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Brittany Caine  
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THE FIELD OF TYA ON THE SOCCER FIELD:  
USING DRAMA STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE YOUTH SOCCER COACHING PRACTICES

by

BRITTANY HEATHER CAINE  
B.A. Smith College, 2014

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Fine Arts  
in the Department of Theatre  
in the College of Arts and Humanities  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

Spring Term  
2020

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis explores best practices for applying drama strategies to coaching youth soccer. How does drama pedagogy translate to sports? Do drama techniques improve youth soccer? How can using drama-based strategies when coaching youth soccer enhance my own coaching abilities and thus improve the quality of youth soccer instruction and experience? This study applies various drama techniques to pre-written coaching curriculum. This manifested in heavily detailed games, supported by pantomime, storytelling, and narrative exploration, all of which further engaged the children in their soccer exercises. This thesis is supplemented by research on best practices regarding youth soccer, as well as the history of creative drama, developed and theorized by Winifred Ward, and drama methods developed by Dorothy Heathcote and Viola Spolin, contextualizing how they have each been utilized from their onset until the current time. This study incorporates journal entries written after each coaching session, reflecting on personal practice and how the curriculum was amplified or diminished based on the dramatic techniques applied. Additional observations of other coaches are included, detailing how their methodologies differ from my own, as well as the results of these differing methods. Using this practice as research, varying conclusions are drawn on the impacts, effects, and successfulness of incorporating drama into coaching.

Eron Block, who made teaching a reality instead of a dream  
Alison Brown, whose belief in her students I can only ever hope to partially replicate  
Heidi Ellis, who fought for what was right  
Natalie Sowell, who valued the voice of young people wholeheartedly  
Smith College and everyone there who I lived with, loved, and learned from  
Elizabeth Horn, who showed me that believing in people's best is the best choice  
My brother, Philip, because you are the best

And my parents, who drove a million miles a week and never complained;  
who always answer their phones, no matter how often I call;  
who faithfully continue to come to my shows, long after I've stopped being in them

This thesis is dedicated to each and every one of you, because without you,  
I would never even have made it to page one.  
You have been power givers and never power takers.  
It is my honor to have learned from you,  
and to now pass that power along to future generations.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis is so much more than it seems: it is a love letter to each person I have ever been on the journey to who I am now, and to write that letter honestly, I want to acknowledge everyone who played an instrumental part on that journey. Thank you all.

Thank you to the teachers I have had, both in and out of school, who pushed, celebrated, and challenged me.

Thank you to coaches and teammates past and present. You make soccer so much more than a game.

Thank you to 4424 for being both a house and a home.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
A Personal Journey .....	1
Starting to Teach.....	5
Realizing this Project .....	6
Methodology .....	8
Three Inspirational Practitioners.....	9
Purpose of the Study .....	10
Limitations of the Study.....	11
CHAPTER TWO: ANALYZING TEACHING AND COACHING STRATEGIES .....	13
Drama Strategies .....	13
Creative Drama .....	13
Mantle of the Expert .....	16
Teacher in Role.....	17
Side-Coaching.....	20
Improvisation + The Game .....	22
Soccer Strategies.....	23
Develop A Foundation.....	24
Keep It Fun .....	25
Similarities and Differences in Drama Education and Soccer Coaching Strategies.....	27

CHAPTER THREE: DEFINING THE ROLE OF THE TEACHING ARTIST AND COACH	29
The Role of the Teaching Artist.....	29
The Role of the Coach .....	33
Differences and Similarities Between the Roles.....	37
Coaching-Artist.....	40
CHAPTER FOUR: BEING A COACHING-ARTIST .....	42
Actor’s Toolbox .....	42
Creative Drama .....	43
Teacher in Role + Mantle of the Expert.....	45
Side-Coaching.....	48
Improv .....	50
Problem-Based Storytelling .....	52
Coaching-Artistry Compared to Traditional Coaching.....	56
CHAPTER FIVE: THE FUTURE OF COACHING-ARTISTRY.....	58
Results of the Study .....	58
Implementing Drama-Enhanced Coaching Strategies .....	59
Looking Forward .....	62
Coaching Older Players .....	62
Drama + Soccer in Schools.....	63
Final Thoughts .....	65

APPENDIX: JOURNAL ENTRIES .....	67
Week One.....	68
Week Two.....	71
Week Three.....	76
Week Four.....	79
Week Five.....	83
Week Six.....	84
Week Seven .....	87
Week Eight.....	91
LIST OF REFERENCES .....	95

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Early in the development of this thesis, a conversation was had with Dr. Jeff Duke, a coaching specialist in the College of Health Professions and Sciences at University of Central Florida (UCF). The subject of teaching arose, and the conversation became a question: “in essence, isn’t the fundamental idea behind coaching and teaching the same? That you are distilling information, showing a person how to do something or about it?” A long look ensued, followed by a deeply passionate “yes!” In his online coaching portal, Duke even says, “the coach is the person who controls what the sport teaches” (Duke et al. 1.3). Boiled down to their essence, coaching and teaching are the same, *especially* with young people who are still developing skills are involved. As a teacher of drama and a coach of soccer, I was struck by the notion that my practices did not have to be kept separate, but rather could be viewed synonymously and even symbiotically. Motivated by this idea, the following question developed: how can using drama-based strategies when coaching youth soccer enhance my own coaching abilities and thus improve the quality of youth soccer instruction and experience?

### A Personal Journey

For as long as I can remember, I have played soccer. This started when I was five, playing what coaches bittersweetly call “swarm-ball.” As I moved from a chaotic clump of girls all vying to be the one with the ball to a goal-scoring forward, I fell more and more in love with game. I’m not sure I can articulate exactly why I am so fond of it, though I do know that it is love—call it joy and wonder—that motivates me to keep playing to this day. Soccer has been a

part of my life for so long that the sport itself, and the nature of being a player of it, have come to be a defining part of who I am, as much as being born in October or raised Jewish make up pieces of my identity.

For as long as I can remember, I have also done theatre. As a young person, I was performing in plays, but theatre also permeated how I saw and moved through the world. I wholeheartedly embraced the trope of theatre kid: I wore outfits inspired by indie films, ate lunch in the middle of the hallway, and was not afraid to loudly share passionate thoughts with anyone nearby. Inspired by the creativity that was fostered within the theatrical spaces where I spent most of my time, I took these imaginative worlds of storytelling and ensemble and attempted to bring them beyond the theatre walls. My world became one big theatre class, and along with anyone who wished to join me, we were free to pretend and play without judgement.

I carried the habit of creating rich narratives onto the soccer field with me. I remember telling detailed stories as we ran our warm-ups or imagining the off-field lives of the girls on the opposing teams. It never deterred my playing; instead, it pushed me to ask questions and to want to know more. But I also believed there was a divide, emphasized by the clear fact that the social circles of my soccer life and theatre life never overlapped. Any conversation between the two halves of myself seemed impossible; there was never going to be any possibility to marry the best parts of each and elevate them into a sole identity that was wholly myself.

Then, at the end of senior year of high school, I received an award from my soccer coach, not for playing, but for teamwork. I was baffled; I did not understand the difference. He patiently and calmly explained that yes, being and playing on the team was inherently teamwork, but that there was more to a team than just moving the ball. There is room for cohesivity when you do it,

and that is what makes a team thrive. He continued, explaining that he believed my energy and enthusiasm – the spritely effervescence that I believed to be my theatre kid-ness, had brought us from 11 disparate girls into a team. This sent me internally reeling; he had seen something I long desired but believed impossible: a collaboration between drama and soccer. Receiving the teamwork award seemed to be indicative that, for the first time, the duality of my roles was complementary. I believed the conversation between sport and theatre had begun.

Shortly after that instance, I began college. At Smith, I was on the soccer team, and I had every intention—or perhaps more accurately, no reason to doubt—that I would remain on the team for the next four years. I also intended to major in theatre. It quickly became apparent that college soccer was not like high school soccer: there was no room for fun and games, no room for shenanigans, no room to bond on the field when it was practice time. Everything I had loved most about being on the field with my team was stripped away. Furthermore, when rehearsal times conflicted with practice, a compromise was never an acceptable answer. Instead, the coach believed it showed a lack of commitment to the team. I came from an environment where my desire to participate in both sport and theatre was lauded and encouraged, but now, it was shamed. As I struggled more and more to find balance between the two parts of my life, I felt as though I was shrinking. I did not know how to pit my affection for soccer and theatre against each other; regardless of which way I turned, I felt I was betraying myself. I began to make up excuses not to go to practice, or to encourage rehearsals to be scheduled during training times. On the field, I felt uncomfortable with my teammates, which impacted my playing, only making me wish I was elsewhere even more. After my first year, I left the team. I was free to focus my

complete attention on the theatre department. With that decision, I believed the conversation between sport and theatre that had so hopefully sprung up only a year prior was over for good.

As time passed, there were new ways to fill the void left by soccer. I began working as an aide in a local preschool, opening juice boxes, re-mastering the alphabet, and falling in love with the exhilarating power of working with children. During my sophomore year, I took an acting class with a professor who believed we could not act until we could access ourselves. The class focused on how we became who we were— we talked at length about personal journeys and beliefs, and the people who left indelible marks on our lives. It was character work in its purest sense, the root of acting. At the preschool, I couldn't stop thinking about what that professor had said. A new idea coalesced: that through theatre, children have the power to transform. They can be anything, and they can become anyone. I had seen theatre do that for myself.

Spurred onward by an intensifying interest in bringing youth and theatre together, I sought out mediums for involvement. As a senior, in a class called "Take the Show on the Road," we staged a production, built a set, and booked a tour of Jose Cruz Gonzalez's *Lily Plants a Garden*, taking the show into numerous local elementary schools. We began our work by reading the script first as adults, and then again as the children who would watch the final performance. During production, we brought on board "consultants" from a local third-grade class who explored and discussed the script with us, allowing us to see the material through their eyes. We used their descriptions of the characters when we designed the costumes, and we had them record sound effects. When they watched the final performance, their eyes lit up. "That's me!" was heard in whispered rounds. With absolute certainty, no singular moment has ever had a more lasting impact on me. Upon graduation from Smith, I had long forgotten about my attempts

to find the intersections between theatre and sports. Though soccer was still tremendously missed, my focus was now on creating theatre with and for young people.

### Starting to Teach

Teaching started slowly, once a week, assisting Eron Block, the then artistic director of San Carlos Children's Theater, with his Tuesday story drama class. He was an invaluable role model, unflappable and endlessly creative. While watching him work, I learned how to transfer my own theatre experiences into teaching moments for students. I learned how to identify what I valued and contextualize it for them. I saw how to use my own imagination and creativity to spark theirs. Much of what is taught in drama classes is passed along from former mentors; I took an enormous amount of material from Eron during that first class, which he undoubtedly learned from his own teachers, including innumerable drama games and the Actor's Toolbox (body, voice, imagination, focus) concept. Eventually, he handed the reigns of the class off to me. During this transition, I felt myself applying my own lens to what I had learned from him. Teaching is building on what we know to make it digestible for those who want to know. As I grew stronger and more confident, I was given more classes to teach. I began teaching for other theatre companies in the area, until I was a full-time teaching artist. I continued to borrow from those training me, and to take what I was learning and meld it with my own ideas. I remember a student who had worked with me for years saying, "It's so great—you can always tell who's taken a class with you, because we all know your warm-up!" That moment felt like an achievement, a realization of my hopes from college to bridge the worlds of theatre and youth. It

made me reflect on how far I had come, from the hallways of my high school, to the teacher of the class.

### Realizing this Project

Midway through Summer 2018, deeply immersed in my Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) graduate studies, I found myself missing soccer. The urge to play again was present, so I ran an internet search for a team. Scrolling through the results, there was a job opening for a youth soccer coach. Given my pre-existing teaching background, it seemed like a fun and easy way to be active and outside, and to re-connect with soccer. More so, it would bring teaching and soccer together, a prospect that seemed ideal.

In October 2018, I was assigned two days of coaching, Fridays and Saturdays. The coaching staff was made up of former soccer players, and though a fondness for children is required, no formal teaching background was necessary. On Fridays my partner was a very seasoned coach. We taught at a private preschool, where, upon arrival, we picked up twenty children from their classes and brought them to the field. With no other supervisory assistance from the school, they were ours for the next 35 minutes. Quickly, the following became clear: coaches, including my Friday partner, forsake the curriculum, playing the same games over and over, because the lack of discipline demonstrated by children rendered it impossible to teach anything new. They were constantly pulling grass, throwing balls, digging dirt, or needing to use the restroom. If we captured the attention of half of the class, we lost the other half. The experience was bracing and challenging. Unsure of what we were accomplishing, I began to dread going.

On Saturday mornings, I coached classes alone, which eliminated contending with the needs, expectations, or impatience of another coach. These classes were also comprised of smaller groups of children who did not have pre-existing relationships with each other but did have their parents present to help manage behavior. These circumstances allowed me to explore the material in a way that made sense to me. I found success using drama to enhance the curriculum. Without realizing it, I was instinctively pulling from my own teaching artist toolbox.

It was curious that my Saturday morning classes were so successful, while Fridays were so exhausting. This is not to say that I left the field on Saturdays feeling as though no energy had been expended, but there are two kinds of exhausted. The first—which I found myself familiar with every Friday—is the exhausted that comes with being unheard for an extended period of time. The second—which accompanied Saturdays’ activities—came with joy, the kind of exhaustion that means your work has been done well. I went home happy; seemingly, my students and their parents, who expressed enthusiasm and immense gratitude at the end of a class, went home happy, too.

A fellow graduate student, who was listening to my ruminations on the differences between the two days of coaching, solved the mystery. Without hesitation he pointed out that Saturdays were succeeding because I was coaching dramatically; Fridays were failing because, among other problems, I was not.

This thesis was born when my instincts turned intentional. It is the resurgence of the conversation that my high school coach started: what is there to be gained from bridging sport and theatre? From finding possibilities instead of impossibilities? During my pre-thesis journey, I went from ignoring the curriculum, to teaching it by rote, to using my theatre-teacher training

because it had become instinctual. As I did, I observed a growth in my own engagement and investment levels. I wanted to know if, by intentionally applying varying theatrical theories and techniques, I could enhance my own performance as a coach, thus enhancing the experience of the young players. I sought to explore which strategies worked best with the sport and the curriculum, and how being a better coach impacted my players.

### Methodology

Each week of the curriculum facilitated in this soccer program includes, but is not limited to, the following concepts: warm-ups, learning skills via games, and scoring a goal. Additionally, each week has a pre-determined theme that complements the over-arching theme of the season (ex: Season Theme-Animals, Session Theme-Kangaroos). Three theatre practitioners whose work would complement this thesis were selected: Winifred Ward, Dorothy Heathcote, and Viola Spolin. After conducting extensive research on the theories, ideas, and strategies of each of the aforementioned women, as well as additional research on best youth coaching practices, these findings were applied to the pre-existing curriculum. The objective was not to alter it completely, but instead to use drama to enhance it. The modified curriculum was taught in to three back-to-back Saturday morning 3-5-year-old classes. Over the course of eight weeks, a journal was kept, recording how each session went, including the variance between the first, second, and third classes. This thesis is an examination of this work, including impact and challenges, culminating in heavily detailed best practice strategies to benefit coaches interested in similar pedagogy but with little to no prior theatre experience. For this paper, impact is defined by the following: engagement, enthusiasm, recall, execution and a desire to continue

learning/playing. The conclusion of this thesis will analyze the results and future possibilities of this project.

### Three Inspirational Practitioners

The first practitioner studied was Winifred Ward, who is also known fondly as the “Mother of Creative Drama.” Ward was motivated by the progressive movement that swept educational theory in the 1930s (van de Water et al. 22-23). Led by John Dewey, the progressive movement emphasized experiential learning and supported social classroom environments. Using theatre and literature, Ward brought dramatic experiences to the classrooms in Illinois and beyond. Her process began, however, on the basketball court. At her first job post-college she “taught speech, drama, reading, and elementary physical education in addition to coaching the girls’ basketball team” (Wiginton 146) and “though they rarely won games, her girls’ basketball team members were always good friends. She discovered that if she could add a dramatic element to the physical exercises of her elementary pupils, they enjoyed them more” (Combs 127). Within the context of this study, the objective was to pick up where Ward, whose focus was never really coaching basketball, left off.

Dorothy Heathcote, the second influential practitioner, was “based in the UK, [where she] developed an idiosyncratic approach to drama characterized by her taking on a fictional role and facilitating the lesson from within an unfolding dramatic scenario. Through this new method, she positioned participants in roles as ‘experts’ and helped them cultivate knowledge through collaborative improvisation with one another” (van de Water et al. 23). Through immense preparations, Heathcote’s strategies, as revealed by van de Water, were executed so the onus of

education was on the young people themselves. She established scenarios in which students gleaned new information through the experience of acting upon their expertness.

The third and final practitioner from whom strategies were borrowed was Viola Spolin. Spolin had a background in theatre, but she began her professional career as a social worker, studying with sociologist Neva Boyd. Heavily influenced and inspired by Boyd's work on play theory and games, she went on to combine these ideas with her own theatre training, ultimately developing improv games with the goal of using them to help young children adapt to city life. The focus of these games, many of which are today's traditionally recognized improv games, would eventually shift to skill-based training and comedy, but at their core, the games remained rooted in quick thinking, ensemble, and character development.

### Purpose of the Study

Preliminary research revealed no prior academic research on the merging of athletics and dramatics. Presently, it appears little to no research has been conducted, or at the very least, published. This thesis sought to fill that gap by discerning whether it was possible to enhance soccer drills and games with drama techniques, and if so, if it was purposeful. It is proven that "arts-integrated instruction techniques can boost learning in subjects other than the arts" (Cooper). I believed that adding drama to soccer curriculum would "[open] the door to creativity and free play" (Cooper), thus raising the buy-in and interest of young players, while also allowing them to digest potentially difficult soccer concepts in a developmentally-accessible manner. It was the aim of this thesis to use drama to enhance my ability to carry out the mission, vision, and goals of the curriculum and to scope out the potentiality of using drama to alter

curriculum other than youth soccer, including future and potential collaborations between education, sports, theatre, youth, and coaching.

### Limitations of the Study

The challenges of this study, enumerated below, must be recognized to acknowledge the scope and limits of my research.

A youth coach wields no power or control over class enrollment or attendance. Attempts were made to conduct research with identical factors each week, but results were implicated due to who attended and who did not. Class size, weekly attendance, and the pre-existing relationships of the students to both myself and to other enrolled students, were uncontrollable factors.

During this process, parents were not informed about the drama-enhanced curriculum. As the coach, I was still an employee, and my own research could not stymie the successful implementation and delivery of the pre-written curriculum. At the conclusion of each class, each parent receives an email summary of the content that was covered in class. Thus, it was imperative that, regardless of the drama-enhancements, the curriculum remained recognizable.

This study was completed exclusively with soccer players between the ages of three to five years old. The conclusions and results that this thesis demonstrates are reflective of a very narrow age range. There is ample room to continue the exploration of the theories discussed in this thesis, included but not limited to, in competitive sports and with other youth of other ages. The traditional, un-altered curriculum was never used during the season, thus negating a control group, and allowing drama-enhanced curriculum to be applied to each of the three classes. In

their paper “Developing Critically Reflective Practice”, Thompson and Pascal posit the term reflection-for-action: “the process of planning, thinking ahead about what is to come, so that we can draw on our experience (and the professional knowledge base implicit within it) in order to make the best use of the time resources available to us” (317). By intentionally eliminating a control group, reflection-for action was possible: trying drama-enhanced curriculum once, troubleshooting and revising for the second and third classes. Post-class journal entries analyzed the intentional changes and implications that resulted from reflection-for-action.

The reflections and analysis in this thesis reflect my own previous experiences coaching alternate seasons, as well as observations of coaches who are not using drama-enhanced curriculum, but they do not reflect a direct comparison of the same group of children experiencing both drama-enhanced and traditional curriculum.

My reflections, analysis, and opinions are entirely my own. No surveys or other means of feedback were collected from youth participants or parents, in part because my role as an employee did not allow this. From this position, I recognize the privilege of my position as the sole facilitator on the field, who had the flexibility and freedom to partially alter curriculum. I recognize that, from within this privilege, my intentions were to better understand/assess your position (i.e. better define the role of the coach and coaching techniques).

This project serves as the genesis of comparing and contrasting the benefits of using drama-techniques when coaching youth sports and is the first look at how drama-enhanced curriculum might change the way youth sports are played and taught.

## **CHAPTER TWO: ANALYZING TEACHING AND COACHING STRATEGIES**

This chapter begins with a section that takes an in-depth look at the drama education strategies applied in practice. It moves into a section pertaining specifically to widely recognized youth soccer strategies. It concludes with a cross-examination of the variant strategies, identifying similarities and differences, and recognizing the qualities that make these combined strategies behoove drama-enhanced coaching.

### Drama Strategies

This section investigates specific strategies employed by the drama practitioners identified in Chapter One: Winifred Ward, Dorothy Heathcote, and Viola Spolin. For the purposes of this thesis, drama is defined as “non-performative theatre methods which explore character, conflict, and story” (Dawson 69n1).

### Creative Drama

Creative drama, formerly referred to as creative dramatics, is a narrative-based, process-centered drama education strategy that was developed and popularized by Winifred Ward. Ward believed ““Creative drama is ... what comes out of the activity of creative dramatics ... [it is] a general term implying all kinds of improvised drama: dramatic play, pantomime, story dramatization, and often puppetry and marionette play’ (Unpublished meeting minutes. 1953. p. 1)” (Libman 25). Ward’s career began at a public school in Michigan, where she had varied

responsibilities, including directing the school play and coaching girls' basketball. Of her basketball team, Ward said:

my basketball girls rarely won [a game]; however, they were always good friends. I met with some surprise in my many duties with physical exercise in the lower grades. I found that if I could add a dramatic element, the children would have enjoyed physical training all morning. For instance, one exercise designed to give the first grade a change was as simple as this: As the children stood alongside their desks, I told them about a snowman standing in front with arms stretched out as his sides like sticks. One child at a time took this part. Then all the other children at their seats were to pick up some snow, pat it into balls, and on a signal throw it with all their might at one of the arms of the snowman. They always aimed accurately and the arm was knocked off, of course. Then, on a signal, the other arm met the same fate; next the snowman's head fell forward; and finally the big climax—the last snowballs knocked the snowman down and he crumpled to the floor. I had no idea how popular that game was going to be! Every child in the room had to have his chance to be the snowman; after a while we had several snowmen at once lined up along the front of the room (McCaslin xxiii).

This passage reveals Ward's recognition that adding creative drama to athletics made them more fun, more engaging, and more desirable for students, because their experience is then supported by "the child's natural love for the dramatic" (Ward, *Creative Dramatics* 3-4). Rather than mandating athletics for purposes such as health or future accolades, creative drama allows students to partake in them purely for enjoyment. Creative drama negates sport being for sport itself, a concept which can be challenging for children of a young age. For the purposes of this thesis, I borrow heavily from the aforementioned strategy of enhancing athletics with creative drama. With the aid of an educator, the child's "free, informal play [is] guided into an orderly creative process" (Ward, *Creative Dramatics* 3-4) and filtered through the application of the sport itself.

In an article titled "Learning Through Creative Dramatics" Margaret S. Woods, a creative dramatics specialist at Seattle Pacific College, wrote "creative dramatics can be integrated with subject matter without losing the art quality ... [because] learning experiences built around

personal involvement through creative drama can enhance acquisition and retention of new facts” (20). Creative dramatics connects to a child’s innate motivation to play, thus applying it to sports through its very nature to implore the student to engage with and ultimately succeed at the sport itself.

In *Drama Worlds: A Framework for Process Drama*, Cecily O’Neill explores what she believes to be the limitations of creative dramatics. Contrary to the spontaneously told basketball-snowman story (above), much of Ward’s inspiration for creative drama came from pre-existing literature. According to O’Neill, using narrative structure as an approach limits “exploration and discovery ... because to work from a storyline implies that there is an ‘it,’ the story, which must be replicated” (39). Edric C. Johnson, an assistant professor at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater in Whitewater, Wisconsin, performed a “qualitative study [examining] non-arts pre-service elementary teachers’ opinions on [three drama educators including] Winifred Ward” (4). Johnson’s partial objective was to assess the comfort levels of non-arts pre-service teachers in synthesizing and replicating the theories and pedagogies of Winifred Ward, specifically creative dramatics. The following response addresses the linear nature of creative dramatics and responds directly to O’Neill’s concerns. Johnson reports that, “in this study, all pre-service teachers supporting Ward were drawn to linear drama ... [they] emphasized how it was helpful for students to have a clear sequence to what they were doing. [One teacher wrote] ‘linear drama is organized around specific goals and objectives with a clear beginning, middle, and end’” (Johnson 12). Especially with children as young as three years old, a linear narrative provides an immediate framework to latch onto. Creative drama forces the educator to remain focused on the story, and in doing so, works to make the participating children use actions and

experiences to act it out. In the process of applying creative drama to youth sport, a narrative framework creates structure, wherein the skill itself becomes the “it” that O’Neill references. The story, reenacted via creative drama, becomes the means to making the soccer purposeful, necessary, and justified.

### Mantle of the Expert

Mantle of the Expert (MoE) is a drama education technique developed and popularized by Dorothy Heathcote. Heathcote had a background in theatre and performance, which was instrumental in her development of MoE. While teaching at Newcastle University, Heathcote intentionally changed the name of her coursework from drama in education to drama *as* education. Instead of looking at drama as a supplemental subject, one that could enhance an educational experience, she saw drama and education as a singular entity. She believed that through drama, learning was achieved. In MoE, the traditional classroom is replaced by student-led learning, as “the teacher [surrenders] the mantle of expertise to the pupils” (Bloom). In Heathcote’s own words: “Mantle of the Expert [is] where the class is set a task in such a way that they function as experts” (Heathcote 44). In action this might look like “... a lesson about conservation [that involves] children acting the part of foresters [or] children might become executives in a biscuit factory, using mathematical and report-writing skills to ensure its smooth functioning” (Bloom). At its essence, MoE is task-based problem-solving, and the collaborative and improvisational drama unfurls through the action. While the teacher guides students through careful language and encouragement, students choose their own roles and relationships, constructing the operational structure of their MoE scenario. By becoming experts, students are

forced to think critically and experientially about finding a solution for the problem at hand. The guise of MoE absolves them of needing to know factually accurate information about the subject, and instead they are free to engage in the discourse necessary to complete their task.

MoE is structured to work in “in a prepared context designed to achieve particular curricular objectives (Heathcote 4). This can be seen clearly in the documentary about Heathcote’s process, *Three Looms Waiting*, directed by Ronald Smedley. At the start of the movie, she enters a classroom of disinterested young boys, all students at a reform school. In mere minutes, she has them deeply engrossed in a MoE scenario set in a Prisoner of War (POW) camp. Heathcote informs all the students that they have rifles, and a boy asks if he can have a bazooka. Calmly but firmly Heathcote responds, “Nobody has bazookas. Nobody has bazookas, is that agreed?” By telling the students they do not have bazookas, Heathcote ensures that they are all playing in the same creative plane. By then asking if they agree, she invites them to refute if they see fit to do so, providing an opportunity for the boys to express their wants and desires as they create their inhabited world. When no one disagrees, she is free to move them further in the MoE experience. By telling and asking, she is both the educator and the doorway to their expertness.

### Teacher in Role

Teacher in Role (TiR) is a strategy, also developed by Heathcote, that is often used in conjunction with MoE, but can be applied for a dramatic experience separately and in and of itself. In TiR “a person is the challenge. When you use a role you gain: a person for the class to respond to; a lifestyle which comes into the room [or space]; a holding device which attracts

interest; something to inquire into that acts as a focus; a specific example of emotional/intelligent life and attitudes to challenge; a pressure exactly where you want it” (O’Neill 44-45). Returning to Johnson’s study offers interesting data regarding TiR. Of the 22 pre-service teachers he asked to take a theoretical stance on a drama leader, fourteen advocated for Heathcote (Johnson 9). This is likely because TiR is a simple concept with complex and valuable results. To achieve results, the teacher must consider exactly what is desired: what does s/he want the class to experience by coming into contact with a new character. This includes “what that pressure is to be; exactly how the role will exert the pressure on the class; which symbolic objects will be essential to communicate the lifestyle; exactly what you want your class to experience through meeting the role” (Heathcote 45). Therefore, the teacher must have a clear understanding of the goals and objectives that will be elucidated during the students’ interaction with the person in role.

Determining the educator’s role can be difficult. In her essay within the collection *A Reflective Practitioner’s Guide to (Mis)Adventures in Drama Education*, Pamela Bowell writes:

I remembered that in the *Three Looms Waiting* lesson, Heathcote took on a very high status role ... the drama was about British soldiers in a German prisoner of war camp. The class, all boys, were the soldiers and she took the role of the officer in charge of the camp. [Why was she] so successful in such a role? ... Firstly, before the drama began, she had negotiated with the class about the content of the drama and they had agreed that she should take that role. [The school] was what is known in the United States as a reform school ... [and] she recognized ... that manifesting such a powerful role in the unremitting manner in which she did would be giving the participants a common cause in uniting against the commandment in order to plot an escape. Her teacherly and artistic judgement led her to select what she determined was the best way in which to play the role, *for this particular group*. ... the high status role is not always, nor indeed, usually, the most effective for TiR. ... the teacher in role occupies a pivotal position in the drama [because] we want to create a dramatic context in which there is an imperative for the participants, themselves, to resolve the central dilemma of the drama. On the other [hand], in contrast, is the knowledge that when their understanding of the social order is placed within the fictional context—even when they are in adult roles—it is almost

inevitable that the children will defer to the higher authority. And if the teacher had taken the highest status role within the drama, this means her! It places the children, arms outstretched, being pulled between two opposing forces and leaves them inert in the middle ... there needs to be a status change *clearly signaled* to the students that reverses the traditional classroom hierarchy [and] this almost always means taking a role that is lower in status than the roles the children are taking in the drama (Bowell 52-55).

As a teacher, it is natural to want to be in the authoritative role. Bowell reflects on her own TiR experience, where she stepped into role as a character with highest authority, juxtaposed with Heathcote's experience in *Three Looms Waiting*, and she recognizes that authority undermines autonomy. When a teacher steps into a role that places him/her in a position of more power than the students, it only reinforces the traditional classroom structure. It does not, as Bowell writes, "create a dramatic context in which there is an imperative for the participants ... to resolve the central dilemma of the drama" (54). This has a domino-like effect, as the students first lose trust in themselves, then the teacher, and eventually, the whole dramatic experience. When the inverse is applied, and the TiR is in a position of lower status than the students, they become agents of their own experience. By intentionally stepping down from his/her power role, the teacher cedes the plot and thusly the direction of the experience to the students. David Booth describes low-level TiR as the following: "the teacher is inside the drama, assisting the students and structuring the work from an indirect, non-specific role" (36). This means that the teacher does not assume a role that will change the direction of the drama or manipulate the experience of the students in role, but rather provides them further opportunities to develop their own characters and experiences. TiR depends not on great acting skills, but on great commitment to the role, and to the impact of the experience. As young people, students are almost never makers of their own decisions. Here, they are given that opportunity, via a structure that still guarantees they are learning. As they find their own footing, they gain momentum and motivation to solve the

problem within the drama. As a dramatic tool, TiR pushes the students to want to solve the problem, because, in the process of doing so, they will have accomplished something for themselves. There is an element of thrill that accompanies being more powerful (even just for a moment and even in fictional play) than your teacher, which is different but tangentially related to a teacher lowering him/herself to a role of a low-status. Using TiR prompts students be decision makers with power in their hands.

### Side-Coaching

One of the main tenets of Viola Spolin's improv work was a technique called side-coaching. In *Improvisation for the Theater* she defines it as, "an assist given by the teacher-director as fellow player to the student-actor during the solving of a problem to help keep focus; a means of giving a student-actor himself within the theater environment; a message to the total organism; a support in helping players to explore the emerging plays" (392). Each explanation bolsters the one it precedes; side-coaching is a way to offer feedback, hints, and re-direction without stopping the activity. Quite literally completed from the side, it keeps the teacher connected, because s/he must watch the game play out, and it keeps the players engaged as they make the necessary adjustments without stopping. In *Theater Games for the Classroom*, Spolin re-defines side-coaching: "sidecoaching is the calling out of just [one] word, that phrase, or that sentence that keeps the player on focus. Sidecoaching phrases arise spontaneously out of what is emerging in the playing area and are given at the time players are in movement. Sidecoaching must guide players toward focus, creating interaction, movement, and transformation" (5). In both function and form, the two definitions are remarkably different. The latter definition,

penned twenty years into Spolin's career, eliminates the hyphen connecting the two words, instead coining one phrase. Spolin seems to have decided that side-coaching was not a hybridization of two ideas, but rather one whole concept. This represents the new definition's directness, a straightforward communication to the side-coach about what s/he needs to accomplish. Van de Water phrases it as, "Neither formal instruction nor direction, sidecoaching is a brief facilitator intervention that players hear and then incorporate into their work as they continue the task at hand" (van de Water et al. 31). Spolin's definition from 1986 succinctly describes the objective of side-coaching by using action words to help steer the side-coach him/herself. The function of side-coaching is to re-direct in the moment, by communicating to the player what s/he needs to fix or alter to succeed. David Booth writes, "as side-coach, the teacher can give encouraging or descriptive commentary as the students take part in drama. By suggesting actions and ideas the students might explore, the teacher can help sustain the drama's momentum" (35). Side-coaching is a means for teachers to heighten learning, via suggestions, feedback, or new direction, with stopping the momentum of the current lesson or game. Interjecting without interfering, it mirrors the reality of making split-second decisions, though for the purposes of learning, alleviates students of needing to make the decisions. They must simply act upon the encouragements of the side-coach.

For my purposes in this thesis, I have chosen to write side-coaching as a hyphenated term, because in current research and application, practitioners write it in a variety of ways, and do not apply standard formatting to the term.

## Improvisation + The Game

The very nature of improvisation is that it is made up on the spot. Spolin referred to this concept as “spontaneity [or] a moment of explosion” (*Improvisation for the Theater* 6). She capitalized on the concept of spontaneous game-play through her development of improv games. These games reinforced her belief that learning was born through freedom, and that freedom was achieved through playing games. She had a “habit of developing games as teaching tools [and] used games for developing specific skills in her students” (van de Water et al. 30). She believed that “games develop personal techniques and skills necessary for the game itself, through playing. Skills are developed at the very moment a person is having all the fun and excitement playing a game has to offer” (*Improvisation for the Theater* 4). Combined, Spolin’s idea was that spontaneous game-play allowed both discovery and freedom. This was further supported by the idea that repetition strengthened skills. Students could play an improv game multiple times, each with a different outcome, and all the while, they would be honing their skill.

Spolin developed extremely specific games and utilized them to make students hyper-aware of various concepts. The ultimate purpose of her games was to hone the skills that the games employed. In her chapter on sensory games she writes: “[they] provide the basis for developing a new kind of sensory awareness ... In stage life ... mashed potatoes are often served in place of ice cream [and] it is not convincing when actors merely behave as if these substitutes are real ... [these games] help players isolate and examine the individual senses” (*Theater Games for the Classroom* 57). Embedded in each game was the development of a specific awareness. For example, “Space Walks ... focus on exploration and awareness of one’s body in movement ... [they give] students a chance to move through and explore the familiar space of

the classroom” (*Theater Games for the Classroom* 35). In a classroom that will transport students, via drama, to a new setting, Space Walks act as a portal. They invite students to determine the aesthetic of their own space, while simultaneously creating physical energy and enthusiasm. Chapter Seven of *Theater Games for the Classroom* is titled “Part of a Whole Games” (67). Within the chapter are numerous games, all of which push students to recognize that their actions have implications on other students, as well as on themselves. Furthermore, the games force students to realize that no one can play alone: they make “both teams become part of the whole” (*Theater Games for the Classroom* 67). Each game had a purpose bigger than the game itself. Spolin trusted the improvisational skills, and as the students used the skills the games required, they heightened the same very same set of skills, becoming ready to apply them elsewhere and in other capacities.

### Soccer Strategies

This section details and categorizes specific coaching strategies identified by highly regarded youth and professional soccer coaches. The current body of literature surrounding coaching youth soccer is primarily comprised of instructional guides (American Sport Education Program, 1995; Blom, 2009; Koger, 2005; Sabiston, 2015; Seefeldt, 1987; Stratton, 2004; Wein, 2009). While little academic research exists about best coaching practices, these instructional books reveal common themes or strategies outlined in the following section of this chapter.

## Develop A Foundation

It is the coach's responsibility to develop a foundational understanding of soccer within their young players. Most often, this is executed in the form of drills. In *101 Great Youth Soccer Drills: Great Drills and Skills for Better Fundamental Play*, former player turned coach Robert Koger writes, "building a strong foundation is necessary ... a must for every player" (13). The foundation is what future knowledge, skills, and understanding of the sport will be built upon. The individual coach determines how to establish a foundation. In some cases, "the development of a task or mastery-oriented climate may enhance young people's intrinsic motivation, persistence, commitment, and work ethic" (Potrac 43). Coaches are tasked with finding ways to teach their young players the technique necessary for a foundational understanding of soccer that will ideally eventually motivate players intrinsically. Most frequently, this manifests via a variety of drills, games, and exercises.

*Survival Guide for Coaching Youth Soccer* by Lindsey Blom and Tim Blom contains six chapters on developing foundational skills, each of which contains "10 simple drills" for reinforcing the skill that is the subject of the chapter. These drills have titles like "Check, Pass, Shoot" (Blom 107), which teaches proper shooting technique. The drills frequently have names that reflect exactly what they require players to do; they are neither creative nor fun. "Effective coaching ... means creating enjoyable, motivating and developmentally valuable experiences" (Potrac 45). A drill like "Check, Pass, Shoot" is developmentally valuable, but for young people who are still developing a foundation, its lack of freedom, fun, or spontaneity negates any possibility of it being truly motivating or enjoyable.

## Keep It Fun

In *Youth Soccer: From Science to Performance*, Gareth Stratton shares his experience: soccer coaches “have two major goals: the first is to engage players in lifelong participation in the sport; and the second is to maintain an introduction to youth soccer ... that continues to inspire and motivate youngsters to participate” (2-3). This means that during the establishment of the foundation, it is imperative to keep the children enjoying the process of learning; this will ensure that the introductory lessons foster a love of playing, which motivates them to return to the field. Stratton believes “the ‘art’ of the soccer coach is to use all the tools available in a manner that is appropriate for the child and motivates the child to keep practising and improving” (2-3). Put in other terms, “the coach [is] central to any attempt to promote young people’s positive sport experiences” (Potrac 43). A coach is a young player’s window into the sport and must be cognizant of this influence. If the coach does not make the experience pleasurable, the player will not want to continue participating. As such, before leading a session, a coach must consider what s/he hopes the outcome will be and how to make playing soccer fun. This has a direct impact on how the session is coached, because what the coach puts forth is reflective of what s/he wants players to experience, learn, and ultimately take away. The key element of how to make youth soccer more fun is unfortunately missing from most manuals. They tout keeping practices simple and short, both of which are ideas that will aid in facilitating fun. However, despite the repeated admonitions that fun is critical no strategies are proffered as to how to bring fun to the forefront of practice.

Among the monotonous drills are attempts to make teaching fundamentals more exciting. *Survival Guide* details two more creative drills, entitled “Traffic Cop” and “Sharks and

Minnows” (Blom 54-55), which involve minor levels of taking on roles and inter-team relations. Within *101 Great Youth Soccer Drills* there is a game called “Soccer Golf” (Koger 22) which is meant to work on passing and kicking in a non-traditional way. Unfortunately, though, these creative games are anomalous. More common are drills like “Control the Ball and Beat your Opponent” (Wein 110) or “Through the Cones” (Koger 54), which offer no room for naturalistic youthful play or imagination on the field.

Horst Wein, author of *Developing Youth Football Players*, believes “children will learn quickly, effectively and thoroughly only when the demands of the training sessions ... match their intellectual, psychological and motor skills” (vii). Coaches must push themselves out of their natural boundaries to connect with young players on a level they can recognize. This includes restraining themselves from defining success in youth soccer with the same terminology they define adult or professional soccer. Children will not want to continue playing if they do not feel they are succeeding, because success directly corrects to fun. Koger writes, “the more fun you make the game for the players ... the more successful you and your team will be. You are the most important aspect of youth soccer. You are the coach” (x). Koger also points out that if the students are enjoying themselves, the coach is likely to be, as well. There is an inherently reciprocal nature between coach and students; the coach grows more successful as the students succeed. By finding a way to make aspects of foundation-building fun, coaches fulfill their role and enhance their own process. Bringing the element of fun into practices excavates opportunities for young players to succeed, while simultaneously is “keep[ing] the creative element ... active” (Sabiston 142). The coach is the master of the experience, both for the children playing and for themselves.

## Similarities and Differences in Drama Education and Soccer Coaching Strategies

Cross-analyzing the drama education strategies with the soccer strategies reveals similar intentions but very different execution. Both drama and soccer seek to impart knowledge on children, but drama is taught with flexibility, fluidity, and spontaneity. It is creative by nature. On the other hand, soccer is inflexible, and generally instructed by coaches who may not be familiar or comfortable with conceptually adjusting the sport or enhancing drills to make them more fun and engaging.

Drama is a means of providing ownership: of giving children creative freedom to play, and thus to experience the joy and wonder that comes from play and brings them back to play. The referenced coaching books advocate for making soccer a fun experience but do not offer input on how to do so. Instead, rote and repetitive drills were encouraged. This demonstrates a key difference between the pedagogy of sport and drama: an improvisational nature. While drama strategies depend on an improvisational nature of generating content and a teacher who is confident in supporting this environment, pre-determined and dry soccer drills do not allow children to exercise any creative freedom and may make coaches who are unpracticed or unfamiliar with improvisational leadership uncomfortable.

In drama, the teacher remains engaged and involved, but has many options of how to do so, including side-coaching, narrating, or perhaps even stepping into role. In soccer, the coach is expected to run the practice by offering direction and clarification, never deviating from the initial role of coach. The heavy-handedness of a coach's feedback is very different from side-coaching, which is quick and instructional, intended only to re-focus or steer. Traditional

coaching involves distinguishing between the right way and the wrong way, rather than helping the child to find their own best path.

Sabiston, whose book specifically focuses on keeping the fun in youth soccer, claims “kids at this age need to focus on touching the ball by dribbling it and playing fun games that happen to involve ... a soccer ball” (9). Like Spolin, Sabiston encourages using games as a teaching tool, so students are engaged and involved from start to finish. Playing a game is a challenge that children love to undertake; there is the potential of winning or trying again, which is fundamentally different than failing to complete a drill correctly. However, for a soccer coach, whose background might be in a field where creativity is not prominent, developing these games or making the experience fun can be more challenging than it is for a drama teacher. This is exacerbated by the fact that the coach who knows fun is directly correlated to success is under pressure to deliver, whereas drama’s inherent playfulness leaves more flexibility for students to devise fun for themselves.

This cross-analyzation demonstrates there is great potential to enhance youth soccer by applying drama strategies to coaching objectives. As they currently exist, drama strategies are built upon the child’s natural inclination to play, they incorporate improvisation, which complements a child’s nature of rapidly changing and developing ideas, and they offer the teacher flexibility in structure. Coaching soccer via drama strategies serves the experience of both the coach and the young players by creatively developing a foundational while still keeping the learning process fun.

## **CHAPTER THREE: DEFINING THE ROLE OF THE TEACHING ARTIST AND COACH**

Within their respective fields, the best practice teaching and coaching strategies detailed in Chapter Two require a high level of detail, precision, and intentionality to execute. They also require the executor to be confident in how to manipulate his/her own role within the created experience, so that s/he serves as both instructor and observer.

This chapter begins by examining the best practices of teaching drama. It then explores the best practices of coaching youth soccer. A cross-examination of the two roles identifies the varying overlapping and disparate qualities. The chapter concludes with the presentation and defense of a new role, the coaching-artist, a carefully hybridized combination of the two fields.

### The Role of the Teaching Artist

Eric Booth defines a teaching artist as the following: “a practicing artist who develops the complementary skills, curiosities and habits of mind of an educator, who can effectively engage a wide range of participants in learning experiences in, through, and about the arts” (The History of Teaching Artistry). This section pivots from traditional drama teachers to the role of teaching artists, and how they can best execute drama pedagogy.

When teaching creative drama, Winifred Ward prioritized facilitating a lesson that brought students to a place where play and art coalesced into a singular experience. To guide her own process, Ward developed five core beliefs about how children should be educated:

1. Schools should give children the chance to practice democracy.
2. Children should learn through meaningful experiences.

3. All children should be encouraged to think creatively.
4. Children should be educated through social living.
5. The whole child should be educated—physically, intellectually, and emotionally.

*(Playing Making with Children 1947, 22)*

As their teacher, she believed it was her responsibility to create environments that reflected these principles. A democratic classroom was one where students' ideas had as much voice as the ideas of the teacher. This would lead to the "meaningful experiences" that she wanted students to have. It is not within a teacher's power to ever truly gauge how meaningful an experience is, but s/he can make the classroom environment atypical, including using play and imagination and pretend to elevate learning. This allows the third and fourth tenets to be possible. Ward was, as she reveals in the final belief, using her role as a teacher to educate "the whole child," which meant that she was seeing each person as a sum of his/her parts, and not just an empty vessel to be filled with knowledge. Creative drama allowed her students to rise up and out of their seats, using their whole bodies while they learned. In her role, she took the time to understand what her students needed and how they learned best, and she applied this to her classroom. Her motivation to bring knowledge to her students was a crucial aspect of how she viewed her own role. "She was a humanitarian utterly convinced of the power of drama to create knowledge [and she exhibited] unwavering faith in others to develop their unique talents to the fullest extent" (Wiginton 155-156). She resoundingly made sure that she, as the person who held the power of her students' educational experiences, made it possible for her five beliefs to be fulfilled.

Teaching artists also need to be comfortable giving up their authoritative role. Viola Spolin employed side-coaching rather than more common feedback methods that place the

teacher in a position of power. She believed that “sidecoaching alter[ed] the traditional relationship of teacher and student, creating a moving relation. It allow[ed] the teacher/director an opportunity to step into the excitement of playing (learning) in the same space, with the same focus as the players” (Spolin, *Theater Games for the Classroom* 6). Spolin understood that teachers can learn something from their students, even as their students are in the process of learning themselves, especially because “there is no right or wrong way to solve a workshop problem” (Spolin, *Theater Games for the Classroom* 9).

One facet of the teaching artist role is a willingness to engage with the students on their level. Spolin approved of teachers joining in drama games, so much so that she encouraged “that the teacher become a fellow player” (Spolin, *Theater Games for the Classroom* 11). This level of direct interaction means that in a dramatic classroom, the traditional educational hierarchy is disrupted; it is replaced by space of equality. When teaching artists intentionally challenge the presumed relationship between student and teacher, they shift the power dynamic of the classroom from the hands of one to the hands of many. The teaching artist has given students the ability to lead the course of their experience.

It can be helpful to think of the teaching artist’s role as a power-giver, instead of a power-taker. At the beginning of *Three Looms Waiting* (Smedley), Heathcote states what she knows the boys believe to be true: “I am here to do a play.” Ultimately this is not why she is there, but by agreeing with their assumptions without asking, Heathcote asserts that they are correct; she gives them power. Then, very subtly, she brings them into the drama. She never bluntly says they are beginning, but rather, invites them each to reach in front of their feet and pick up a gun. Each boy does, and their investment is clearly shown on their faces. Heathcote never makes the drama

feel like something they have to do, but rather something as natural as stopping to have lunch. After the conclusion of a drama, Heathcote engages in discussion with the participants to unpack and analyze what has occurred. Heathcote approaches the students as though she is an equal; this is key. When she talks to them, she sits on the ground with them, not above them, but among them. She was purposefully hyper-sensitive to the nature of power: her mission as an educator was to ensure the children she worked with never felt she had stripped them of theirs. She used drama as her equalizer: “I build trust ... by working as a teacher, negotiating within the real world, while in role I build trust in the [dramatic] virtual world” (Heathcote 74). She was insistent upon pursuing the drama only as long as the youth with whom she was working were in favor of the roles and rules that were being followed. She advocated operating “from two positions of power. The *doing* position, where [teachers] are involved in the action of their art, and the *seeing* position from which they perceive what is happening and what might need to be done” (Heathcote 74). In many moments, she stopped the drama to check in with her students. If they rejected a concept, she asked them how to change it. As a teacher, Heathcote never acted as a dictator, but rather created a democratic environment, much like the one Ward also strove to achieve.

In her introduction to Heathcote’s essay “Creativity,” (housed within the book *Dorothy Heathcote on Drama and Education*), drama expert Cecily O’Neill compiled a list of six key components she believed made the “alchemy” of Heathcote’s teaching work, and that serve to benefit the role of other teaching artists. They are as follows:

1. Imagination;
2. The ability to sense the general mood of a group;

3. The capacity to put the children's needs before the teacher's plans;
4. The ability to employ sensitive changes of register in communication with the group;
5. The ability to look—to perceive the real situation;
6. The ability to listen –to perceive the real statement (30).

This list reveals that the teaching artist's role is as much about being talented in the field as it is about emotional sensibility. The teaching artist is there to perceive and perform: s/he is the vehicle for the students' learning. The teaching artist cannot prioritize themselves, or they reclaim the power that has been given away. The teaching artist must be able to see the classroom on two co-functioning planes: the one that is engaged in dramatic content, and the one in which these are young people with emotional and developmental needs. Remaining connected to both of these truths allows the teaching artist to maintain a dramatic environment that is successful, democratic, and imaginative.

Ward, Heathcote, and Spolin were open, empathetic, creative, and quick. They were malleable to students' needs and willing to flow with their ideas. They were the adult projections of the students' potentiality, and they proved that if children are invested in the dramatic experience, they will learn while they play, and the role of the drama teacher will be fulfilled.

### The Role of the Coach

In the late 1930s, German-American social psychologist Kurt Lewin observed how well athletes performed when led by coaches of varying styles. At the conclusion of his experiment, he identified three distinct coaching styles.

The first style is autocratic. Colloquially known as bossy or authoritarian, an autocratic style is one where the input of the players is minimal. Instead, the coach makes all the decisions and players are expected to do just as they are told. In dramatic terms, the coach becomes a puppeteer, and the players become his puppets. Autocratic coaching is shown to be more successful with older players than younger players.

The second style is democratic. Democratic coaches are the most personable or reasonable. Democratic coaches value input from their players and “facilitate decision making and goal setting with ... [their] athletes instead of dictating to them” (Three Styles of Coaching). These coaches give players more autonomy than an autocratic coach does, which allows players to help shape their own experiences and have a hand in the outcome of their participation.

The final style is laissez-faire. French for “let do,” this style of coaching employs the idea that left to thrive on their own merits, a happy team will be a successful team. There is little to no input from the coach, who is making a conscientious choice to let the team develop on their own volition.

Of these three styles, it has been proven that young people respond and learn best from a democratic coach. This is evidenced in the *Routledge Handbook for Sports Coaching*, which says:

Martin *et. al* (1999) found that young people ... preferred more democratic styles of coaching where young people were involved in the decision-making. They were less likely to prefer autocratic coaching, desiring directive behavior only in relation to instructional feedback and broader team decisions. Democratic styles ... have been shown to foster self-determination, encourage young people’s participation in decision-making, de-emphasise outcomes and increase perceived competence. Intrinsic motivation and persistence may be increased when the coach is flexible and provides a context where players perceive autonomy support and opportunities for self-determination (Potrac 44).

A democratic coach honors the voices, thoughts, and ideas of the young people that are being coached, maintaining a belief that players will grow from their own discoveries and efforts, and players are thus able to “develop a sense of their own control over training” (Three Styles of Coaching). Coaches who put energy and effort into creating positive relationships with their players will have an impact on the players’ desire to participate, because their behavior makes athletes feel supported, which makes them self-determined. In a similar vein, “The Impact of Coaching Styles on the Motivation and Performance of Athletes,” a master’s thesis written by Mike Marcone in 2017, concludes that a coach who exhibits autonomy-supported behavior will best motivate athletes to play to the best of their abilities.

The significance of positive youth development (PYD) is an important consideration for coaches in their role. PYD is defined as a “strength-based approach [that regards] youth as having ‘resources to be developed’ rather than ‘problems to be solved’” (Holt 1). *Positive Youth Development Through Sports* by Nicholas Holt advocates for coaches to familiarize themselves with the qualities that constitute Positive Youth Development (PYD), so they can potentialize them. “A growing body of literature highlights the integral role that quality interpersonal relationships play in facilitating positive youth development (PYD) in sport” (Holt 137). Coaches must prioritize not what they want or need but what the young people they are working with require. Wein goes so far as to draw up a “Bill of Rights” for youth soccer players, including “the right to enjoyment” and “the right to play as a child” (9). This is supported by the article “Coach Behaviours and Practice Structures in Youth Soccer: Implications for Talent Development,” which purports that some of the shortcomings in coaching come from a lack of self-awareness and intention in the coaches; coaches are unaware of the impacts of their

behavior, so it continues unchanged. Further proving this point, the paper “The Fun Integration Theory: Toward Sustaining Children and Adolescents Sport Participation” discusses the results and significance of how children perceive having fun while participating in a sport. The results of the study indicated that one of the highest-ranking factors in how much fun players were having was a coach who made the experience positive by being informed, respectful, encouraging, patient, friendly, and even silly. Sabiston believes coaches need to “make it fun, keep it simple ... be positive and friendly, be supportive and praise frequently, ‘play’ more and ‘coach’ less, know your players individually, [and] teach by playing game” (12). To “coach less” is to take a democratic stance, moving away from the role of an authoritative figure and away from being an uninvolved laissez-faire figurehead.

Vern Seefeldt, author of *Handbook for Youth Sports Coaches*, suggests that being a successful coach begins with how instructions are given: “providing clear instructions is an essential part of effective teaching (37)” Making sure that players understand what is expected of them gives them the necessary tools to succeed in their undertaking. A player will not perform the drill or exercise correctly if s/he did not understand what it was, and this will not motivate them to continue participating. A coach must remain cognizant that “it may be damaging in the long-term for younger players to [be coached autocratically. They] have no input in their training which could impact their attitudes toward sports moving forward” (Three Styles of Coaching). Giving instructions that are didactic or presumptuous prevents young players from the acceptance of misunderstanding, as well as the enthusiasm to try new methods. Rather than lecturing their players, coaches need to find a way to connect and to engage with them, because “involving the players ... obliges them to think, to organize collected information and come to

conclusions, to evaluate and judge, to imagine, invent, and create new moves or combinations” (Wein 4). Furthermore, he writes, “giving the players solutions to memorise should be replaced by presenting them with tailor-made problems that they have to resolve on their own” (5). Wein recognizes coaches cannot play the sport for their players but must give them the skills and critical thinking prowess to play themselves.

The role of the youth coach is determined by the coach; they have freedom to be as involved or uninvolved as they please, though neither the autocratic method nor laissez-faire coaching have proven themselves to be most successful with young people. In the role of the young person’s coach, it is most lauded to give top-priority to the needs and experience of the players, thusly letting that determine the course of action that coaches take. Research shows that the most successful youth coaches are those who fulfill their role democratically: listening, prioritizing fun, and giving clear and reasonable instructions to their players.

#### Differences and Similarities Between the Roles

Much of what makes a teaching artist thrive is the early acceptance that the role is often more passive than active. “Successful drama teachers also guide, rather than direct, and are able to work with others, are considerate of others’ opinions, and offer their own ideas. Also, teachers need to invite children to create and maintain the dramatic world, through the use of open-ended questions, animated expressions, and enthusiastic responses to the children’s ideas” (Wee 490). If the role is done well, students are armed with the power to think and activate their own thoughts. The same is true for youth sport coaches. Children in both the classroom and on the soccer field blossom in an environment rife with “sympathetic leadership, imagination, and

respect for others' ideas." (Wee 490). Ward, Heathcote, and Spolin navigated the role of the drama teacher by being enthusiastic and exceptionally aware. Each woman also made sure her actions and decisions were motivated by the experience of the child, determining both successes and necessary adjustments to her teaching by the response of the students. Many coaches do not have this highly attuned sense of self or the awareness of a child's needs. They feel it is their responsibility to dictate information, rather than letting it speak for itself. While drama is a field that emphasizes creativity, celebrating differences and work completed in a non-traditional, boundary-pushing way, sport carries with it a prescribed understanding of right and wrong, which frequently manifests in autocratic coaching. Though democratic coaching has been proven to be more effective, coaches often do not have the tools to employ this practice in their role. A quote from *Positive Youth Development in Sport* nicely sums up the disparity: "those of us who work in sport need to create opportunities for young people to be able to explore themselves, to find a self that feels like it fits, and negotiate a way of living that might involve diverse roles and identities" (Holt 224). Holt feels that those working in sport are not currently creating exploratory opportunities for young people because, although it is recognized as the best and right thing to do, it goes against the grain of what coaches have been taught. To further the divide, "most players are in awe of their coach because of their positional power" (Duke et al. 3.4). From the onset of a sporting experience (as soon as there is a coach in a coach's role and players in their role) there is an assumed power rift, paralleling the traditional classroom dynamic of teacher and student. The drama strategies explored in Chapter Two reveal ways to mitigate power dynamic challenges, though no similarly direct solutions have been presented for coaches. The answer may lie with a coach who is willing to step back and let their athletes think

creatively and imaginatively on the field, like the teaching artist who guides but remains active and present. The coach becomes a guiding force, rather than a domineering presence. The coach is then an instrumental mentor, raising players who will grow into team leaders, can problem solve and communicate on the field, and know when to take a chance and do something unexpected. A coach who steps back acknowledges that s/he is nurturing the next generation; coaches may be fearful of relinquishing their power because they may never get it back. Teaching players to share power, though, shows them that power is not something to covet, but rather something to spread, because it is more powerful when it is shared than when it is singly held.

It may be helpful to look at both drama and sport through the lenses of process and product/performance. In her article “Drama as a Valuable Learning Medium in Early Childhood,” Victoria Brown offers the following definition of process drama: “[a] medium for learning: a dynamic teaching methodology in which teacher and children collaborate to create an imaginary dramatic world and work within that world to explore a problem, a situation, or a story, not for an audience, but for the benefit of the children themselves” (165). In contrast, theatre, which is more traditionally recognized, is intended for an audience; though some learning may happen by osmosis, the performance is the crux of the experience, and there is no intentional educational component. If these lenses are applied to sport, we see that process soccer is therefore an experiential means of teaching young children the fundamentals of the sport. Product/performance soccer is like a theatrical performance: the game is played out for an audience, with no learning goals, but rather the objective to have a winner and a loser.

Within the field of TYA, the delineation between drama and theatre is widely acknowledged. In the field of athletics, “Lyle (2002) and Lyle and Cushion (2010) have argued that achieved understanding and clarity about what the nature of coaching actually is can only be achieved when a clear demarcation exists between the acts of the sports leader (basic introductory role), the sports coach instructor (mainly developing skills), and the sports coach (working with competition focus)” (Potrac 31). By this definition, a sports leader is engaging in process sport, while a sports coach leads a player/team in performance/product sport. The overlap between a teaching artist’s role and a youth soccer’s coach’s role then becomes clearer: to teach the material to the best of their ability.

### Coaching-Artist

In returning to the guiding question about using drama-based strategies to enhance my own youth soccer coaching abilities, it became clear the existing strategies and disparate roles of teaching artist and coach did not sufficiently define the intended outcome. In order to accurately describe the role encapsulated by combining drama-based strategies with youth soccer, I present the title coaching-artist.

A coaching-artist is a hybrid of a coach and a teaching artist. In this role, the coaching-artist blends coaching, artistry, and teaching to deliver soccer fundamentals in an intentionally dramatic experience. The coaching-artist uses best practice strategies from the fields of drama and sport, executed via behaviors proven most successful for both drama teachers and youth coaches. The objective of a coaching-artist is to use drama strategies to bridge the chasm between idealized coaching principles and current realities. The article “Coach Behaviours and

Practice Structures in Youth Soccer: Implications for Talent Development” claims that “skills learnt using explicit instruction and feedback have been shown to be more likely to break down under stress ... compared with those learnt using instructional techniques that promote implicit learning” (Cushion 1635). Drama strategies emphasize the learning of information in a transitive manner, without acute awareness of what has been learned, and therefore are extremely well-suited as a learning medium for soccer skills.

In her PhD dissertation, Fiona McDonagh, a Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow in Drama and Theatre Studies at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, and former Artistic Director of Cups & Crowns Children’s Theatre, defines co-creation as the following:

a set of beliefs and behaviours that teachers enact in their practice. ... It can be characterised by features such as teacher and students collaborating and sharing power, artistic action and the act of creating something new. The presence of ‘co’ in co-creating drama relates to the partnership that happens between teacher and students, whereby they operate as co-participants and co-artists (McDonagh 7).

With references to collaboration, power sharing, and the creation of something new, co-creation represented the ideal execution of coaching-artistry. True co-creation is impossible when working with very young children, because power between coach and players/teacher and students can never be fully equalized, but the concept served as a beacon of possibility, and a reminder to strive for behavior that prioritized the experience of the young people.

## CHAPTER FOUR: BEING A COACHING-ARTIST

This chapter critically examines the results of applying the drama strategies from Chapter Two to eight weeks of soccer curriculum. This process occurred in Fall 2019, with three classes of children between the ages of three to five years old. This chapter also investigates my role as a coaching-artist, including how specific changes in practice and behavior amplified or diminished successes, as detailed in the journal kept throughout. The same journal holds recorded reflections on variance, brought on by reflection-for-action (Thompson and Pascal 2012), between the first, second, and third classes, which will be analyzed in this chapter. Finally, this chapter offers ideas and suggestions for coaches with little to no prior theatre experience to successfully implement coaching-artist pedagogy into their own practice. This chapter is intentionally organized by the same theatrical teaching strategies explored in Chapter Two, so the reader is privy to witnessing how the drama strategies enhanced the existing curriculum. For the purposes of this thesis, impact is defined by the following: engagement, enthusiasm, recall, execution and a desire to continue learning/playing. Many of the drama strategies and exercises referenced below are not just adapted for soccer, but also adapted for a much younger age group than many of them were first implemented with.

### Actor's Toolbox

As a coaching-artist, the Actor's Toolbox is useful for reviewing the core rules of soccer. In a drama class, intentionally using "materials" from the Actor's Toolbox (body, voice, imagination, focus) is often as direct as encouraging students to "take out their bodies" or "turn

on their imaginations.” In a soccer setting, these tools do not need to be as obviously presented. Instead, the coach alone can keep track of the tools, ensuring that each one is used, both separately and together. Rather than just repeating the rules, which creates a didactic and mundane atmosphere, players can use the Actor’s Toolbox to physicalize them. This creates a call-and-response activity where each rule has an accompanying physical gesture: showing their listening ears, flexing to show how big and strong they are, and putting their hands behind their backs to reiterate how there are no hands in soccer. This allows players to vocalize early on the session, which is an early building-block to empowering players’ voices throughout the process. Using the Actor’s Toolbox allows coach to see which students are fully engaging, partially engaging, or completely disengaged. It also prepares students physically, verbally, and mentally to creatively engage in the rest of the class.

### Creative Drama

Creative drama, the narrative-based, process-centered strategy that implies all forms of improvised drama, is instrumental in heightening players’ enthusiasm and details for playing. It is a means of navigating students into the setting of a session’s theme. This involves using heavily detailed descriptions of the thematic setting, as well as asking students what they see, hear, smell, or even taste. Pantomime, or the acting out without words or sounds, is an excellent way to elevate the drama. The objective of creative drama is to create an immersive and exciting atmosphere that players have bought into the legitimacy of, so it is key to readily improvise and practice democracy: engage with their ideas and validate them. If a student points into the distance and claims to see an elephant, you should also see the elephant. If a student wants to

pick fruit from a tree, reach up high and pick the fruit. Describe its shape, size, color, texture, and taste. When you take a bite, react – was it good? Was it sour? The more you visualize, describe, and show what is happening and where you are, the more they will believe.

One of the purposes of incorporating creative drama into soccer practices is to heighten players' enthusiasm via details, in order to give them content to connect with. After establishing heavily detailed descriptions of the thematic setting, use guided storytelling to connect each theme to a danger (sometimes supplied by the students themselves) that lies just beyond the soccer cones, thus reinforcing the boundaries of the field. Invested in the story, students will choose to stay in-bounds of their own volition. Details can be further expounded upon while running the length of the field. For each leg that players run, envision and then narrate a moment that will bring them closer and closer to total immersion in the theme and setting. If problems or distractions arise from the storytelling, the coaching-artist may manipulate the story to solve the problem in context without diminishing or ignoring a student's ideas.

An example from my class shows what this guided storytelling looks like in practice, as well as some of the challenges that may arise. The theme for Week Seven was pirates. Through guided storytelling, I led players onto the ship. Immediately, students vocalized about the dangers of sharks and storms. As the coaching-artist, it behooved me to use improv and affirm their ideas; this validation encouraged them to continue committing. As we completed our lap around the field, students identified other ships in the distance and treasure chests, which signaled to me that they were prepared to engage. While running four lengths of the field, I adjusted my original plan to instead include the shark that students had imagined earlier. The first run was our journey aboard and helped us get our sea legs. Then, using detailed pantomime,

each student put on an eye patch. Prior to the third run, we noticed the shark, motivating us to complete the third run as a means of getting away from it. After the completion of the third run, students insisted the shark was still following us. When a student noted that the shark had followed us, I adjusted the story so that we each lost a leg to the shark. Using detailed narrative pantomime again, I guided students into putting on a peg leg. To ensure that our running form was not sacrificed, we practiced “running with a peg leg” before completing the fourth run. After confirming our eye patches were still on securely, we completed the fourth run.

As a coaching-artist, the goal is to facilitate drama and soccer through the lenses of play and technique. At the conclusion of our opening ritual, students were yelling about their adventure and laughing with silly joy. The incorporation of pantomime and detailed descriptors as inspired by creative drama proves to increase comprehension and investment early on. It allows instructions to be delivered in a manner that is digestible and relatable for students, which in turn makes them more excited to participate in the remainder of the lesson.

### Teacher in Role + Mantle of the Expert

Using TiR to take on thematically-influenced role is an additional means of giving students the playful, fun experience they crave while remaining cognizant of what needs to be achieved during the lesson. TiR is a simple concept easily amplified with techniques similar to those utilized when practicing creative drama. The coaching-artist chooses a role that makes sense in the pre-existing setting and steps into it, thus allowing the drama to naturally progress with and around this role. The more committed the coaching-artist is to the role, the more interested the players will be. When using TiR, it important to continue honoring students’

thoughts and ideas, while still driving the crux of the lesson. This is achieved by manipulating games that involve TiR so that the students participate as themselves, or all in the same role, which allows the coaching-artist to remain in role without having to navigate the variant ideas of every child in their individual role. Additionally, stepping into a lower-level role is very successful, because from there the TiR does not direct the action, but rather responds to decisions made by students. Stepping into role as a villain or an inane character is often a successful lower-level character that will make players laugh. It is funny to see a coach acting so silly; to complement that, intentionally demonstrative and dejected reactions in response to a villain's "failure to succeed" will lead to tremendous amusement on behalf of the players. This will encourage them to continue using their new skill correctly. Humor is an extremely powerful tool: "a coach's humorous attitude holds implications for the coach-athlete relationship, as it will allow athletes a humorous attitude as well ... shared humour creates feelings of belonging and community" (Potrac 230-231). Along with encouraging students to use technique, TiR is a way to reinforce students' desire to continue playing the game.

Mantle of Expert (MoE) involves giving students a role, and in that role, asking them to complete task-based problem-solving. Again, this should always be thematically relevant. Using a mantle-like technique is beneficial for the players because they all undertake a singular role, and thus can learn from one another's example. It also allows the coaching-artist to act uniformly, demonstrating similar behavior with each player so that no one child is receiving more or less attention. Combining MoE influences and TiR makes it possible for players to become more deeply engrossed with the theme and for them to learn each session's skill by doing it because it was necessary for the character they are playing to solve or prevent a problem.

This ensures that players are engaged and learning, while still allowing the coach to assess their completion of the newly learned technique.

A moment from the sixth week of my research elucidates successes and challenges of using MoE and TiR. The theme was jungle, and in accordance with the curriculum, I told all of the children that we were going to be monkeys. In the same way that Heathcote, in *Three Looms Waiting* (Smedley), brought boys into the POW camp by having them visualize and pick up their guns, I used our morning ritual as a transition process into monkeys. In Week Two, my idea to be veteran astronaut had not worked as a role partly because it took power away from the players, but also because it did not present a problem to solve. In MoE, students are always given a problem that, in role, they must find a solution to. During the third leg of our runs, we used pantomime to collect bananas, and our fourth run to bring them home. Once there, I explained to the children that today their soccer balls would be bananas, and above everything else, they needed to protect them. This raised the level of investment immensely, as they had just collected these bananas and not want to have their hard work for naught. As monkeys, the players were experts, and they unwittingly applied skills they had learned from previous sessions. This reinforced the success of this project, because players were utilizing technique without the context of the dramatic scenario in which it was learned and supporting the idea that “role helps them *do*, and the teacher helps them *see*” (Heathcote 74). Coaching-artistry was embedding soccer technique into their memories and bodies. When I stepped into role as a snake with an immense dislike for bananas, the children knew immediately that their objective was to shield the ball past me. When I stepped into role as a giant hungry monkey who wanted to eat their bananas, the children once again knew that they needed to protect the ball. The foundational

nature of the skills being taught meant that often the role I assumed was one of a villain or form of danger, and the students needed to keep their balls safe from me. The goal was that, rather than have students feel daunted by my power, they instead felt empowered by the skills they demonstrated when they kept the ball away from me.

### Side-Coaching

As a tool for a coaching-artist, side-coaching is viable during any strategy or activity, especially when giving feedback and or assessing a player. Side-coaching helps “participants focus ... create interaction ... refine and revise movement ... and engage in transformation” (van de Water 32-33). The purpose of side-coaching is to quickly re-direct by communicating what needs to be fixed or altered. It supports action, rather than halting it, and it can be used for correctional or reinforcement purposes. The short and active nature of the dialogue it generates makes young participants feel encouraged to continue, instead of disparaged. Side-coaching is adaptable in its purpose, which makes it well-suited to moves along with the ever-changing nature of dramatic activities and the speed of the soccer games.

By using side-coaching, the coaching-artist allows for continued movement about the field while still offering feedback or suggestions, all without halting players’ momentum after they have begun a game or a skill review. Side-coaching is a tool for assessment as well: the coach-artist takes stock of who is or is not engaged, and then side-coaches those who are demonstrating lower levels of engagement while praising those who were highly engaged. This puts the onus on students to modify their behavior to reflect that of those being praised, or to continue praise-worthy behavior for further accolades. In this manner, side-coaching lets “the

games to do the work. When students feel they ‘did it themselves,’ the teacher has succeeded” (Spolin, *Theater Games for the Classroom* 11). Side-coaching also allows a coaching-artist to correct any accidental missteps without calling attention to them or needing to start something over completely. With its quick nature and ability to re-direct, coaches can side-coach students into performing an exercise one more time, if necessary. Side-coaching prevents a heavy-hand when delivering information, and instead keeps the atmosphere and energy light and fun.

The benefits of side-coaching were very evident in Weeks Eight and Two, shared here to demonstrate what it looks like in practice. To celebrate our last session of the season, I had amplified the theme into a party. My hope was that students would be exceptionally engaged if their parents were guests at the party, so I planned that one length of the runs would include delivering an invitation to them. It was to be the third run, but the third run is always away from parents, not toward them, and I miscalculated. To invite their families, students had to run an extra distance. Using side-coaching, I was able to instruct players to run back to me and to let me know if their parents had said yes. When some parents started to meander toward the field, I was able to side-coach the students and parents back to their appropriate positions. Without side-coaching, the miscommunication might have resulted in parents on the field or students who did not want to play any further. Instead, the lesson did not stop, and both the players, the parents, and I were able to continue on with the session.

During Week Two, when we voyaged to space, I used side-coaching to amplify the feeling of moving without gravity. I offered players creative input regarding the shape of their bodies and steps without having to stop the skill review, bring everyone back to the starting position, and eventually begin again. Players looked forward to hearing what I would share with

them, frequently calling out my name from the other side of the field or asking me to look at them. Side-coaching is also most useful when the coaching-artist chooses a vocal quality with enough volume for individual side-coaching to be applicable to multiple children. During Week Seven, I side-coached one student about holding onto his treasure (soccer ball) more carefully. Immediately after, the next player stood up to score a goal, and announced, “I’ve got to be careful with my treasure!”

### Improv

Improv gives coaching-artists permission to navigate the worlds they have created with their players. Essentially the ability to say yes and move forward with the present situation, improv is invaluable in drama, especially when used in tandem with other strategies. Though it may require deviating from original intentions, improvising within strategies can often make them more impactful. As children have ideas, improv allows coaching-artist to make them a reality. David Booth claims that in a successful drama experience “the teacher has the responsibility for the framing and action of the work ... [and] the students are in control of the ... direction of the drama” (76). Furthermore, improv is linked to the freedom to think broadly, quickly, and creatively about content that complements drama-enhanced soccer, including problem solving. It is imperative to stay attuned to the fluctuating needs and aesthetic of a class, and coaches who are comfortable improvising can amend lessons smoothly.

The following example from my classes shows how using improv can benefit the coaching-artist and players. When preparing for Week Two, themed Outer Space, I had asked, “What would class look like if I was in role for the entirety of it?” As mentioned above, I

intended to greet students as a veteran astronaut, one whose space ship had coincidentally landed on their field. After introductions, I, as the astronaut, would invite the players aboard my ship. However, this TiR exercise became complicated when my research objectives did not align with what the students envisioned for their roles based on the theme. Players were not prepared for a teacher in role, because, at that point in the season, they had never been introduced to the concept of a teacher in role, and they were reluctant to leave their parents and come to the field. I improvised: I let the astronaut character go. Instead, I reverted to my own self, and I followed the traditional order to begin the session. This single improvised decision impacted the entirety of the session, including my own role and the role that the players played. As the veteran astronaut, I would have been in the power position, explaining concepts to players, rather than guiding them to their own discoveries. Had this played out, students would have been robbed of their potential expertness and left without a way to actively participate. The students had no say in the theme of outer space, but from my improvisation came the ability to take the journey there together, and in doing so, we created the environment democratically. Through this process, they entered a state similar to MoE. MoE is different because it prioritizes the expertness of a role that a character has, and it is much more deeply developed, often over the course of many hours and sessions and with great attention to detail, but when my students became astronauts, they did so with conviction. In this capacity, we didn't just put our helmets on, but we truly saw them, felt them, wore them. They were sure of how gravity would change, and sure of how to steer the rocket ship. By improvising, I was able to support and validate their expertness, and I created truth in their experience.

When they saw an alien, I saw an opportunity to improvise and use TiR again. I transformed myself into the alien they had spied earlier and threatened to steal their soccer balls. This prompted them to make sure to dribble their balls carefully so as not to lose it. Before becoming the alien, I described it in detail. I then looked at my players and asked if they knew who the alien was. Together, they pointed at me and yelled, “You!” In the same way that the coaching-artist is free to step in and out of role by carefully acknowledging when it is happening, the players are able to see the non-dramatic scenario of coach and player, even while they are invested in the drama. So much so that at the end of the final session of the morning, when we landed back on earth, one student removed his (imaginary) helmet and declared, “whew! It sure is hot back on earth!”

### Problem-Based Storytelling

After eight weeks, the most significant takeaway was that successful coaching-artistry came not from separate implementation of various drama strategies, but from a newly amalgamated combination of many of them, threaded together with problem-based storytelling. In an article titled “Tell it With Zest: The Generative Influence of Storytelling on the Origin of Creative Drama” Rives B. Collins and Fiona G. Maxwell take a critical look at the origins of Ward’s creative drama practice. They write, “Winifred Ward’s appreciation for stories and love of oratorical performance were instilled in her from a young age and nurtured through her education. For a creative drama teacher, storytelling was considered an essential skill (24, 29). Collins and Maxwell trace this oft un-referenced oratorical foundation of Ward’s pedagogy directly to her success as a teacher. In viewing coaching-artistry as a problem-based storytelling

process, I was able to determine thematic connecting moments throughout each lesson, while maintaining the focus that the soccer skill being taught would ultimately solve the problem. Students therefore perform the skill repeatedly and implicitly, learning it experientially rather than directorially. Furthermore, the ritualistic nature that opened each lesson served as a way to bring students into the story for that day. They knew that the setting of the field would be changing, they just did not know what would be. This expecting the unknown prepared students to engage with themes dramatically.

There are three key steps to follow to use problem-based storytelling in youth soccer practice. First, identify the soccer skill that will be taught within the context of the story. Next, identify the role the students will play, and what object or item the balls will represent. The item must be something that is covetable by the character the students are representing. In some cases, the soccer balls may just remain soccer balls. The third and final step is to identify how the coach will step into role to create an obstacle. It is imperative that all three steps correlate: the soccer skill must prevent or solve the obstacle that the coach creates, which is most often to take away the item that they soccer balls represent. These three steps simultaneously generate ownership and enthusiasm for the drama and the soccer. Problem-based storytelling is broad enough to encompass all the drama strategies, while remaining narrow enough to keep soccer engaging and foundational. It offers a framework for power-sharing but allows the coach to do so in a way where s/he remains in control of the session. With no certainty of where the story will go or how it will end, the coach is free to share power with the young players, letting them determine what might happen next. Based on these ideas, the coach navigates his/her next role or the structure of

the next game. The improvisational nature of storytelling parallels that of a real soccer game: the structure is clear, but the outcome will be determined by the players themselves.

Week Four demonstrates successful problem-based storytelling. During my preparation for this lesson, I never considered that the balls would be anything other than soccer balls, reasoning that in the royal characters we were going to take on, we might also play soccer. In role as royalty, one of my players announced that he and all his companions needed to “protect the dragon eggs.” That assertion changed the trajectory of the whole morning: from there, the story unfurled that all of the balls were dragon eggs, which royalty was stealing from the dragon and using a step-over, that morning’s assigned skill, to bring back home. A step-over involves taking a single large step directly over the ball, then turning around and dribbling away in the opposite direction. As the coaching-artist, I used improvisational problem-based storytelling to adjust the necessary details. I stepped into the role of the dragon, while still using side-coaching to offer feedback and instruction as needed. Under their MoE as royalty, the players knew to complete a step-over in order to successfully avoid the problem (in this instance, the coaching-artist as a dragon). Looking again to problem-based storytelling, I spontaneously altered the final moments of the lesson to better fit the story we had constructed. Reminding the students that they had managed to bring back stolen eggs, I encouraged them to lock the eggs in the dragon-safe chest (the goal) to keep them safe from the dragon forever. Placing myself in front of the goal, the players saw that the dragon wanted the egg back. Stepping out of role allowed me to remind them to use step-over; avoiding the dragon en route to the goal reinforced that the skill is used to change directions.

Week Seven provides an example of what happens when there is no problem to solve. The theme for Week Seven was pirates, and before the class, I had rationalized that all the soccer balls would be treasure. This felt rife with possibilities for dramatic enhancement. In my preparations, however, I neglected to incorporate a problem that would capitalize on the morning's skill: passing and trapping. The students needed to learn to pass, or gently kick the ball to another player, as well as trap, or stop it, upon receiving the pass. After our opening ritual, I made the mistake of giving each player a ball, or a piece of treasure. Once they received their treasure, players were reluctant to give it up. On the spot, I was unable to think of a justifiable role to step into where players would need to pass their balls. To compound the issue, players could not pass to other players because everyone already had a ball. (The person trapping the pass should not already have a ball.) Without a problem to reinforce the new technique, I found myself scrambling, trying to receive a pass from each player under the guise that I wanted to "admire their treasure and then give it back." Using reflection-for-action between my first and second classes helped me to identify that the problem was the lack of a problem. I was able to somewhat remediate this for the following two classes by being more specific about how treasure was received, including needing to show it off (thus incorporating passing and trapping) before getting to hold on to it. Further reflection leads me to believe that this lesson would have been even stronger with a more active problem: perhaps playing a version of monkey-in-the-middle, renamed parrot-in-the-middle where players must pass the treasure (ball) between each other, avoiding the pirates' parrot (the coach) who wants to steal the treasure. Week Seven's problems proved that the problem is the crux of the storytelling that makes soccer and drama work in harmony.

## Coaching-Artistry Compared to Traditional Coaching

In an effort to situate the merits and struggles of coaching-artistry within the field of youth soccer, it is useful to compare it to non-dramatized efforts of other coaches. One Saturday morning, a fellow coach, putting forth his best attempt at following the curriculum, welcomed his students to class. Then he told them they were all monkeys. That was it. This example represents many similar occurrences with multiple coaches. Each time, these coaches did not take the time to set the scene and provide students with some agency, perhaps by saying “We are at the zoo today”, which invites a child to make a choice when he decides, “I am a monkey.”

According to the LEGO Foundation:

agency is about the balance of initiative in the child-adult relationship: are children’s interests listened to? Are they consulted on decisions that concern them? Do they initiate an activity and invite adults to join them in play and decision-making? ... [Consider] how planned the learning environment is, and how much the child and adult control the evolving ‘flow’ of activities (Zosh, Jennifer M., et al. 14).

Whether it was from a lack of interest or a lack of know-how, the coaches using traditional practice methods with very young children were neglecting to create an environment where students were able to digest the material and still enjoy themselves. When they did seem to be having fun, the players were engaging in unproductive and unstructured play. Coaching-artistry made it to possible for children to retain their agency and still actively play and learn. Using drama while coaching supports an if-then model of understanding: students can recognize the cause-and-effect logic that if one statement is true, related facts and ideas must also be true. This is represented in the follow sample exchange: If we are at the zoo, then I can be a monkey. If I want to keep my bananas, then I must shield them from danger. If my coach has put forth one idea, then I can supplement it with my own related ideas. Rather than ignore their ability to think

creatively, drama can be used to create an environment where children, through the process of role playing and problem-solving, act upon their capacity to have fun and grow their own ideas while learning foundational soccer skills.

## CHAPTER FIVE: THE FUTURE OF COACHING-ARTISTRY

Ward claimed that “the success of [a] project is judged by the joy ... it affords the child” (*Drama with and for Children* 9-10). Experts in the field of athletics believe joy and wonder lie at the heart of playing a sport. There is a bridge to build between the two: how can a coach use drama strategies to make soccer for very young children not just something they had to do, but rather an activity during which they were able to really engage and find joy? What would that look like in practice? My experiment in becoming a coaching-artist sought to answer this question. This chapter articulates how coaches can implement this research into their practice. A portion of this chapter is used to hypothesize about the future possibilities of coaching-artistry.

### Results of the Study

When I became a coaching-artist, I made the switch from being an autocratic coach to a democratic coach. My application of the curriculum changed, as did my approach with my students. I re-framed my approach to one where information was disseminated by guiding a child’s experience, rather than directing. Ann M. Shaw wrote that drama is “a process in which a leader guides participants in exploring and expressing ideas through spontaneous enactment. [This is] appropriate to any age group [and is] particularly suited to the interests, needs, and learning styles of children” (McCaslin 67). Coaching-artistry does all of this: assuming the role gave me the ability to let go of expectations of perfection and coloring within the lines and allowed me to access the joy that comes from playing an unpredictable game. It became my

responsibility to use drama as a forum for experiencing joy and wonder, which stem from the very devices that are being used to help players learn soccer skills.

Through coaching-artistry, I discovered that the priority was less about what I was coaching and more about how I was doing it. In other words, if I could find a way to disseminate information clearly, in a way that made sense to me, students had a better chance of understanding. Drama, which is my most familiar medium, became my key, my way into comprehending the material. It was, as Heathcote wrote, a way of “making facts understood in action” (McCaslin 88). Coaching-artistry gave me a way to access the parts of myself that I most celebrate, and by utilizing these skills, I was not hampered by my own expectations of what I thought a coach needed to be. Instead, I was able to do what Shaw describes and guide my young players through both pre-planned curriculum and spontaneous, dramatic, and improvised adjustments to the games and skill reviews.

### Implementing Drama-Enhanced Coaching Strategies

Drama-enhanced coaching strategies are not inherently more impactful or effective than the strategies of a traditional coach. Rather, for the coach who is willing, motivated, and open-minded, adding drama strategies can be the difference between feeling disparate from or connected to the curriculum and the young players. Using drama to coach is a decision that must be motivated by the individual; it is a person-specific choice that may behoove practitioners who naturally gravitate toward drama or creative practice or those who are struggling to engage their players. It requires the practitioner to be comfortable stepping in and out of myriad roles, all while maintaining their focus on the class as a whole. Adding drama to coaching practices is

well-suited to those seek to bridge two subjects and hope to find educational transformation in their cohesion. In using drama, a coach “discerns, discovers, chooses, and crafts. ... [that coach] sees multiple possibilities and outcomes” (Duffy 4). It is enormously helpful to be able to filter curriculum through dramatic imagery, environment, character, looped together by storytelling. This device allows the coach to access content confidently, and to therefore guide young players through an immersive experience where they are able to use drama to rationalize the soccer techniques they are being taught.

This raises the question: who is the drama component really for? Is it for the coach, or for the players? Can it be for both, if the coach’s own practice is strengthened by continual player participation? Using drama while coaching requires the coach to stay completely present at all times and expends an enormous amount of physical, mental, and creative energy. Additional energy may be spent worrying that a parent will question why so much dedicated time is spent imagining outfits or surroundings, when you could just be playing soccer. Cushion believes:

coaches [can feel] that they need to conform to a given coaching norm ... However, coaching ‘norms’ are arbitrary and intimately linked to power relating to, for example, the underlying culture, a powerful individual, coaching ideology or tradition ... Coaches’ practice takes place in a given social context and coaches make meaning of their existence from the sporting cultures that they inhabit (*Reflection and Reflective Practice*, 88-89).

Cushion is asserting that people expect soccer to be coached in a certain way because that is how it is currently done; this does not prove it is the only or most correct method. In this case, power needs to be given to the practice of adding drama to coaching strategies for it to work to its fullest extent. Believing in the practice will give power to the coach, thus enabling him/her to work without fear or judgement.

When I became a coaching-artist, I brought newly found patience onto the field with me, and the acceptance that the morning might not play out the way I had envisioned. This change had significant impact: my players made me their partner, and in becoming so, they gained reverence and I gained confidence. We were finally learning together. “If one wishes to ‘connect’ with students ... one must expose at least part of one’s self to one’s students. To the extent that we are successful in this endeavor, we create an environment conducive to [our own individual] effective teaching, and by implication, effective learning” (Rapport-Building: Creating Positive Emotional Contexts for Enhancing Teaching and Learning). Successfully employed, drama creates a learning atmosphere where children glean information and are then given opportunities to build upon and demonstrate their learning. It is vital that coaches receive players’ ideas with enthusiasm, because this is what will make them want to continue playing. Belief in the praise is instrumental: do not say it just to say it. When the children succeed with what they have been tasked, that joy can be shared between players and coach. This symbiotic process build rapport, which, if maintained, will blossom into trust. From trust develops intrinsic motivation, defined by 3-Dimensional Coaching as “the inclination to pursue and persist in the journey towards a desired outcome” (3-Dimensional Coaching, 3.2). Drama can be used to build soccer skills for a lifetime: the foundational skills that are built with it become a lifelong love, and eventually transition into an intrinsic motivation for playing. Players’ commitment to soccer grows stronger with regular attendance, as does their mastery of skill, which supports the eventual development of intrinsic motivation. I saw this firsthand during Week Two: as we kicked balls into the rocket ship (the goal), one student remarked, “the dolphins from last week!” A similar occurrence happened in Week Seven, when we revisited the concept of shielding. A

student proclaimed “yes! We had to protect our bananas!” Drama embeds material in the conscious mind; it creates experiences that live deeply in our bodies. A coach who uses drama to enhance their practice has the potential to unlock these possibilities.

### Looking Forward

At the conclusion of the initial phase of this study, it important to ask if the merger can be taken a step further: how might drama apply when coaching older players, in middle or even high school? And can in-school education be brought in? How might teaching drama-athletics in school change the way we approach “extra-curricular” classes? How might it engage and enthuse students who might not otherwise connect with the material or look forward to school?

### Coaching Older Players

When coaching players older than those coached for the purpose of this thesis, drama can still play an instrumental role. While players older than eight years of age will likely not readily engage in problem-based storytelling, it is still possible to use the strategies that comprise it to benefit them. Drama provides “an outlet to be creative [and fosters people] who [are] outgoing and alive...who [have] confidence and...who makes [others] feel comfortable with and [are] easy to communicate with” (Coon). These are all highly important qualities in successful individual players; together, they can make a team. Participating in MoE scenarios as a team will create a camaraderie between players that translates onto the field. Coaches may even ask mature enough teams to step into a role during a practice, to gain first-hand experience of how another

play thinks or feels. This might manifest in asking players to play positions that are not their normal positions (ie. moving a forward to goalie) to develop empathy and understanding for each player's individual experience during the game. Players will emulate a coach who uses improv to unflinchingly accommodate and accept mistakes, as well as develop creative solutions. What is a game of soccer, other than structured improv? The best on-field communication parallels side-coaching, a skill that can be developed through practice. Using TiR, the coach is able to literally switch places with a player, letting her stand off-field and side-coach, so that she can bring that awareness back on-field. Drama strategies are an enjoyable vehicle for legitimate discovery; as older players learn more about the game, themselves, and their teammates, they will develop unbridled on-and-off field cohesivity and confidence.

### Drama + Soccer in Schools

University of Texas at Austin operates a state-wide program called "Drama for Schools."

In their defense for the necessity of drama they write:

Drama mirrors the ways in which children learn through their early experiences of dramatic play. As a more structured kind of improvisational role-playing, Drama-based pedagogy generates and cultivates many cognitive skills. Of these skills, the following are important for ensuring a student's success in school: language and communication abilities; problem-solving / critical thinking skills; decision making capabilities; creativity and imagination; [and] collaboration skills (Drama-Based Pedagogy).

As demonstrated in Chapter Four, children playing soccer are exercising all of these skills. In fact, if these skills are accessed when just playing soccer, adding in the additional component of drama only enhances them. I posit that putting drama-enhanced soccer in schools could have as much validity as Drama in Schools. A recent survey showed that only "3.6% of elementary

schools, 3.4% of middle schools, and 4% of high schools require daily physical education or its equivalent for the entire school year. 15.3% of elementary schools, 8.5% of middle schools, and 5.9% of high schools require physical education at least 3 days per week for the entire school year” (Physical Education Fast Facts 4). Based on the limited time that physical education is allotted, it would be extremely sustainable to alter the programming to include drama. In the 2009-2010 school year, “[only] 4 percent offered drama/theatre instruction” (Parsad et al. 5). If drama-enhanced soccer was brought into schools, the average number of children with access to both quality physical education and drama education would rise. Drama is already being integrated into other subjects: “in the 2009–10 school year, 29 percent of elementary schools taught drama/theatre as part of their English or language arts curriculum, and 30 percent reported this approach to teaching drama/ theatre in 1999–2000. In addition, 46 percent of elementary schools indicated that drama/ theatre activities were integrated into other curriculum areas in 2009–10” (Parsad et al. 46). Perhaps with the additional of a drama component, physical education, which might struggle to connect across curriculum on its own, could become more accessible, and even connect across other subjects. When I was prepping curriculum, I often found potential cross-curricular connections. It would be a simple transition for students to go from acting as monkeys (while playing soccer) to learning about them. This tangents into possibilities for music education (“Five Little Monkeys”), science (conservation, habitats, ecosystems, etc.), math (counting monkeys, bananas, planning for winter, etc.), writing (a jungle adventure from the point of view of a monkey or a research report), and even geography. Furthermore, this supports the belief that STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) education does not benefit students as much as STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art,

and math) education does. John Maeda, former president of RISD, writes, “the STEM subjects – alone will not lead to...breathtaking innovation...Innovation happens when convergent thinkers...combine forces with divergent thinkers...So what does it mean to...turn STEM to STEAM? [It means] problem solving, fearlessness, and critical thinking and making skills...that will keep our country innovating” (Maeda 1). The cross-curricular connections and possibilities for learning and creating, spurred on by bridging drama and soccer together, are limitless.

### Final Thoughts

This thesis has been a personal journey, from my own yearning to be accepted as both an actor and athlete, to accepting my present identity as an educator who specializes in drama, even when venturing into sport. Over the course of this thesis I became a coaching-artist, a new role in which drama offers a reason and a purpose for the activity in which we are engaging. As a coach, it lets me paint a picture, to tell my young players why we are going to learn that morning’s skill. McCaslin says, “The good teacher stimulates and inspires, respecting all honest efforts and making sure that learning takes place. She does not order, test, or pass judgement on young players as to the right or wrong way to perform” (xviii). She was writing about child drama, but she could very well have been writing about coaching young people. My job is to ensure that they have left the field having enjoyed themselves, because that is what will bring them back. Drama allows me to teach that we seek not perfection, but rather each student’s personal best. Drama gives me the freedom to give each student the power to see an opportunity and take it. McCaslin also believed “that a good teacher avoids a rigid adherence to the practices of any one authority or text. The effective teacher becomes familiar with a variety of views and methods but

eschews imitation of a single one ... the imaginative teacher will find his or her own way in time, and that way will be better because it was created to meet the teacher's specific needs" (McCaslin XIX). Coaching dramatically *works for me* because it makes sense to me. Frequently, my kids recalled a drama-based detail from a prior week, which proved that the mornings when I, as a coaching-artist, hit my stride were the mornings they learned best. It is an amalgamation of inspiration, resplendent with ideas from Ward, Heathcote, and Spolin. It is a combination of two worlds that I love, demonstrated through passing the material along to young people.

I think that what I love most, in both soccer and drama, is the essence of playfulness—the joy and wonder that must be present for them each to succeed. I am not competitive, a trait well-suited to coaching-artistry and the recreational leagues I now play in, and part of what I love about playing now is the frivolity of it. I play just because I love to play. I am a minority in that regard, though. By age thirteen, 70% of kids are quitting sports (Miner). The reason? They have simply lost the urge to play. Maybe, just maybe, adding drama can change that.

**APPENDIX:  
JOURNAL ENTRIES**

## Week One

For week one, I decided to just jump right in. The theme for week one was to explore an island. I latched onto this and decided to use it as the glue for the rest of the class. In prior seasons, I had established a routine of having my kids run a lap around the field at the beginning of each class. This helped establish boundaries. Additionally, when coaching on Fridays, I noticed that the kids often overran, going past cones. On Saturdays, I began putting my hands up in a “stop” position and ensuring that my kids understood that, if I was in that position, it meant “freeze.” This meant that even if they couldn’t hear me, they knew to stop. On top of that, they were self-describing what they would do when they arrived at the cones. At the beginning of every class, before running our lap, we would “warm up our wiggle.” I’d have the children shake their whole bodies, challenging them to freeze or “turn into statues” when I put my hands up. This served as a silly game and a refresher of how to freeze. For week one with intention, I had decided that if the theme was explorers, we would really explore. I moved through the beginning of my session in my usual fashion, teaching wiggle and freeze. Then, I explained that we were explorers, and we were venturing out onto the field, which was actually an island. Outside of the cones and all around us, I continued, were dangers – it was imperative that we stay inside of the cones. Using narrative pantomime, I described our explore attire: hats, backpacks, and binoculars. As I described each item, the children and I put it on. I invited them to tell me what color their hats and backpacks were. We then began our journey around, which, in keeping with the theme I called “exploring the island.” The children peered through their binoculars each time we stopped (when doing the session-opening run, I have them freeze at each corner to further establish boundaries) and described the dangers they saw just beyond the cones. The second half

of warm ups consists of running from one side of the field directly across to the other side, then back, a total of four times. In previous seasons, I had always given each run a variant theme, but had not been specific or intentional in connecting it to the overall theme of the session. For this session, we warmed up by being creatures you might see while exploring an island: pigs, birds, monkeys, etc. Before each run, I aimed to have the children embody the creature by putting on their monkey tail, their pig nose, unfurling their wings, etc. I also encouraged them to vocalize the creature they were portraying as they ran. The final component of warm ups is stretching. When we stretched, we waved *up* to the birds, *sideways* to the monkeys, etc. My goal was to reiterate the animals we had just embodied; I did not consider the potential confusion of rapidly transitioning from being the animal to being yourself, waving at it. Overall, I was using heavy descriptors and attempting to dramatize their experience from the onset, really making them believe they were on an island.

During my first class, I noted that the theme and consequently the class's energy and enthusiasm dropped between warm ups and learning the day's skill. Why spend so much time on a theme, when it is going to vanish in the next part of the lesson? For the second class, I explained that as part of our exploring, we were going to dribble all over the island. Then, I became an island monster who was trying to take the balls away, thus forcing students to work on their dribbling.

After learning the skill, we played a game to reinforce it. The objective of that day's game was for the children to dribble from one side of the field to the other without dribbling into the cones, lest they explode. I made the decision to connect this to the pre-existing theme by explaining to the children that we had dribbled so far while exploring that we were now on a part

of the island that was covered in volcanoes. I asked them to show me with their bodies what happened to a volcano when it exploded. I then demonstrated getting too close to a volcano, reacting dramatically. The children were engaged and enthusiastic and succeeded in the game. For the final round, I brought back the island monster who they had met before. This reinforced the story that we were on an island, and further encouraged my players to keep the ball close when dribbling.

The final activity of the day was to score a goal. For week one, the objective was to put the ball in the goal. When I prepared the lesson, I found myself confused at this stage. I knew that unless I could offer an explanation as to why we were doing this, students would question it. I enhanced the game by connecting it to the previous game, saying dolphins had worked up an appetite by watching us avoid volcanoes and that they love to eat soccer balls. This worked wonderfully: the children jubilantly scored goals and celebrated avoiding hot lava and feeding a hungry dolphin.

The more enthusiastic I was, the more engaged the players were. With my third class of the morning, which had only three students in it, I noticed that I was paying attention to the duality of performance when I was in role as the island monster or storytelling---my focus was on the parents watching me. This heightened my commitment to what I was doing, which in turn made the storytelling even stronger. Adding the themed connections enhances the experience by upping the engagement. It put the students in their own story. Part of my performance comes from using what they supply. When they told me 'volcanoes are hot,' I demonstrated getting too close to one and getting burned multiple times. Was this an example of 'I do', 'we do', 'you do'?

Overall, the more fun I had, the more fun they had.

## Week Two

Before week two, I needed to reset and recalibrate. After not using a specific practitioner the week prior, I needed to become further intentional. To do so, I considered the goals of each of my three inspiration practitioners. Ward wanted children to find joy and delight, and, while doing so, to master the basics of the dramatic elements. Heathcote wanted to give children power, to create a learning environment in which stepping out of their own lives and into a dramatized fiction allowed them to make grow through discoveries that paralleled reality. Spolin originally wanted young people to adjust to the changes happening around them, but her goals changed: she came to want children to discover their talents without realizing they were training. I also thought about what had worked the week before. For week two, I decided to focus specifically on Teacher in Role.

My goal was to be in role for 50% of the time during my first class and 100% of the time during the latter two classes. I intentionally crafted my role from within the curriculum, pre-determining exactly what I would say and when I would say it. I noted when the curriculum had pre-determined moments of using role, and I found ways to accentuate these moments. When preparing the lesson, I wanted to maintain consistency throughout rather than jumping from role to role. I decided that I would assume the role of a seasoned astronaut who landed my ship on the soccer field and invited the students aboard. From there, we would move through the regular activities: exploring the day's setting, playing games, and scoring a goal. The role of a seasoned astronaut offered me the expertise to lead the class, and the flexibility to stay in theme. I would be able to move the story along, as well as model and justify our actions. Things, however, did not go according to plan. A later-than-anticipated arrival meant that I was short on prep time,

which impacted how ready I was to commit to the role when class began. In addition, I had thirteen students, and only half of them bought in to the drama that morning. The ones who did not created a larger problem, because as I worked to bring them in, I lost those who had already invested. It became a cyclical problem of attention-seeking, rather than using the students' own ideas to engage them. I did not give my students a choice that morning; I simply showed up and told them what we were doing and where we were going. I was unable to bring them on the imagination journey because some of them simply did not want to go. Why should they? They were given no onus over the choice. This early struggle set the tone for entirety of my first class of week two.

The shortcomings of my first class left me more prepared for my second class of the morning. Though I had intended to in role for 100% of that class, I knew that just showing up would not work. Logistically, the turnover between class one and class two prevented that: students were arriving as I was wrapping up the first session, and they were privy to what I was doing. If, minutes later, I were to ask them to buy into the concept that I was an astronaut and not Coach Brittany, it would fall short. Furthermore, the precedent had been set during week one that I was Coach Brittany, and we were there to play soccer. Trying to change that after spending so much time establishing it would not work. I needed to find a compromise. I needed to find a way to invite the students in. This came in the form of stepping down from my expertise. Instead of being a seasoned astronaut like I had anticipated, I let the children become experts. I shared with them what the theme for the day was, and I asked them what that meant we needed. In response to their answers, I guided them through the detailed pantomime of stepping into our space suits, lacing up our boots, and trying to see with our helmets on. My students were considerably more

engaged during warm ups during my second session, as was I. I also noticed that when the parents bought into the work we were doing on the field, continuing it with their child during water breaks, it kept the drama moving even when it was segmented by breaks.

Like in week one, I found myself connecting the pieces of the morning through storytelling. After getting our gear on, we noticed that the field had become our space ship. Our boundary-establishing run around it was used to explore the space ship. Students were invited to share what they noticed aboard as we circled the field. Then, I had my second class complete the second part of warm up runs as though we were launching the ship into space. For the first of the four runs, we blasted off, with each run after getting faster, as we launched higher. The final run slowed at the end, and I allowed the students the time to descend and look around. One of my biggest challenges as a teaching artist is accepting truths that make no sense. This is a frequent problem in drama work, because often you need to make an adjustment for the lesson to be possible. I found that this same problem manifested in early coaching-artistry as well: I struggled to justify the soccer balls. Why would astronauts have them? I have come to believe that it is just the nature of the beast – the answer is because we are at soccer. Discerning what needed to make sense for me and what needed to sense for the players was a challenge. What did I need to understand in order to make them understand?

Once I had let go of the plan to be an astronaut who was taking the students onto my rocket ship, I was free to step in and out of role. This allowed me to give directions and then play the role necessary to make the game work. This made me wonder...do you have to always remain in one role? My research on Heathcote made me want to, but the evidence of the morning (and additional sessions, reflected on below) leads me to believe that there is no definitive

number of roles that are right for being a coaching-artist. The nature of teaching soccer is instructional, thus I must be able to give the instructions before the game is played. It is imperative that the players master the skill; they receive that information from their coach, who then becomes the artist to help employ the skill they've just learned. As an astronaut on board with my players, we brought our soccer balls along, and I taught them to move from fast to slow and slow to fast, intentionally. Then, we had to bring our balls back to earth, avoiding an alien who wanted to take them. After explaining this, I became the alien, chasing players around the field, and forcing them to go fast or slow, based on my proximity to them. After the success of this game, I made a spur of the moment adjustment to my explanation of our goal-scoring game. When we scored the goals, it was to safely keep the balls away from the alien; they needed to be packed up to transport them back to earth. Again, for both me and my students, this linear progression helped the morning make sense.

My morning spent immersed in Teacher in Role left me with additional questions to answer such as...think about starting in role; big groups; parent involvement; breaks; stepping in/out of role (and into different roles); bringing back focus. Week two was the real beginning of my coaching-artist definition, because it was the first time I experienced and acknowledged the crucial differences between teaching artist work and coaching-artist work. While they overlap and stem from the same place, the goals and objectives are different, thus the journey will be different. As a teaching artist, I am free to determine my own goals and objectives. As a coaching-artist—at least for this thesis—I represented a larger organization, and I was responsible for meeting their objectives. It was not in my power to change the theme, nor was I free to dismiss it. Though my drama training made me want to let the students determine our

entire experience, finding a way to operate with the pre-existing limitations was my only option. The first step of coaching-artistry is to understand the limits, and to see the possibilities within them.

### Week Three

Week Three is a short reflection about an unsuccessful experience. A few weeks prior, in a meeting to discuss this thesis, a discussion was had about being more intentional about applying theory. We talked about the possibility of using Viewpoints, and thinking broadly and boldly, I sought to try that during week 3. Viewpoints, I discovered, did not complement my needs and objectives. I cannot speak to the potential successes of Viewpointing with children between the ages of three to five if that is the singular goal, nor can I properly assess what long-term curriculum of this nature might look like. In my experience, applied in a space with limited time and varied curricular goals, Viewpoints did not succeed. I discovered that I did not have the flexibility to truly bite into the theory of Viewpoints while still trying to wrangle children and cover the necessary games and skills.

After one attempt, I returned to my safety net of coaching like I had in week one. While week three was not a success for Viewpoints, it was enormously helpful in assessing how much theory I can undertake vs. how much of it can be applied in a single session. Week three also helped me gauge what kind of theory I wanted to be applying. While Viewpoints is a wonderfully detailed method of helping actors become more aware of their physicality, it is not rooted in creating joy and wonder. My failure pushed me to assess again and to consider why people put their children in youth soccer programs and why I had chosen to coach. Why do people sign their children up for youth soccer? I brainstormed:

- It's cute! Parents enjoy watching their children do it.
- They themselves played soccer, and they want their children to do the same.

- They want them to play soccer. This might be for any number of reasons, including that they always wanted to and never did.
- PYD (positive youth development) including developing motor and sensory skills, as well as team work and skill building.
- It's simply a thing to do/ they had a friend whose child was also doing it.
- For their child to have fun / make friends.

Then, I engaged in some of the reflective practice detailed in *Positive Youth Development*

*Through Sport*. This meant asking myself :

simple questions such as: Can you clearly explain your coaching philosophy? What factors make it difficult for you to prioritize PYD [positive youth development]? What specific activities do you give to your players to promote their development? Can you use sports to teach lessons that will be valuable in other areas of athletes' lives? ... Why do I coach? Why do I coach the way I do? What does it feel like to be coached by me? How do I define success? (Holt 210).

My answers were:

- It's cute! I love watching my kids succeed and grow when I teach them, and coaching is the same.
- I play, and I love getting another opportunity to do so.
- Fostering the kinds of players that I believe we need more of. Broadening this goal and thinking about how player development can extend off the field.
- It's a great excuse to be outside, moving, and meeting people in my community.
- It's fun!

This process helped me to re-align with my goals and to understand why I brought drama into my coaching. When I looked at why I was doing it, I was able to see how I could continue doing it better. Thus far, my forays into coaching-artistry were revealing that unless I was specific but

fluid, I was not going to succeed. Unless I knew exactly where I hoped to finish, I had no starting place. Unless I was willing to commit 100%, my players would not. I also came to the realization that, although I had not had three successful weeks, I had three weeks of growth and learning. By bringing drama into my practice, I began to be the kind of coach I wanted the children to experience.

## Week Four

After week 4, I reflected on the larger question of why I was doing this. Though I had laid out the reasons for myself personally and for the parents whose kids I worked with, I couldn't help but wonder if we were doing a disservice to soccer itself. I wondered: are there benefits to traditional (ie. non-drama, non-themed) coaching? Perhaps...but these kids, in my opinion, are too young. This brought me back to something I had written in my notes after the very first week of this process: theatre → belief → skills.

For week four, I wanted to spend more time on being experts. Mantle of the Expert is, by design, meant to be facilitated over a long and uninterrupted period of time. For Heathcote this might have been a week or several months, but it was a complete immersion. I had only 35 minutes with my kids and did not have the ability to make them true experts. Heathcote was not concerned with the information her students used as experts being correct, merely with them experiencing expertness. Because there is a right and wrong way to execute the skills I was teaching, I could not make the children true experts. Heathcote's expertness invited a world of experience, not tangible skills. I wanted to figure out how to give them expertness without them having expertise.

From a coaching standpoint, this was a shift in mentality more than anything else. I put the word expert on a continuous loop in my head, and each time I found myself frustrated or stuck, that was the solution. My goal was to find a way to make the new skill feel familiar, to teach it with confidence, so that my kids would be able to teach *me* by the end of the class.

We began class in the same fashion we always did. I explained that the field had been transformed into a palace, and we were all going to be princes and princesses. From the get-go I

was finding myself a little stuck—“princes and princesses” is a mouthful, and each time I stumbled, I felt my confidence waver. My first class had an enormous number of onlookers that morning, comprised of parents, grandparents, cousins, and family friends, and this made me acutely aware of how watched I felt. On top of that, instead of just teaching my material, I found myself thinking about all of the problems I might run into. I was worried that parents, with all their extended relations watching, would feel like what we were doing was too dramatic and not soccer-enough. I was worried that telling the kids they were princes and princesses was too gendered, and that there would be pushback or problems. As I reflected on this experience, I realized I was getting in my own way. My desire to succeed was preemptively preventing the immediacy of my work. This experience concludes that in order to succeed as a coaching-artist, I needed to maintain confidence in my work, and a belief that what I was doing was an example of best practice. When this wavered, my practice suffered.

For the rest of the first session, I continued to be my own obstacle. Though my children eagerly embraced the theme, decorating the boundaries beyond the field with dragons, moats, and other dangers, I kept looking to their parents for validation. I received neither validation nor invalidation, which perhaps was even more unsettling. We outfitted ourselves in dashing royal clothing, taking the time to adjust hats, swords, and suits of armor. I told them all to “walk like royalty”: chins up, big steps, so the kids would just “walk like royalty” over the ball. I believed that if they believed they were experts on being royalty and castle living, that they would believe me about walking like that, and that the natural progression of understanding the skill would make sense. I was pleased with how well it worked, and this bolstered my confidence. But again,

and again, I caught myself seeking reinforcement from off-field observers. How do I judge the success of coaching-artistry if I feel hesitant, but my players are thriving?

I had a change of heart midway through. The first reinforcement game was about bringing the balls to the front of the field while avoiding the dragon. One of my kids shouted out that we had to “protect the dragon eggs” and from there, the story unfurled that all of the balls were dragon eggs, which the castle royalty was stealing from the dragon (me) and using a step-over to bring back home. This was such a boost of confidence; they were invested in the story! They were doing the skill correctly! From a pedagogical viewpoint, the child’s assessment of the balls as dragon eggs, which were stolen and needed to be protected, created a problem. The root of Heathcote’s work is in problem solving. I had failed, in my planning, to establish a scenario in which there was a problem to be solved, and yet, my tiny experts had created one themselves. This heightened stakes and ownership; using a step-over, as I had hoped, became a subconscious part of their problem solving. What more is a game of soccer than problem solving? During this moment, I felt extremely confident in my coaching-artistry. It had just succeeded.

For the final, goal-scoring, component of the morning, I made the decision to further the problem that my kids had created. Rather than just instructing the children to score, I told them that I, the dragon, had followed them back from where they had stolen the eggs, and that I wanted them back. They had to lock the eggs in the dragon-safe chest (the goal) before I could catch them and take my eggs back. But, the chest would only unlock if a step-over was completed before kicking the egg inside. One at a time, the students dribbled out, completed a step-over, and scored a goal while I chased after them. It was imperative that they believed the threat of losing the ball was real, all while I knew that I would never do anything more than

apply pressure to mimic the reality of a real game and to keep it fun. What about being caught makes something fun? I couldn't tell you – but I played tag on the playground, too.

My latter two sessions of that morning were even more successful than the first. I was able to take the discoveries we had made in the first session and apply them. I also had smaller classes, and therefore a smaller number of onlookers.

If Dorothy Heathcote had watched this session, it is unlikely she would have recognized any of her influence. I felt it, though, deep in the roots of my own coaching-artistry. Reminding myself to think of the players as experts allowed me to trust their input. Creating a problem allowed me to make smaller problems, which linked our morning from beginning to end. The problem gave us roles, in which we were free to dramatically express ourselves, while learning the new skill without beating it over the head.

## Week Five

Because I was traveling, a substitute coach covered my week five Saturday morning classes. I did not ask the substitute to try and recreate coaching-artistry. I will discuss impacts of having a session of traditional coaching in my week six reflection.

## Week Six

I went into week six feeling very motivated. Because of unforeseen circumstances and pre-planned travel, I had not seen my kids in three weeks (since week four). They had had one session (week five) with another coach. I was eager to get back to them. In reflecting, I considered the two sides of my eagerness. Partly, it came from the genuine joy I got from spending time with them, the joy that I feel no matter what I am teaching. The other side of my eagerness was related to the success of week four; I wanted to know if the strength of my coaching-artistry would continue. How do we avoid being our own worst enemy? How do we avoid becoming over-confident? How do we walk the line of comfortable but not cocky?

My goal with week six was to take the drama from 90% to 100%. I intended to channel Dorothy Heathcote and Winifred Ward simultaneously and collaboratively, focusing on environment, imagery, and pantomime. I wanted to use the world of the drama to create an environment to develop expertise, open to improv and responses. More so than other weeks, I heavily marked up the curriculum, thinking about visualization, descriptive words, and the power of questions. I found that as I became more specific, the possibilities of the material became broader. A sample, with my edits in italics, is below:

Week six pushed me to use action words as I prepared the drama. Active words prompt engagement; from the engagement comes the learning. In accordance with the curriculum, we envisioned the field as a jungle. As I prepped, I was struck by how much of the drama came from our location, including the roles we played and the problems we solved. This realization helped me think about location-based problems that we might solve in role, rather than problems that our characters might solve, regardless of where they are located.

During the warm-ups I was able to set the scene of the jungle, reinforce boundaries, get the kids running, and establish our identity as monkeys with bananas. My plan was to use the bananas as the root cause of the potential problem that would unite the lesson. As mentioned before, week six highlighted the importance of active words. With regards to language, it also reinforced specificity of terms. If I wanted my kids to buy in and believe that the balls were bananas, it was important that I continue to call them bananas. The same was true for the field (calling it the jungle) and the players themselves (calling them monkeys). As I reflected, I realized that I was making coaching-artist discoveries that were second-nature when I was in a classroom. However, the added layer of soccer content was preventing me from seeing what I knew how to do, and I was re-learning my own best practice.

To learn shielding, I had each child come and sit on a soccer ball. To the best of my ability, I proceeded to exclusively call them “bananas” from that moment forward, explaining that we were so proud of the bananas we’d collected we were going to show them off. I explained that shielding is when a player uses his/her body to protect the soccer ball from a defender, or someone who we don’t want to have the ball. Then I explained that a rainstorm was coming, and they had to protect themselves and their bananas from getting caught in the rain. In the dry part of the jungle, though, Coach Brittany was going to turn into a snake who hated bananas, and they’d have to shield the ball past the snake. Their investment level was immediately very high, because they had picked these bananas themselves. They did not want to lose the fruits of their labor. Part of coaching-artistry is navigating how and when to step in and out of role. This is in the same vein as side-coaching, but in the framework of coaching-artistry, I was side-coaching only when stepping out of role. This was different than Spolin’s usage, which

was exclusively for a teach outside of the experience. Stepping in and out of role, while side-coaching when out of role, asked my kids to believe in both my role as coach and my role in the story simultaneously.

For the goal-scoring component of week six, I took inspiration from week four. Ending in a dual victory—a goal scored and the object safe from the enemy—was a nice way for the kids to leave feeling enthused and validated. I set up the goals and explained that they were the monkeys' houses, where they wanted to stash all of their bananas to keep them safe. Then, I took on a new role, as a giant and angry monkey who wanted to steal and eat all of the bananas. Their objective was to shield the ball past me; in half role, I coach/acted them all the way to the goal.

I remember thinking in the moment that it went so well. We used a lot of descriptive words to set the scene, and the rain storm was amazing! The kids had to shield their balls from the storm, then running from the storm brought them to another part of the jungle, where they had to shield the ball past a snake (me) who hated bananas, to then get it home safely past the giant hungry monkey. There were three obstacles, each of which mimicked a real soccer issue. Each lesson, save for the theme and skill, is virtually the same.

I also noticed during this week that many of the parents would reference activities that had been completed the week prior with the substitute coach, like “do a silly dance” after completing a task. One week with another coach had adjusted parent expectations, but when I did not comply or invite everyone to partake in silly dances, there were no objections. Upon reflection, this made me wonder how much we are doing for the kids and how much we are doing for the parents, in order for them to think their children are having fun? How do we gauge something like that?

## Week Seven

After week six, I was looking at being coaching-artist as using action-based and highly specific language to create an environment-based series of problems that, through role play, storytelling, and narrative pantomime, we'd solve using soccer skills. My kids had done really well the week before, and I went into week seven with lofty preparations.

The theme for week seven was pirates, and from the get-go during the first class, I felt as though my focus was a little fraught. I was buoyed by the success of last week, but worried that two great weeks consecutively was unlikely. I was also excited about demoing the curriculum, and I think my need to prove it "worked" got in my own way of teaching it. Between all of these elements, I felt jumpy, distracted, and not entirely confident. One of my biggest worries is that a parent will say "why aren't you spending more time on soccer and less on storytelling?" *This has never happened.* In fact, most parents hear what I am describing to the kids on the field and assist. This was especially clear last week when I heard many of them encouraging their kids to "sit on their bananas." The biggest issue in my first class was a lack of focus, which I take 90% responsibility for; parents who are not attentive to a problem child make life hard.

To prep my players to be pirates, I wanted to, throw the balls onto the field while they were getting water. Upon their return, I intended to help them spy the treasure. Each child would run onto the field and dribble one piece of treasure back to edge of the field, sitting on it to keep it safe. If it felt right, I would tell them to "put their booty on the booty."

My big plan went very badly. My plan to throw balls as treasure during a water break failed in two ways. First, we normally take a water break before we stretch. In order for this plan to have worked, we needed to stretch, then get water. Because of my lack of focus, I instructed

the kids to get water, then they came back and stretched. Then, they were immediately told to get water again. This led to the second mistake. While on their second—and thus unnecessary—water break, kids saw me throwing out the balls and ran to them. Had they actually been drinking water, they almost certainly would have left them alone. It was nearly impossible to get everyone to leave the balls and come back to “spy” them. By that time, class was almost over, some kids had turned to parents, and all of their focus was lost. Besides warming up, we were supposed to learn how to pass and trap the ball, play a game, and score a goal.

I was going to teach passing by explaining to the children that their gold was so beautiful, they wanted to show it off. They would do so by passing the ball to other players (or pirates). They’d need to pass carefully so the balls don’t go overboard (off of the field). I also placed tall orange cones around the field and told the kids to use the treasure they already had to knock over the cones. If they knocked it over, they’d find more treasure underneath! Because of my earlier miscalculation, we were running behind. In an effort to try and get us back on track I (because I was panicking) tried to combine the game and the goal scoring. The idea for scoring a goal was to tell the children it is time to put the treasure in the chest to keep it safe. Logistically, combining the two activities didn’t work at all. Some kids played, but some didn’t engage at all. I was panicking for two reasons. First, because I felt as though I were failing in front of the families who were watching. It was like forgetting your lines on opening night. Second, I felt, that morning more so than others, as though the weight of this thesis was riding on the curriculum deploying without a hitch. Any teacher worth her salt can tell you that an expectation like that is bound to failure. I had forgotten everything that made up being a coaching-artist: my execution that morning was devoid of problem-solving, spontaneity, fun, or joy. I ended up

failing not just to execute the curriculum the way I had intended, but to truly uphold who I wanted to be. A coaching-artist, I believe, celebrates the young people, making soccer dramatic and fun for their pleasure and learning. I did not do that. I took away their chance to score individual goals, blinded by my own hopes to succeed. Ultimately it did not feel like I had succeeded in keeping the kids engaged, nor did they adequately perform the skill for the day. The drama is meant to enhance the skill, not slow down the whole class.

Between the end of my first class and the beginning of the second one, I took a minute to myself. I reminded myself why I was doing this, and that it really was only fun for me if they were having fun. Thankfully, the two later classes were much smaller and had far fewer parents watching. After realizing my mistake with the balls, I was much more intentional with the timing of when we stretched, when we got water, and how to find the treasure. Instead of just seeing the balls, I had everyone pull out an (imaginary) telescope and stare at the field to see what they could spy. When they did so, the field was empty. As they stared, I rolled the balls out, one by one. My kids, enthralled just with watching and imagining their telescopes, stayed put on their line at the front of the field. When there were enough rolled out for everyone, we identified them as treasure, put our telescopes away, and everyone ran out to get a piece of treasure. They dribbled them back to their spots and sat on them, just like I'd hoped for the first class. It went super well! I also made sure to run through all our skills before teaching the new one which helped my kids focus and helped my own focus and concentration. Once those returned, I was able to execute the lesson well.

I made other small adjustments as well. I simplified the passing game for better understanding and to reinforce the skill. For the individual goal scoring at the end, instead of

cheering, everyone said “argh!” like a pirate. I also had them pass me the ball, under the guise that I wanted to see the treasure one final time, and then I passed it back to them, so they could trap it before scoring a goal (put the treasure in the chest). More so than any other week, week seven clarified the importance of the role. Monkeys was great because it was clear and had one exact role. Pirates was a challenge because the kids knew a lot about them, they don’t have a singular movement, and everyone just wanted to be the shark. I thought a lot about Heathcote after this lesson, and how, when she would join the drama, it was always in a role where she has subtle control – enough to keep the students engaged, but not so much that they didn’t feel they had power. Without the flexibility of open-ended curriculum, I found more success with an environmental theme like castles or jungles, where I was able to choose my role and the role of the players. I was also able to create obstacles and problems for them to encounter. In week seven, there was no problem. Why else might they have needed to pass the ball? Perhaps to get away from danger? Looking for more treasure was exciting, but not a real incentive.

## Week Eight

I found out just before my week eight session started that it would be the final class of the season. Scheduling problems meant that we did not have access to the field for the final week, so the internal admin team made the decision to end the season early. Normally, the last class of the season is a celebration of the previous eight weeks. The week eight curriculum is not written for that purpose, and, in wanting to honor my kids and the work they'd done, I made the decision to adjust it. I altered the theme to be a party. I wanted to also, for the last session, return to the roots of where this project began, while also looking forward. After week seven, I felt I had a comfortable, strong, working definition of what it meant to be a coaching artist.

I told my students that we were having a celebratory party for the last class. For their warm up, we explored the field by setting up for the party. We described party hats/clothes. The four runs were as follows: run because we are so excited about our party, run to grab the balloons that are floating away, run to invite family and friends to the party, and hurry back so you're there on time!

My lesson plan for week eight reflected how harried I was when I was preparing it. The third run is always away from families, not towards them. To invite their family, students had to run an extra distance. Additionally, after inviting them, it was unclear to both parents and children whether the adults were supposed to come into the field, or just acknowledge their invitation somehow. Again, this was short-sighted preparation on my part. I found myself feeling the same way I did in week seven: frustrated with myself. In order to salvage the class, I needed to shake that feeling off.

After demonstrating the skill, we moved onto the first game. This entailed taking a tall orange cone and turning it upside down. Children were meant to roll their foot over a ball (called a roll-over), and then pick up the ball and place it atop the cone. I encouraged them to think about what flavor it was, and to pantomime eating or sharing the ice cream. This went very well! Kids were enthusiastic about the game, and they were engaged in creative thinking as they saw the cones and thought of ice cream flavors. One student, though, kept asking for cake. He was fixated on the idea that being a party means having cake. I felt myself stumped by my own desire to engage with improv and student choices. I didn't know how to say yes to him and keep the class moving forward in the way that I had planned. It eventually resolved at the end of class when I said that it was time for cake to celebrate being done, but I felt badly to have stymied his desires for so long.

When it came time to score a goal, my hope was to frame it as a party game, specifically Pin the Tail on the Donkey. I set up a single orange cone in front of the goal. One child at a time, children were to knock over the cone (pinning the tail) and then finish by putting the ball in the goal. This went moderately well. Children completed the roll-over and scored the goal. We celebrated. One problem of this lesson was the gap between what I imagined a party to be and the kids' actual experiences with parties. I was asking them to imagine something they had a concept of, but I wanted them to do it differently. Ward, Heathcote, and Spolin all advocated for using drama to create newly imagined scenarios. These could pull from their own experiences, but generally placed them in worlds in which imagination had to provide the answers. A party was too familiar.

When I look at my curriculum notes from this lesson, I see someone who was trying too hard. I had lost the ease of intuition. Take for example, my justification for a roll-over step. I tried to justify the move by telling the kids that sometimes it gets crowded at parties, and you need to roll-over to get out of the way. It's not that it doesn't make sense, but it almost makes too much sense. Part of coaching-artistry, I can confidently say now, is knowing when to just let soccer be soccer. Let the curriculum do its job. As I look back, I see moments where I tried too hard to make connections or alter the games. If I had used my drama tools to just enhance, I'd have assuaged my own concerns, kept the kids learning, and helped them find understanding and joy through drama and soccer. After the week eight classes ended I was left wondering: how could I have made this theme environmental? How might we have taken on roles for this lesson that were not ourselves? Was it presumptuous of me to disregard so much of the curriculum and to think I could do it better?

A coaching-artist creates a world in the middle of two ends of the spectrum (bridging necessary knowledge with learning whatever the drama may teach). Along the way, I got a little lost in the process. I stopped listening to myself. As I conclude my journal entries on these eight weeks, I can separate my original successes, which came from instinct, from my successes that came from intentionally re-framed curriculum. The sessions that struggled the most were the ones that I over-planned. Instead of following my instincts, through the lens of intention, I tried to manipulate the experience to go the way I wanted it to, instead of the way it needed to. When I was coaching from instinct, my concerns were rooting in fun and comprehension, not in matching pedagogy of other practitioners. I believe that in order to be the best coaching-artist, it is imperative that I recognize where my influences come from and why, but that I also listen to

my instincts. These are the ones telling me to let storytelling flow through the morning, and that silliness is just as welcome as seriousness.

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