A well-processed piece of work will provide innovation and thought, and as Johnson has stated provoking thought is high on her aims list, and she is in the film industry, one that can often wrongly be seen as extremely frivolous.

Johnson mentions she aims to create work that stays with people, so what does she mean by this? A piece of work that leaves you thinking, a piece of work that sparks your own ideas or perhaps a piece of work that grates on you, but you cannot get it out of your mind? All these aspects are creative tools of engagement and are often used in re-works of work when reflecting upon audience feedback. In my work *Coffee Shop Culture*, there was a section where I represented an old couple who could not stand without the other. The choreography worked in a way that showed this connection and reliability. It was not until the end of the duet when the female dancer melted away leaving the male occupying her empty space and continuing as if she was there, but with a great struggle, did the audience realise she was in his imagination. This section resonated with many an audience member and they expressed that they wanted to see more of this relationship, to get to know the characters more as the sadness and beauty had stayed with them. So, when re-working *Coffee Shop Culture* for tour, I elongated this duet and had the old man stay in the scenario longer to interact with other characters.

This is an example of that creative reward that Johnson mentions, to make a work 'which resonates deeply and stays with people' (Johnson, 2020). After a long and sometimes gruelling process, finding reward from your outcome can be key. Johnson finds that reward via audience reaction and participation, so if she was not aiming to entertain (i.e. showcase the work) then how would she gain her rewards?

Sarah Brigham on aspiring to make her work entertaining

As both the Chief Executive and Artistic Director of Derby Theatre, Brigham is juggling two hats and running a building set up specifically to showcase productions indicates that her intention to 'entertain' is perhaps at the forefront. In conversation I asked if she aspires to entertain, and I was met with explosive enthusiasm.

> Yes of course! We want people to enjoy being with us, but I guess I would say the key aim is engagement rather than entertainment. Sometimes when you watch a really great play it's really hard! It pushes you to think in new and different ways, it provokes discussion, maybe even anger. . . . But you enjoy that intellectual challenge. Sometimes it satisfies in a more traditional sense – you feel uplifted and that's great too.
>
> *(Brigham, 2020)*

Brigham mentions enjoyment. She wishes for the spectators to enjoy being involved in an experience with her, the building and the cast. This idea of enjoyment is so closely linked to the majority's idea of what entertainment is and perhaps links into

Brigham's thoughts around traditional engagement. Being uplifted by something you are observing is an 'easy' experience. But similarly, to Johnson, Brigham feels that her sense of wanting to engage can be more layered when occasion calls for it. Watching work that is hard to understand or makes you feel rage are all things Brigham sees as entertaining outcomes.

The world of arts is not shy when creating hard-hitting work. Often political themes are explored and have had controversial reception, but have sparked thought, conversation, and in some cases, action. As early as 1600s, plays were being performed not only to entertain but also to make a political statement. Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* (Shakespeare, 2015) is considered to potentially have condoned revolution. It looks at the battle between aristocratic and plebeian factions, and its crowd scenes could be viewed as a suggestion for revolution in England. To this end it was withdrawn and not staged again until 1792. To this date we are unsure if Shakespeare was intentionally sparking revolutionary thought, and as Robert Mshengu Kavanagh (2017) states, when reflecting on South African political theatre, that if our purpose is to bring about revolutionary change through our performances in theatre (or any of the arts), the work we create and showcase must be revolutionary in function. The quality of the work must still withstand regardless of its intentions.

In more recent times, David Hare's *Stuff Happens* (2013) explored the political process that drove the United States and Britain to go to war with Iraq. Hare's suggestions of pre-occupied American agenda forcing the hand and using 9/11 as a pretext for invasion shocked audiences. Thought and speculation was initiated about the real reasons they went to war, all through a piece of 'entertainment'. We can see here that a challenging piece of work can provide depth and social awareness, but as Brigham runs a Theatre, she is fully aware that sometimes an uplifting and enjoyable piece of work will bring in an audience, which is required when running a business. Sometimes it is unfortunately about the money, and a piece of work that will make you feel warm and fuzzy is going to relate to a wider audience, compared to one that berates our government.

> Money plays a huge part. Interesting looking at colleagues in Europe where the commercialisation is less. I have connections in Germany who make children's theatre, and it is not about getting lots of audience, therefore it has more heart to its work. With our funding structures in this country money plays a huge factor and brings a totally different dynamic into it.
>
> *(Brigham, 2021)*

Interestingly, Brigham indicates here that companies that do not have the pressures of making a profit can allow for more depth in their work. This links to the idea that a process can be more important than an outcome which attracts masses of audience. Perhaps if money is no object to an artist, then they may say process is more important to them than the outcome. But Brigham goes on to mention our country's funding structures and how this inevitably has an effect on the work we generate.

The largest funding provider for England is Arts Council England (ACE) and they provide funding for an array of creative industries from theatres to museums.

They have different funds that you can apply for that relate to the sort of business or work you are generating. A handful of organisations are NPOs which are National Portfolio organisations. These receive regular funding and consequently have to meet an array of government-led outcomes, public engagement and cultural diversity being high on the agenda. Therefore, projects and work that are being created or produced via these NPOs have to meet these criteria, and at times can be limited by them. ACE also provide funding for individuals and small companies, and this is done by project-based funding. You apply for a certain amount of money for a certain idea or project, but yet again there is an array of caveats that are unofficially expected, and you discover these the more you apply via ACE. Within the application form there is a whole section on public engagement. So if you are not planning on showcasing your work, how are you expected to articulate this? You have to find a way to meet their needs. Be your idea a film, to have a premiere or live streaming event. Be your project a series of poems, to publish a book or have them read live. Public engagement has to be seen to be at the heart of the work. So you could say that in order to obtain ACE funding, you need to be seen to be open to engaging, in other words, entertaining.

Although there are criteria to be met in order to obtain funding, Brigham's point that it brings a different dynamic is one to focus on. She and I are not insinuating it makes the work worse, it just categorises the work more tightly. But it can make the work more thought-through. When personally applying for ACE, the proposal form has given me an opportunity to articulate what my process is going to be. This is a great tool before I head into the studio as it is essentially a guide and stops me from getting thoroughly lost in a process. But I do not think my having to 'tick the funding boxes' has and will commercialise my work.

Brigham mentions that where this is less of a sense of commercialisation, more heart-felt work can be produced. With her pressures of running a Theatre she perhaps feels to keep the profits high she needs to conform from time to time. Direct a show that will make you feel uplifted, schedule a production that is a 'laugh a minute'. This then allows for more thought-provoking work to be showcased as their risk is less in conjunction with high-gain work. A variety is key, and what we are learning in these artists' case studies is that their varied approach to the term entertainment and its realisation in their work is just another example of the need for variation to keep innovation within engagement.

Amit Lahav on aspiring to making his work entertaining

Vale, Johnson and Brigham all immediately said their aim was to entertain. They then dug deeper and found the nuances of the concept of entertainment that rings most true to them and their work. Amit Lahav's initial reaction was the opposite when asked if he creates work to entertain:

> For me, the answer to that would be no. However, it is definitely an important facet of what happens when I'm creating a show. First and foremost, it's

crucial for me to invite the audience in and take them on a journey. With that in mind, 'entertainment' might sit alongside other objectives, whether that's to 'offend', 'aggravate', 'provoke' or 'exhilarate', all as a means of achieving a greater goal for the audience to think about the world differently; to re-imagine it in their image.

(Lahav, 2020)

Lahav has outwardly said he is not driven by a need to entertain but has gone on to state similar outcomes that our other artists have been identifying with, even though their initial answers were different. Interpretation of a term is time and time again being questioned throughout this book. Entertainment is such a broad term that naturally, individual interpretation is to be expected. But what Lahav provides us with is a few key words and terms that he classes as objectives when creating a work. These objectives, in my mind, result in a wanted outcome, of which some would find entertaining.

One of my favourite works by Lahav's company Gecko Theatre is *The Time of Your Life* (2015). Created for the BBC's *Live from Television Centre*, this short performance was created for film but shot and aired live. This in itself is an extremely engaging concept. But what I am going to explore is how this work hits Lahav's above objectives.

Take the audience on a journey

This work is about a journey, the journey of a life. The first thing you witness is a man entering a room and being surprised with a party. A recognisable situation that we have all witnessed or been aware of at some point in our lives. Immediately Lahav puts us at ease as we take our seat on the journey. As the work progresses, you begin to see the man's childhood, the love of his life, his children and the heart ache that follows. This life journey all leads to his inevitable death. A whole life story in the space of 25 minutes. Lahav manages to take you on a literal, relatable, journey.

This journey is also a journey through physical space. So intricately designed, and so cleverly choreographed, the piece uses four different spaces to show the man's life. A living room, his parents' home, a space of ever-changing scenarios and a space that leads to death. So beautifully crafted is the work that each destination is crucial to the experience and amplifies the innovative way of using set and camera angle, in particular, the space that shows the bulk of the man's life with continuous circles of the room with the time and scenarios changing right in front of our eyes.

The final journey that Lahav takes us on is the journey of realisation that all that we have witnessed is a simulation, a fake life. An experience that is paid for by the man to witness a life that he wishes he may have had. The realisation that what you witnessed was perhaps not heart-felt and that the connections you witnessed were untrue, leaves the audience at the end of an unexpected journey.

Offend

Causing offence is a tool that can really resonate and make ones work provocative. In *The Time of Your Life* there were a couple of instances that did offend me, but I was glad of them, as strange as that may seem. The initial offence was the interpretation of being birthed. The man (played by Lahav) is seen squirming up against a plastic sheet which brings the image of a foetus in a womb so vividly to mind. The movement combined with the claustrophobia put me on edge and offended my view that birth can so often be depicted so inaccurately. His final moments breaking through the plastic and being 'birthed' offended me on another level as I simply found it too grotesque. Upon further viewings, it is not grotesque but in my first initial reaction, my imagination took over and caused me to be offended.

Later a scene depicts the man's parents arguing and has implications of domestic abuse. I was offended by the arguing parents and the show of violence not because I feel this should not be shown, but that it embarrassed me. It embarrassed me to be a witness of such an awful thing. I was offended by my embarrassment and shame of feeling this way. I wanted to brush it aside, not witness it and pretend it was not happening.

Aggravate

The work has such a beauty to it as you explore this man's life, and the intricate choreography done with naturalism really sparked my creativity and produced intrigue. But I did get aggravated. I was annoyed that none of what I had so naively been immersed in was real. Watching this man's life come to an end and see him pass to the afterlife was where I wanted this work to finish. This would have concluded this experience in a succinct and satisfactory manner for me. But as I have mentioned, this production continued and revealed that all we had witnessed was fake, made for the consumer to feel they had lived a life full of twists and turns.

I was aggravated that I could not be left with my modern-day fairy-tale ending, I was aggravated that the love I felt to be so genuine between the man and his wife was an act. I was aggravated that I had been left with an empty hollow feeling that can only be translated as being annoyed at my ignorance. But this annoyance led to my final feeling of satisfaction, satisfaction that work like this can make me feel this way.

Provoke

Often when I watch dance and theatre work, I am provoked into deeper or critical thinking, and this was no exception. Many aspects of this work were a stimulus for further thought, but the one aspect that provoked me the most was the insinuation that the 'workers' of this consumer led 'life in a day' were trapped and being made to work under duress.

After the man has finished his 'life', he manages to break through to the backstage area of the simulation. You see him frantically grabbing and trying to engage

with the 'cast' that has just previously been his life. They seem in despair, you see some of them crying, you see them arguing. All whilst putting on a brave face and continuing with the next customers 'life', which seems no different to the man's. This provoked anger in me as there were connotations at play here that could be relatable to sex workers, the drug scene or illegal slavery which we, unfortunately, know happens in our modern-day society. I was provoked to want to do more for people's working conditions. All from one five-minute section of this work.

Exhilarate

To be exhilarated by a piece of work is a seal of approval for me. If I watch a work and am spellbound by it then I know it is a production or product that works for me. *The Time of Your Life* is one of these. There is such beauty to this work, but enough bittersweetness to allow the beauty to resonate even more.

The section which shows the majority of the man's adult life from marrying right through to dying is the most exhilarating for me. The way Lahav has choreographed this section in such a seamless manner, allowing space and time to pass so effortlessly fills me with awe. Next to no script is used, making the physicality of this section take centre stage. You see the characters age and you see different emotions fly by, all with a panning circular camera. Each scene is set ready as the camera hits, which shows the rehearsal that must have taken place ahead of the live filming. As much choreography, I presume, was needed off camera as on for the next section of the life to be ready, and to flow. This scene in itself was inspiring and one I often share with students to show what they should be aspiring to.

Imagine the world differently: to re-imagine the work in your own image

Interpretation is, as we know, a key factor to being entertained. Being given permission to understand it in our own way is what connects us, makes us come back for more. This work made me imagine what my life to date would look like in just 25 minutes. Would there be such beauty? Or would I struggle to pan a room without content having run out? We do not have time here to discuss the depth of life, but Lahav has managed to make me see the world differently, or should I say my past world differently.

It also made me consider what is a perfect life? Are we never satisfied, to the point where some would pay, in this scenario, to experience a full life? Expectation is higher than ever, and we have to value what we have, what we want to achieve.

Lahav outlined some elements that he wants an audience to experience, and I feel I have proved that to me he has achieved this with *The Time of Your Life*. But ultimately, I was entertained. Although Lahav says he does not strive for this, it is clear that what he does strive for results in entertainment. I feel this can be true of many artists. It may not be their intention, but it certainly can often be a by-product. Ultimately, I feel the answer to 'do you strive to entertain through your

work' is always 'yes' because everyone strives for a reaction, even if they are striving for 'no reaction'. This engagement of an observer, be it good or bad, is ever present and should not be brushed aside.

After reading these case studies, let us see if your perception or your own thinking has changed or been informed:

TASK

Answer the below and consider all that you have heard from our artists thoughts:

- Do you strive for an outcome with engagement?
- Has reading the above made you realise that you do entertain even if this was not your aim?

Taking the debate of process vs. outcome to the next level

The joy of having conversations with a wide range of artists allows for your own thoughts to be questioned and pulled apart. So far in this chapter we have explored the meaning of 'process', and the meaning of 'product', and seen reflection upon the outcome being linked to entertainment whether intentionally or not. To take this debate to the next level, I feel it is important to examine different standpoints of the argument. As with any debate, hearing the opposing argument allows for a fuller and more informed understanding. I will look into these three opposing aspects:

- Being process driven
- Being outcome driven
- Outcome and process being of equal value

As always, continually consider where you stand with what is being discussed and allow your own individuality and thought to guide your interpretation.

Argument 1: process can be seen as an indulgence for an artist

Preston-Dunlop (2014) investigates the notion of a choreographer's choice in *Looking at Dances* and reflects upon the questions you have to ask yourself when considering your work. 'Am I making this for myself?' is mentioned here as something to consider highly as well as what you are communicating. Preston-Dunlop is insinuating that making a work for yourself is an indulgence, but that we have a responsibility as an artist to always consider what we are communicating. Therefore, the

outcome, or product, has to be considered. But this standpoint is not where everybody sits. For some, the process, the development or the devising are the elements that they enjoy the most and strive to find in their work.

Kim Grant in *All About Process – The Theory and Discourse of Modern Artistic Labor* (2017) believes that when artists state that it is all about the process, they are insinuating a multitude of things. It can be seen as a declaration that they are dedicated and attentive to their creative labours. So what Grant is proposing is that it is not as simple as the process being the sole purpose, the investment in the importance of the process is reflected in their creative outcomes or continuing processes. 'It is the doing of the work rather than the outcome that is the most important thing for such artists' (Grant, 2017, pp. 6–7). Having an aim and a purpose when being creative is often something I strive for my students to seek out but allowing the process to be the sole aim is perhaps resulting in a decline of observable products. Grant (2017) is in agreement stating that the recent prominence of artistic process is perhaps instigating a decrease in artist's product being an object of independent aesthetic interest. My publication is seeking out a definition of Entertainment, and if we are potentially being faced with an array of artists who are no longer driven to make aesthetic work, then it becomes harder for us to identify this as Entertainment. As we have discovered in Chapter 3, aesthetics plays a huge part in engagement, so is there a way an observer could perhaps identify aesthetic qualities in an artists' process? That is assuming we are allowed to be party to the sometimes rather private development phase.

Grant is coming from the view of contemporary art, and although in this book I am concentrating on the Performing Arts, it is worth mentioning this world whilst discussing the notion of process. There is a term called *Process Art* which I feel helps us understand where an artist is coming from when they consider themselves process driven. *Process Art* is a term that refers to a process that is not hidden but is in fact a prominent aspect of the completed work. This results in a part, or even the whole product being the creation/process of the work. Process became more prevalent in the 60s and 70s, and in the world of contemporary/fine art, Jackson Pollack is perhaps a fine example of *Process Art*. This American painter was known for his large canvases that had layers and layers of paint poured or thrown on them, leaving drips and sweeps that result in a mass of colour and movement. His process of applying the paint can be clearly seen in the end product, to the point where some consider it relatively easy to reconstruct if you follow each pathway and delivery of the layers of paint. Here you have a piece of work that is about the process of creation, about the way in which the material was applied to the canvas.

In a similar ilk, John Hilliard's *Camera Recording its Own Condition (7 Apertures, 10 Speeds, 2 Mirrors)* shows how a piece of *Process Art* is eliminating the mystery around a process by displaying it exactly as it happened as the end product. This work consisted of 70 photos taken by a camera pointing at a mirror, allowing the observer to see the camera which was the subject. The snapshots taken were using every different aperture and speed setting and were laid out in a grid with the 'correct' image at its centre. The correct image is what you and I would expect to see

when taking a photo of a camera via a mirror, the rest range from over-exposed to under-exposed resulting in the image of the camera becoming less visible. Each shot clearly showed the process of setting a camera at a certain speed and aperture. To the observer it would seem no aesthetic was considered, it was portrayed to the audience like the results of a scientific experiment. Yet again an example of a piece of work which is the embodiment of the process. But this is the world of contemporary art, and as Sande states in *Dance: The Art of Production* 'An unwillingness to communicate in a medium that by its very definition is a performing art only serves to alienate the audience and thus nullifies the power of dance' (Sande, 1998, p. 10). We are exploring mediums of performative quality, therefore it is harder to consider a process to be the sole purpose of a work in the way Hilliard and Pollack were able to in their field. A performance of sorts is expected, therefore a process that is designed never to be seen could be considered not to be a performative genre, resulting in said process being considered pure indulgence for the artist.

In the 70s theatre-making too was pushing the boundaries of process and devising became more and more popular. This popularity increased in the first decade of the 21st century and theatre-making derived from devising becoming a significant tool that was considered to be cutting edge and expected (Harvie and Lavendar, 2010). Sarah Brigham comes from a theatre-devising background and in discussion, we touched on the idea of research and development (R&D) being not only a place for devising but also a place that can end up being indulgent rather than productive:

> I did an R&D about 15 years ago, and the idea was brilliant, but it was a waste of time if I am honest! We didn't really know what to do with it, we were in the creation space at the Point, we had really great people in the room, but it never quite got anywhere. It is the one project in my entire life that I feel was a waste of time. I had a lovely week, but it didn't actually get to anything.
>
> It becomes an indulgence. It was with my theatre company at the time, we had had quite a few successful productions, and what we were trying to do was something different. We were almost trying to do something different for the sake of doing something different. 'We can't keep doing the same thing, even though it is hugely successful and audiences like it, we have to do something different' But it didn't spark or fly.
>
> I feel the outcome is important, we make artwork to be seen. Otherwise, it is a therapeutic process. If you are making stuff for yourself that is fine, and there is a time when you have to do that to be then better, but I think we make art to be seen.
>
> *(Brigham, 2021)*

Research and Development phases where a formal outcome is not expected are common projects that can attain funding. We discussed the notion of funded-driven processes and products previously in this chapter, but at this stage we can reflect upon how Brigham perhaps felt her time was wasted in the anecdote above

because the funding received allowed her complete freedom and indulgence as the product was not the 'earner' in this instance. As she mentions, she had a 'lovely week' (Brigham, 2021) but was frustrated by the lack of conclusion or innovation, but as there was perhaps no incentive to do more as the exploration was funded, the drive was potentially not there to formulate and finish an idea. By wholly zoning in on a process are we stopping original and noteworthy work being created? Or would others disagree with Brigham and conclude that any process helps you develop as an artist, irrelevant of it producing an outcome or not.

Brigham feels that art is designed to be seen, pulling on my idea earlier that a performative art has to result in a spectator-orientated outcome at some point. But she considers that focusing on a process is less of an indulgence but perhaps more a therapeutic process. We often use our own experiences, political and social themes, or even our own emotions to build a piece of work. Working through some more challenging aspects of these categories via a creative process may allow you to subsequently produce work of greater integrity and understanding. Often, we have to climb a mountain within a creative process before we can conclude in a succinct way. But this unspoken feeling that what was working in previous work cannot be the thing you always do, is what is perhaps driving the more indulgent processes in an attempt to create something entirely new.

We all want to create innovative work, but there is a pressure to push the boundaries at every opportunity and to indulge in a process for yourself. To explore concepts that ring true to the individual is perhaps how most of us perceive 'pushing the boundaries'. But are we, as Brigham (2021) states, trying to do something different for the sake of doing something different? Can these boundaries be pushed without trying to start afresh? There is a school of thought that if you know what works well within your craft, use it. Take that and then push that idea's boundaries. For example, in my own work, I initially liked the idea of video projection in conjunction with choreography, but only used a small element in my first touring show *3Fold*. This was done simply and in a technical way that many before me had done, but what I did differently was having the projection become an extra cast member. This is the element I decided to push. This was my boundary that could be developed. I did not go on another creative process to try and find another completely new way of fusing the forms. I used my creative knowledge to that date.

Although I can be seen to be disputing the idea that a process should be indulgent, I want you to consider what that word even means. Indulgent can suggest selfishness, or a lack of awareness. But perhaps in this context, it should relate to confidence in your own creative ability. A confidence that allows you to follow a process knowing it may not have an outcome, but that journey will have informed your practice far more heavily than pushing for one. The start of any creative process is somewhat indulgent, allowing to be wildly expansive in exploration (Walter, 2009). This exploration with no inhibition is what can really excite artists. If we look back at *Process Art*, Pollack did not hold back with the method he wanted to explore, and from it came innovative work. 'The recent embrace of process by contemporary artists in their public statements as well as their work often, but by no

means always, reflects a rejection of the notion that artists are subservient to critical theory and ideas' (Grant, 2017, p. 8). Theatre makers are starting to feel they too can generate work that maybe previously they felt did not fit the norm and subsequently would not be taken seriously. Process has allowed them to push boundaries.

Being process driven should not be seen as indulgent. Most process is of worth even if not used. Brigham's example shows how that particular experience made her realise that she believes her work is to be seen, therefore a process with no end point is not for her. Equally someone may have embarked on a very stressful process where an outcome was needed quickly and realised that they were an artist who needs a phase of Research and Development to even know what their starting point is. Preston-Dunlop's (2014) feelings that to leave a process open, verges on irresponsible are perhaps too harsh. I agree that a performing arts process should have an element of audience observation but if it is not fully concluded then that is up to the artist's discretion. If they are satisfied with the endpoint, then the observer should be too, irrelevant to whether they like it or not.

Process is evident in nearly all art forms, and the fact it can be considered an indulgence if you linger on it could be seen as a reflection upon Art itself being indulgent. Spending your time creating and thinking can be seen as egotistical, so perhaps we really are arguing that a process *and* the outcome are indulgent, and that the overall creativity is what we are drawn to and thrive on. We can say with certainty though that no artist is wrong however. If you are process driven with no desire to produce, then you are in your creative rights to pursue this. If you feel a process can be too lost if indulgence kicks in, then you are at liberty to have suc–cinct and efficient processes that produce an outcome. Whatever journey you go on, innovation will occur and new ways of creating and thinking will come to the forefront moulding the future landscape.

Argument 2: it is all about the outcome

As this book is about Entertainment, and that term is often used to reflect a type of outcome, you would be forgiven to think that I agree that ultimately it is all about the outcome. Originally coming from the performance world of dance and then moving into academia does make me inclined to agree with Pakes in Jo Butterworth's *Contemporary Choreography, A Critical Reader* that 'those choreographer-researchers who object to the idea that their practice must be informed, even directed, by a theoretical perspective or agenda in order to qualify as research' (Butterworth and Wildschut, 2017, p. 13). These people are left feeling disregarded, or perhaps laughed at, because for them an end product is their ultimate drive, an end product that is not always a published paper, which goes against traditional research out–comes. Often when I start on the journey of creating a show, I have an idea of what the end performance will be like, and I have a well-designed process that allows me to realise this form. Federico Zuccaro, founder of the Accademia de San Luca in Rome, felt that there should be practical work to inform the theory and 'insisted on the necessity of concrete activity and demonstration practice as an adjunct to theory.

He claimed that theory alone is sterile' (Grant, 2017, p. 26). But academic research is another vast topic that we do not have time to cover during this exploration, what it does highlight though is that even in the world where thinking and dissecting is expected, there are still individuals who focus on an outcome.

Paul Jackson is such an individual. Being an Academic for many years has not altered his thoughts on process vs. outcome:

> Process is irrelevant, the only thing that is interesting is if the completed work is comprehensible to its chosen audience. I say chosen deliberately because a creator has to know who they are making work for. I get nothing out of heavy metal but that is a life blood to its fans. Similarly, my taste for Messiaen would perhaps be lost on a heavy metal fan, or perhaps not. Depending on the definition of entertainment all work should be entertaining i.e. not dull or boring or poorly constructed or making time drag.
>
> *(Jackson, 2020)*

Bold words from Jackson claiming that to him a process is irrelevant. Is he insinuating that there is no need for process, and that we can generate work without research and development? Of course, he is not saying this, but what he is presenting to us is that if an end product is readable and well structured, the process is unrelated to our understanding of the work. The creative process is irrelevant to our appreciation of a well-designed piece of work. The intention will manifest in the design, the creative process can at best tell us how the design came to be, leaving us with extra information that may not be useful to the end product (Herman, 1999). This idea of a well-designed piece of work links to Jackson's theory that process is irrelevant if you have carefully devised your work to meet your target audience's needs.

'The success of the product is based on its consumers' expectations of what is, should or shouldn't be' (Preston-Dunlop, 2010, pp. 33–34). Your chosen audience needs to find the work comprehensible which can be used as template to generate the desired outcome. This will limit the breadth of your process as you have already identified what 'type' of work you are aiming to create. Taking Jackson's example of a heavy metal band, you would not expect them to release a power ballad to their fans because this is the opposite to what they are expecting. They like a specific genre so are invested in that. 'Many devising companies have an area of interest to which they return repeatedly, producing a kind of 'family relationship' between their different shows' (Mermikides and Smart, 2010, p. 22). A process that has this aim will be succinct, this is considered an outcome-led process. Some may consider this approach limiting and leading to a lack of creative integrity, but what it does do is channel your ideas down one path when often we can face a fork in the road in a creative process which can cause confusion and loss of intention.

If your target audience comprises children aged 6–10, you know immediately what kind of work you are aiming to generate. It will be vivid, inoffensive, educational and potentially interactive. Therefore, there is no reason why your process

should involve a day long workshop, for example, on how best to shock and offend an audience to stir critical thought, this is not a useful tool for this specific piece of work. A child-based audience is different from an adult audience. They differ by what they respond to, what makes them disengage and how they react to a portrayal of a certain story – knowledge of these areas is vital (Grant and Wood, 1999) so that your process does not end up diverting from the desired outcome.

Jackson mentions that for a product to be entertaining it needs be constructed well, so a focused process which is ultimately all about the outcome should result in a satisfactory end point. But if process is irrelevant, how does one produce a well-constructed piece of work? It is the journey of a process that often allows for integrity and innovation that makes exemplary work. Gecko Theatre's sense of what they are aiming for in a process changes noticeably as their projects develop and this openness to discovery is a crucial feature of their creative identities. Lahav highlights the importance of not shutting the door on potential areas of creative exploration (Mermikides and Smart, 2010). But Lahav has years of experience working with a process, and as stated before, many companies have their identity and continue in that ilk. Gecko has a clear personality, therefore it could be assumed that even though Lahav is open to the twists and turns of a process, he always has a clear indication of an end product because he has a clear notion of what past audiences have engaged with. This is an outcome-driven structure, whether it is done deliberately or unintentionally.

In the world of film, audience-driven work is often the norm. Due to the globalisation of Hollywood, film creators are often in its shadow, so if you are striving for acclaim and accreditation you have to have an element of a Hollywood approach – for it all to be about the end product. This outcome is thought of and designed before production even begins.

Rebecca Johnson really values the importance of the product. In conversation, she emphasises the importance of the experience as well as the product:

> I think ultimately outcome is what matters – the proof of the pudding so to speak. Because if you have a great time making a film but it's rubbish, it's a pretty pointless exercise! But having said that, the process is your life journey. It matters on a personal level because it absorbs you so consumingly, often for years. You want to feel you've treated people well and acted with integrity. What's wonderful is that a film not only takes on its own life once you've made and released it out into the world, but a film shoot also takes on its own life beyond you as a director. Relationships are formed. Flirtations and creative partnerships and the coming together of people from disparate age groups and backgrounds, who might never otherwise have met, who become lifelong friends. I've worked with a lot of young people who have become friends and who, I am somewhat bewildered to say, are not only themselves adults but now have children of their own. I have found friends and mentors and people I love dearly through filmmaking. Long may that continue.
>
> *(Johnson, 2020)*

Johnson plays around with this idea that if a piece of work is 'rubbish', that is, does not entertain, but you enjoyed creating it, then it has no value. What are you going to do with a piece of work that is no good? Previously when we were discussing process being some artist's main aim, we touched on the fact that validation for work is not always sought after. Defining something as 'good' is extremely hard in the more subjective areas of the art world. But there is always individual acknowledgement and knowing when we consider our work to be up to standard. 'Before his death Michelangelo burned his sketches, designs, and cartoons to hide the great labours he endured in his desire for perfection' (Grant, 2017, p. 25). Completely destroying a process so that the end product you are satisfied with is the only evidence, was how Michelangelo orchestrated his work to be forever perfect. He may have enjoyed drawing some of his less-known works, but he clearly felt that these being seen by his audience would devalue the rest of his achievements. So, the fact he did not share this work, does this make it a waste of his time, as Johnson indicates, as it is left with no value?

What sparked further thought when in conversation with Johnson was her lyrical articulation of the process being your own life journey. The outcome of the work is just one outcome. The perhaps forgotten outcome is the relationships and development of the art form that has occurred to make the product, in Johnson's case, the film. An outcome of connection and diversity is a by-product, and perhaps of more importance than the work itself. Collaboration is key in many performative arts genres and is a relatively neutral term. 'In itself it reveals very little about process, about purpose and objective . . . which have propelled the collaboration to be established and pursued in the first place' (Noyale, 2016, p. 29). The beauty of a final piece of work is that it does not tell us about the experience of the collaboration, it is the outcome of connectivity and artistic solidarity that we can witness this experience throughout, both as an artist within the collaboration and also as an observer who witnesses continued artistic partnerships. The outcome of a film, in the case of Johnson, says nothing about whether the process was gratifyingly productive, or toxically draining (Noyale, 2016), it shows a unified artistic showcase.

When we think of an artistic outcome we automatically think of the finished work, but what Johnson has made us consider is the importance of the hidden, or less-considered outcomes. Another outcome she identifies is the journey of a product once it has been released. For her this is when the film is showcased and the audience takes on ownership of it, the piece 'takes on its own life' (Johnson, 2020). The outcome of this process can be varied. For example, in my own work, I often have the performance photographed. These photos then get used in an array of ways and start to tell the story of my work differently, in a way that I have no control over. The image Figure 5.1 has become an articulation of my fusion of digital projection and choreography. It is used to spark conversation about this fusion, not about what the image actually is of, which is the death of Icarus. It has become almost a symbol of collaboration that I never thought this relatively static moment in the choreography would be able to achieve.

FIGURE 5.1   One dancer lay on the floor, with another cradling them. Behind projection is seen with the imagery of a broken maze, and in the darkness you can see two ominous figures.

Icarus 2016 (Adaire to Dance) | Photo Credit: Greg Jackson | Performers: Alice Marshall/Kieran Shannon

The consideration of multiple interpretations just makes the argument that *outcome is ultimately the aim* have more gravitas. If we are managing to produce multiple outcomes that progress us as artists, we can see how having this as our main aim is perhaps a healthy attitude. It is hard to imagine a world where product was not important, particularly the world of entertainment. As consumers we want to be absorbed and engaged by a piece of work that has concluded. To observe a process, or even an end product that has no intention to be seen, can be problematic.

How do we engage with that, except maybe on a negative level? Having a visible outcome pleases an audience. For some creatives, this is key, for others this is exactly what they rebel against, wishing not to conform to the norm.

Argument 3: without process there is no outcome, without an outcome there is no need for a process

We have discussed the importance of process and outcome as solitary aims, but again and again as we look at the evidence it becomes apparent that perhaps one cannot be without the other. Yes, there can be more of an emphasis on one, but without a process there is no outcome, without a product there is no need for a process. 'If the process is brilliant, then the outcome will be. But the outcome has to be brilliant to validate the process' (Brigham, 2021).

The work of Illuminos is the epitome of process and outcome living in harmony. Often their work is derived from a brief or specific description dictated by the funder, or the client. They have small parameters, so making sure the process and the outcome complements one another is what makes their work so engaging and accessible. Rob Vale understandably had these thoughts when asked which he values more, process or outcome:

> You can't separate the two. The process of making a piece, of beginning with ideas, researching content and context, engaging with participants, figuring out what a building can offer and what might work with it- all of this is what interests us, and if we've brought it together right it interests an audience too, so it entertains through its connection and resonance. But our artform does I think lend itself to the spectacle, to the large and dramatic outcome. Small and subtle moments can and do have a key role as a fulcrum to this, but when you are animating a whole building, eventually you have to work with the fact that its 40 or 50 metres wide, and that vast canvas is going to need to be exciting and bold, and hopefully an entertaining product. We do value joy, wonder, awe, giddy excitement, the smile on the face, but we try to get there through storytelling, beauty and a crafted, textured approach. Large or small, we're interested in people engaging with our work, and if you want to ask that of people, you have to catch their attention, hold them together – entertain, and a thorough process leading to an outcome will achieve this.
>
> *(R. Vale, 2020)*

Here Vale delves into how the process and the product must work hand in hand to allow for success. The more practical elements of a process such as how big their projection will be due to the building being used, means that the creative element is given parameters. As he states, if the building is large, they need to fill it, be as large as it so that it captivates and engages the large crowds that events like this gather. Bringing every element together will result in a well-bodied piece of work. What I enjoy about Illuminos' work is that you can see their process in their final work, but when observing their process, you can envisage the end product. Their work

Door to Door (2008) was commissioned by Bolton Council and was to connect with the community via a projection on the Le Mans Crescent, a 100-metre crescent building. They took this connection with the community to the next level and proposed a piece of work that showed residents of Bolton at their front doors.

I was fortunate enough to be present for some of the process of this work and helped with the filming of a selection of the residents. Due to the nature of the work, they had created a call-out for participants and were surprised by the vast up take. The end product showed these members of the public passing and throwing objects to each other, appearing to live next door to one another, but in fact they were spread right across the district. All each participant needed to do when being filmed as part of the process was open their door, catch an object, throw it to the other side and move back indoors. Being given these instructions on their own would have been quite baffling for the contributor, so Rob and Matt Vale had to have a clear idea of what they were intending to do with the footage.

Working via split screen and seeing action or object cross from one to the other had become a signature look for Illuminos. This concept had been used previously in *Le Ballet De Cour* (2005) and subsequently in *To where it begins* (2010). They were using a process they were used to, and this allowed for them to articulate the outcome in a succinct way to the participants of *Door to Door*. As the project developed, they were able to edit a section together to show the public who were interested in having their front door filmed, what could be achieved with their moment. All this clarity of the outcome helped define and develop the process.

The projection onto the Le Mans Crescent was a well-realised and well-formed outcome, but the process it had been on was evident. You could *see* it. You could see that participants had been filmed at their homes; you could see that instruction had been given on how to manipulate the object. A beautiful marriage of process and product had occurred. Neither could have developed without the other.

This example argues the point that a process is needed to generate work, but without the desire to create work, what is the point of the process? Amit Lahav agrees with Vale with respect to the connection of process and outcome; let us reflect upon his words we looked at earlier in the chapter:

> Process and outcome are often inseparable. Ultimately, it's about the outcome, because that's what you're striving for, but a Gecko show is never finished, and that is due to the fact there are many processes and many outcomes during the life of our shows.
>
> *(Lahav, 2020)*

'Inseparable' is a descriptor that emphasises the unity between process and outcome, clearly Lahav and Vale identify this in their own work. The fact that work is ever-changing and growing, as Lahav states, permits both process and outcome to continually play their parts. Allowing for development and growth will inform every aspect of creation and production. But what this opens our eyes to is the clarification that a process-led outcome and an outcome-led process are interchangeable.

As I mentioned before, they are the Chicken and the Egg, the cause and effect, of the Arts world. One will struggle to survive without the other.

Process vs. outcome – revisited

Through this chapter we have really dissected what process is and what outcome is, and you would be forgiven to be feeling a little more confused than you were at the start. So let us embark on the task below to help filter what you have absorbed.

TASK

Reflecting upon all that you have read in this chapter, select the statement that resonates most with you:

1   Process and outcome are interchangeable
2   Process should always be the main driver
3   Outcome should always be the main driver

Are you surprised by your answer? Reflecting on a topic can often result in a change of standpoint.

Process and outcome are subjective. If they were not, the creative industries would be limited. Therefore, it makes sense that the individual's perception of which is most important is equally subjective. As an artist you need to know where you stand but allow for your mind to shift and alter as you engage with more work and processes. You may find that from one project to the next your opinion changes. This is exciting and should be embraced, you never know what you may develop out of a change in opinion, or a realisation guided by a shift.

In this chapter we have considered the definition of process and outcome. The word 'engagement' is prevalent yet again in connection to 'outcome', and the idea of structured and unstructured processes are highlighting the individual's ability to take a journey any way they choose. Having considered our artists' opinions, it is clear that every process is different, and every aspect we choose to follow will naturally be distinctive to the individual. The practice of devising, for example, has been influential to theatre-makers, helping them develop artistically satisfying ways of working by stretching their limits of known practices and reformatting their own creative processes (Govan et al., 2007). But devising is not used in all genres, other factors have developed and emerged. Therefore, the debate of Process vs. Outcome is vast due to the subjective nature of the contributors. But one aspect that we have kept revisiting in this chapter is that an outcome is an inevitable conclusion. Whether this be realised in a conventional manner, it will naturally occur after a

process. Recognition that ultimately an outcome will be made opens our minds to realising that, in most instances, this will generate entertainment. You do not need to be laughing to be entertained, you can be offended, you can be startled, but if you are engaged this is entertainment.

The idea of creating work with the intention of entertaining opened up many a debate amongst our Artists and linked closely to their individual standpoint when considering which aspect drives them most: Process or Outcome. Those that felt outcome was the ultimate goal were those that said they were creating work to entertain. On the flip side, if process was more valuable to them, they felt just creating to entertain was not enough and that there were many other aspects and goals that they were aiming for. By analysing some of these artists' works we were able to see their thoughts in action. Amit Lahav felt that he strives for a multitude of outcomes and by looking at his work, *The Time of Your Life*, we could see that his intentions had been met. Equally when scrutinising the work of Illuminos' *Door to Door*, we could see the close connection between process and outcome, and how the interplay resulted in a very transparent piece of work. A work that showcases the importance of knowledge of an outcome whilst within the creative process but allowing the process to shine through the final work.

Hopefully the analysis of my own methods and work, along with the examples given earlier, have allowed you to see action in process, thought in action. It is easier to understand your own opinion when you can visualise the range of arguments being presented. The tasks throughout this chapter have ideally shaped your opinions. Now as you have completed reading this chapter, you are encouraged to think and discuss the following with your peers:

TASK

- How valuable is an entertaining outcome to *you*?
- Should every creation have a thorough process?
- Can the only possible outcome within the performing visual arts result in entertainment?

Continued debate and analysis is healthy and progresses an art form. By no means am I always presenting 'fact' in this chapter, I am presenting opinions and statements to evoke debate. Upon reflection, however, it is exciting to see that as we draw closer to understanding what Entertainment is, we can conclude that a formula has emerged within this chapter.

Process + Outcome = Entertainment

We know that 'entertainment' is a vast term, but we can see that a creative journey will result in a conclusion, which ultimately will engage an observer. This may

not be your aim but 'There are receivers, the spectators, even if ignored' (Preston-Dunlop, 2014, p. 10). Being engaged is a vastly subjective experience and knowing this allows you to accept its inevitable occurrence from your work, or you can ignore it. This is the beauty of being creative, boundaries are in place to be broken. Thought and exploration are there to enhance. All our aims should be to develop our art form, and this in turn may generate conventional entertainment, but we can choose when, how and why.

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6

CONCLUSION

At the start of our journey I asked you to define 'entertainment', and from this initial step together we have discussed and heard an array of topics designed to push and pull your understanding of this commonly used word. I hope you are at a stage where the initial definition you created has evolved and matured. I know that researching and writing this book has shifted my perception to one that is more informed and, in all honesty, more useful. Weaving ideas together can help build individual thought even further. Therefore, I propose, in a nod to concluding a topic that is near impossible to conclude, to highlight a few factors that see the ideas and debates from different chapters merge.

These debates are just the tip of the iceberg and I urge you to find more interplay between Chapters 2 and 5. Each of the chapters is designed to compartmentalise this vast topic and by working through each stage, you are now at a place where combining the ideas from each will feel less of an enormous task. Chapter 2 allowed for speculative definition to occur, leading to Chapter 3 providing some facts and theories that help us understand why entertainment is a human pastime. Chapter 4 brought us to the current day to help place our own practice within it and brought ideas to the forefront concerning what is perceived as the modern brain. This led us to Chapter 5, where process and outcome were discussed and brought our attention to the need for process and an outcome to fulfil a traditional definition of entertainment. Each of these areas has subsequently led the way to this end point where we feel able and prepared to explore interplay between each of the main topics.

Linking why we seek entertainment with a definition

In Chapter 2, we explored the notion of finding a definition of Entertainment. Aside from the formal definition found within a dictionary, we discussed what our

resident artists felt were key words and phrases, and cross-referenced this by finding a definition via analysing work considered to be entertaining. What we concluded in this chapter was that there is no definitive answer, and that a definition is ever-evolving, but we did generate a universal definition created from all the elements explored in the chapter as a starting point for further development and evolution.

Entertainment is an all-immersive shared experience created by high quality collaborations, pushing an audience from recognisable truths to the unexpected in a well-structured display of creativity.

This description of what is an entertaining piece of work can be cross-analysed with what we discovered in Chapter 3 about our innate need to be entertained. In this chapter, we investigated the basics of neuroscience and the chemical make-up of our brains, exploring one reason why we seek reward in the form of entertainment. This led to discussions on the human ability to imitate and how this links to our capability to imagine ourselves in a scenario or situation when engulfed in an entertaining experience. This imagination is another reason why we engage with entertainment, and this led us into exploring the world of Aesthetics which highlights individuality and subjective interpretation. All these factors are reasons we seek entertainment, and what we can now explore is how the above definition marries up with the elements we know are instigators for interaction and creation.

For the purpose of this exploration, I have selected four words/phrases from our definition, which we can connect with our findings from Chapter 3:

All immersive
Recognisable truth
High quality
Unexpected

These will provide us with a starting point to potentially link the rest of the definition with the findings we discovered in Chapter 3.

Firstly, we are going to look into the notion that a piece of entertaining work is 'all immersive'. Something that is all immersive is an experience that ignites your senses, and you are unlikely to be distracted from this moment due to the connection you are experiencing. As we discovered in Chapter 3, a chemical reaction kick started by dopamine runs past our prefrontal cortex in our brain, contributing to our feeling alert, happy, motivated, focused and in some cases, euphoric. This said reaction contributes to us being 'lost in the moment' and having that all-immersive experience. If you reflect upon a piece of work that had you engrossed, you could probably pick out how you felt from the listed reactions caused by dopamine initiating the reward sequence. Personally, when I watched Sidi Labi Cherkaoui and Antony Gormley's *Sutra* (2008), I was captivated from start to end and would describe how I felt as motivated, focused and alert to nuances in the production. Being immersed requires the chemical reaction of seeking reward to keep you watching and staying to find more reward in what you are observing. A beautiful cycle of dopamine raising its red flag as we realise we may observe something we

enjoy, then the opioids making us feel the joy upon seeing it, to then loop back to dopamine raising the flag again as there may be more, and on and on it goes. This is us being immersed and engaging fully in a piece of entertainment. Without the innate reactions of our brain, this element of our definition would not exist.

Another element of our definition that can be connected to the more scientific reasons why we seek entertainment is 'recognisable truth'. In Chapter 2, we explored the idea that if a piece of work has elements in it that we recognise from our daily lives, we are more likely to engage with it. This can be done through characterisation, story line or even recognisable sounds within a soundtrack. The reason we connect with this approach is due to our ability to imitate which we investigated in Chapter 3. We, as humans, on some level, can understand the thoughts and feelings of others through an examination of our own mental state and process, a mental simulation that allows us to appreciate how it is to be someone else (Povinelli and Prince, 1998). This ability, which stems from our skill of imitation from an early age, allows us to connect with something that is recognisable or relatable in a piece of entertainment. If we see a character that we recognise, whether within ourselves or another, our inbuilt skill to imitate and consequently understand, allows us to connect and engage. If we were to observe a piece of work that had a character no human had ever encountered, then this inbuilt ability to empathise would not be kick-started, unless said character had been cleverly designed to have recognisable elements of human traits. Being immersed in truth instigates our ability to imitate which helps us recognise situations, so yet again our definition draws on our innate reactions.

A work that is considered to be of quality is often presumed to be engaging, so therefore entertaining. In Chapter 2, we discussed in depth the value of reputation and allowing time for a piece of work to be crafted and developed. This idea of high-quality work draws us back to the thoughts and theories explored in Chapter 3 when reflecting upon Aesthetics and the Greek philosophers who took time to ponder the importance of 'beauty' found in the world of arts. They often drew parallels between something being aesthetically pleasing and being of high quality. A poorly painted landscape that had inconsistencies and showed a lack of skill would not be considered aesthetically pleasing. If the landscape was realistic and evoked emotion then the sought-after 'beauty' that the likes of Aristotle and Plato pursued would be evident, resulting in an aesthetically rewarding piece of high-quality work.

Although we are now pushing the boundaries of what a high standard piece of work is, there are still parameters that have stemmed from the ancient Greek philosophers. If thought and process has gone into a piece of work and it can be articulated coherently then that is a sign of quality, regardless of the outcome. If we consider John Cage's 4'33" where you witness silence for 4 minutes and 33 seconds, you would not be alone if you were struggling to find the quality in this work. On the surface it may seem like 'nothing' is happening, but in reality, a thoughtful process has occurred to land at this end product. First performed by David Tudor in

1952, the work was designed to 'compose' the natural sounds around you, to high-light that music is not just notes played by an instrument, it can be silence and the environment. 'What they thought was silence, because they didn't know how to listen, was full of accidental sounds' (Gann, 2010, p. 4), such as the wind, rain and the sounds of the audience themselves as they restlessly absorbed what was being performed. This is not merely a piece of work that is made up of 'nothing'. It has a purpose and quality due to its intentions. So, having an aesthetically pleasing piece of work has perhaps surpassed a simple, beautiful landscape, but now is a description of a piece of work that has resonance and thought. This in turn highlights its quality providing its place in the artistic world. Aesthetics which derived from the ancient societies, as explored in Chapter 3, are the starting point for any type of high-quality work. Therefore, this ancient value of quality has continued and as we concluded is often a factor for something being perceived as entertaining.

The change in what is considered to be high quality is a factor that has happened over time, and this can be said too of the way in which we engage with entertain-ment. In Chapter 3, we explored Brock and Livingston's (2004) experiment that looked into the need for entertainment and how difference of opinion leads to such an array of entertaining options. Over time we have evolved to create many more choices and this in turn has allowed for individual thought to evolve even further, so keeping all types of audience engaged is increasingly becoming challenging. The final word that we are exploring from our definition is *unexpected* and generating this in our work links to our need to keep in mind the experiments that have been run that highlight differences between audience types. If we can reflect upon these, we can more effectively create the unanticipated elements of our work. Brock and Livingston's (2004) exploration tried to scale how passive audiences were when looking for entertainment and watching it. In this experiment, men were more likely to seek out entertainment but observe it passively whereas women were more likely not to constantly seek it out, but when they did, they wished to be cogni-tively engaged. To generate surprise for both would mean a thought-provoking moment that could be just as unexpected if you were 'in the moment' or thinking about what you are going to cook for dinner. This approach would lead to break-ing the modern phenomenon of passive watching of entertainment. Chapters 2 and 3 have shown us that we must try to consider our innate needs and the ever-changing definition of what we are creating, as we, as humans, evolve. One with-out the other would struggle to make sense. Being unexpected in your work will eliminate passive watching and this in turn may lead to further experiments by the likes of Brock and Livingston that consider the deeper layers of modern engage-ment and how we can use these findings within our work.

Why we seek something will naturally carve a definition of the thing we seek. Here we have delved into just four areas of our found definition in relation to the findings in Chapter 3. I urge you to continue in this ilk and find connection between other elements of the definition and our ever-evolving need to entertain and be entertained.

The brain seeks a reward which is ultimately an outcome, not a process

Previously we touched on the brain's reward system initiated by dopamine, and we use this research again to pull on factors explored in Chapter 5. In Chapter 5, I controversially instigated a debate around the importance of process vs. outcome. In this chapter, we examined the importance of each and were rewarded with a depth of examples that showed that both the process and the outcome struggle to exist without the other. We were left concluding that the importance of either one is down to the individual. The one which they value above the other is subjective and can sometimes change throughout their creative lives. But as we noted, those that embark on a process to create an outcome will entertain, those that are process driven with no outcome in mind are less likely to meet the definition of entertainment, unless their intentions change near the end of their process. A chapter that I hope has sparked thought rather than being seen as rules to follow. But from these discussions, I could not help but wonder how the role of process and outcome weaves with the innate chemical reaction we encounter when being engaged.

The process of dopamine being released from the ventral tegmental area, travelling on the mesocortical pathway to pass through the prefrontal cortex where aspects of cognitive engagement occur, is one that is ultimately seeking reward in the form of opioids which increase pleasure and satisfaction in our brains. The element that starts this process is an observed or desired outcome. An outcome. To engage our brains, you could argue that ultimately what we need to observe is an end product, not a process. If we take the example I articulated in Chapter 3 where Wolfram Schultz saw that a rat biting into a desired apple released dopamine, which made it then seek the apple out time and time again, we can see that the apple is the product of the outcome. The rat is not interested in how the apple was made or even how it came to be in their vicinity, all they are interested in is eating it, a reward received for an action (Parkin, 2018). Therefore, we could argue the same of a human interacting with entertainment. They are seeking the reward of enjoyment so are not interested in how the experience they are enjoying was created, unless the observer is experiencing the end product in the context of the process, which adds or facilitates the enjoyment. For example, Cage's 4'33" which makes the process a part of the observed outcome.

Now I am making huge accusations here and it would be presumptuous of me to leave this argument here. Firstly, let us consider the avenue that we looked at in Chapter 5 with regard to a process with no outcome, an artist engaging in an exploration but not seeking to resolve it in a formalised product or outcome. With this approach we could argue that from what we have learnt about brain engagement you are limiting yourself in terms of generating entertainment. If the reward in the form of an outcome is not obvious, that is, there only being evidence of a process, then engagement will not occur. No reward has been presented; therefore, it is hard for the brain to raise its dopamine red flag to seek it time and time again. The recent importance of process by contemporary artists has led to them publicly

stating the significance of it to their audience, which in turn demonstrates their rejection of the idea that artists are compliant to critical theory and ideas (Grant, 2017). This openness about the process being of higher value than any outcome, that may or may not occur, does not seem to fit within our definition of entertainment, and certainly does not spark the neurological journey that we know generates engagement.

Often a process is not observed, so we could argue that an audience seeking engagement would never know what they had missed. An unseen process with no outcome is not going to fall onto the entertainment radar. What we might consider is an artist who has a lengthy process in order to receive detailed feedback and analysis on their practice. Such a process would have some form of observer within it, and although they are likely to be fellow artists and ones that value the importance of an in-depth process, they are still only human, and that built-in reward-seeking factor is still present. A process with elements of intrigue will initiate the possibilities for reward, but the observer will only tolerate it a few times before the prospect is abandoned because the reward has not materialised. Liken it to the rat and his apple again. If a rat smells the apple, he will seek it out, but if he smells it too often without ever getting the reward of tasting the apple, the rat will no longer react to the scent. So, a process that is too inward and materialises to nothing would be extremely hard for an objective observer to engage with and usefully critique. Take for example, Brigham's anecdote of the R&D she led that she felt was too indulgent and ended up being a waste of time (Brigham, 2021). She enjoyed the process, but the outcome never happened which led her to feel it was not a success. But what intrigues me here is the fact *she* enjoyed the process. Did she receive rewards from engaging in the research and development?

In order to be entertained we need to have those that are invested enough to create said entertainment, and if a process is something an artist enjoys then we could say they are receiving the same reward chemical reaction as someone watching an outcome. My research into the dopamine reactions has taught me that there is never a definitive formula of events that will cause enjoyment, it is always an array of different outcomes linked to the specifications of the individual's likes and dislikes. So, my statement at the start of this section that *the brain seeks a reward, which is ultimately an outcome, not a process*, is arguably incorrect with this view in mind. The artist's brain is seeking a reward too and creating and devising work can be exactly that. When I am in the studio choreographing with my dancers, I am engaged and alert because I can see at the end of the day a conclusion of what we have created. However, the most exciting potential reward is knowing more can be made the next day, more ideas can be worked through, and the excitement of a new lift or new sequence being created is something I strive for. My red flag is knowing the potential possibilities, and it is rewarded with mini outcomes throughout the whole process. This idea presents to us how we are in a cycle of continual creation and observation. Some of us create to seek reward, some of us observe to seek reward and one without the other would result in no reward. A process is not overtly a reward like the rat's apple, but it is enough of a reward for artists to continue to create.

Although it is refreshing to look at my research in this light, I cannot help but come back to the idea that ultimately there is always an outcome, whether intentional or not. An artist releasing a statement that explains the importance of process to them is a product in itself. That statement is read, critiqued and discussed. An outcome has occurred regardless of the aim. This brings us back to the idea that an outcome is a reward, which is what we seek to find in order to be engaged and ultimately entertained. With this in mind it is hard to see an angle in which entertainment is not linked to an outcome, and that is hard to envisage enjoying in any respect other than as a reward that instigates a fulfilling feeling. Each finding links to the next and in Chapter 5, I suggest a formula that equates entertainment: *Process + outcome = entertainment*. With the finding of Chapter 3, I feel an amendment can be made: *Process + outcome*, leading to *outcome + reward = entertainment*. The importance of all factors is evident here and although it is just a theory, we can see how one realises in the other. What I have learnt as an artist is not to disregard any avenue or way into making work, not to disregard any option that may enhance your work and not to think you believe in one approach when another may be just as exciting. The same applies here, process and outcome have value beyond what we have time to explore here, and the fact we seek the result of a process through chemical reward centres shows me that every element links to the next. Yes, reward is ultimately an outcome, but without a process we have no outcome, and so continues the beautiful cycle of creation and appreciation.

The three qualities of aesthetics and their relevance to the 'modern brain'

In Chapter 4, I instigated a debate around the repercussions of the modern brain, and how the digital era has potentially changed how audiences interact. The phenomenon of the internet and the social media takeover that followed has sped up our way of life and seen a shift from just traditional forms of entertainment to an array from which we can choose to engage with. Although this change has happened, the basic principles of why something is engaging, or aesthetic, still applies. The three qualities of Aesthetics help us determine if a piece of work is a success and are the bedrock of critique being just as relevant to digital era work as they are to older work (Baugh et al., 2006). These descriptors not only are useful for analysing work, but can also be used to help generate work, and in this respect, helpful in creating work that will engage a modern brain. The three qualities of Aesthetics are the literal qualities of the work, the design qualities, and the expressive qualities. Sometimes described as the three aesthetic theories with the labels imitationalism, formalism and emotionalism (Zupanc, 1988), these factors can be used to see their relevance in relation to what we have learnt about the make-up of the modern brain.

Let us start with imitationalism, the realistic qualities of a work. Something with truth and recognisable qualities has been recognised as an identifying factor of entertaining work in Chapter 2, and in Chapter 3, I looked at some of our resident

artists' work in relation to these Aesthetic categories, discovering yet again the importance of having relatable material in one's work. In relation to the modern brain, the literal aspect of a work is more important than ever. Current entertainment pulls on real life more and more, and with the increase in Reality TV what is shown is no longer just a representation but a truth, all be it a slightly elaborated truth at times. It has been praised for giving a platform to the ordinary person and raising awareness of social issues, but on the flip side is criticised for its insensitivity and the concern that it harms the participants involved (Deller, 2019). This kind of entertainment would seem to have its pros and cons, but it is popular and many of us thoroughly enjoy it. It is a constant in our current society, so subsequently, the modern brain is used to its realism and engages with other forms of entertainment that have this feel.

In Aesthetics, the quality identified as realistic in a piece of work is often not completely literal, take for example, my own work *Icarus*. I implemented realism via recognisable characteristics, but they were not exact replications. They were interpretations open to subjectivity, they had moments of realism interspersed with choreography. Because a modern brain is used to exact reality, we are perhaps at a place where they will engage better with replicas. A literal translation is now at our fingertips, so work that is within the world of performing arts may need to start to consider this approach to engage on a larger scale. Although this may feel like a limitation as interpretation becomes less of a factor, it does open up more possibilities with respect to exact truth. Connection with your work could be on a higher level as the structure of reality TV 'often leads the audience to form a strong emotional connection with them (the character) especially when the feelings shown are considered to be "real", or the person showing their "true" self' (Deller, 2019, p. 40). An investment from the modern-brained audience could occur because they have become attached to the people within the work. Such a venture could see an increase in the intrigue of your work and contribute to a rise in reputation, leading to further funding and more opportunities to generate more work. Having realism in your work is considered to be a pillar for aesthetic quality and engagement, so as we progress and evolve in this digital era, the need to make it more real than ever is upon us, and it is our job to work out how best to put this into action. How to keep your art form and artistry whilst bending to the needs of the modern brain.

This re-invention can be set in motion through the design element of a piece of work. The aesthetic theory of formalism is our next quality on which we can reflect with regard to the modern brain. Referring back to Zupanc's (1988) descriptions of the three aesthetic qualities, we can see that the design of a piece of work is referring to its make-up. How well it is structured, how well it manages to flow from one idea to the next and how effective the overall look of the work is. The modern brain is used to a certain aesthetic with regard to design due to the digital interfaces we now interact with, so if we are intending to create a piece of work that can be critically declared aesthetic and engage a modern brain, then perhaps looking at these interfaces to inform design is the key.

As our smart phones are the most consistently used digital interface, it is worth reflecting on the design of these and narrowing down the analysis by looking at the two main contributors: the interfaces designed by Apple and the interfaces know as Android. Android phones always feel like they are three steps behind the iPhones, and in the early stages they were, but they are now starting to develop their own identity. Both stem from the era of touch screen and the subtle interactions that can be used with this interface. The team working at Apple first saw the potential in this appealing interaction of the tactile approach. Having previously placed handles on their computers to encourage touching, the designers saw the touch screen technology as a fantastic way to eliminate the mouse and keyboard and create a tactile experience that was intimate (Kahney, 2013). In time this became the only way in which consumers wanted to interact and the Android phones followed in their footsteps.

Apple interfaces are rounded, smooth and intuitive. Squeeze your fingers together to make something smaller, pull your fingers apart to make it larger, swipe to the side to vanish. Subtle movements that have become so built-in, you are astounded when an interface does not react in this way. But the tactile nature of an Apple device does not stop there, they are smooth to hold, the iMacs look like pieces of art in themselves. Designed to make you feel comfortable with no threatening abrupt edges and no abrasive colours. The same can be said for the visuals. Subtle and comforting with rounded corners and colours that are intuitive to whatever light you are in. This kind of interface is one that so many of us feel comfortable with and this is due to its intuitive nature. As previously discussed, we connect with work that has recognisable qualities, and this is why the design of Apple is so effective. Now, I am not suggesting we should start generating work that looks like an Apple product, this would be far from unpredictable – a factor we know is key to entertaining. However, we can consider how to use the essence that these designs all have. This is the fast, slick-paced approach, which is most importantly, intuitive. Creating a piece of live performance that responds in a way you expect, with recognisable design qualities will help engage the audience and draw them to a place of comfort, allowing you to then pull the rug from under their feet and create the unexpected. This comfort led disruption will undoubtedly engage and entertain.

Androids are considered to be the cheaper alternative to Apple products, so you can perhaps expect a less sleek interface, but the likes of Samsung and Sony are now finding their own voice and the interaction that we can build upon is different to the experience of Apple users. Still centred around tactile navigation, the android approach is less about uniformity in the form of calmness but about individuality. Users can edit the look and style of their phone with far more ease than with Apple. There is also more scope with regard to palette, choosing images and colours that intrigue you and making it your own unique piece of technology (Vogelstein, 2015). This customisation is something you could use within your own design of your work. Perhaps there is a community element to your production and the participants have contributed to the set with drawings or paintings. Displaying these as part of your design helps engage the modern day audience as

there is evidence of personalisation, neatly wrapped up in a recognisable design that pulls on the more overt interfaces used in technology. The process of creating a visual experience is one achieved in three steps: thought, design and interaction (Coleman, 2017). By identifying the interfaces the current brain is used to, then designing your work to reflect these, will lead to an audience feeling they have a sense of interaction generating the ultimate well-designed visual experience.

All of the above is ultimately there to try and evoke a response, and often the desired response is an emotive one. Emotionalism is the last of the three Aesthetic qualities and perhaps the hardest challenge with respect to the modern brain. Often thought of as desensitised due to the over-saturation of representation of emotive scenarios, the modern audience is one that needs realism but may not always react in a realistic manner. Large Hollywood productions and high budget TV series often have urban values at the heart of the work, which characteristically is violent and a lack of subtlety in the representation is 'causing art, artists and audiences alike to be desensitised, rendered uncritical and vulgarised' (Hood, 2005, p. 92). Therefore, generating connection to lead to an emotive response is the final hurdle. A piece of work is considered to be aesthetically pleasing if it evokes an inner feeling, be it contentment, sadness or euphoria. This reaction must come from a stimulus and this is where we can begin to play around with ideas that will hopefully result in a modern audience member having an emotional experience. 'A stimulus provokes an emotional reaction, unconsciously attracting attention at first. We are attracted to an idea before we understand it intellectually' (Alrtz et al., 2011, p. 129), so finding a stimulus that captivates the modern audience is our answer. It is at this point that we perhaps disregard the digitalisation of society and look on other aspects that evoke emotion. More than ever, we are seeing the effects our actions are having on the natural world. Environmental awareness is high on everyone's agenda, and for many, the realisation of the inevitable downward spiral is an emotive topic. Weaving this stimulus into your work will certainly evoke a reaction from a modern audience. Equally, displaying the repercussions of mental health issues will ring true to many, well-being is paramount but there are still so many who are suffering in vain. These stimuli are not what you would immediately think to use if trying to evoke a modern audience, but they are removed from the pre-conceived idea of a digital era individual, therefore will have more resonance and 'clout' if used effectively.

The three qualities of Aesthetics have shown us that the modern brain is as versatile as the brains in Aristotle's time, we just have to reflect upon the current and use it to our advantage. Making work that is designed well, emotive and real will always be a clear structure from which to enhance and build on, even when audiences keep evolving. The modern brain and Aesthetics come from polar opposite chapters in this book. They explore such different aspects of the world of Entertainment, but this marriage of ideas shows you how important it is to relate everything you read and see to each other. A well-informed artist is one prepped and ready for success, a blinkered one may be talented but will fall at a hurdle that requires dissection and debate.

How we create has changed due to the artists' modern brain

Being prepared for all eventualities allows for variation in your practice and generating entertainment puts you into a competitive field. Therefore, understanding that the way in which we create work is ever-evolving will keep you ahead of the game. As we discussed in Chapter 4, we often assign the label of 'modern brain' to the younger generations, but in actual fact we are all being affected by the technological changes and subsequently are all evolving to have the mind-set of a 'modern brain'. We became aware of how artists are using their new mentality to create work in different ways due to their own experiences of the digital era and their target audience. The idea that the process of creation is changing is one that links to Chapter 5, where in-depth discussion on the different types of processes was explored. At this stage, I want to delve into how a process can be informed by aspects of our modern lives to generate new and innovative work.

In Chapter 4, we looked in depth at the effects of social media on the modern brain. But how can you use social media within your process? We explored how artists are using social media within their work, but what I am expanding this to here is how to use it purely in the process of your work, with no outward-facing intention of generating an outcome. There are two approaches to this challenge: replicate nuances of social media in your process and actually use the apps as part of your research. If we were to look at replicating the characteristics of social media, some key words and phrases that describe the interfaces could be:

- Interactive
- Individual
- The 'like' society

From each of these, we can design a process that would help the modern artist create more effectively and also generate outcomes that are akin to the outcomes we see daily on social media. As a choreographer I will provide choreographic examples, but do take the time to see how you could work these ideas into your own genre.

Creating an interactive process is potentially the easiest approach as interaction is key to any research and development phase. Social networks have provided users with a certain amount of control (Hinton and Hjorth, 2013) and this control can be replicated in a process. A process that I would use to embrace this idea would be one led by myself with interaction from my dancers. I would initially teach them a pre-made phrase that would then be our foundation. The next stage would be in pairs, dancer A would execute the phrase whilst the dancer B would manipulate it with in-person interaction, and then verbal interaction. The in-person approach would have the instruction to 'gain control of the movement' and dancer B would physically interact with A and gain control by moving them to their desired specification. Dancer A is to try and execute the original phrase as authentically as

possible but succumb to the interactions when they occur. This will result in a new phrase most likely labelled as a duet, but it has provided dancer B with that element of control that they can experience on social media. The second approach would be to run the task again, but this time dancer B can only use their words to gain control. Instructions such as 'stop', 'rewind', 'use a higher level', would instigate a manipulation of the original phrase whilst allowing dancer B to have full control of the outcome. Yet again the interaction has occurred, and a new phrase has been generated by an individual grasping control.

This individuality could be heightened further in our second approach to using the nuances of social media in a process. Taking the same phrase taught for Task 1, the dancers would be asked to re-design it to their own specifications. They would be required to list five things that they find appealing and attractive on their social media profile, and five things that describe them as an individual. Such an approach is a replica of the 'about me' sections so often found on our social media profiles, and the layout with which we chose our wall and interactions to be seen. Profiles are the way in which we identify ourselves to the rest of the world (Hinton and Hjorth, 2013), so this task will provide individuality but within their own perceived parameters. The dancers would take these 10 descriptors and apply them to the foundation phrase. If for example, I had chosen the word 'energetic' to describe myself I would apply this to the phrase by making some elements more dynamic and elevated, and if I had seen my profile was 'lineal', I would make a few select movements in the phrase travel only horizontally in the space. Such manipulation could be done on every movement resulting in a completely different phrase that would be unrecognisable from one dancer to the next. The individuality would shine through and be rewarding as the dancers recognise themselves in the work.

This gratifying approach replicates the same feeling we receive when something we have posted gains a 'like' or a comment. My final example of a process influenced by social media is one that replicates the sensation of your post being acknowledged, both positively and negatively. Taking the same foundation phrase, again the dancers would be asked to perform it one at a time. As they dance, the other dancers have the task of either 'liking' it or 'disliking' it. To 'like' the action the dancers will shout encouragement and boost morale, to dislike they will boo, sit in silence or start to talk and ignore the dancing individual. The performer will not know which they have been told to do and must react honestly through their movements. What will occur here is a change in quality in the movement. When encouraged you will see it become more vibrant and probably faster paced, when that encouragement has gone it will become a different character where pace is slower and the performer dancing more inwardly. Both outcomes are of intrigue to a choreographer as they provide character and subtleties influenced by the dancer's ability to ignore judgement, or to be overcome by it.

All of these tasks are influenced by social media in an abstract way, so for our next example, we will look at how we can use social media itself in a process. Initially it is a great tool for receiving feedback which is paramount to any process. You can post videos of your ideas and ask for users' thoughts and observations. On Instagram you

can generate polls that are easy for users to click on and cast a vote. As we explored in Chapter 4, such interactions could not only help your process progress but also build potential audiences. But what if we were to take this to the next level and not use it to seek reaction from others, but to use the users' posts to generate work? A task that could be used would require each dancer to have a device on which they could open a social media thread. One dancer is to pick the first three phrases that appear after scrolling for three swipes. One dancer is to pick one post they can see on Facebook and list the first three responses to the post, that is, 'love', 'hug', 'angry'. The final dancer is to scroll for three swipes and use the first three images they see. Each dancer has their ammunition, and they will take these and generate a phrase. What we have created here is a chance method, inspired by the work of Merce Cunningham, that directly uses social media.

Bringing social media into your process should be considered with caution due to its vastness and the disregard some have for it. But these approaches will generate some new innovative work that is then at your liberty to pull apart or ignore. Such a process utilises the modern brain of your co-creators and yourself. Another approach would be to explore employing the multi-tasking abilities we now have, and to captivate our attention which some think is as short as a goldfish's having been affected by years of fast-paced interactions. In Chapter 4, we discovered that this is a misconception on the whole and that actually what we have become is better at multi-tasking. So how can you use this within your process?

You can have two approaches to this influence. Designing a process that suits those that are now more skilled at multi-tasking, or to create a process that will result in work that suits the needs of the audience who are used to changing focus more frequently. Let us first dissect the idea of a process that is heavily layered with options from which to jump to and from. Most processes have many tasks within them but using the ability to multi-task could result in even more tasks being used. Try and avoid one focus for a whole day, swap and change between ideas and you will see more innovation emerge from your cast and company. If for example, I was doing an improvisational task for an hour, I would then move swiftly on to a task that required some thought and articulation like one of the tasks mentioned previously. Mixing up the style of the task too will enable your company to keep their focus alert and attentive. But then the sort of task you design with a multi-tasking audience in mind is going to be a different approach. The task needs to generate variation and be captivating. If I was to take this idea in its simplest form and present a task that just uses movement you will begin to see how this approach can be advantageous.

Firstly, you need to decide how many layers you want the audience to interact with in this one section. You then can begin to piece together some tasks with the desired outcome. I have decided to have three iterations of a change of focus and have made three tasks around one concept to utilise this. My concept is the flow of water, so Task 1 enables me to generate a simple phrase that replicates the calm flow of water on just one dancer. Task 2 needs to produce a change of focus but still have the same concept, so the task is to generate a fast pace of water with three dancers. Task 3 is to shift the speed again and is designed to generate movement

that shows a flow of water being stopped and billowing and engulfing out of its natural journey. For this section seven dancers will be used. Each motif generated will then be woven together going from a calm flow to fast, to stunted. The key at this stage is not to dwell too long on any element, make it snappy and succinct. What the audience will witness is a choreographed moment that goes from slow paced movements into more bodies that react together but in a more dynamic and faster-paced way, leading to a chaotic mass of dancers pushing and pulling the space. The audience are being taken from one extreme to another, keeping their attention spans alert. Now, this described material would not stand well on its own, and would need layering of music, set and plot to really captivate, but what this example shows is how you can create fast-paced work by simply employing more tasks that derive from the same starting point.

The pace of your process and work is important when considering a modern audience, but as we explored in Chapter 4, in recent years, our lives have been hugely affected by the unforeseen, a worldwide pandemic, and if we are considering how our processes have adjusted due to modern society, we must acknowledge this change too. This mainly comes in the form of how to treat those working for you. At any stage in a process it is 'important to take into consideration some of the practical and economic matters which affect any company' (Mermikides and Smart, 2010, p. 168) and the way in which we now feel comfortable to interact has dramatically changed. These changes are ones instigated by fear and ones instigated by the new norm. Because for so long we had to work in isolation, we have realised there are many ways in which this can be done effectively and often these result in a more economical budget. If you are working with collaborators in a process, you may find it common practice to link them in via a Zoom call rather than bringing them in in-person. Not always ideal as in-person interaction allows for fuller conversations, but useful for keeping to a schedule and allowing independent creation 'out of each other's hair'. This same sort of distance may be required from those you wish to work in-person with. Interacting within large numbers has become scary and although I know we will change and soon forget these fears, a residue will remain. We will never be as adept at large interactions, so making your place of work a COVID-safe environment will boost the more apprehensive of us. Allowing people space if they feel overwhelmed and warning them if the tasks expected will involve larger numbers of participants will prepare them and provide a sense of understanding and acceptance of their needs. Understood and looked-after company members will ultimately provide you with more innovative work.

A process that is considerate of the modern brain of both artists and collaborators is one we already can see happening within our industry. As we learnt in Chapter 5, process is key to a successful outcome and a process that is attentive to the ever-changing aspects of our world is one that will flourish and succeed. Who knows what will emerge after the digital era, but as artists we will be the first to embrace and use it. We are the innovators, we are the questioners and we are the creators, so being prepared for any alteration will keep the world of entertainment as fruitful as ever.

Tasks to further your exploration

The connections I have explored in this concluding chapter are just the start of a deeper exploration. Throughout this book I have suggested tasks for you to enhance your learning and understanding, I now have a range of tasks for you to delve into in a time and place that suits you. These tasks are designed to enable you to discover more connections and ultimately push your thoughts and practice. They are not designed to make you agree with my opinions, or designed to make you change your own, they are there as stepping stones to a deeper and more informed approach to your work.

First, I wish you to consider more associations between the main subjects of this book as I have done at the start of this chapter. This task is best done whilst the book is fresh in your mind, so after your most recent reading is ideal.

TASK 1

Put your pen to paper:

- For each chapter write down two words that are key or sum up the feeling/debate of the chapter.
- Do any chapters share words or phrases? If so how do the main subjects then link?
- Can you combine all the words to make a definition of what is entertainment?

This task will help you look at this book as a whole, and such reflection can change over time, therefore consider doing this task now and then in the future when you have developed your practice further and see how your interpretations have changed.

TASK 2

1 What is entertainment to you? Can you define it?
2 Is there an overriding definition within your industry?
3 Do you aspire to entertain through your work? – If no, why not? | If yes, is this your key aim?
4 What are key features that you consider make work entertaining? Are these used within your practice? Please provide examples if possible from your work.

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5   How do you think we can keep the modern brain engaged through work? (*Modern brain meaning ones that are used to digital interfaces, and expect things to happen instantly*)
6   Do you feel there is a taboo around creating work purely to entertain?
7   Does work have to be entertaining, is this the sole purpose of creation? Is it about the process or the outcome? Do you personally value process above outcome, or outcome above process?

Throughout this book I have used the thoughts of our resident artists. As an initial task when embarking on our working relationship I sent each of them a list of questions that I asked them to honestly and openly answer. For your next task I would like **you** to answer these questions.

As you are at the end of this book, you may find some of these questions easier to answer than you would have before reading, but what it is allowing you to do is reflect personally on your opinions, not those of others. But others' views are of great value as they enhance and question our own. So, the next stage of this task is to gather a group of artists that you perhaps work with, or you wish to work with, and ask them to answer the questions above. Discuss your answers as a group and enjoy the debate that will ultimately follow.

The next task is designed for a group discussion too, but this time you need to have a mixture of both artists that create and people that appreciate the performing arts and actively watch it, but are not generating work. This will provide balance and intrigue to the answers.

TASK 3

Gather your group in a circle, in a calm environment that all parties feel comfortable in. Once settled, outline the questions below and instruct the group to discuss:

•   What is engaging when you watch a live performance?
•   How often do you consider you seek out entertainment?
•   What is the difference for you between the word entertainment and engagement?

Understanding the differences and similarities between an artist's wants and an audience's needs is a key factor when considering entertainment. This will help you see a rounded picture and not only provide you with ammunition to generate entertaining work, but also give deeper acknowledgement to the importance of

individual opinion. This individuality is what will ultimately help you create new and innovative work, and this next task is one where I want you to start using your art form.

In Chapter 2, we generated a definition of Entertainment in the performing arts from what our resident artists articulated and factors that were recognisable as successful in popular work:

> *Entertainment is an all-immersive shared experience created by high quality collaborations, pushing an audience from recognisable truths to the unexpected in a well-structured display of creativity.*

We then discussed this sentence at the start of this chapter and used it as a tool to link to the factors we know about human nature that make us seek and engage with entertainment. Using these thoughts and the definition as a starting point carry out the task below in your art form to generate a small sample work.

TASK 4

1   Pick a truth that can easily be shown through your art form (*e.g. a character, a recognisable image, a display of physical emotion*).
2   With this truth generate a small phrase, section, image.
3   Take this element and produce the polar opposite (*e.g. a sad character becomes ecstatic, an image of a post box sets on fire, etc*.).
4   Link one to the next – try different orders, different variations, see what structure creates the most effective unexpected moment.
5   Ask a fellow artist who works in a different genre to take the same truth and opposite and interpret in their material.
6   As a duo, combine the two sections, images, motifs to create a collaborative sample work. Consider the structure and the flow of the work.

This task should be done relatively quickly and with as little analysis as possible. Using your gut reactions to help mould the work will provide a truthful outcome. Once the above has been completed you can then take the time to pull it apart, tweak it, add to it, enhance an element of it. Working in a small sample way helps build ideas that you can then use on a larger scale. This task will help you envisage possibilities and introduce you to working collaboratively if this is not something you have explored to date.

Task 5 is one to be done throughout your creative life. Remembering why you generate entertainment and why you are excited by it, is often something we forget. We can get lost in the lows of creativity and it can be hard to pull oneself from

the depths. This task below is designed to remind you why you do what you do, and why others need to engage with the fruits of your labours.

TASK 5

Put your pen to paper and answer as succinctly as possible:

- Why do you create?
- Why do you critique yourself?
- Why are your audience wanting more?
- Who inspires you? Why?
- List your three highest successes.
- List your three failures.
- List what you learnt from both your successes and your failures.
- Turn the paper over, do not re-read your answers. Take a deep breath and continue to create.

This task may not work for everyone, but it is one I have found useful in keeping students on track, and one I have used within my own practice to remind myself of all the aspects of my creative journey to date. Being able to understand yourself is just as important as understanding why we entertain and how we fit into this world of entertainment.

These tasks and those spread throughout this book are there to be picked up and dropped whenever you wish. Some may resonate with you, some may grate on you, but they are there to keep you active and engaging. As we have learnt in this book, keeping your audience entertained involves variation of intention and interaction, and this is precisely why I have embedded these tasks throughout. It stopped you reading, it changed the scene and it provided you with the opportunity to implement individual thought. Although a book is not a piece of performing arts entertainment, it is a work that is designed to engage, and I hope you found yourself more actively engrossed because these tasks were at hand.

The final task that I wish you now to complete is the one you did at the very start of this book in Chapter 1. Not highlighted as a formal task I asked you to:

> *Reflect upon what you consider entertainment to be. Write it down and keep it safe for we will return to this sentence at the end of our journey.*

So here we are, returning to it. Have you it to hand? If so, read it and see if your opinion has changed. Often change is subtle and you may find your thoughts have enhanced rather than completely transformed. But I am hopeful it will show you the influence the thoughts and experiences this book has had on you.

Entertainment in the performing arts

As I come to the close of this book I feel a sense of pride and excitement by the world in which I work. I set out to try and understand what Entertainment is for those of us who create and watch visual performances and have found such a breadth of thought and debate that I am intrigued to see where this discussion travels next. This book has been designed to make you, the reader, consider the question 'what do you think is entertainment?' Whether you are a creator reading it, or an observer, everyone has their own opinions on what equates to entertainment. By presenting a few starting points, and a range of opinions, you will be able to start answering these questions for yourself and contribute to the ongoing debate. This discussion has been through the viewpoint of Visual Performing Arts and has concentrated on artists and case studies that are mainly small scale, rather than mainstream. This has allowed for a zoned approach to the question. Small-scale work often has a 'risk-taking' approach as they do not have to meet main-stream demands, therefore the idea of questioning their own work and the meaning of entertainment has allowed for a deeper answer. My own small-scale practical research has led me to conclude that any visual work created with an audience in mind will generate entertainment in some way, whether this was the intention or not. But I have often been left wondering what entertainment is. What are the key components that result in entertainment, and why do we need to be entertained?

All the chapters in this book have been informed by discussions I have had with our resident artists to whom I am forever grateful for contributing to this publication. Our resident artists cover the main genres of visual performing arts: Dance, Theatre, small-scale film and outdoor productions. Mainstream TV, film and social media have not been accounted for in this publication, as this makes the proposed discussion too wide. Although I have questioned some of these artists' thoughts and scrutinised their work, I have the highest respect for all that they do and all that they contribute to our world. Their input into this book has pushed the question further not only in terms of what entertainment is to them, but also the fact that entertaining is sometimes considered beneath those trying to generate meaningful work. Making us consider if work is always created to entertain, or if entertainment is purely a side product of a process.

Although you, the reader, are one of many studying these art forms highlighted in this publication, so value the work being produced, we are in a society that is over-saturated with entertainment. In every corner we can find new ways to be entertained, to the extent that many consider our attention spans to have short-ened. This book has discussed not only how to keep our over-stimulated brains engaged but also how live performance is a potential antidote to this as it is the only medium which can be transient. Your challenge now is to keep this theory alive. By following the tasks throughout this book and the final tasks in this chapter, I have placed you in a strong position to delve deeper and create innovatively. None of that which I have mused should be taken as law but should be considered and analysed to allow for further thought and development.

By questioning what Entertainment is, I hope I have brought a deeper understanding to the world with respect to the arts, and why they are of such great value. This question of definition is rarely asked, therefore by bringing it to the table, the hope is to legitimise the creation of entertainment by highlighting the need for it. Entertainment is what you make of it. It is the result of the ingredients *you* decide are important enough to be shared and questioned. So now it is over to you. Close this book and entertain.

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