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Casey at the Bat: A hybrid genre of two worlds

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Abstract

School art, of which performing art is one form, is a hybrid genre. It exists between educational and artistic institutions. This paper examines ways in which theatrical forms are transformed or created as they enter the embrace of the school institution. Through an in-depth analysis of a one-man dramatization entitled, "Casey at the Bat," the authors investigate content, performance style, and values as they are manifested in the school performance. This examination enhances understanding of what children are learning on these occasions and how this learning is orchestrated. The authors discuss the relationship between the school and art worlds, and the role and value of this hybrid genre of the art form.
Casey at the Bat:  
A hybrid genre of two worlds

Oh! somewhere in this favored land the sun is shining bright,
The band is playing somewhere, and somewhere hearts are light; And somewhere men are laughing, and somewhere children shout,
But there is no joy in Mudville--mighty Casey has struck out.

Ernest Lawrence Thayer [1863-1940]

The verse quoted above is the final verse from the poem "Casey at the Bat," a well known American poem about baseball. In this paper, we discuss a dramatic school performance developed around this poem, as an exemplar of one "school art" genre, exploring how such performances serve as school learning experiences.

School art, of which performing art is one form, is a hybrid genre. It exists in a space between school and theater. The contrasts between educational and artistic contents emerge in their divergent purposes, goals, and interests, their styles and structures, and the content and values with which they are imbued. Schooling is a continuous, long term process, whereas an art performance is a one-time event. Educational contents focus on verbal and mathematical literacy, whereas theater utilizes diverse modes of representation. Educational forms often draw on fragmented, short time slots for teaching, whereas theater is typically developed around a sustained, dramatic form. The tension between the worlds of school and theater is also reflected in the behemian image of the artist, the carrier of that experiential message, versus the managerial and didactic image of the teacher. The artist is typically one member of a larger ensemble, with whom s/he works closely, whereas the teacher, although part of a network, spends most of the working day in an isolated individual classroom.
This study examines the ways theatrical forms are transformed or created as they enter the embrace of the school institution. We explore the structures for school performance, the audiences involved in it, and their respective roles. We investigate contents and "performing" styles, and the values they manifest. This examination helps us understand what children are learning on occasions such as these, and how this learning is orchestrated. Through these lenses, we demonstrate the ways that "school art performance" emerges as a hybrid genre.

Arts and schools: margins and centers

The role of the arts in the public schools is simultaneously marginal and central to the ways schools establish their presence as institutions. Art disciplines are peripheral to the core, academic curriculum. Yet, the major moments at which the entire school comes together as a whole (including such instances as holiday programs, presentations of "other cultures", sports or for recognition of academic honors, and assemblies on drug awareness), often feature performances of the arts.

There are a number of forms that schoolwide performances take. Many are produced by school members. These include plays, skits, choral, band performances and talent shows. Schools also come together to host the performance of "visiting" artists from outside the school community.

These school-wide performances, whether conducted by insiders or outsiders, represent a special form of school activity. They are unique to school settings in the particular modes of presentation they use--their purpose, conduct, and structure. They are stages on which to see the values of schooling enacted, moments where meanings are invented and reinforced. Through an examination of these events we can learn about the meaning schools ascribe to themselves as agents of social organization, the vehicles for the interaction and transmission of these meanings, the roles they allot to their members--administrators, teachers, and students--and the role and significance of the arts as an aspect of school life.

The Art in Education Project

Methodology

The work we report on here was part of a three year project in which we investigated explicit and implicit values in school arts curricula (music, visual arts, dance and drama) and the roles the arts fulfill in educational settings. The project encompassed three arts programs in seven elementary schools (K-5) in two mid-western towns. Data sources for the project included: (1) 300 hours of nonparticipant observations of arts instruction, (2) 110 hours of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with arts specialists and principals, and (3) materials such as
textbooks, resource books, lesson plans, program notes, etc. In addition, we observed after-school music clubs, in- and out-of-school performances, inservice and meetings of program arts specialists across disciplines. The school in which the performance took place, housed about 600 students, including one third of minority students. The school had an arts program consisting of dance/ drama, music and visual arts instruction by arts specialists.

Liora Bresler, with a background in music performance and musicology, directed the study. Nancy Hertzog, a former dancer with a background in education for the gifted, observed dance and drama instruction in two elementary schools and attended schoolwide performances. Judy Davidson Wasser, with a background in literacy and qualitative research, provided, in the analysis of data, lenses from discourse analysis and the ethnography of performance.

The particular event we refer to was a performance by a young actor who had made a business of presenting a one-man show to schools. The local arts center sponsored his work as one of their attempts to bring original artistic performances to the children in this small Mid-western town and its surrounding hamlets.

The actual performance, a 50 minute piece of several parts, was sandwiched between the entrance and exit of the classes (grades K-5), and the delivery from and to the principal. The actor, Sam Collins, developed his performance around the poem, "Casey at the Bat," including another poem performance and some drama instruction for students. The dramatic rendition was divided into two major parts: 1) the performance, and 2) the instruction. Both parts, but particularly the performance section, contained numerous comments by the actor. These were primarily moral messages, evaluations of the material the children had heard, but some were also humorous matter. They formed a sort of connective tissue, binding the small segments together, and serving as transitions that furthered the movement of the overall show.

The interpretation of this section of fieldwork observations, as with the corpus, has been an extended, reiterative process. In re-reading and discussing these observations, we were stimulated and challenged by the differences in our outlooks. Bresler, an Israeli, stood outside the assumptions that Davidson and Hertzog, American citizens, brought to the poem "Casey at the Bat" and the meaning of baseball in American society. Bresler's probing forced the other two members of the group to articulate given assumptions, 'to make the strange familiar' (for her), and 'the familiar strange' (for them).

In the following section we provide the reader with Hertzog's field notes, parsed in segments that reflect our view of the major divisions of the event. In this
way we seek to give a sense of the "real" performance as it was experienced through the eyes of the fieldworker and to provide the critical reader with adequate means for evaluating our interpretations.

Casey at the Bat

I. Prelude

1:30: The actor has set up his stage on the floor of the gymnasium rather than the stage. Green indoor carpet indicates a baseball diamond, and there is a small screen behind the "diamond" and a bench on the side to represent the dugout. White squares represented the bases. Sam Collins, the sole performer, is dressed in a baseball uniform. As I enter the gymnasium, the principal and the actor are talking together. Waiting for my turn to talk to the principal, I overhear their conversation about having a mutual friend from a youth music camp. The principal expresses appreciation for the work Sam does, and discusses where to seat the children. The actor wants to make sure they are not seated too close because he needs room to move. Sam does a few warm-up exercises and then takes his place behind the screen as the children begin to enter the gym. He puts a warm-up jacket on before coming back out from behind the screen.

1:40. The children enter from both doors of the gymnasium in absolute silence. As the children file in to take their seats on the floor, the actor comes out briefly to talk to some of the children. The janitor stands by the south door as the children enter, and the principal paces back and forth with his hands behind his back, holding a piece of paper with the actor's name. I sit just inside the door as the students enter. No children talk, either as they enter or as they wait for the rest of the children to enter. The teachers take their places on chairs at the end of the row where their classes are seated. As more and more children began to fill the gymnasium, Sam goes to stand behind the screen.

1:50 PM: The principal begins ("Boys, girls, & teachers..."). He reminds the children that they are to be a good audience. They are to be quiet, clap when it's appropriate and otherwise keep their hands to themselves. He introduces the actor as a performer from the local arts center. Everybody claps when Sam's name is announced.

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School members bring multiple expectations to their roles as participants in arts events, and these expectations reflect their beliefs about art their notions of performance. In this instance, the core school staff, teachers, administrators, and janitor, focus most of their attention on behavioral issues--quiet and proper deportment as appropriate characteristics of the audience. The pattern of entering by
class, supervised by a classroom teacher, who, in turn, is supervised by the principal, is highly structured.

Once the children are seated, the principal performs what we have come to see through our three year study, as the ritual act of "delivering" the group to the artist. It is a ritual performed on a day-to-day basis between art specialists and classroom teacher and at schoolwide events between artists and principal. Here, at a school wide arts events, the principal officially greets the audience, warns about appropriate behavior, and introduces the artist. The commentary on behavior at the moment of the "delivery" and the "return" of the classroom is an important gesture in this ritual act. In most cases in day-to-day interactions that occurs when delivering and returning the children, this commentary stands as the primary content interaction between the classroom teacher and the arts specialist.

II. The performance

1:53. Sam takes the floor and tells the children that so far their audience behavior has been fantastic, and that the most important thing is that they "all enjoy this American Classic." "On with the show," he calls out and runs excitedly behind his screen, exaggerating his run by lifting his legs high into the air. The children giggle at his exaggerated movements.

Sam turns on his tape recorder. It's a song, often sung before baseball games and one that is familiar in the oral tradition: "Take me out to the ball game." The sound system quality is rather poor, the singing uninflected, the intonation flat, lacking in dynamics and agogics Sam stands behind the screen making his arms stick out from behind it. The children laugh at this as he makes several funny motions from behind the screen with only his arms exposed and begins to sing, "I am a loyal baseball fan" making motions to his song. He puts on an umpire's vest and begins, "I am a lonely umpire," and "I call them like I see," draping the flag over the screen and shouting, "Play Ball!"

There is more music as he pantomimes: losing his bat; the ball sticking to his hand; his hand on his crotch; wigglng his hips (the audience laughs heartily); pushing his cap over his eyes (more laughs). Then he pantomimes falling on the ground, but the children can't see him because they are sitting flat on the floor. Seeking a better view, they want to sit on their knees, while the teachers make frantic motions to them to sit on their bottoms.

Sam pantomimes using three bats to swing. This action carries him all the way around, and then he hits his bottom with the three heavy bats. A little girl near me said, "He's hit himself on the back". The teacher next to us "shushes" her.
I am sitting in the far corner of the gym. I had been sitting with the children in the middle, until I realized I might be too tall for some of the children to see over me. Then I moved to sit in the far corner so as to be as unobtrusive as possible.

The music ends, Sam bows, the audience claps, and he begins to recite and act out the words to "Casey at the Bat." As he is saying the words, I can see the children grow restless. One child raises his hand, trying to get the teacher's attention. Children begin to look around more at the others in the audience. The teachers, on the other hand, have strongly directed their attention to the actor in lieu of the children, their charges. The teachers are smiling throughout the three minute poem recitation. [It seems that the children find it very difficult to understand the words to the poem].

2:00 PM: The actor says "LOSING" and throws down his glove. He says "WINNING" and shouts, "YES" with a jump in the air. Then: WINNING again (makes high five signs), LOSING (walks slowly away with his head down). The children seem to love his portrayals of winning and losing, and laugh at each one. Sam talks about winning and losing, saying that all of us face events like this every day. When we walk away from the event we know if we either did our best or not, and if we didn't, we feel terrible, like Casey did that day in Mudville. Sam gives the children information about the poem, written in 1888 for a San Francisco newspaper. It was first performed by Wolf Hopper who presented the poem 10,000 times over a span of 45 years: Sam says this is only his 47th performance.

Sam asks: "Why did a poem about a baseball player become so popular?" and then answers his own question immediately: "Maybe because it's like the game of life. We struggle in life, an unpredictable journey between first and second base, just as unpredictable as real life gets." He talks about America, using the word Home frequently. He emphasizes that America is made up of people like "you and me", people "who left their homes and made America their new home" and participated in the American sport of baseball. He lifts up his marker for Home Plate, showing that it is in the design of a house with a door and windows. The children clap.

2:10 PM. Sam lifts up three boxes--popcorn, cracker jacks, and peanuts, and asks the children to sing with him, "Take me out to the ball game." When he turns the three boxes over, the words for the songs are written on the bottom of the boxes. The children giggle. As actor and children sing together, Sam juggles the three boxes.

Then he says: "Baseball is by and for the people. In the 1860's, when the country was split, the game of baseball helped to heal the wounds of the divided country. There were over 200 professional baseball teams in the 1860's."
Then he changes the letter "M" on his shirt to the letter "B" and begins to recite another poem, "The Bugville Team." As in the other recitation, children appear restless. [I notice that they are much more attentive to music and pantomime than the recitation of the poems.] In this poem, one of the players gets hurt and they need a volunteer from the crowd. The "volunteer" makes the winning hit for the Bugville Team. At the end of the poem, the coach asks the master volunteer his name, and the volunteer replies, "I'm Mighty Casey who struck out just 20 years ago."

After his rendition of the Bugville poem, Sam talks about the pride of the winner and the humiliation of the loser. He tells the children that Casey got to "redeem himself" and concludes with: "The whole world is a community, we have to give our hearts and lend a hand." There is no clapping from the audience at the end of this serious message. Sam walks quietly back behind the screen. Then, the mood brightens as the music goes on again, Sam emerges from behind the screen and begins to pantomime to the music. He gestures (smelling under his arms, wiggling his bottom and hips, making baseball signals in fast motion), and the audience laughs. He finishes the performance by turning his back to the audience. On his rear, he has attached a sign that says "THE END". The audience laughs heartily and claps.

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The actor warms up the child audience preparatory to reciting the poem in two ways. First, he evokes the content of baseball, mimicking gestures and singing songs associated with the game. He also prepares them by establishing himself as the primary character, making this connection in a humorous, almost seductive manner.

The roles of the various participants in the performance, as in the entrance, are indicative of school values. During the performance section, the principal fades into the background and the teachers, as the immediate guardians of children's manners, are more fully present. We see them waving at children to sit flat and "shushing" them to be quiet and sit on their bottoms (even when the cost is that they don't see). Children seem to have intermittent involvement in the performance. They laugh at the slap-stick, enjoying the bawdy pantomime and familiar music. However, for most, the content of the poems seems to go past them. This is not to say, however, that they are not learning. As in the case of much ritual participation in our lives, (in schools no less than in church), much of the believing and learning is in the doing. By being present and performing the actions, through their bodies, as well as their eyes and ears, they absorb what it is to be an audience.

The performance consisting of the recitation of the two interconnected poems "Casey art the Bat" and "The Bugville Team", and the interspersed "homilies" or
values lessons is rich with moral significance that we will discuss at greater length in a later section of this article. In closing the performance section, as he does when he concludes the following instructional section, the actor creates a serious moment that is then quickly followed by a joking moment. Thus, the audience is briefly challenged by a provocative thought, but not for too long, nor too seriously. The section ends on a deliberately happy note.

III. The Instruction

Sam turns back around to the audience and thanks them for being a great audience. He says that he is going to play different characters, asking them to raise their hands to tell him what characters he is playing. Students name: pitcher, umpire, coach, and Casey, (Sam then comments that Casey let two good chances go by because he wanted to "bask in the glory"). He asks the children how they knew when he was a coach but then answers his own question by saying that he used signals. One girl added that the signals were like sign language. Sam says that they could make signals too, but that their teachers wouldn't like it ("Let's go over to Bobby's house after school").

He tells the children that all of his characters came from his imagination, and asks them to put their fingers in the air. Everyone--students and teachers--follow his direction. He then leads them in the following pantomime games: (i) -a red balloon with helium in it. Grab a needle and pop the balloon. (ii) -rub hands--high, low, open it, right in near your face, close it again (he pretends that it stinks). Sam opens, then closes his hands, revealing that it is green slime. He has them stretch it--and become the green slime monster. He has them become a witch with the slime on their nose, then directs them to take it off, rub high, rub low, pick up a small piece of coal. He directs them to crush the coal with their other thumb. They crush and crush until he declares that it has become a diamond.

The sight of 350 arms up in the air with a pretend balloon is beautiful to see. I am struck by the notion that all 350 children are able to follow the pantomime perfectly: no discipline problems, not a sound is heard to interrupt their concentration. I am surprised that the actor is able to let them 'pop a balloon' without fearing that they might get carried away and pop someone else's or upset their neighbor on the floor.

Then the actor recites:

I promise
I will always
Use my imagination
Wherever I go
Whatever I do
No matter how old and fuddy I get
Me.

"It has been a pleasure coming to your school. Give yourselves a round of applause", he says in conclusion. He claps in a circle to include the audience. The children all do this in return. In closing, he offers them one more problem to solve: How many ways can they say good-bye? He suggests a wave—large, small, way across the parking lot; A wink; Nod of head—small nod (they all imitate), medium nod, huge nod (Sam cautions the children not to break their heads when they try this); then he blows a kiss, and the children go "OOOOhhhhh."

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The instruction section opens with a series of questions from the artist (now a teacher) to the audience (now students). The questions serve to pique interest and also as transitional devices. They are convergent, designed to lead the students toward the teacher's desired response: simple enough to be answered quickly, with ease, requiring little inquiry and no exploration. In the interests of time and control, most are rhetorically answered by the artist/teacher himself. Ironically, as he assumes the teaching role, he simultaneously sets himself apart from the teachers in his comments by mentioning that the teachers would not like his assignment, (implying a difference in value systems and roles between him and the teachers).

Having established the idea of character, the actor/teacher quickly moves children into active practice of pantomime. He selects the pantomime topics, and leads children in the specific physical actions that they will use to depict the pantomime. He mimes, and they imitate. The practice of pantomime provides the audience with the possibility for a controlled amount of physical activity, important for release for a group of 350 young children who are wedged closely together and have been sitting still for a relatively long amount of time. Interestingly, we know from our study that this use of pantomime games for the depiction of recognizable physical activity relating to daily behaviors was used extensively in the district's dance and drama classes.

In concluding his performance, the actor/teacher recites another poem, (which is also a chant or vow), about the use of imagination. In this poem, imagination is depicted as a tool that one exercises on the world. The text conveys that the use of imagination of young people is special, and that the ability to exercise the skill of imagination often declines with age. Note that imagination is interpreted by the actor as "make believe", rather than as originality and creativity, and in that section of instruction the children had to follow Sam's directions closely, that is, the imaginative activity was not open-ended in form.
This multiple meanings offer a good place to observe the hybrid nature of the school art genre. In and out of schools, imagination is perceived as a critical characteristic of artistic performance, a necessary ingredient in distinguishing the artistic product from the merely technical. Imagination is depicted as a personal possession and works deemed to possess imaginative qualities are strongly reflective of the personal touch of the creator. Thus, the term imagination is closely aligned with creativity, and both are regarded as positive attributes. Artists and children who are seen as having artistic skill are often described as being imaginative or creative, possessing the faculty to think independently and to create products that differ from the mainstream. However, while teachers frequently exhort children to be imaginative or creative, most school work provides little opportunity to work in an independent manner and the aim of most school projects is towards a uniform rather than a differentiated product (Anyon, 1980; Bresler, 1994). This performance follows that same pattern. The congruence, as we have learned, is that imagination and creativity may exist in a state of odd ambiguity and tension in relationship to daily school life, in much the same way that the arts exist in relationship to the core curriculum.

The use of a vow gives this part of the performance event a ritualistic sense, as if it were part of a ceremony. Historically vows or pledges were an important part of the semi-religious/semi-secular Protestant civic organizations, elevating the importance and seriousness of the ideas presented (e.g. the swearing by public officials or leaders of civic organizations or the pledges used in Boy and Girl Scouts.) In today's schools, the use of vows or chants also remind one of the indoctrinational campaigns, such as those against drugs or for self-esteem, where young people are expected to make pledges of temperance or are asked to chant as a group with the notion that they will gain strength and conviction through the oral affirmation.

The use of the vow creates a moment of solemnity. The actor's choice to shift back to the generally light tone of the show through the pantomime activity and the farewell kiss to the audience, dispels the seriousness of the pledge to use one's imagination and emphasizes the general tone of light function of the arts, shifting away from the somber to the frivolous.

Finally, in a mirror reversal of the principal's "delivery" of the student group to the actor, the actor now "returns" the group to the school officials. He does this as he expresses his delight in coming to the school, and, through his request that they "give themselves a hand" provides confirmation to the principal of the group's good behavior while they were in his charge.

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IV. Closing Frame
The principal comes to the front and asks the children to thank Sam again. They clap for the final time, the principal shakes the actor's hand and asks him to show them the trick of the far lean. Sam says that it is a recipe: "Trust, muscle, and some magic connected to me and my set." The principal comments about the children being the "best audience", and directs the teachers to dismiss their students from the front.

[When everyone leaves, I have a few minutes of informal talk with Sam, now dripping with sweat. An independent actor, Sam tells me that he had to learn to dance to learn how to move his lower body in the manner required for many of the pantomime activities in "Casey at the Bat"; and that his wife helped him with the set, although, generally he does everything himself. He is currently acting in a Shakespearean production at the local arts center, and is developing another show for children--"The Land of Nod", a take-off on "The Owl and the Pussycat". He commented on the quietness of the audience as they entered, attributing it to the style of the principal. He comments that the audience reaction was a bit stifled by the principal's control, but that as an actor he was also able to go "pretty far" with them because they were so well controlled. He notes that because the audiences at the different schools vary widely, he plays the last part by ear: he doesn't know until he gets to it how much the whole group will get to pantomime. As I left, he began to gather up his props.]

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With the conclusion of the performance, the principal steps to the front to "receive" the students from the artist. To the remarks about behavior that mark so many interactions between school staff representing the core curriculum and arts specialists, the principal adds a question to the artist about a technical issue--"the lean." This technical focus on an artistic product is a frequent response in our schools. Although the actor's work is formally finished, for the members of the school, the production also includes the ritual of "the dismissal", where the principal tells teachers how they are to exit, and the teachers direct their class back to the classroom.

As seen here, control is a double-edged sword. Sam noted the extreme emphasis the principal placed on children's behavior, recognizing it to be more stringent than what he had encountered from administrators in other schools. While concerned about children's spontaneous responsiveness under these conditions, he also recognized that control made it possible for him to do more with the children than he would have been able to in a less restricted environment.

School Art: Composing the Hybrid Genre
There is much in this theatrical performance to remind us of school. First of all, there is the teaching style, an explicit, didactic commentary. Then, note the overall construction of the performance as numerous small events (recitation of a written text, direct instruction, practice, evaluation, etc.) that are tied together by multiple moral commentaries that provide students with evaluatory information and value lessons. This form reminds us of the ways that much classroom life unfolds, in which a teacher/performer moves the action quickly, shifting frames, and modes, but tying it all together with a moral ambiance that gives a sense of unity. This unity created by shifting modes is different from the development of a long, sustained form. The potpourri of dramatic poetry, and pantomime games do not create dramatic tension: if there is a climax, it may be in the vow. The format of delivery from and to the principal and the commentary on behavior at the moment of delivery and the return remind us of school life, where classroom teachers "deliver" their classes to the arts specialists on a daily basis.

And yet, as a theatrical performance, it aspires to be art. And we might ask, is it art? John Dewey defined art as the production of an expressive work, that embodies the dramatic tension in its rhythms, contents and materials (Dewey, 1934). Art, Dewey believed, expresses experience in multiple ways—as a statement of the artist, and in the interpretive process of the audience. Art is challenging, implying tension and conflict in that it seeks to solve a problem, requiring the artist and audience to grapple with something unresolved. To "get it" in an artistic sense connotes a qualitative reorganization of multiple concepts in these domains. You "see" differently as you come to understand in new ways (Dewey, 1934). While art may be highly abstract and intellectually focused, it is always simultaneously sensuous, grounded in ordinary experience, and imbued with emotion. For these reasons, experiencing art is a powerful act—a moment when the physical, emotional, and intellectual can converge, where memory is forged to impress itself upon the experience.

The two poems—Casey at the Bat and The Bugville team, belong to a dramatic genre: they possess an epiphany, with a crisis and a turning point in life: from glory (and arrogance) to the fall (and humility), and back (in the second poem) to resurrection. The performance, however, tends towards popular shows, which aim primarily at entertainment. The poems are performed in a humorous style, involving such acts as exaggerated gestures and the juggling of boxes. (Indeed, Hertzog's notes manifest that if it were not for these pantomime parts, the children would have been lost.) Art and entertainment are not mutually exclusive. Both rely on engaging the audience and capturing their attention. Entertainment marks the attainment of that first level of engagement which allows the play of fancy to hold sway (Beckerman,
It opens the spirit to other possible exchanges between a show and its audience. Whereas engagement is sufficient for entertainment, art typically involves a deeper level of cognitive and emotional challenge. In the next section, we explore the complex intermingling of art/entertainment and school that occur in the composition of the hybrid genre of school art. In particular, we examine the conflicting notions of these domains as they are played out.

Content and values

The performance we describe contains two sorts of content: 1) the story of Casey's strike out and then his making good year later, and 2) an instructional section in dramatic techniques. For the purposes of this discussion, we will focus on the first part of the presentation, as we take up aspects of the instructional section at a variety of other places in this paper.

In regard to the first section, the content is ostensibly about an historical incident in American folklore associated with one of America's favorite past-times—baseball. Less ostensibly it is a moral tale about the danger of pride and the lack of humility and the possibility of redemption.

Many of the values related in this piece are clearly stated in the actor's direct statements, and, these values, not surprisingly, are interwoven with the discussion of baseball. They include such items as the healing power of baseball, its potential as a tool to achieve multiculturalism, and the importance of struggle of the sort one finds in a competitive sport.

The text regarding baseball is as interesting, however, as the one that is readily visible. As Sam, the actor, implies, baseball is a metaphorical symbol, embedded within a larger discourse that embodies ideas about American life reflective of a general orientation toward consumer culture. Springwood notes that "conflating baseball with America is a paramount practice, going back at least to the writings of Walt Whitman" (Springwood, 1996, p. 20). This "notion of America [and baseball] reveals not so much a parochial sentiment about the US. as a nation-state but instead a more amorphous locus of cultural identity", what Bellah has termed a "community of memory" (ibid, p. 21). Springwood notes that "in these spaces of baseball nostalgia, patriotic allegiances emerge more often around racialized, politicized images of everyday life in immediate, localized planes of existence, and that these images of organic solidarity are at the core of a more provisional American, attained increasingly through interaction with the commodity." (ibid).

When Casey was written, at the end of the 19th century, baseball had reached a high level of prominence in the United States, becoming the nation's first professionalized team sport. Mark Twain claimed, that baseball was "the very
symbol, the outward and visible expression of the drive and push and rush and struggle of the raging, teaching, booming nineteenth century" (in Springwood, 1996, p. 30). Albert Spalding, an important leader in the institution of baseball, and the cofounder of the National League, highlights, in 1908 the game's American character, claiming that "the genius of our institutions is democratic; Baseball is a democratic game" (quoted in Brown, 1991, p. 53), that "the game is so thoroughly in accord with our national characteristics and temperament that this fact itself tends to confirm my opinion that it is of purely American origin, and no other game or country has any right to claim its parentage" (in Springwood, 1996, p. 34), and that "Baseball is the American Game par excellence, because its playing demands brain and brawn, and American manhood supplies these ingredients in quantity sufficient to spread over the entire continent" (in Brown, 1991, p. 53). Baseball is undergoing a revival today that demonstrates that its hold on the American public is as strong as ever, as witnessed by the pilgrimages to spring workout sites and movies such as "Field of Dreams" or "Angels in the Outfield" (Brown, 1991; Maurer, 1992; Springwood, 1996).

Baseball serves complex metaphoric purposes in American life, and is associated with a romanticized time in the past in the period between the Civil War and World War II. Baseball is said to be urban, a modern sport born in the early cities, played by immigrants; paradoxically, it is also associated with the pastoral, signifying the green open landscapes of America (Springwood, 1996). The official story on the origin of baseball in 1907 is that it was conceived amid pastures of grazing cattle and rolling farms" (ibid, p. 2), and pastoralism has long been central to the patriotic imagination to the American identity. It is often used to evoke images of a cleaner, better, and safer world where relationships between neighbors and among family members were on easier and less troubled footing.

While evoking the world of small town America through the recitation of "Casey at the Bat", the actor also draws upon the poems as a symbol of multiculturalism. The baseball world of "Casey at the Bat" (circa 1888) was a segregated one, which existed long before Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier, forcing acknowledgment of the racial and economic complexities of the sport. Even now, African-Americans are absent from the casts of movies on baseball. The philosophy of multiculturalism for which baseball serves as a metaphor dwells not on the vast differences of various ethnic groups, but on what is defined as their common humanity. The commonalities of these "many different peoples", as described by Sam in this performance, consist, in the first instance, that they have left their natal homes to create a new home in a common location--America. Their second commonality is their willingness to participate in baseball--a game that,
through participation, is common to them. Participating in baseball is constitutive of a common humanity because of the American values embodied in the game—its rules and its performance (as referred to above). These two criteria for the common humanity—leaving home and participating in baseball—focus attention on activities or activity systems, carefully avoiding the question of shared/ or not shared values and beliefs. A main theme in the performance is that because we participate in the same activities, we share common beliefs. This assumption allows members of loosely connected groups, who hold diverse beliefs and interests, to come together in a semblance of unanimity that has the look of a whole fabric, but, in truth, is only momentarily stable looking. Commonalty then is a substitute for commensurability.

In this performance, the actor uses baseball to talk about winning and losing, pride and humiliation, rupture and healing, the fall and redemption or resurrection. The particular "spin" he puts on these issues are embodied in phrases that Americans are all well familiar with: try hard, be positive, honor your opponent, avoid false pride, "3 strikes you're out", get back up when you fall down. Baseball then becomes here a vehicle for the values of this broad discourse of Americanism, a symbol through which one can transcend individual and collective anger, fear, and defeat.

A primary theme of the poem is community vs. the individual as seen in the "winning and losing" scenario (an area of inherent stress in our society). On the one hand there is the rhetoric of the group/ communitarianism/ let's all get along/ let's all care/ we're all the same underneath/ America is great because we all participate together to build it. On the other hand there is the belief in individual/ hierarchical achievement and the benefits of competition. A prime concern in American society is the avoidance of friction between these two outlooks. Interestingly, both the Casey poems and the instruction focus on the individual (Casey) and his winning or losing/ his pride or humiliation—there is no sense of the group, except as a background.

Although much of the content was over children's head, the performance was able to deliver three things to the young audience: 1) it brought them entertainment in the guise of art through the association of the well known sport of baseball; 2) it indocrinated them into a cluster of pieces of American folklore—songs, games, and stories, and 3) it presented them with a series of simple moral lessons about good, bad, and proper behavior.

Indeed, the moral/ patriotic content and force of the program is compelling, dwarfing the artistic pretensions of the program in comparison. Moreover, the presentation of moral issues is that associated with school, not with art, in that the
emphasis is on didactic instruction as opposed to an emotional experience of a moral dilemma through an aesthetic medium.

Audience

Artistic performances involve a performer, a performed act, and an audience. This particular audience is unique to school performance, in that the congregation consists of two distinct types: (i) the "real" audience, to whom this show is intended: the children, and (ii) school practitioners: the teachers, principal, janitor. Central to these special distinctions of school arts performances are the roles of the participants and the ritualized contract executed between the "core school element"--regular classroom teachers and principal--and the artist (in this case an outside artist, but in other cases the school arts specialist). The children are there to learn, which in this case is equivalent to exposure to the show. School practitioners serve as supervisors and, to some extent as role models, exemplifying good audienceship. Teachers focus on the poem as if to say to children, "this is the literate moment." The intensity with which teachers modeled listening at this moment meant to tell children to pay attention and listen. As supervisors, teachers are alert to any potential disciplinary problems that may arise during the performance, especially when the children are having fun (e.g. responding to the slapstick) and more likely to transgress the boundaries of appropriate school behavior. Even though the performance is aimed towards the children, it is really the adults that are in a critical position, where they can voice their verdict, conveying feedback to the local authorities.10

Clearly, there are significant differences between these audiences of school art and the audiences of the art world. In the latter, audiences are voluntary. The expression of free will is embodied not only in their physical presence, but possibly also in their mental attitudes; in their anticipation and willingness to suspend daily life concerns. That is not the case for either teachers or students in school performance. Teachers' supervisory roles are similar to what they do in their own classes: they stay attentive to the children rather than get carried away with the show. Children experience the constant, explicit monitoring of their actions and reactions during the show, which is similar to the rest of their school day. As we discussed earlier, the absence of facilitative conditions (e.g. elegant hall; division between stage and audience; sophisticated sound and light systems), may make it harder for them to enter a state of mind which focuses.

These two audiences differ not only in regards to their role ("learn" and "get exposed" versus "supervise" and "model") but also in regards to their skills and tastes. We noted, for example, that teachers are tuned to the textual, which is central to the school's mission; whereas the children acted restless during this section.
Children, in contrast, responded to the exaggerated use of body language in the pantomime sections, use which is a distinct demarcation from school and academic culture. The contexts of the audiences vary as well. As Slowikowski points out (private email communication, 1996), kids may be too young to be nostalgic for simpler, better times. They might focus on their baseball card collection, and on buying more baseball memorabilia. Thus, they won't necessarily use the poem as intended (high culture; America; winning; honor opponent), but will take malleable bits and pieces of it and shape it for their own purposes and contexts.¹¹

Proper behavior is important not only in school settings, but also in public performances. Kasson (1990) noted the cultural stakes involved in issues of manners and deportment and how the genteel ideals of public deportment urged by etiquette advisers fit within an important larger history. He traces the rising of the nation's renowned institutions of art, theater and music, coinciding with the increasingly hierarchical conception of the performing arts: "high" art and theater, in contrast to the "popular" and "cheap" amusements, no longer to be accorded the dignity of Art (Kasson, 1990, p. 216). The behavior in school performances fits well with the modern decorum of silent, sustained attention to a performance and the curtailing of the audience's expressive display.¹² The audience is guided to cede much of their expressiveness (including chattering, giggling, laughing, and even clapping in the middle) to the performer. Kasson raises the issue of the performing arts as a problematic, and at times contested redefinition of the place of the performing arts in metropolitan life and of their proper constituency. He points to the class implications of these efforts to subdue demonstrative behavior, and points that this enforced gentility meant not only the adoption of norms of behavior that changed their relationship to the performance, but a kind of gag rule that reduced their role in a powerful arena of cultural expression to their relatively weak economic standing at the box office. These issues, we believe, are also relevant to school performances

Goals

One critical way in which this particular production can be claimed as educational art is in the purposes that underlie its production. We examine purposes from the perspectives of the two types of participants who shape the event: the artist (shaping contents and formats), and school practitioners (shaping structures).

From the artist's actions in the performance, we can project four goals: 1) to introduce children to a well-known American poem and its surrounding cultural
notions; 2) to inculcate a particular outlook on America and its attendant values in children; 3) to instruct children in basic dramatic conventions; and, 4) to entertain.

The actions of school practitioners manifest the goal of educating (or training) children about how to behave appropriately as an audience of a dramatic performance. Their null actions—what they don't do (e.g., discuss issues of aesthetics, issues relating to contents, or attitudes to theater), are equally revealing. Part of that "null" behavior has to do with their lack of expertise in the arts and self-image: when it comes to art, most classroom teachers shy away from the role of an intellectual/aesthetic guide, a role which requires, in teachers' eyes, expertise (Bresler, 1991). Literacy, however, is very dear to teachers' hearts, as they demonstrate by their close attention to the recitations of the two poems. Their actions and inaction send a distinct message about the segregation of the arts, and their isolation from the rest of the curriculum (academic as well as arts curriculum) and the basic values of school life.

These actions and inactions fit with previous findings concerning teachers' attitudes and expectations of the arts. In an earlier study, Bresler found that teachers often talked about "exposing" children to art as a virtuous goal (Bresler, 1991). In that study, teachers disclosed that they did not see themselves sharing responsibility for exposure to art (including preparation before or follow-up after the experience, to help children integrate the experience into their conceptual and emotional schema.) Part of the implicit messages conveyed to children when a teacher does nothing special to prepare the class for the assembly may imply that the assembly is not relevant and necessary to school life; that a performance may be a "frill" rather than of substance; that it is a relief from academics rather than co-equal. Teachers' emphasis on compliant behavior throughout the school day and including the performance send powerful messages about the importance of compliance, in contrast, for example, to experience and intellectual engagement.

The lack of explicit and implicit guidance on how to "see" theater contributes to the students' difficulties in gleaning meanings from the performance. To be initiated into artistic genres, format and conventions, requires guidance. Theater performances, like museums exhibitions, and concerts, provide contextual commentary in program notes. In contrast to the latter commentary, the running commentary provided by the actor in this school performance is high on content and moral values to be digested wholesale, and low on substantive guidance on how to cultivate a critical stance to theater and art.

Although the occasion described here is, as we have labeled it, an example of school art, within it we can also discern the manner in which school is careful to separate itself from art. As we described in the opening of this paper, artists and art
are both marginal and central to school functioning. At the same time that their work and skills are held separate from the core curriculum and core teaching staff, time and again on an annual ritualistic schedule, art specialists are also the individuals through which the school is brought together as a whole. It is through the arts that the school re-experiences itself as one community, jointly participating in shared activity. In this example, as in the daily practice of schools, art and artists are separated from the normal day and curriculum by carefully framed moments. The ritual exchange in which a class is delivered, received, and returned from classroom cares to art and back to classroom life symbolizes this framing.

Implications

School performances are the sites for complicated interplay between form and content, artistic notions and pluralistic community values and desires. As learning experiences, they are rich with symbolic meaning, and, through the performance of that meaning, the ideas and values they embody become enfleshed in the minds and bodies of young children and their instructors. A blend of educational and artistic expectations, the agenda of schools is dominant. Our findings underscore the power that schools' institutional presence and operation can have in shaping the experience of school guests and members. In this sense, school art differs in significant ways from art as it is found in non-school locations that provide different circumstances and conditions for the production of art. This is manifested in the "packaging" of school art, which reflects school values, goals, and hierarchical order. The artist might be labeled a "school artist" not only because he engages in art within this institutional framework, but also because his art is also designed in concert with the ends of this institution as regards its mission and purposes, and because he draws heavily upon the genres of school life to frame his art.

Artists in schools have become a significant market (the National Endowment for the Arts, for example, allocates funds for education outreach mission of institutions such as the local arts center.) The common assumption is that bringing artists to the school is equivalent to, but more cost-effective, than bringing children to the theater. Our contention is that when art comes to the school setting, some essential characteristics of the art experience are lost. For example, entering into school contexts means that artists alter both what they do and how they do it. As we reflected on school arts, placed along the continuums of art and entertainment, and of art and propaganda, we questioned whether school art maintains its raison d'être. If, indeed, school performances are generically different from authentic theatrical experiences, are they worth doing for their own sake?
The tension that school art embodies, can be viewed as a tension between the distinct goals of schools and the goals of the art world, as presented in aesthetic theories and artistic statements (even if they are not always actualized, they embody the visions that justify bringing the arts into the schools). Simplistically stated, the world of public schools is governmental and controlled, aiming toward consensual values. By contrast, the strived for world of art and theater is experiential and communicative, conveying diverse and controversial values. Art, when it rises above entertainment, appeals to the edge of human consciousness, whereas schools are mainstream and abhor anarchy. Art aims at psychological transformation, whereas school aims at enculturation through management.

This tension is reminiscent of the tension that Turner points out between societas and communitas (Turner, 1982). Societas and communitas are two major modes of social life that ground the use of symbolic forms. According to Turner, societas is characterized by a human order held together and differentiated by a configuration of roles and statutes, a web of conventionalized, formal relations. In contrast, communitas is a state of existence outside social time and place, characterized by the suspension of the roles and rules that hold in the realm of societas, much as we see in the relationship between school and theater. Societas characterizes the mainstream, instrumentally originated domains of social life, whereas communitas characterizes contexts of marginality, highlights the expressive and requires a suspension of the normative social order which gives rise to new expressive possibilities.

Indeed, as Turner noted, (1982), the experience of communitas is antithetical to ordinary, rule and role-oriented human relations, and it cannot be long sustained if society is to proceed with its workaday, instrumental functions. However, it is in those enclaves of social life where communitas is allowed to flourish that the community can re-create itself through a regenerative spell of symbolic activity in art, ritual, myth, and play.

The tension between order and transformation can also be discerned in the notion of ritual. Rituals (van Gennep, 1960), involve disassociation—the subject's disengagement from his customary world. A second stage is a transitional phase in which the ordinary world is suspended and the ritual subject symbolically prepares himself for the third phase, that of reintegration into the social structure following the appropriate ritual transformation. These transformative elements seem to be missing from school art.

Can school encompass those elements of rituality and transcendence? Can it, and should it, incorporate structures anti-thetical to its regular routines and tolerate contents that are challenging? This study suggests that such incorporation is
problematic. One of the consequences is, that, like many subjects approached within schools, school art is tamed down within school boundaries, that it relinquishes its potential for evoking powerful emotions. School art, then, becomes "nice", meaning that it is clean, safe, moralistic, evasive of painful issues, and primarily entertaining. The wilder ends of the emotional continuum that could be evoked are avoided. The problems or conflicts that art could raise disappear. As is demonstrated in this performance, one way this is achieved is through focusing concern on technical or moralistic parts as opposed to more holistic, emotional, social, political or expressive concerns.

Keeping school art nice, staff believe, makes art manageable within school confines and as this performance demonstrates, management is a primary concern for the staff. Our examination of goals reflects that the combined goals of both artist and school staff are far more attentive to mainstream educational norms than they are to artistic concerns. School artists, like Sam, even if not trained as educators, often internalize the expectations of school setting, and produce artistic performances that are attentive to schools' concerns and reflexive of schools' modes of instruction.

Conclusions

In summary, we suggest that the relationship between schools and arts is a critical one, and one in which the tensions of many structural and curricular issues can be observed. The arts prove to be a substantial site and means for understanding these issues. The arts represent an important "dialogical turf" between the parts of the school and its knowledge of itself as a whole and between the issues represented in art that are in contradiction to the traditional presentation of curriculum. Inherent in the arts is the tension found in schools between the continuous and the episodic, the parts and the whole. The arts then become the place where dialogic meaning between these elements must be hammered out.

Our initial question had to do with the ways in which the world of art and the world of school create the genre of school art. We explored how art forms are transformed or created as they enter the embrace of the institution, and how academic and ideological school contents are ascendant in the powers that shape art once it is within schools, by prevalent instructional styles, as well as by structures and formats. Accordingly, the power of the arts to serve expressive ends, facilitate new understanding, recraft vision, and help develop children's' interpretive skills is strongly affected by these school values. We believe that the potential of art to inform children's lives in this setting and trigger in them deep experiences is diminished because of the dominance of institutional values.
References

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2Theater, too, fulfills important educational functions, but with different aims and audiences, and in different type of settings.
3sponsored by the Bureau of Educational Research and the Research Board at the University of Illinois.
4As case-studies go, there is no claim of representativeness or generalizability. Transferability, the qualitative response to the issue of applicability, refers to the extent to which the research facilitates inferences by readers regarding their own situations and responsibilities. Good transfer is based on similarity of situations, intuitively weighted as to what is important or unimportant in the match. Writers' responsibility is in reporting the kind of detail that enables readers to bring their developed
faculties of judgment into play, thus facilitating readers' inferences regarding other situations. For a more comprehensive discussion on the issue of transferability in qualitative research, see, Bresler, 1992, and Lincoln and Guba, 1985.

For a more detailed account on the methodology of this project and its unique collaborative aspects, see Wasser and Bresler (1996), and Bresler, Wasser, Hertzog and Lemons (in press).

All participants' names in this paper are fictitious

Nancy Hertzog

A week later: in an informal conversation with a classroom teacher, she told me that she felt the performance was too difficult for children to see because Sam had his set on the floor, not the stage. She also felt the content of the performance was way over their heads, and for that reason was not impressed with it as an event for school children.

For an interesting discussion on the hegemony of white race in baseball narratives, see Springwood 1996, pp. 145-170.

Our experiences of classroom teachers as "critics" is that they do not bring artistic/aesthetic considerations to their evaluations of school art (Bresler, 1991). Their dominant preoccupations are entertainment and keeping children attention. In both cases, performers are judged as managers of audience behavior, much as teachers are judged on classroom management first, quality of educative experience second. For many principals, the first is sufficient. Teachers feel incompetent to judge the "art"; but interestingly, those same adults could render opinions about the quality of movies or plays they see in out-of-school life.

Slowikowski suggests (private email communication, 1996), that Nickelodeon's GUTS sport or MTV's Sport shows, would have probably evoked more thought, creativity, inspiration, and controversy with the students even if they have never seen or heard these forms before. These works were not used because they are not old, not classic, not poetry, not the "American" that we can be proud of.

which started at the end of 19th century.

Turner's emphasis on communitas is on its community aspects, involving the creation of egalitarian, undifferentiated, individuating, person-to-person relationships. This emphasis is not part of an aesthetic experience. However, the experience of an audience captures that undifferentiated quality.