This research narrative tells the story of a Māori immersion early childhood centre’s engagement with the performing arts which. Discussed here is how this was explored in partnership with a community artist from a storytelling and drama background. This took place within a more extended arts based teaching and research learning initiative (TRLI) known as Move, Act, Play, Sing (MAPS), which over two years also involved provocations from music and dance community artists across three centre.

Drama, storytelling and tikanga structures provide the context for new relationalities which emerge here, and it is the tension between structure and emergence that is the main focus of what is shared in this presentation. This research also draws on Deleuze and Guattari’s (1988) concept of assemblages of desire invoking the imaginary as a new means of expression affecting unexpected relations and connections, and it is within these emergent, unexpected, yet still anticipated potentials that this article seeks new possibilities for understanding learning at play in early childhood education, learning pliable and in movement, and similarly teaching that learns and experiments. Following a rhizomatic analysis (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) attention is drawn to the production of an ‘and’ space and a relational ‘in-between-ness’ rejecting simplistic either/or binaries of a structured vs emergent curriculum. The collapsing of roles artists/researchers/researched, teachers/learners, adults/children was in itself a broad ethical project which also speaks to the endeavor of cross cultural collaborative partnerships. What emerged throughout the overall project was an affirmation of the intricate ties to lived experiences, sensations, encounters, interactions and intensities that are present in children and adults collaborative learning together.