EDITORIAL

Drama’s transdisciplinary potential

The editors are excited about this edition of NJ. Our authors consider the transdisciplinary nature of drama highlighting its potential resonance with design thinking, its enhancement of the teaching of poetry, verbatim plays and the use of performance in authentic assessment as well as the impact dramatic processes can make on vulnerable communities.

Sue Davis provides an excellent introduction to this edition with her keynote paper, Dramatic Thinking, from the 2017 Drama Australia Creative Capital Symposium, in Canberra. In this paper she elaborates on her early thoughts as she seeks to make connections and resonances between the current emphasis on Design Thinking, and our own drama processes.

Cleo Xiaodi Wang gives us an engaging account of a project using drama to introduce primary school in China to T’ang dynasty poetry. This article emphasises that drama can offer a practical and embodied entrée into the development of literary imagination and emotional responses to poetic literary forms, even those that are sometimes considered outdated or ‘cultural relics’. Wang has provided both practical descriptions of the workshops and theoretical explanations underpinning the work.

In a second article focusing on drama and poetry, Danielle Hradsky provides an account of her use of embodied drama practices to explore two poems by Indigenous authors (Oodgeroo Noonuccal and Travis Eulo) with Year 9 Drama classes in a Victorian state secondary school. Danielle’s careful reflections on her practice highlight both her successes and challenges negotiating in the curriculum space while honouring cultural protocols. You may want to read this article alongside Kate Lee’s ‘Crossing borders with Youth Arts in a Remote Australian Community’, NJ 40(1), 40–52.

Third, Sarah Peters considers three Australian verbatim plays: Alana Valentine’s Parramatta Girls; Campion Decent’s Embers; and David Burton’s April’s Fool to identify the conventions of the form. She explores conventions and their functions in dramatic composition.

Authentic assessment of drama performance can be a controversial issue. In her article Rachael Jacobs, explores six critical issues in drama assessment through case studies. Each case study examines one senior secondary performance assessment task from each of six research sites in schools in New South Wales, Queensland and the ACT. Rachael’s analysis clearly demonstrates how the students’ responses to the assessment tasks were affected by the assessment environment in the school. Finally, she foreshadows future areas for research in Drama assessment or assessment in other creative disciplines.

In this issue we have reprinted Scott Rankin’s keynote from the Drama Australia Conference in Launceston, twelve years ago. Scott was the Tasmanian nomination for Australian of the Year in 2018 in recognition of the outstanding contribution he, through Big hART, has made to the Australian arts and education communities. Scott’s comments still resonate today. In a new introduction to the keynote, Scott challenges us to put the A in STE*M in authentic, creative and transformative ways, rather than the placatory models that we are currently often seeing in schools.

Our book reviewers, from around the country, have been hard at work. Paul Gardiner’s review of New performance, new writing (Freeman 2016) suggests it is a valuable text for teachers wishing to introduce their students to a broader range of theatre forms, including live/performance art,
devised works and autoethnography. The book was written for higher education students and includes case studies as well as questions, stimuli, and workshop activities.

Christina Gray enthusiastically reviews the new and revised edition of *Dramawise reimagined: Learning to manage the elements of drama*, (Haseman and O’Toole 2017). She notes that the new version has been significantly and substantially rewritten from the original (published 30 years ago). For Gray, the practical orientation of this drama classic, means that will be an essential go-to text in every drama teacher’s library.

Our third review is for *The School Drama Book: Drama, Literature and Literacy in the Creative Classroom*, (Ewing and Saunders 2016). Kate Garrard, a primary school educator, is highly positive about the 22 units of work provided in the book, and the quality literary texts upon which these are based. She concludes the review by recommending the book to ‘teachers of all backgrounds who are seeking an engaging, student-centred and transdisciplinary approach to English and literature in their classroom.’

We are already well underway with NJ 42(1), to be published in the first half of 2018. This year we are particularly excited to be publishing, as our second issue, a special edition featuring partnerships between members of Drama Australia and Drama New Zealand. *Dialogues across the Ditch*, edited by Christine Hatton and Tracey-Lynne Cody promises to be a special edition indeed, sharing current drama education practice and research from Australia and New Zealand.

We also look forward to hearing from you, about your exciting and enriching practices in drama education in 2018.

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