

ADEM

AUSTRALIAN DRAMA EDUCATION MAGAZINE

NO. 18 2022

Thrive: Drama and Wellbeing



ADEM 2022

ADEM (Australian Drama Education Magazine)
Number Eighteen, 2022

ADEM is a Drama Australia publication
ISSN 2653-0341 (Online version)

Editor: Jo Raphael
Associate Editor: Danielle Hradsky
Copy-editing: Shay Ryan
Design and Layout: Lead Based Ink

To subscribe to Drama Australia publications

Drama Australia Administrator
PO Box 1205, Milton, QLD 4064. AUSTRALIA
Ph: +61 7 3009 0664
email: admin@dramaaustralia.org.au
web: www.dramaaustralia.org.au

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for membership information:

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Thrive: Drama and Wellbeing

ADEM 2022

The connection between engagement in the arts and personal wellbeing has long been recognised. Drama is a pro-social artform holding an important place in building community and belonging within classrooms and other contexts. Young people are especially vulnerable to experiencing anxiety and loss of hope when living in times of rapid change, multiple global crises, and uncertain futures. The COVID-19 pandemic increased the need for connection with others, while simultaneously decreasing opportunities for face-to-face connection and the kinds of gathering required for live and located drama performances to be created and performed.

These challenging conditions have taken a toll on Drama as a subject, and yet drama has never been more needed. As we emerge from the pandemic, this is a time for drama to take its place with renewed confidence and determination: to be alive, to revive, and thrive.

For this edition of ADEM we called for articles and teaching resources that share examples of drama education practice highlighting the ways drama contributes to participant wellbeing, critical and creative thinking, and social and emotional learning. We welcomed contributions that illustrate how drama builds community and a sense of belonging, energises learning, and brings wonder and joy to participants and audiences. We know that every teacher of drama has a positive story and a worthwhile approach to share to revive and encourage colleagues, and to ensure the artform of drama and participants in drama education can thrive. We are delighted that some drama educators have responded to the call and thrown us all a lifeline.

In the style of a conversation, the ADEM editors caught up with Robyn Carmody, Danielle Cavanagh, and Matthew Ryan from ACARA to talk about connections between **Drama and Wellbeing in the Australian Curriculum**. Drama teachers are aware of the amazing contributions drama can make to student wellbeing, development of empathy and understanding of different perspectives. It is important to be able to show how this kind of learning in drama is meeting these curriculum priority areas and capabilities to help us build wider awareness of the contribution of drama to young people's social and emotional learning and wellbeing.

In **Small Town Spooktacular Success**, an article as entertaining as its subject, Erin Landles describes a project with Year 11 drama students who gained a sense of purpose and wellbeing through developing an interactive theatre project in outback Longreach. The project developed momentum, gathered industry and local business partners, and brought the wider community together, boosting morale in tough times.

In her article **Building Multicultural Relationships through Drama Education**, Tahnee West summarises her research based on creating a positive learning environment for students of diverse cultural backgrounds and the importance of developing strong friendships for young people's wellbeing. She describes her program of workshops and provides an outline of the sequence for other drama teachers to translate into their own programs, co-curricular activities, production rehearsals, or adapt to suit curriculum requirements.

In **Bring the Drama! A Positive Start Initiative**, Kate Ellis, Nicholas Waxman and Susan Cooper describe Drama Victoria's response to a Victorian Government call for programs to re-engage primary and secondary students and boost their physical and emotional health and wellbeing in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. The Bring the Drama! Positive Start Program has brought drama workshops to over 4000 students and their primary generalist teachers, who will have lasting resources to continue this work.

Drama for wellbeing is just as relevant in higher education, as Richard Sallis describes in his article **Drama for Enhancing the Wellbeing of International Students in a University Setting**. 'Are you joking?' is a program of comedy workshops created to explore language, humour and identity through drama to encourage wellbeing in international university students, so needed in these times.

In **A Touchy Subject: Intimacy Training in the Drama Classroom and Skills for Life**, Nicholas Waxman considers student safety and wellbeing as he describes an approach to intimacy training encountered while participating in a workshop in New Zealand. From this experience and his further research, he shares what he has learned about approaching rehearsal practice, and discussing and exploring movement, connection, and communication in the drama classroom

Meghan Stacey and Nigel Kuan reflect on Angela's Betzien's new play *Chalkface* (STC) in **It's so dramatic: what new play Chalkface gets very right about being a teacher**. It's always interesting to see how teachers are portrayed in theatre, and according to these reviewers *Chalkface* offers an authentic reflection of concerns about teacher wellbeing and the education system more broadly, perhaps educating the wider community and offering some catharsis to teachers in the audience.

Conferences are regenerative spaces, and for drama teachers they are best experienced in person to engage in our practice of drama and our art of live performance. After disruptive years of the pandemic hampered our ability to meet in person, 2022 was a year when this once again became possible. In this edition of ADEM, writers from across our drama education community share the joy of their experience of attending conferences in person. In **IDEA 2022 Drama4All: Celebrating Drama for All, Tall and Small in a changing world**, IDEA's immediate past President Robin Pascoe reports on the IDEA 2022 congress in Iceland, providing a wide perspective on the importance of these congresses for the International

Drama and Theatre in Education Association, to which we are all connected as Drama Australia members. Drama Victoria was well represented at the IDEA congress and four Victorian delegates have joined to write their personal reflections on the congress in the descriptively titled article, **“I have never been in a room with so many drama teachers at the same time”: Reflections on drama and wellbeing after attending the 2022 IDEA and IDIERI conferences**. Close to the time of publishing, some of us were fortunate to attend the Drama New Zealand Conference in Otepoti, New Zealand in October 2022. Jo Raphael, Nina Rossini, Nick Waxman and Kate Ellis share their insights in **Timatanga Hōu – New Beginnings: Reflections on the Drama New Zealand National Conference**.

It was at the Drama New Zealand conference that we heard about the organisation **Health and Wellbeing for Arts Education**, established by five educators whose concerns and interests aligned at a previous Drama New Zealand conference in 2018. The founding collective are Kimberley Fridd, Gillian Towle, Rachel McMillan, Diane Dupres and Ria Cummings. Recognising drama teacher burnout and a need to nurture those who nurture the arts, this group of educators shared a vision. They are determined to be advocates for wellbeing in the arts education sector by providing quality resources, policies and support, to empower arts educators to make positive choices regarding their health and wellbeing and consider the flow-on effect for students and community. Their concerns and aims for health and wellbeing are mirrored in the thinking behind this wellbeing edition of ADEM, but our Aotearoa colleagues are already much further down the path. Taking inspiration from the Danish quality of *Hygge* – engendering a feeling of cosiness, contentment, and wellbeing – they have designed and produced two beautiful editions of a magazine UHO (meaning the heart or core of a tree) filled with articles that put health and wellbeing at the heart of arts education, which they willingly and generously share with our Drama Australia community. So, after you’ve finished reading this edition of ADEM, we encourage you to do yourself a favour, make yourself a cup of tea, or do whatever relaxes you, and take a gentle dive into [UHO Issue 1](#) and [UHO Issue 2](#), shared with permission of the editors.

Finally, we present the **State and Territory Associations Year Reflections for 2022**. These reports reflect the many wonderful regenerative professional learning activities that have been designed to help teachers and drama education to revive and thrive. Let this be a record of our recovery.

A special thank you to all our authors. We appreciate the contribution you make to the profession by sharing your ideas and views in writing for ADEM. You will likely notice some regular and frequent contributors. These are people who enthusiastically responded to the call, and as much as we value them, we are keen to encourage new writers from all Drama Australia’s member associations. ADEM editors offer a supportive editorial process, and we are very willing to hear your ideas and help you test them out and prepare for publication. Look out for the call for contributions for next year’s edition of ADEM.

Please enjoy the 2022 edition of ADEM with its focus on drama and wellbeing. We hope it nourishes you, inspires you and helps you and all those you nurture in the art of drama and theatre to feel alive and to thrive.

Jo Raphael
Editor

Danielle Hradsky
Associate Editor

Articles

Drama and Wellbeing in the Australian Curriculum

ADEM editors Jo Raphael and Danni Hradsky caught up with Robyn Carmody, Danielle Cavanagh and Matthew Ryan from ACARA to talk about connections between Drama and wellbeing in the Australian Curriculum, Version 9.0.

JO *We know The Arts in general, and Drama in particular, have an important contribution to make to the wellbeing of young people, and this edition of ADEM is focused on Drama and wellbeing. What are some of the relevant connections in the Australian Curriculum?*

ROBYN Great question Jo, and not an easy one to answer! Wellbeing is a very large concept with many aspects to consider. There are multiple ways that the [Australian Curriculum, Version 9.0](#) provides opportunities for teachers to explore wellbeing through all three dimensions of the curriculum. It is not really possible to point to specific connections, as it often depends on the school and class context. Each learning area, each general capability and each cross-curriculum priority in some way touches on different aspects of wellbeing.

However, for the purposes of our conversation, we can certainly point out connections between [Drama](#) and [Health and Physical Education](#), and with the [Personal and Social capability](#).

DANIELLE Our new website showcases the connection between learning areas through a link called ‘related content’. This link highlights the learning area content descriptions that connect with each other. These connections enable teachers to easily see the opportunities to integrate content across learning areas.

Other connections on the website remain the same as Version 8.4, with icons being used on content descriptions and content elaborations to show links to the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities. These icons highlight the best opportunities to include and develop the skills and behaviours described in the other two dimensions of the curriculum.

DANNI *That is interesting. So, is there related content between Drama and HPE?*

MATT No, there is not really, because of the flexibility of both the HPE and Drama curriculum. The connection is a possibility rather than a direct one-to-one relationship.

ROBYN Yes, you are right Matt. This is what I mean when I say that it depends on the teacher and their context. A Drama teacher could connect to the HPE curriculum, but it is not the only way they could approach the Drama content.

MATT Yes, and vice-versa. A HPE teacher could approach the *Personal, social and community health* strand of the HPE curriculum by connecting to the Drama curriculum, but they might equally choose to approach that content in a completely different way.

ROBYN I would encourage Drama teachers to have a look at the *Personal, social and community health* strand of the HPE curriculum, as there are so many opportunities to make connections. For example, if you are a Years 3–4 Drama or HPE specialist, or a primary classroom teacher, you could be looking at the *Developing practices and skills* and *Creating and making* strands in the Drama curriculum, and the *Personal, social and community health* strand of the HPE curriculum. Matt and I have a little table here that shows them side by side, with just a few possible ideas for activities that would address that content.

DANIELLE Although there is not the related content between Drama and HPE, there are certainly connections on the website between Drama and the general capabilities. I can certainly see obvious connections in your table between the Drama, HPE and the Personal and Social capability. Again, as you discussed earlier, these connections are not necessarily on the website, but when you start planning activities and making connections with other learning areas, they quickly become apparent.

| Potential wellbeing curriculum connections 3–4 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Health and Physical Education | Drama | Personal and Social capability (level 3) | Possible activities |
| <p>Students describe and apply protective behaviours and help-seeking strategies to keep themselves and others safe online and offline. (Achievement standard)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AC9HP4P07 rehearse and refine strategies for seeking, giving and denying permission respectfully and describe situations when permission is required | <p>Students use selected elements of drama when creating drama and/or performing. (Achievement standard)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AC9ADR4D01 use the elements of drama to explore and develop ideas for dramatic action in improvisations and/or devised drama AC9ADR4C01 improvise and/or devise and shape drama using the elements of drama to communicate ideas, perspectives and/or meaning | <p>Self-awareness: Emotional awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> explain the influence that their own behaviour has on the emotional responses of others <p>Self-management: Emotional regulation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> manage and moderate emotions in familiar contexts, using provided strategies <p>Self-management: perseverance and adaptability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrate perseverance when faced with challenges, adapting approaches based on successes and learning from setbacks and failure | <p>Exploring, through dramatic play and improvisation, a range of strategies for seeking and giving consent; for example,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> managing changing relationships in friendship groups navigating fair game play exploring strategies they can take when they feel unsafe <p>Using this exploration to devise a short scene that uses the elements of drama to communicate respectful approaches to consent</p> |

Table continued from previous page.

| Potential wellbeing curriculum connections 3–4 | | | |
|--|-------|--|---------------------|
| Health and Physical Education | Drama | Personal and Social capability (level 3) | Possible activities |
| | | Social management: Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • apply verbal and nonverbal communication skills when responding to others Social management: Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • perform designated roles within groups, appreciating everyone's contributions to a shared outcome Social management: Conflict resolution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • apply a range of conflict resolution strategies to negotiate positive outcomes in a range of contexts | |

JO Thanks for that explanation. So just to get that clear, there are opportunities for teachers to explore the concept of wellbeing through related content and the connections to the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities. Some of these have been made by ACARA, but teachers are able to make more, as appropriate, depending on their context and their students.

DANNI It is well known that learning in Drama develops empathy and understanding of different perspectives. Where do you see those specific connections in the Drama curriculum?

ROBYN Yes, great point. I think Drama teachers are very cognisant of the connection between empathy and learning in Drama, to the point where it becomes an unconscious part of their practice, but is perhaps not always obvious to those teaching out of the field. As with wellbeing, empathy is not a concept that can be confined to one aspect of the curriculum. The Personal and Social capability element of Social awareness has a sub-element of Empathy, and I would certainly encourage Drama teachers to familiarise themselves with this.

DANNI But wouldn't you also say that empathy would also connect with the cross-curriculum priorities?

ROBYN Totally. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures and the Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia cross-curriculum priorities both provide opportunities for learning about and understanding cultures other than our own.

JO *So what does this mean for a Drama teacher, when planning their class?*

DANIELLE I think a really good starting point would be to read through the organising ideas for the cross-curriculum priority they think might be a focus for them and then to read through the Empathy sub-element of the Personal and Social capability. When they approach the Drama achievement standards and content descriptions as they are building a unit plan, they are then considering all three dimensions of the curriculum.

JO *It sounds like a lot of reading!*

DANIELLE It really isn't. They are quite short statements and the functionality of the new website makes them really easy to find.

ROBYN I think they will find that when they glance over them, they stimulate ideas and possibilities that can be really invigorating. Remember that the Drama curriculum is process driven. The strands *Exploring and connecting*, *Developing practices and skills*, *Creating and making* and *Presenting and performing* do not tell teachers what drama forms to teach or what topics to cover. That is up to the teacher, as they are the experts and know what will work with their students in their context. So, I would encourage teachers to first get to know their students and choose how they are going to approach the content in a way that is relevant for their circumstances. Then, as Danielle said, familiarise themselves with the cross-curriculum priorities and general capabilities that relate to the topic or approach they have chosen, as this can help them when they are developing their unit plan.

JO *Drama is often described as a social and pro-social art form; how can this relate to the general capabilities?*

ROBYN What a great question, Jo! The Arts, and certainly Drama, is most definitely pro-social. It brings people together in a way that allows us to explore and deeply understand ourselves, each other and our world. As humans, pro-social engagement and interaction is fundamentally important for our physical and emotional wellbeing.

DANIELLE Yes, but additionally, my understanding of pro-social is that it is also about helping others, providing support and care for others. This taps into empathy, and teachers might also like to look through the Intercultural Understanding general capability. Through engagement with Drama, students certainly have the opportunity to explore pro-social behaviours and attitudes that build empathy and understanding.

JO *Thank you all for drawing our attention to all these curriculum connections. Although drama teachers are often aware of the contributions drama can make to student wellbeing, development of empathy and understanding of different perspectives, it is important to be able to show how this kind of learning in drama helps us meet these curriculum priority areas and capabilities. Most importantly, we can draw wider awareness of the contribution of drama to young people's ability to understand themselves and others, to manage relationships and live more effective and fulfilling lives.*

About the interviewees

Danielle Cavanagh, Curriculum Specialist, General Capabilities, Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is responsible for the Australian Curriculum: General capabilities. Danielle led and coordinated the development and review of the F–10 Australian Curriculum: General capabilities. She has led projects including General Capabilities and Career Education Illustrations of Practice and the research into a Critical and Creative Thinking learning progression.

Matthew Ryan, R/Curriculum Specialist, Health and Physical Education, Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is responsible for the Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education. Matthew is an experienced teacher and has worked in both primary and secondary classrooms. Matthew has previously worked as a K–6 and a 7–12 teacher both nationally and internationally. During his career, Matthew has been involved in leading and implementing school-wide, regional and state-wide initiatives. He has also worked for the NSW Department of Education as a PDHPE Advisor K–6.

Robyn Carmody, Curriculum Specialist, The Arts, Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is responsible for the Australian Curriculum: The Arts. Robyn collaborated on the development and review of the F–10 Australian Curriculum: The Arts. Robyn is an experienced Visual Arts educator from F–12. During her career, she has been a head of department (Arts, Design and Design Technologies), SACE moderator, curriculum writer, University tutor (University of South Australia) and president of Visual Arts Educators South Australia (VAESA).

Small Town Spooktacular Success

Erin Landles

“Don’t be afraid to ask. The worst that can happen is they’ll say no.”

This was the sentiment that started an ambitious and unusual Drama in Practice semester long production our remote outback town had never seen the likes of before.

In fact, neither had the QCAA study plan approving officer.

But we asked, and they didn’t say no... and so the Longreach State High School class of six Year 11 students embarked on the Spooktacular production; an interactive haunted house maze which engaged both the school and wider community at a time when community wellbeing was at a low point – plagued by drought and pandemic low morale. Our once thriving tourist town had been financially challenged by travel bans and cautious grey nomads which caused a cascade of cancelled opportunities and a lack of community events. There was, however, a large gap in the community social calendar – Halloween.

Squad Ghouls – Cross-curricular, community and interschool collaboration

Our semester module’s goal was to design, build and execute a ‘Fright Night’ style Halloween Spooktacular for the local community. This was our first attempt at interactive, exhibition style drama and we had some reservations on how willing the community would be to engage with something so different. The inspiration for this project arose from the students’ interest in technical theatre – costume, special effects, set and lighting design. However, residing in an outback town means that our opportunities to practically engage with this field with our small class (and small budget) were limited. But YouTube provided the spark of inspiration we needed – average American families build small scale haunted house mazes in their front yards and garages year after year for their local communities. This small but dedicated class had been together in Drama from Year 8 – this could be our family project.



Year 11/12 Construction and Engineering students constructing the walls inside the classroom.

Image: Alfio Gangemi

We quickly engaged the construction and engineering class in collaboration with Blue Dog Trade Training to become a cross-curricular, multi schools project with VET students from towns 200km away participating in build day. The local businesses of the community gladly donated around 80 wooden pallets for our walls and the construction class collaborated with us to design a floor plan for our pallet maze to be held in our small drama room. The process of watching the build come together for a real-world project created a sense of ownership in the students and required critical and creative thinking skills to create a structurally sound maze within the classroom space.

Witchful thinking – ask and you shall receive

For the drama students, their first piece of assessment was a design pitch for one section of our maze. They were solely responsible for designing their set, costume, makeup, lighting and audio-visual elements for their corridor or room in the maze. This process meant that we undertook research of prior productions both professional and amateur such as Warner Bros' Fright Night, Universal Studio's Halloween Horror Nights and Knott's Scary Farm to evaluate our preferences and the achievability of designs on a K-Mart budget. Our sentiment of *Don't be afraid to ask. The worst that can happen is they'll say no*, returned. The class developed some research questions and decided to go big or go home – they emailed them to Warner Bros studios in the hope they could engage with industry professionals.

Student devised interview questions:

- How ideas and themes are developed each year – do you do market research with audiences or are there artistic directors who decide?
- What training processes are actors both on the street and in the mazes put through especially as they interact with the public?
- Are they given set lines or particular physical characterisation they are to be inspired by? Do they undergo much improvisation training?
- What quality assurance processes do you run (to ensure certain moments or jump-scares achieve their intended effect)?
- From past experiences are some characters/interactions/technical effects more successful than others?



Warning posters for the exhibit – we researched other examples and met with the WHS officer to plan our poster

Image: Erin Landles

- Who designs the floor plans and technical considerations of the interactive maze exhibits? Do you follow a narrative based structure or are there 'experience' themed areas instead?
- What does the technical side of such a large production involve?
- How do you reflect on and evaluate the success of Fright Nights?

We were unprepared for the degree of openness and authenticity from Chris Grew, Group Entertainment Creative Director for Village Roadshow who provided amazing, in-depth answers to each and every question and was a valuable industry insider into the planning of interactive improvised drama works.

Inspired by their success, the students weren't afraid to ask even though it seemed impossible – and through community connections, asked Owen Paterson, the production designer and art director for films such as *Captain America: Civil War*, *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle* and *Kong vs Godzilla*; and his partner Alethea Deane, set decorator and costume designer, if they had insight into the design process. Owen and Alethea visited the school and conducted an hour-long Q & A session with the class, allowing them insight into the production design industry for film.

If you've got it, haunt it – community spirit

Throughout the designing and set decorating process, students experienced an artistic sense of wellbeing and purpose. They collaborated to create sets, costumes and props from found and recycled materials which encouraged their creative thinking and problem-solving skills. Students made faux aged wallpaper from paper mâché, large melted pillar candles from pool noodles and hot glue and a padded cell using leftover calico. They jokingly used the flowchart for props and costume acquisition of Beg > Borrow > Steal > Buy to save our budget and to be resourceful.



One of our character portraits in our hallway – one of the artworks drops suddenly to reveal the actor who lunges through the window.

Image: Erin Landles

The project had high stakes, but high motivation from the students who were energised by the community hype surrounding the project and the growing production around them. The rest of the student body got involved by using the event as a community fundraiser – this ensured we would increase our audience and cater to our younger community members in a family centric town. For years, parents had asked where they could trick or treat, now they had a safe location to bring their children to engage in Halloween themed arcade games (lucky dips into sensory buckets such as snot and snails: a bucket of chunky soup and tinned mushrooms), trick or treat balloon popping games, face painting, a BBQ, raffles and bake sales.

The sense of community and fun the Spooktacular project brought to the school resulted in a queue of eager patrons 50m from maze entrance to the outside gates; an unprecedented number of community visitors for the high school, who struggle to encourage community visitors on open nights.

Fangs for the memories – reflections on wellbeing

The Drama in Practice Fright Night Maze was invaluable from a wellbeing perspective for the students, staff, broader school community and the town of Longreach. It not only gave the drama students a huge goal to work towards knowing that their work would be showcased to nearly the entire town, but also provided an opportunity for the whole school community to come together for a night of fun and performance. The sense of community and fun that the project brought to the school with all grades participating was invaluable, especially in a town facing almost a decade of drought. The connections to real world industry with a costume and set designer coming in to speak with the kids and answer questions also provided real world application and connections to the performing arts industry.

– LSHS Wellbeing Coach and HOD Arts.



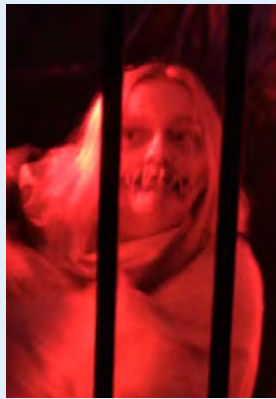
Student designed and sourced exhibits – Frankenstein inspired surgeon, Victorian era creepy dolls/possessed child trope.

Images: Erin Landles



Students designed themes and planned multiple scare variations for their sections of the maze – this section was a gory butcher theme.

Image: Erin Landles



Students learnt special effects makeup application both in natural and theatrical lighting.

Images: Erin Landles

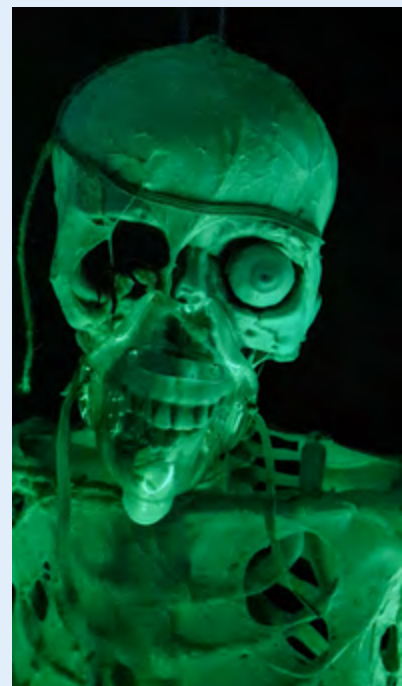
Amidst the construction of the maze last year I found myself being more motivated as I had a reason to attend more often. After receiving positive reviews and the production being an overall success an overall feeling of accomplishment was shared amongst my peers. We all mutually felt excited for our next assignment in drama! K.S. – Student.

Wonderful. Creating and being a part of the Maze was such an amazing opportunity. It took so much effort from everyone, but it was so worth it. My favourite part was seeing everyone – kids and adults – absolutely terrified! T.R. – Student

The Spooktacular maze and accompanying fete has been a career highlight. The joy it brought to both audience members and performers, the sense of community both small scale within the classroom and on a broader scope of the town. This unusual project energised our classroom, school and wider community and was a morale booster for our tiny community doing it tough.

About the author

Erin Landles has been the drama teacher at Longreach State High school for the last 10 years. She has enjoyed bringing productions to her small community and exposing students to the possibilities and freedoms the Arts allow. Her interests lie in making the Drama in Practice and Visual Arts in Practice programs at her school engaging and accessible.



Skeleton prop (above) and Haunted House Maze promotional image (below). Images: Erin Landles



Building Multicultural Relationships through Drama Education Workshops

Tahnee West

This article describes a series of workshops designed to assist in developing peer relationships between multicultural adolescents. The lessons were devised and delivered as part of a recent research project in collaboration between Murdoch University and Edmund Rice Centre Western Australia. Forty primary and secondary school-aged multicultural young people took part in eight drama workshops.

Context

As a secondary school teacher, my professional interest in this research project was to better understand the ways in which positive relationship development could be facilitated within the daily interactions I witnessed between the culturally diverse adolescents whom I taught in my own school in a semi-rural region of Perth, Western Australia. Creating a positive learning environment for students of diverse cultural backgrounds is key to my pedagogical philosophy, and developing strong friendships is an important factor in a child's wellbeing (Brogaard-Clausen & Robson, 2019). Exploring a possible relationship between drama education and peer relationships was an important objective in this research. Building knowledge within this domain is also highly socially relevant, with intercultural relationships currently garnering wide media attention, particularly due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, which, in the educational settings I engage with, highlighted an "us" and "them" divide between various cultures. Given that multiculturalism contributes to egalitarian attitudes (Crisp & Turner, 2011), exploring strategies to foster a successfully multicultural learning environment was key to this research project.

The workshops took place in an out-of-school program run by the *Edmund Rice Centre Western Australia* (ERCWA). The research site was chosen because of its strong connection with young people of diverse cultures. ERCWA was able to recommend suitable participants for the study as young people from dozens of different cultures regularly attend the centre. As well as providing settlement assistance and community education programs for individuals and families in Perth's northern suburbs, ERCWA runs programs designed to assist young people from refugee, migrant and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds through art, sport and leadership development services. Workshops ran at two locations in Perth's northern suburbs: ERCWA in Mirrabooka, and at the Girrawheen Hub in Girrawheen. ERCWA is located

within a strip-mall, and is neighboured by a butcher, an African grocer, the fashion retailer Big Boyz King of Bling, a jobs and skills centre, the Multicultural Services Centre of Western Australia, and a barber, amongst other miscellaneous shops. Across the front of the butcher's shopfront is a large, jovial cartoon mural that fittingly depicts two butchers, one Black and one white, with arms around one another, grinning. On my first visit to ERCWA, an African woman dressed in a strikingly colourful, loose-fitting dress and matching head scarf walked past me to my right, speaking in her language, while a young Aboriginal girl waited outside of a shop to my left. This picture of disparate cultures coming together in one frame struck me as a clear visual representation of the centre's purpose, and that of my own study. The Girrawheen Hub is not far from ERCWA, but was tricky to find, with signposts pointing the way through a nondescript carpark behind the Girrawheen Library. Inside, the centre was bustling, with volunteers serving noodles, spring rolls and biryani to hordes of hungry pre-teens and teens filing in a single line from a bus to a galley-style kitchen counter. As I followed suit and filed in behind the crowd in search of someone in charge, a spirited discussion was taking place among organisers about which food was or was not vegetarian or Halal.

I framed the study through a plurality of qualitative methodologies, including feminist, action research and case study approaches. Feminist research methodology aims to give voice to marginalised groups (Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004); action research addresses social issues in collaboration with those experiencing the issues (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014); and case study research provides a methodology to capture complex, nuanced narrative interpretations of real-world situations (Stake, 1978). Thus, a combination of these approaches was deemed most appropriate to the goals of the workshops, and was used in planning, running and evaluating the lessons involved in the project.

Some lessons are more effective than others at achieving learning objectives. In this case, I found it useful to focus on seven areas of drama education: *relationships of trust, storytelling, building ensemble, voice and movement, role, focus and devising*. In particular, experiences based on the formation of *relationships of trust, building ensemble* and *devising performances* appeared to be most closely linked with features of friendship. A possible explanation for this may be that the relationships of trust, building ensemble and devising tasks performed in the workshops were those that required the most collaboration and the closest interpersonal connections.

Workshop Focus

Each of the eight workshops focused on providing rich opportunities for participants to work in drama and develop multicultural relationships. The opening workshop, for example, focused on building relationships of trust amongst participants through improvisation and theatre sports. The seven workshops that followed aimed to build ensemble, develop voice and movement skills, discuss sameness and difference amongst the participants, allow

opportunities for storytelling and role play, and encourage the young people to direct their focus in rehearsal and performance processes.

While the context of the workshops sat outside of the formal Australian school curriculum (ACARA 2022), the workshops could translate to use in school pastoral programs, co-curricular activities, clubs, or production rehearsals, or be adapted to suit curriculum requirements with minor modifications. The drama foci of the workshops link to the aims of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts (v.9, 2022). In particular, these aims provide for the participants in the research:

- knowledge and skills to imagine, observe, express, respond to and communicate ideas and perspectives in meaningful ways
- empathy for multiple perspectives and understanding of personal, local, regional, national and global histories and traditions through the arts
- understanding of local, regional, national and global cultures, and their arts histories and traditions, through engaging with the worlds of artists, arts works, audiences and arts professions.

In terms of the general capabilities of the Australian Curriculum, the project offered a perspective on Intercultural Understanding. As outlined by ACARA (v.9, 2022), students can begin to understand various cultures as they consider the influence of cultural practices and thinking of artists and audiences. In the role of performer, students develop empathy by engaging with their own and others' cultural identities, learning to appreciate the diversity of cultures. Similarly, in the role of audience member, students explore art works from diverse cultural sources, and may consider accepted roles, images, objects, sounds, beliefs and practices in new ways. As artists and audiences, students may use their arts practice to respond to biases, stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination, as was the case in our drama workshops at ERCWA.

The project offered opportunities for participants to the four strands of drama in the Australian Curriculum: The Arts (v.9, 2022).

- Exploring and responding
- Developing practices and skills
- Creating and making
- Presenting and performing.

Perhaps the most memorable part of the process for me as a researcher was the engagement and openness of the young people involved. Their ideas about what constitutes friendship were unique and valuable, ranging from, "Someone you can cry in front of," to, "Someone who's kinda similar to you," to, "Someone who respects how you want to be treated". Following the

final workshop, one of the perceptive employees at ERCWA noted of the diverse students in the group, “They just are better friends now... Some of them had issues getting along and I really didn’t know how to help them, but this has.” While I observed the formation and development of both relationships and drama skills over our eight weeks together, it was reaffirming to hear from an ‘outside observer’ that the student friendships had ostensibly grown.

I provide an outline of the sequence of workshops in the following table. My hope is that this may help inspire others who are planning arts-based activities that aim to foster relationships or cultural connections. Given my experience with these workshops, I would encourage teachers or facilitators to adapt the order, exercises and focus points to suit their context, objectives and students.

Outline of Sequence

| Workshop # and Focus | Drama Exercises <i>(those with an asterisk are described following this table)</i> |
|--|---|
| 1. Relationships of Trust | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intro to improvisation rules: trust yourself and others, characterisation, accepting offers (Yes, and...) • Theatre games developing trust in participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – All Those Who – Name and Gesture – Run In* |
| 2. Building Ensemble | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recap improv skills • Theatre games to build ensemble: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – One Word Story* – Taboo (a board game that involves describing an object or phrase without using associated words) – The Family (Boal, 2022) – Mirror Mirror (Boal, 2002) – Granny’s Footsteps – Shark Attack* |
| 3. Voice and Movement, Sameness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining voice and movement in drama • Theatre sports incorporating voice and movement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Alien voices (students use pitch, pace, projection, tone and accent disguise their voice, with peers guessing who is speaking) – Magnets (students walk around “negatively charged” from one another, then “positively charged” to stick to one another) – Massage Circle – The Cross and The Circle (Boal, 2002) – The Bear of Poitiers (Boal, 2002) |

| Workshop # and Focus | Drama Exercises (those with an asterisk are described following this table) |
|---|---|
| 3. Voice and Movement, Sameness <i>(continued from previous page)</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Line Up challenge: participants line up in a particular order. E.g., age, height, birthplace, most hours studying per week; with and without talking. Groups for the next activities are then formed from the last line created Brainstorm challenges common to participants in groups, then share as a collective. Judge which issue everyone views as most pressing Groups create a tableau of the issue Discussion: We are all very different, but we all share this same issue Mime it Down the Alley |
| 4. Difference, Building Ensemble | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theatre sports for building ensemble: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balloon name game* Tangles and Knots Act out daily ritual from waking up to leaving the house. Copy someone else's ritual and perform this Discussion of sameness and difference in what we all do, versus the individual qualities of our rituals |
| 5. Difference, Storytelling | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theatre sports focusing on storytelling: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alliteration name game. E.g. "My name is Tahnee and I like turtles." Two Truths and a Lie Zombie name game Brainstorm of cultural foods from each participant, write up on the whiteboard |
| 6. Building Ensemble, Role | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theatre sports focusing on building ensemble: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balloon name game* Taboo The Circle of Knots (Boal, 2002) Wizards, Giants, Goblins* Brainstorm of cultural celebrations. Discussion of differences and the value in this Role play scenarios of conflict identified from common issues brainstorm in workshop 3, spect-actor style, including solutions |
| 7. Storytelling, Building Ensemble & Relationships of Trust | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationships of trust theatre sports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 21* Light as a Feather Building ensemble theatre sports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bombs and Shields* Octopus |

| Workshop # and Focus | Drama Exercises (those with an asterisk are described following this table) |
|---|---|
| 7. Storytelling, Building Ensemble & Relationships of Trust (continued from previous page) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storytelling: Sharing of own most interesting stories in a group of 4 – 6 people. Creation of performance piece based on the most interesting story. Sharing of performances with the group. |
| 8. Focus | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theatre sports relating to focus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Granny’s Footsteps (‘What’s the Time Mr Wolf?’/Red Light, Green Light style game) – Zombie* – Cyclops (a blindfolded student sits in the middle of the circle of students, and must guess who is sneaking in towards them through their sense of sound only) |

Description of Drama Exercises

| Activity | Description |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Run In | This circle activity requires participants to run into the centre of the circle simultaneously, without communicating their intention to move, verbally or non-verbally. A cohesive and focused group will sense when their peers are about to move, and can respond in kind. |
| One Word Story | Participants sit in a circle. One person begins the story by speaking a single word. The person to their left says another word that develops the sentence, and so on, until each person in the circle has contributed a word. The aim is to eventually create a cohesive narrative, one word at a time. |
| Shark Attack | Participants place chairs somewhere in the space. The chairs act as their safe havens. Participants will act as a sea creature decided upon by the facilitator and move around the room in role as that creature. When the facilitator calls, “Shark attack!”, the participants must flee to the safety of the nearest chair. However, one less chair exists than participants, and one chair is removed every round. |
| Balloon Name Game | Students form two even teams, then two lines, with the teams facing one another. Students tap the balloon back and forth from one line to the other, calling out a person’s name as they hit the balloon towards them. If they can’t remember a name, hit the balloon in the wrong direction, or do not tap the balloon before it hits the ground when their name is called, they are “out”. |
| Wizards, Giants, Goblins | This activity is a combination of rock, paper scissors and a fantasy role play. Participants secretly decide within two teams if they are all simultaneously going to play the role of a wizard, giant or goblin. Facing one another, both teams take on the role of their chosen character (for example, by stretching upwards and roaring if they are a giant, or crouching down low, scratching their beards as a goblin). Wizards defeat giants, giants defeat goblins, and goblins defeat wizards. |

| Activity | Description |
|-------------------|---|
| 21 | The idea behind this game is that the group works together to count to 21, one person at a time. Anybody can start the count and contribute a number, but if two or more people speak at once, the count starts again. |
| Bombs and Shields | Adapted from Boal (2002), this activity requires participants to stand in a circle, then silently select one other person in the group to be their “bomb” and another to become their “shield”. Participants then move around the room constantly, with the aim of keeping their “shield” between them and their “bomb”. To finish, students reveal who their “bomb” and “shield” were to the group. |
| Zombie | Participants stand in a circle. One participant is chosen to act in the role of zombie. The zombie stands in the centre of the circle, and moves towards another participant in a zombie-like fashion. The student chosen by the zombie must immediately call out another student’s name, before the zombie reaches them. The zombie will in turn begin to move toward the student whose name has been called, and the process repeats. |

About the author

Tahnee West is the Head of English and a Drama teacher at a secondary school in the outer suburbs of Perth. She completed a Master of Education through Murdoch University in 2021, which involved research into culturally diverse relationships in adolescence, and drama education. Tahnee also works as a Sessional Academic for Curtin University, where she will commence her Doctorate of Education in 2023, and occasionally with the Australian School of Performing Arts. Her research interests include social justice through education, cultural diversity, inclusivity, gender, literacy and the arts.

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Bring the Drama! A Positive Start Initiative

Kate Ellis, Nick Waxman and Susan Cooper

There is nothing like walking into a room full of smiling faces. Over the last few years there hasn't been a lot to smile about, but students across Victoria know that something has changed when incursions are back on.

In 'The Hero with a Thousand Faces', Joseph Campbell (1949/2012) noted the way in which our human lives align with the archetype of the Hero. By the end of 2021, this perennial journey had been lived out by people all over the world and we as a people shared a collective 'call to the adventure'.

This period has been deemed the 'anthropause: the great hiatus in human activity resulting from the pandemic-inspired lockdowns' (McCarthy, 2020). But on the other side, there are some opportunities to escape the challenges and reinvigorate engagement. The Victorian Government has acted to re-engage primary and secondary students and boost their physical and emotional health and wellbeing in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic through the \$112.9 million *Positive Start in 2022* initiative. Through Positive Start, students have had more opportunities to visit museums, zoos and galleries, and get involved in the visual arts, music production, drama, and sport workshops. Drama Victoria has been funded by the Positive Start initiative to provide half day Drama incursions for primary school students in Years 3 to 6.

Expert drama teachers Kate Ellis and Nick Waxman have had the pleasure of delivering this free incursion to metro and regional students across Victoria. They work with generalist teachers to facilitate a fun and reinvigorating half day Drama workshop utilising video lessons from the "*Drama Victoria Presents...Primary Drama*" video library of 64 self-guided primary Drama lessons, lesson plans and student worksheets. Drama Victoria developed this Drama video teaching library as part of the Victorian Department of Education (DET) funded Rural and Regional Blended Arts Program (Drama).

There is an often-quoted adage of uncertain origin, "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day, teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime". The *Drama Victoria Presents...Primary Drama* video lesson library was created as a "fishing rod", to provide sustainable support materials, to enable generalist teachers to facilitate Drama lessons themselves and further Drama learning in the classroom.

The '*Drama Victoria Presents...Primary Drama*' pre-recorded video lessons are available free on Drama Victoria's Vimeo Channel – <https://vimeo.com/channels/dramavictoriapresents>.

The video library is accessible to teachers and students from all over Victoria, Australia, and the world. The lessons have links to Victorian and Australian curriculum and research. Each lesson consists of several activities that can easily be adapted for the curriculum of other states or countries. Any teacher, anywhere, can have access to Drama as a tool for exploring creativity, healing, connecting, and collaborating.

We found Brame's (2016) research into learning through video useful for the following recommendations it made for any educational video content:

1. Use signalling and keywords to highlight important information
2. Use segmenting to chunk information
3. Use weeding to eliminate extraneous information
4. Match modality by aligning auditory and visual stimulus
5. Keep videos brief
6. Use a conversational tone / don't be too scripted or formal
7. Speak quickly and enthusiastically
8. Make sure the video is relevant
9. Include questions for reflection
10. Use guiding questions
11. Make the video part of a larger unit of work.

These guidelines are similar to the techniques utilised by *Drama Victoria*. Each video is broken into bite size chunks and has clear places to pause the video to reflect on the learning. Once a task is complete the students then share their creations and give feedback to others. Afterwards they reflect on their work – on the worksheet or with their teacher and class.

The *Bring the Drama!* incursion consists of four parts. In the first part, Drama Victoria's expert Drama teacher delivers a Drama lesson to the Years 3 and 4 classes utilising the Dramatic Storytelling or Improvisation video lessons. The generalist classroom teacher assists with the activities. In part two, the classroom teacher leads the Drama lesson using Part B of the Dramatic Storytelling or Improvisation video lesson with the expert Drama teaching assisting as necessary. Parts 3 and 4 of the incursions involve repeating the above for all the Year 5 and 6 classes.,

In the Storytelling workshop, students and teachers learn to lean into a problem – the vital component of any story if we think about the narrative structure. They learn to use their expressive skills to capture this, and many other parts of their group devised stories; then talk to how they feel in each moment as much as how it feels to play other characters in the story. In group discussions after a series of physical and creative activities, we wonder why we think about problems differently when it's a story. Even grade 3 and 4 students can talk about context or the fact that an ending can appear 'bad' but maybe 'if the character learnt something' it's also 'sort of good'.

In the Improvisation workshops, practice is gifted in learning to create *from* the given circumstances. Saying ‘yes, and’ through explorative games, works the muscles of malleability and teaches young people that there are opportunities and choices with everything that comes at us. When asked ‘What does improvisation feel like?’, one grade 4 student in a metro school replied “dreamy... because I feel like I am floating in a sea of possibility”.

This comment led to another (albeit different) conversation around problems. Why can’t we approach problem solving from this perspective? Like ‘floating’? Most students said it depended on what was happening. ‘How big is the problem?’ one asked as they thought to the question. This of course means talking about difficulty as much as some of the great things we experience in life.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions regarding school incursions, the Positive Start program started late. This put pressure on program partners to deliver KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) within a greatly reduced time frame. Of course, the pandemic has continued to be disruptive with teachers sometimes unable to attend their incursion due to isolating with Covid. Drama Victoria had also anticipated that there would be twice as many metropolitan schools wishing to engage in the program than regional schools. But we were mistaken. There was such a big uptake from regional schools that the travel required used up some of the available time to deliver the program. Therefore, we had to pivot and commence delivering online lessons to regional schools.

In a recent online Improvisation workshop one student said at the end, “I never knew Drama was *that* important”. This has been one of the most exciting things about delivering the program – the connection teachers and students are making to drama’s potential when making links to the outside world.

Many of the classroom teachers are also making links to the Storytelling workshop and their English lessons because there are embodied ways of teaching narrative structure, perspective, and character development. How too can ideas be generated for say, creative writing, through improvisation rather than sitting at a desk thinking? These have been fruitful post workshop discussions and another reason why it’s so important that classroom and leading teachers are present at the incursions.

Literacy is fundamental to the study and performance of drama. Thus, drama “provides opportunities for students to build vocabulary, awareness of language structures, grammatical and syntactical knowledge and builds their capacity to question, debate, challenge and imagine” (ACARA, 2019, p. 3). With its process-oriented approach to learning (Lee et al., 2015) and kinaesthetic dimension (Lee et al., 2015; Rothwell, 2011), drama pedagogy has been shown to contribute to positive academic and wellbeing outcomes for students (Ewing, 2010; Ewing & Saunders, 2016; Lee et al., 2015).

Over the course of a few terms, Drama Victoria's *Bring the Drama!* Positive Start Program will have reached well over 4000 students and their teachers. That's over 4000 students and teachers who will now have an embodied practice to lean into as we move into a future we are all so unsure of.

We may not have all felt like heroes at the end of lockdown but sharing our stories, creating, and playing together through such a period has been met with a great deal of laughter, play and joy through Drama Victoria's '*Bring the Drama!*' Positive Start initiative. This has been one of the program's most important goals.

About the authors

Kate Ellis is a drama educator whose widespread experience includes teaching at Melbourne University, Preshil Secondary College, the DET, 16th Street Actors Studio, and TAFTA. In 2022 she helped deliver Drama Victoria's 'Positive Start and Blended Arts Programs' initiative to provide half day Drama incursions for primary school students in Years 3 to 6.

Nicholas Waxman is a PhD candidate with RMIT Creative Agency Lab working in the areas of online education, student agency, voice and drama. He is an award-winning educator, writer and director with passion for drama and media that has seen him working across Australia and internationally presenting at conferences and performing arts institutions. He is also host of The Aside Podcast and producer of the Drama Victoria Presents ... interactive video series. Nick is currently Head of Theatre and Drama at Haileybury College across their seven campuses.

Susan Cooper is the Executive Officer of Drama Victoria and a community development, project management, events, marketing and business development specialist. As inaugural General Manager of Entertainment Assist, Susan devised and led world-first research to explore the negative impact the entertainment industry has on the mental health and wellbeing of its workers. She created significant industry partnerships to establish and convene the Australian Alliance for Wellness in Entertainment (AAWE).

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Links

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Blended Arts: <https://www.vic.gov.au/blended-arts-education-program-dance-and-drama>

Drama Victoria Presents. Primary Drama <https://vimeo.com/channels/dramavictoriapresents>

Drama for enhancing the wellbeing of international students in a university setting

Richard (Johnson) Sallis

When it comes to students and their wellbeing much has been written about those in pre-tertiary settings but less so those in undergraduate and postgraduate university courses. Even rarer are accounts which bring together drama (and theatre), wellbeing and international students. A study of university students in Australia found that ‘... the mental health issues of university students are flying under the radar of policy attention and leadership in both higher education and mental health portfolios’ (Brown et al., 2017, p. 9) with international students suffering higher levels of anxiety than domestic students (Forbes-Mewett & Sawyer, 2016).

The following case study outlines how drama/theatre was used to enhance the wellbeing of international students at The University of Melbourne. It highlights a program which took place during the Melbourne Covid ‘Lockdown’ where colleagues from the University of Melbourne produced and ran a series of stand-up comedy workshops for undergraduate and postgraduate international students, most of whom were overseas at the time, unable to come into Australia due to the pandemic. It was found that the application of drama/theatre techniques and processes resulted in a noticeable improvement in the wellbeing of the tertiary student participants. I am writing this article as one of the project team members, however the findings as reported here were uncovered by the team as a whole.

International students creating comedy to foster wellbeing

This University of Melbourne (UoM) project, of which I was a part, entitled, *International students creating comedy to foster wellbeing: ‘Are you joking?’* was funded through the university’s *Creativity and Wellbeing Hallmark Research Initiative* (CAWRI). Its primary objective was ‘to foster international student wellbeing by teaching them how to harness their creative potential and explore the funny side of life as international students in an Australian context’ (Sallis et al., 2022, p. 3). Along with the following UoM colleagues (see below) we received funding to run a series of comedy workshops with the aim of using ‘humour and the use of English language [as] a mediating space for students to reflect on the relationship between language, humour and

identity and the way in which these elements can be harnessed to create powerful narratives about self and other' (Sallis et al., 2022, p. 3). As well as the wellbeing aspect of the project, the academic team was interested to see whether the findings of its project would support the assertion that humour is a form of language play and has been found to enhance language acquisition (Hackathorn, 2011; Mohan, 2016) in second and or additional languages.

Further the academic team argued that,

if humour is known to promote well-being, it is also known to enhance belonging through the fostering of common values and attitudes. Thus, the pragmatic function of humour as a tool to foster aspirational values in one's group or community was explored and discussed with a view to fostering greater understanding of the community in which they live and study as well as greater awareness of their own value and ideals. (Sallis, et al., 2022, p.3)

The University of Melbourne team academic team consisted of:

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Dr Richard Sallis | Melbourne Graduate School of Education |
| Dr Diane de Saint Leger | Faculty of Arts – School of languages and linguistics |
| Dr Jane Lysk | Medicine Dentistry and Health Sciences – Melbourne Medical School |
| Danielle Clayman | Medicine Dentistry and Health Sciences – Melbourne Medical School |
| Kelly McConville | (PhD Candidate) Melbourne Graduate School of Education |

The aims of the project were to:

- Foster international student wellbeing by showing [them] how to harness their creative potential and explore the funny side of life as international students in an Australian context.
- Gain an understanding into the ways collaborating to create and produce a comedy routine can foster wellbeing for undergraduate and postgraduate international students at the University of Melbourne.
- Explore cultural differences by working explicitly with the positive dimension of interruption, conflict and tension.

It should be noted that even though the academic team were interested in whether the program promoted wellbeing in the participants, this aspect was not overtly advertised to them; it was the stand-up comedy nature of the workshops which was main focus marketed to the international students.

The project ran from August 2020 to December 2020. It was followed by an associated research project which ran from the start date and throughout 2021. The planning commenced early in 2020 and the program was originally intended to be for on-campus undergraduate and postgraduate international students. With this in mind, a series of evening workshops was planned to run in 'Studio-five' the (new) home of drama education in the university's Graduate

School of Education. However, it was not long into the project that COVID-19 hit. Rather than delay the project to run once students would be back on campus (whenever that might be) the academic team decided to shift focus and run the program online with the participants largely being UoM international students who were undertaking their subjects online whilst in-person teaching, and learning was on hold due to the pandemic.

A professional artist joins the team

The original vision for ‘Are you joking?’ was for a professional comedy creative to run the workshops. Even though the program was to move online, a professional artist Justine Sless, was engaged because she was known for running stand-up comedy workshops. Given that Justine had not run workshops online before, drama lecturer, and PhD candidate, Kelly McConville volunteered to work with Justine to adapt her program to an online platform. Other academic team members were able to further advise on techniques and tips based on their own experiences delivering lectures, tutorials and workshops online. Initially Kelly assumed that when the workshops were running, she would be assisting Justine with the technical aspects of conducting them via Zoom. However, it became apparent that whilst Justine was expert in devising and conducting comedy classes, she was unfamiliar with teaching in a university environment, and online. Kelly, a drama teacher and theatre director who has taught in both secondary schools and at tertiary level, soon became Justine’s confidant and collaborator. Justine and Kelly would reflect on what seemed to be working, what wasn’t and where to go next. Kelly and Justine kept in the forefront of their mind that this was an elective program that was being offered, not a subject. For that reason, the students were free to leave at any time if they didn’t engage with what was being provided (with some taking this option).

What was discovered and how it aided the participants’ wellbeing

The workshops were recorded so all of the academic team could closely observe what took place. In accordance with an Arts-based Research (AbR) approach (Sajnani, et al., 2019), as the team scrutinised the way in which the students (who were also participants in the associated research project) engaged with the workshops, findings began to emerge. In turn these informed the delivery of the remaining workshops. For instance, it soon became apparent that, on the whole, even though the students liked the idea of producing a stand-up comedy night (which would be broadcast internationally online) their cultural backgrounds revealed that they did not share a common sense of what was ‘funny.’ This however was seen by the academic team and Justine as being an opportunity. As the final set of findings revealed, for the students, one of the most appealing aspects of the program overall was the cultural exchanges that took place including insights to what is deemed to be funny in the different homelands.

Comedy workshops can enhance the wellbeing of international tertiary students

Overall, the findings of the project indicated that the broad intentions of the project were realised. That is that 'a correlation exists between international university students (undergraduate and postgraduate) being involved in a comedy-based project and the enhancement of positive wellbeing (and potentially the prevention of illbeing)' (Sallis et al., 2022, p. 6). Those student participants who stayed the course, attributed this to the 'fun' inherent in the project which gave them a reason to return each week and complete the required 'homework' tasks. There was also a distinct sense that the participants were part of a community of practice and as such they did not want to let their colleagues down by withdrawing or not contributing as required. Interestingly, it soon became evident to Kelly and Justine that they were not conducting the workshops in a vacuum; the impact of Covid on the project and the lives of the students more broadly was acknowledged by all and found its way into their stand-up comedy routines. It was generally agreed by the academic team that Justine's reputation as a comedy artist was an initial drawcard, but that as the project developed, what became more important was the team-based approach where everyone was free to share ideas and steer the direction of the performance. Whilst it was determined that these factors contributed to enhanced sense of wellbeing amongst the students, the academic team found the experience to be a positive one for them as well. This became apparent when the team began to watch the video recordings of the Zoom workshops and started to follow the path of the participants as they developed their stand-up comedy routines. Reflecting on this process, the students reported having a greater sense of self-confidence resulting from the artistic challenge of having to deliver a live stand-up comedy routine to an international (online) audience. They also asserted that the sense of achievement that the program engendered, enhanced their sense of self-worth and greater confidence in their ideas.

Online delivery – a plus, not a minus

Contrary to what the academic team expected, most participants responded positively to the online mode of delivery. Some claimed that the detached nature of being online gave them an added boost of confidence because they said and did things they might not have done in an in-person set of comedy workshops. Some student participants noted that whilst the nature of the workshops initially seemed a little strange, for example when they were placed in break-out rooms with people they had only just met, they soon adapted to the opportunities and limitations the online mode afforded them. Regarding the use of break-out rooms, Kelly and Justine appreciated that the students needed time to get to know each other not hampered by the gaze of the facilitators. For this reason, this feature of Zoom was often used so students could share ideas about their routines in a more relaxed and convivial atmosphere. When interviewed several months following the program, the students later reflected that when they were in the break-out rooms whilst they did not always 'stay on task'

they bonded with each other, including sharing their Covid experiences and offering each other empathy, sympathy and support.

When the stand-up performance took place one evening in October 2020, the online platform again proved to be advantageous. The international audience, whilst not being physically present, responded by providing comments through the Zoom 'Chat' function. Significantly the student-performers could see the 'Chat' being populated as they performed. This they claimed gave them added confidence, especially those who were waiting to perform. Some however watched the Chat *as they were performing*, and this they stated spurred them on and they even found time to respond the comments *as they were performing*.

The project resulted in a set of predominantly encouraging findings regarding the wellbeing of international university students being enhanced by an online program combining drama education and stand-up comedy. However, like myself, the other academic team members are keen to try out variations on the approach we adopted for this project. Firstly, we are considering running a future project where the workshops are run in-person, as was originally intended, and compare this to the online delivery mode. Secondly, given the input of drama educators into this project, the academic team would like to see what differences there might be if a series of comedy workshops were run by someone with a drama education background who also has a background in comedy.

About the author

Richard (Johnson) Sallis (B.Ed, M.Ed, PhD) is Head of Drama Education in the Melbourne Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne. His research areas include diversity and inclusion in drama/theatre education, initial teacher education, Cultural and Linguistic Diversity, and Arts-Based Research, including performed research/research-based theatre. Richard has taught drama in both Primary and Secondary schools. sallis@unimelb.edu.au

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A Touchy Subject: Intimacy training in the drama classroom and skills for life

Nicholas Waxman

Learnings from a workshop at Drama New Zealand Conference 2022

“Do you want to know what you missed?” asked Charlie, a friend I made in the tight squeeze of a lunch line situation within the historic foyer of the Otago Boys’ College, Ōtepoti (Dunedin). I had snuck into this workshop, hoping to go unnoticed. However, we Australians did not go unnoticed very often at the Drama New Zealand Conference. I’d just come from a morning of improvisation based devised theatre workshops. It had gone long as some of the best (and worst) workshops do as we lost track of time ensnared in the beguiling trance of creativity and collaboration.

Of course, I said “Yes” to Charlie. Maybe even “Yes and”, it was a drama conference after all. Charlie’s description of the activity was my first introduction to intimacy training in the theatre. He spoke with a unique charismatic lilt that took the sing-song-sound of the New Zealand accent to a whole new level. He was clearly excited to show me, not just tell me, what I had missed. The description he gave confused me terribly. It made no sense to my already quasi-sceptical (mainly ignorant) and frightened brain. His demonstration was actually perfect, but I didn’t know then what I know now. I hadn’t had the training.

I had heard of intimacy training. I had met and conversed with an intimacy trainer at the Victorian College of the Arts earlier in the year, I had spoken to colleagues who had brought them in to their schools, and directors who had praised their value, but I was yet to take the leap. In the back of my mind, it was something for later, for when I couldn’t handle something myself, or when there was a student who needed it. I figured I had gotten by thus far without one... I’d never had an issue. I also knew the tide had turned significantly in the last few years. I thought that if I waited too long it’d be too late. I’ll end up in a situation that is beyond me and that could have terrible consequences for a student, or a member of staff. So, with some unwarranted incredulity and not a small amount of discomfort I signed up for Ryan Hartigan’s workshop “Up Close and Personal: Shape and Intimacy in Staging”. It was a stupendous awakening.

You may not know what an intimacy trainer is. You can think of them as fight coordinators or choreographers for moments of physical intimacy onstage. Perhaps you, like me (the old me) have a small amount of sub-conscious niggling cynicism for the role of an intimacy trainer. We had been doing fine without them for decades. Why now? I think we know why now. In the

wake of #metoo and the recent high-profile events with some of Australia's' biggest names making news for allegations of misconduct backstage, onstage and in rehearsal, there's no doubt that theatre makers need to have clearly articulated policies and plans for engaging physically in the rehearsal room.

Melbourne Theatre Company, Opera Australia, Sydney Theatre Company, Queensland Theatre, Bell Shakespeare, Belvoir, Griffin Theatre Company, La Boite Theatre, Victorian College of the Arts, all use intimacy coordinators (Intimacy Coordinators Australia, 2022., Eve Morey, 2022). They are also used on film sets around the world, and in Australia including ABC, Stan, Netflix, HBO, and Amazon. Yale University, The Utah Valley University's Department of Theatrical Arts, Stage and Screen, Equity New Zealand, Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance and Equity Australia (among others) all have explicit policies and guidelines for intimacy on stage and on screen. Keeping our actors, crew, production team and audience safe and supported is so very important.

I thought of Intimacy Coordinators as being needed mainly for moments where kissing, hugging, sexual scenes, or violence were enacted on stage. However, I now see that it is about so much more than that. I was lucky enough to experience first-hand the transformative power of some strategies intimacy trainers use and I was glad to have had this revelatory experience in a strange land huddled with my fellow workshop participants in the communal lobby area of a boys' school in Southern New Zealand. There I was, watching Charlie recount the missed minutes of the session unaware of how far I was going to travel in 90-minutes.

"Okay," he says with a grin that is wider than cheeky. "We improvised a scene about a couple coming home from a first date." I watch him move, carefully recreating the moment.



Figure 1. Actors working with physical touch.

Image: Fabian Friedrich on Unsplash

“Standing on the sides of the stage are two people. They each have a blow-up toy. One has a hammer, the other has a saxophone.” I know he is from New Zealand, but I am sure he said saxophone. “Anytime either one of us felt uncomfortable we shouted “Police!” and the two actors would come in and drag us off stage beating us with the blow-up toys.” I was dubious. “Oh, and also while they’re beating us with the hammers and saxophone we shout ‘I’m a good actor!’, I’m a good actor!’ until they stop.” I am now at my most dubious. If I was pessimistic before, call me downright cynical now. I had expected to be met with incense, calming music and quiet voices. Not play. Not fun. Not silliness. Wasn’t this intimacy training? Charlie had clearly been having a ball. I was utterly mystified. Then, I got to watch.

For the next five minutes our workshops presenter Ryan Hartigan lead us through an introductory intimacy training activity for high-school students. It was exactly as Charlie said. Fun, playful, silly and very safe. The pair improvised a post-date-night-cap during which Charlie (in character as the romance instigator) yawned, stretched and put his hand over his partner’s shoulders. At this moment she called out “Police!” and sure enough out ran the two volunteers, dragged Charlie off and beat him with toys as he called out “I’m a good actor!” over and over. This ridiculous activity had the exact right affect. It took the judgment away from the act of self-actualising. It wasn’t placing blame, or creating another moment of discomfort, or risking offence in early stages, it was about celebrating asking for space and helping your scene partner see your limits. After the shouting Ryan Hartigan asked some open questions and found out what needed to change in the scene and the improvisation ran again. He worked smoothly with the actors and curated a powerful sense of autonomy with those on stage. In just five minutes I saw just how accessible intimacy training is and I was eager to learn more about Ryan Hartigan.

Ryan is a Chapman Tripp Award winner, finalist in the Broadway World Awards and the Moreteeth Award recipient. He was Artist-in-Residence with the Contemporary Theatre Company and Artistic Director with Wellington’s groundbreaking Theatre Pataphysical. Ryan has received awards from ADSA, ATHE, UCSB, UCLA and TaPRA (UK) and was Associate Professor in Theatre at Cornish College of the Arts before taking up a position at the University of Otago. Ryan was an excellent workshop presenter offering us insight into his manner when working with intimacy on stage, as well as strategies we could use in our rehearsal rooms. It can be so tricky trying to navigate intimacy in a school setting, but there were three key words and one activity that I took away from this workshop that I want to share with Ryan’s permission. The three words are button, fence and gate. The activity is a body scan.

The Button

The Button is a word that the cast, class, or group agrees on at the start of rehearsals. When someone says this word during a scene, rehearsal or ensemble moment, the group stops. We shake out, we take a minute, we get some water and we’re not asked why we stopped or what

happened. The director checks in, an adjustment is made, and we continue. The button allows for a judgment free pausing to help re-block or discuss the choreography of the scene.

Fences

A fence is an area of your body you fence off. Like a baby in a play pen. If you have a 'fence' that means you have an area that is off limits. A sore shoulder, a trick knee, disdain for being patted on the head, disinterest in having people touch your hands, or any other part of your body for any reason, or not given reason at all. At the start of a rehearsal you are given an opportunity to announce your fences. This can happen at the start of a process and can be revisited often.

Gates

Gates are specific caveats to fences in specific circumstances under certain conditions. For example, I may have a fence around my head. I may not want people patting or touching my head for my own reasons. I can share those reasons or not, they are not relevant. As Ryan said, drama class is not psychotherapy, even if you are a trained clinician this is not the time or place. Gates allow for openings in your fence provided certain criteria are met. You may not usually allow people to touch your head, but you may suggest that a gate to allowing touching of your head is a carefully choreographed rehearsal, allowing only certain actors to do it and at certain times. Your gate, your rules.

A button pauses the scene, a fence established clear boundaries, and a gate is a negotiated shift based on your own clear rules.

The Body Scan

Body scan helps each member of the ensemble understand your boundaries for playing in a scene, or in a devised piece of theatre. Standing opposite a partner one of you goes first and move your own hand over parts of your own body that you are happy to be touched. You could wave a hand over your own head for example. Then you show the kind of touch you're happy with – a firm pat, a gentle stroke, or fingertips for example. You then repeat it for other parts of your body. Any part of your body you don't indicate is off limits. Your partner is silently invited to touch that part of your body in the way you show. If at any point you want them to stop, you just say the button word. No judgment, no offense, just a new word and a clear way of saying that this is stopping. Very accessible, and very freeing.

I had no issues with my partner touching any part of my body, beyond the socially unacceptable areas that are out of bounds regardless of the context. But, getting permission to highlight my comfort zones to my partner, communicating my level of ease and privacy, and seeing theirs was such a clear and helpful guide for the rest of the session. Rather than hamper our creative

work, it made it more confident, more playful and more comfortable. It wasn't the fun police coming to stop anyone from touching, it was creating a clear set of rules for theatrical play. The body scan didn't create more awkwardness, it released it. It allowed for discomfort to be shared, it broke the ice and created a shared understanding. AFL isn't less fun because of the rules of the game and expectations around safety. We all know the rules and everything else is football.

Choreographing, staging, blocking, rehearsing or coordinating Intimacy on stage are not necessarily difficult, it just requires time, shared vocabulary and a commitment to appreciating the autonomy and safety of our students and staff. In May 2021, Howl Round published an essay by Alli St John about her experience as a director of young people (St John, 2021). Many of the suggestions she makes and things she asks the reader to consider are actionable and well justified. They also echo the sentiments of the workshop run at Drama New Zealand conference. There is much more detail in the essay. However, here is some of the advice she gives for teachers working with High School students that were explored in Ryan Hartigan's workshop.

1. Set intimacy expectations early, even during audition process.
2. Seek student feedback after casting to get a sense of any injuries, illnesses, limitations, fears around heights, or moving floors, and any non-traditionally intimate areas of their body they wish to protect from touch.
3. Create a community agreement. Build rules and expectations as a group. Put it somewhere visible.
4. Discuss consent and intimacy with the cast early, don't wait for surprises.
5. Run an intimacy training session with your cast early in the process.
6. Develop a safe word or gesture for your rehearsal room that can pause a moment if and when necessary, without judgment.
7. Independently and collectively Identify the intimate moments in the script you are performing.
8. Revisit intimacy activities to build a shared vocabulary and culture around intimacy.
9. Meet and talk with cast members involved in moments of intimacy.
10. Carefully choreograph each moment of intimacy with clarity around what will happen and when
11. Create rituals for de-roleing and closing out the intimacy sessions

One of Melbourne Theatre Company's intimacy coordinators, Michala Banas, describes how fluid the experience of intimacy agreements are:

an agreement of touch is not set in stone; it can change from day to day, or even hour to hour, depending on the actors' circumstances. If an actor comes into work one day with a head cold, or a cold sore, the agreement may need to be altered for the safety and comfort of all. (Sheridan, 2020)

These intimacy sessions aren't something you can do once and forget about. It is a new way of approaching your rehearsal practice, a new way to discuss and explore movement, connection and communication in the drama classroom. The learning I had in this short session doesn't just help me at school, it has seeped into my everyday life as well. I will leave my new friend Charlie with the last word. This was something he said in the reflection session at the end of the workshop that I agree with: "Intimacy training isn't just for the drama class, these are valuable skills for life".

About the author

Nicholas Waxman is PhD candidate with RMIT Creative Agency Lab working in the areas of online education, student agency, voice and drama. He is an award-winning educator, writer and director with passion for drama and media that has seen him working across Australia and internationally presenting at conferences and performing arts institutions. He is also host of The Aside Podcast and producer of the Drama Victoria Presents ... interactive video series. Nick is currently Head of Theatre and Drama at Haileybury College across their seven campuses.

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It's so dramatic: what new play *Chalkface* gets very right about being a teacher

Meghan Stacey and Nigel Kuan

Chalkface is a new play about teachers, currently being staged by the Sydney Theatre Company and playing at the Sydney Opera House. Written by Angela Betzien, *Chalkface* is advertised as a black comedy in which an 'old school' teacher clashes with a bright-eyed newbie. As a [researcher of teachers' work](#) and a [head teacher Science](#), we hoped the play would be a fresh take on the profession we live every day; that it would make us laugh, and maybe even have something insightful to say. We went to see *Chalkface* last Saturday evening and overall, we think that the play gets a lot right.

From the peeling paint, to the old mis-matched chairs, out-of-service hot water tap and enormous tin of Nescafe Blend 43, the set is without question the quintessential public school staffroom in Australia. There is even a resident rat* eating through the precious limited stock of coloured paper in the supply cupboard. Meanwhile, one teacher tells the newbie teacher to note the school's general scent, which he describes as "old fart".

Between us, we've spent a lot of time in a lot of schools. While some are newer or better-resourced than others, we can tell you that this is generally a pretty accurate representation of public education in NSW. (The "old fart" smell in particular seems, curiously, universal.)

What the accuracy of the play's set, and jokes about lack of resources reflect, however, are a [systemic underfunding](#) and lack of maintenance of government educational facilities which will not be news to any local audience. It is well known [Australia has a problem with educational equity](#), and the play takes frequent jabs at wealthy private sector schools. While the teachers in the play guzzle Blend 43 and rotate cleaning shifts, for example, the private school up the road has apparently just hired a full-time barista for its staff. The contrast here is stark, and while not all private schools are hugely wealthy, some of them certainly are and despite years of debate about developing a 'needs-based' funding system, [we aren't there yet](#).

Chalkface doesn't end its commentary on education policy with resourcing, however. The school principal wants teachers to focus on NAPLAN preparation at the expense of richer learning activities, as he angsts about the possibility of losing students to other schools. This experience has a sound basis in research; the [marketisation of education](#) through the ongoing encouragement of parental 'choice' and the displaying of NAPLAN results on the My School website has had well-documented flow-on effects of ['teaching to the test'](#).



From left to right: Susan Prior, Stephanie Somerville, Catherine McClements and Nathan O'Keefe in Sydney Theatre Company's Chalkface, 2022.

Image courtesy of Sydney Theatre Company. Photo: Prudence Upton

Nicknamed 'Thatcher', the principal is renowned within the school for his austerity, even stealing kids' lunchboxes from the lost and found. His anxiety about the school's budget reflects not only an overall lack of funding, but also the current positioning of principals as school 'business managers', having a larger share of financial responsibility for the running of the school. Our bright-eyed newbie teacher, for instance, is on a temporary contract, which she is told is because she is cheaper; the rise in fixed-term contract work in teaching is also a current issue for the profession.

The relationship between 'Thatcher' and the rest of the teachers in the school is, indeed, fractious. The principal establishes a 'suggestions' box which is derided, by everyone other than him, as a "black hole". Again we see resonance with current themes in policy and research: under autonomous schooling conditions, principals in NSW have been described as chronically over-worked, their attention diverted from engaging with staff perspectives and working conditions.

As for the teachers themselves, the divide between the 'old'/experienced, and young/'new' teacher may seem stereotypical, yet also raises important questions around teacher burnout. One of the discomforts we felt while watching *Chalkface* was the way in which the teachers, especially those more experienced, talked about their students. Usually these were jokes but they were always disparaging, and not always funny. 'Deficit' talk – where students and/or their families are described as lacking, either in intelligence or desirable social norms – is indeed rife in teaching and probably does rear its ugly head most frequently in school staffrooms. It can serve to support cycles of poor academic outcomes for populations of students experiencing

forms of educational disadvantage. It can also be linked to burnout, as indeed the younger teacher in the play identifies: one of the three dimensions of burnout is 'depersonalisation', and we see much of this in the staffroom talk of *Chalkface*.

Also of concern is the raft of rather alarming health conditions the teachers experience, caused by their jobs. One has a damaged coccyx from having a student pull a chair out from underneath him; another has spent the summer holidays in a psychiatric ward after being locked in a cupboard overnight by a student. These are extreme examples. They are funny, but they are also not funny, reflecting genuine, current concern with teacher wellbeing.

There are some positive outcomes in *Chalkface*. The two women teachers who are the main characters learn and grow from each other, and it's genuinely enjoyable to see them do so. But that is about it. Ultimately, nothing is done about the inequity the school faces and the difficulty of these teachers' jobs. In fact, most of the teacher characters leave this under-resourced school by the end of the play.

Chalkface lands on a description of pedagogy as the "art and science of hope". Generally, the play feels authentic. It made us laugh, and sometimes grimace in frustrated recognition. But ultimately, its ending portrays a bleak situation for public school education. We hope this part isn't accurate, although we worry that it is.

*Spoiler alert: it turns out, it's not a rat.

About the authors

Meghan Stacey is a senior lecturer in the UNSW School of Education, researching in the fields of the sociology of education and education policy. Taking a particular interest in teachers, her research considers how teachers' work is framed by policy, as well as the effects of such policy for those who work with, within and against it.

Nigel Kuan is Head Teacher Science at Inner Sydney High School. He holds a Bachelor of Science with Honours in Physics Education and a Masters of Teaching. Nigel has presented at Teach Meets and other practitioner forums, and takes a particular interest in student engagement and scientific literacy.

This article originally appeared in the AARE EduResearch Matters and has been republished with permission.

IDEA 2022 Drama4All: Celebrating Drama for All, Tall and Small in a changing world

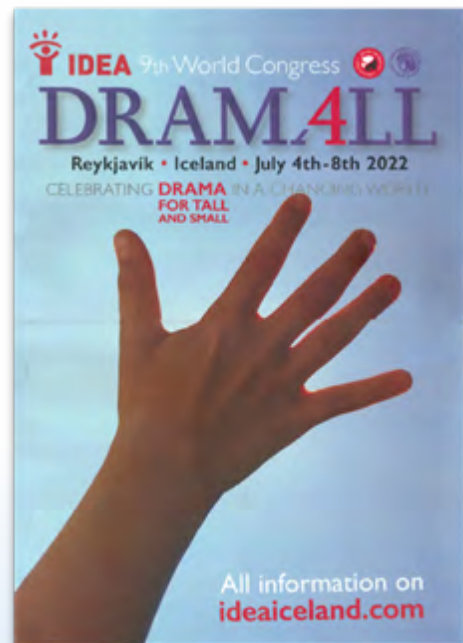
Robin Pascoe

This short article for ADEM is designed to capture some impressions from the IDEA2022 Congress, July 4-8, Reykjavik, Iceland. As this report is being written immediately after IDEA2022, it is too early to make a formal evaluation of the congress. That must be the work of the whole community.

The following informal notes have been collected from my notebook and conversations

- The inescapable COVID-19 Pandemic context
- The joy of being together face-to-face – even under the pandemic cloud and affirming the value of meeting in congresses
- The amazing work of the small, dedicated FLÍSS team in hosting the congress
- The value of seeing young people perform during the Congress and valuing the contributions of young people.
- Voices missing – the issues of distance, cost, expense
- The work of the General Council – sustaining this aspect of IDEA in the face of circumstances including the unresolved issues of the next Congress

I am writing more about the Congress in an ongoing project to mark the 30th anniversary of the founding of IDEA. To mark the 30th anniversary of IDEA I am writing a memoir – NOT a history but a personal memoir. See www.StagePage.com.au for details as this project unfolds. I am including images to share the atmosphere of the Congress. Also documenting the Congress, in her unique visual form, was Adriana Nichting who has generously shared her impressions of other IDEA events.



IDEA 2022 poster.

Under the COVID cloud

There is an inescapable context for this IDEA CONGRESS: the Coronavirus COVID-19 Pandemic. After the postponement of two IDEA Congresses (in 2016/2017 and 2020) and a world plunged into a pandemic, it is hard to believe that the IDEA Community finally met in Reykjavik, Iceland. But we did. It is time to celebrate.

No one assumed that this Congress would or could be held. It was an act of faith on the part of FLÍSS, the Icelandic member of IDEA, and the University of Iceland School of Education. For us in Australia, borders were still closed when we made the airline booking and paid the congress registration fee back in December 2021. Increased access to vaccinations, easing of travel restrictions and an upswing in mood meant that there was cause for optimism. But no guarantees.



*IDEA Congress Opening
documented by Adriana Nichting.*

Drama Australia was surprisingly well represented in Reykjavik with a strong contingent of drama teachers from Drama Victoria. Nina Rossini (VIC), Drama Australia's Director of International Liaison attended as well as IDEA Director of Communications, Colleen Roche (NSW). Not forgetting that as a Drama Australia member from WA, I was also there as Immediate Past President of IDEA.

Reaffirming why idea congresses are important

It's impossible to underestimate what it meant to be together in the one shared space.

Drama is an embodied experience. In drama as audience and actors we share the breathing in and out of each other. We share the spaces, physical and emotional. We make meaning together. Of course, that can happen on Zoom (sort of). But I need to be in the room with the performer. I need to sit across the table from Larry O'Farrell and share titles of books we use in our teaching. I need to hear and see more than the voices of friendships and connections built across past congresses.

Nor do we forget those who could not join the Congress in person. There were many that we missed.

Yes, I too caught COVID! Not surprisingly, I will remember the Congress as where I picked up COVID-19 and carried it across to Washington DC after the congress. Admittedly I am grateful



The FLÍSS team welcome us to the Congress. Left to Right: Rannveig Björk Thorkelsdóttir, Director of Academic and Pedagogic Program; Jóna Guðrún Jónsdóttir, Director of Finance; Ólafur Guðmundsson, Congress Director; Ása Helga Ragnarsdóttir, Director of Academic and Pedagogic Program, Chairman of FLÍSS; Aníta Ómarsdóttir, Director of Young IDEA.

that four vaccinations seem to have helped mitigate the worst effects. Fortunately, none of my family tested positive. But it would have been nice to have avoided it completely. Quite a few people are reported to have picked up the dreaded symptoms and returned home with the lingering effects.

IDEA 30 years celebration

IDEA was founded in Oporto, Portugal, in 1992. At the IDEA2022 Congress we celebrated 30 years of IDEA through a book to mark the occasion: *IDEA 30 Years Navigating*. It was published with QR codes linking to more detail on the IDEA story. The team who helped put together the publication included: Sanja Krsmanović Tasić, Maria van Bakelen, Tomas Leijen, Beth Murray and Mercy Mirembe Ntangaare (there were, of course, others who contributed).



Three IDEA veterans from the First Congress: Larry O'Farrell, Stig Eriksson, Robin Pascoe.

Marion Kuster and Kathrin Gooses also launched the *Young IDEA Lab 1 2020* publication outlining the work of IDEA bringing together collaborators at the University of Lomé in Togo West Africa. The book documents the workshops in vivid images and shared stories and explores the concept of the power of family. Issues of working across languages and cultures were explored in Africa as well as in workshops at Rostock University of Music and Theatre (hmt). IDEA supported this project (within its limited available resources).

Copies of both books are available through the IDEA web site www.ideadrama.org



Publications: IDEA 30 Years Navigating (left) and Young IDEA Lab 1 2020.

Young IDEA at IDEA 2022

As we have come to expect, there was an active Young IDEA project embedded in the Congress, building on the successful IDEA Lab Project. The project culminated in a performance taking audience members directly from the main congress venue via a series of adventures in the long afternoon/evening (remember Iceland in summer is the land of the midnight sun). Inside, we were taken in separate groups through checkpoints and interrogations before being ushered into a space behind a curtain – seeing the action as shadows – we wondered, were these Plato’s shadows?



Young IDEA performance.

General Council Meeting

Integral to the work of IDEA, the General Council Meetings are shoehorned into Congress programs, while most delegates go about their business of registering, having coffee and catching up with friends. This General Council Meeting was impacted by the pandemic with the Chair of the General Meeting Committee on Zoom, waylaid by COVID. The General Council Meeting met three times during the Congress. The minutes of the meeting are available from the IDEA Administrator.



IDEA General Council Meeting.

The General Council Meeting welcomed an invitation from Mercy Mirembe Ntangaare to host the next GCM in Uganda in 2023. It was also a pleasure to see for the first time some of the delegates (like IDEA Administrator Borisav Matic) who had been in isolation since arriving in Iceland because of COVID. Australian voices included Colleen Roche and Nina Rossini.

There was an intense, necessary discussion about the postponed 2020 Congress re-scheduled for Beijing, China, in July 2024. Sanja shared the warm video invitation from IDEA member IDEAC made by Mme Fan. A significant conversation was held about this next Congress. There is a remarkable development of drama education taking place in China, with recent government policy decisions to include drama in the curriculum for all. As ever, time was short for this discussion and issues were left unresolved. Drama Australia members need to be aware of the unfolding scenario. Expect additional information to be sent to Drama Australia for discussion.

WAAE @ IDEA

During the Congress, IDEA hosted a panel discussion featuring the World Alliance for Arts Education-WAAE exploring the topic of “Arts Education in an Ever-changing World”. The speakers were Emily Achieng Akuno, ISME, Teresa Torres De Eça, INSEA, Ralph Buck, WDA, Sanja Krsmanović Tasić, IDEA with moderator Joachim Reiss. Ralph shared recent research from Australia about teachers facing the impact of change: *What do you keep doing? What do you stop doing?* Watch this research space.

The World Alliance for Arts Education is a network of four organisations: International Drama/Theatre and Education Association (IDEA), International Society of Education through Art (InSEA), International Society for Music Education (ISME) and World Dance Alliance (WDA). WAAE provides a powerful voice for advocacy, networking and research.

Conferences are also about the incidental exchanges

Conferences are about coffee conversations and chance meetings. For example, I share some notes from a discussion I had with teachers from Finland over lunch about how the COVID-19 pandemic has changed what we do as drama teachers. I was struck by how even in changed circumstances, there are familiar patterns of drama teaching and learning we use.

| | |
|---|---|
| <i>In the conversation, the colleague from Finland outlined what happened in her online class</i> | <i>This I recognised as familiar drama practice</i> |
| <i>I asked my students to look at images from visual arts (paintings).</i> | <i>A PRETEXT SHARED</i> |
| <i>Each in our own spaces, made tableaux – while it was parallel activity in our own space, we shared through Zoom.</i> | <i>EMBODIED ACTION THROUGH STILL IMAGES</i> |
| <i>We identified a specific character in the painting and used a form of Role on the Wall to develop our understanding and imaginatively create role.</i> | <i>ROLE ON THE WALL STRATEGY</i> |
| <i>These became monologues.</i> | <i>CREATING. WRITING. PERFORMING</i> |

| | |
|---|--------------|
| <i>Next, we worked on putting together a recorded performance of these monologues as they were refined, chosen, juxtaposed and organised for coherence.</i> | DEVISING |
| <i>Sharing in both recorded and “live” time.</i> | “PERFORMING” |

Voices missing: distance, cost, expense

There were important missing voices at the Congress, for understandable reasons of cost and COVID. We are also living in times when previous sources of support have dried up in universities and governments. I read a post of a delegate “selling part of her house” to travel to be with the Congress. That reflects dedication and commitment.

Everyone commented on the cost of being in Iceland. The fact that 200 or so people from across the world made the journey is magnificent – sketchy representation in some locations, of course – but nonetheless the spirit that drives IDEA was there. As a venue for a Congress, Iceland was expensive. That is to take nothing from our hosts and the warmth and generosity of local people. However, it is and always must be a consideration. I wouldn’t have missed the experience because of cost, but there are some who could not join the Congress because of cost.

A general discussion is needed about the financial and environmental costs of travel to IDEA Congresses as well as consideration of models of hybrid congresses using technology. The streaming of the keynotes from the Congress was a step forward, yet we need to do more. It is important to consider models of documentation that were considered for the IDEA2020 Congress in Beijing (based on the digital documentation of IDIERI 2019 in Auckland, New Zealand by Performing Dialogue). Above all, IDEA must be inclusive and consider ways of increasing participation that is not limited by capacity to pay.

Reaching beyond the Congress

A report like this is always a sketch. I hope others share their memories of our time in Reykjavik Summer (and that’s also part of the story). As part of my commitment to this brave new world, I have made my paper presentation for the Congress available on www.stagepage.com.au. In addition, an ePub version of the full report is now also available there, free of charge for all interested.

Important footnote during the IDEA2022 congress

As was observed by Sanja (and many others), this Congress coincided with the news that Peter Brook had just died in Paris at the age of 98.

A sad grace note on proceedings.

Those with long memories will note the closing of the brackets from the first Congress in Oporto in 1992, where we were expecting Brook to present in person. (He didn't; there was a movie! More crossed wires with the French!) This is something I have written about in the chapter on the First IDEA Congress, in Oporto Portugal, 1992.

We all have our own memories of Peter Brook and his influence on our own work. Brook shaped much of the theatrical sensibilities of our times. Possibly, probably even, his importance is overstated, and we need some healthy skepticism. But his influence is inescapable. I still have my battered copy of *The Empty Space*.

At one point in the Congress, I was asked to nominate a memorable theatre experience and unsurprisingly I suggested *The Mahabharata* at dawn in a quarry at the Festival of Perth. We are all trapped in a memory web aren't we?

Vale Peter Brook. Thanks for the empty space!

About the author

Robin Pascoe is Immediate Past President of IDEA, the International Drama/Theatre and Education Association. President 2013-2020. He has now been to all IDEA Congresses since 1992 in Oporto, Portugal. All of Robin's children had been to IDEA (Phillip to Budapest; Ben to Kenya and Brazil; Hannah to Canada and Hong Kong). For the first time, Liz Pascoe, joined the Congress trail.



Robin and Liz Pascoe.

“I have never been in a room with so many drama teachers at the same time”: Reflections on drama and wellbeing after attending the 2022 IDEA and IDIERI conferences

Amara Jensen, Kate Ellis, Dr Rachael Jacobs, and Danielle Hradsky

This year, more than a dozen Australian drama educators spread our wings and attended the IDEA 9th World Congress: DRAMA 4ALL in Iceland and/or the 10th IDIERI Conference: Navigating Mess and Complexity in Uncertain Times in the UK. Here, delegates Amara Jensen, Kate Ellis, Rachael Jacobs, and Danielle Hradsky offer our subsequent thoughts on drama and wellbeing.



Figure 1. Australian delegates at IDEA, Iceland.

Image: Jane Carter

After more than two years of lockdowns and COVID-19 restrictions, it was lovely to have these events to look forward to! This was a chance to celebrate our chosen careers and vocations with so many other like-minded, wonderful people. We were all from different parts of the world but were brought together by a common passion: drama education. Everyone had their stories of the hardships faced—especially over the last few years—but it was invigorating to see that our similarities bind us, rather than our differences dividing us. It was also exhilarating to travel the world once more. How fortunate and privileged are we, that we got to travel to Iceland and the UK?! Not to mention those of us who managed to sneak in side trips elsewhere...

Our wellbeing was nourished and enriched from the experience in so many ways. As Kate says, “I have never been in a room with so many drama teachers at the same time!” Teaching is a really big job, where we get to interact with so many different people, and yet teaching drama is sometimes very lonely. Many of us are the only drama educator at our school or university. At IDEA and IDIERI, we were surrounded by educators from every corner of the globe who are so passionate about drama and its ability to create change. Even though English wasn’t the first language for many delegates, we shared a first language of drama. We connected with educators from Ecuador, Canada, Ireland, Tunisia, Moldova, Finland, India, and many other countries, as well as our hosts from Iceland and the UK. We felt so proud of what we were doing, and to be part of this global community. It was inspiring and motivating. We were all there, and we all belonged.



Figure 2. Getting fancy at the IDEA conference dinner, Iceland.

Image: Danielle Hradsky



Figure 3. Engaging activities to take back to our own practices!

Image: Amara Jensen

Meeting, sharing ideas, and connecting in person was so important. Drama is an embodied practice. As much as we have been able to do incredible things online, it is imperative that we gather in person. Teaching and learning drama online can be so draining. Both as a teacher and as a student, you have to output so much more to get and transmit energy. Feeding off everyone's energies at IDEA and IDIERI was electric. Of course, travelling after such a long period of being locked on our island nation also enhanced the energy and wonder of the experience. All of our senses were stimulated, making the doing of drama even more present and fun.

It's hard to pick favourite sessions, but some do stand out. At IDEA, Stig Eriksson (Norway) facilitated a workshop called 'In Medea-Land: A Medean Process Drama Approach on Gender Based Violence'. Although the content was pretty heavy in places, Stig had amazing workshop activities and such engaging resources. Amara has definitely taken some of these activities back to her own school and put them into practice already. Amara notes that, "Getting teachers actively participating in the workshops was so beneficial. You could see the activities through the eyes of a student, and realise how the learning directly impacts educational outcomes."

Another great IDEA workshop, run by Lucy Wang (China) and Morag Morrison (UK) was 'The Selfish Giant Process Drama Workshop'. This engaging workshop—another where the delegates were active participants—explored how to use process drama as a means to explore areas like philosophy, critical thinking, groupwork and more, all through the lens of teaching English as a Second Language. As we found when communicating with other delegates, drama powerfully transcends language. The workshop was engaging, thought-provoking and moving.

At IDIERI, there was a greater focus on drama education research, but still a fabulous range of active workshops, as well as paper presentations and panels. The dialogue on 'Decolonizing the Debate: The Beautiful Mess of Cultural, Sexual, and Gender Diversity in Drama Education Research' between our own Dan Harris and Dirk Rodricks (Canada) was a deeply moving

embodiment of the changes we need to see in our research and practice. Canadians George Belliveau, Christina Cook, Tetsuro Shigematsu, and Graham W. Lea's workshop "What is it, exactly?": Exploring Research-based Theatre' was an inspiring example of how we can use drama practices to create powerful research-based performances. As someone currently staging a research-based play, it was fascinating for Danielle to see different ways of bringing data to life, and meet new 'colleagues' from across the globe.

For Rachael, seeing a new, younger generation of researchers, teachers and practitioners sharing fresh, exciting work that draws on their lived expertise was deeply energising. As Rachael paraphrases from Michael Finneran's thought-provoking keynote, "This generation's ways of working are beautifully dialogic and decentring of power and privilege. The focus on intersectionality was powerful, and spoke to the need for us to live *alongside* one another rather than living *through* each other."

It was disheartening to hear from so many educators globally that they are struggling with support for drama education. Both at a school-based level and also from the government, drama is often seen as an afterthought – a 'fun' subject – and not as the powerful pedagogy it is. While it was heartening to know that Australia (and in particular Victoria) has a strong, vibrant and recognised place for Performing Arts, the rest of the world is only just opening their eyes to the benefits.

We, as drama educators, know the benefits a holistic drama education brings to schools and students. Put simply, the Performing Arts facilitate life-long learners. As drama educators, we are developing empathy, critical thinking, confidence, leadership, human connection, communication, global citizenship and creativity skills that propel our students into life in the 21st century. Studying these subjects opens many doors and prepares young adults for an incredible future. It was heartbreaking to hear how little these benefits are seen and valued around the world, but inspiring to know how many passionate advocates drama education has. As representatives of a country with relatively strong drama education, we were proud to share resources and stories that have successfully supported our own fight for this incredible learning area. For drama to confidently and determinedly take its place as an internationally alive, revived, and thriving subject, attending IDEA and IDIERI made it clear that we need still more resources, support, time, and respect. This was a wonderful opportunity to realise our place in this global movement for change.



Figure 4. Australian delegate Tim Roach holds up his drawing of the Selfish Giant.

Image: Amara Jensen

About the authors

Amara Jensen is the Head of Performing Arts at Beacons Hills College – Pakenham. She is passionate about building students' confidence through the dramatic arts and has a focus on curriculum development and teaching practice.

Kate Ellis is a drama educator whose widespread experience includes teaching at Melbourne University, Preshil Secondary College, the DET and Drama Victoria's 'Positive Start and Blended Arts Programs', 16th Street Actors Studio, and TAFTA.

Rachael Jacobs is a lecturer in Creative Arts Education at Western Sydney University, as well as running anti-racism programs through the arts in NSW primary and high schools, and contributing to the community as an educator, activist, and artist.

Danielle Hradsky is a PhD candidate at Monash University, exploring how embodied pedagogies can support teachers to engage with (re)conciliation.

Tīmatanga Hōu – New Beginnings: Reflections on the Drama New Zealand National Conference

Jo Raphael, Nina Rossini, Kate Ellis and Nicholas Waxman

Drama is a social artform, and drama educators are social people, who desire the opportunity to gather with drama colleagues to share our research and practices. A lack of opportunity to meet face to face over recent years has deprived us of this opportunity. As the world begins to emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic, it's time for new beginnings, and this was the apt theme of Drama New Zealand's 2022 National Conference.

We are keen to forge strong ties with the Drama New Zealand community across the ditch, and this year some Australians were able to take the opportunity to travel to Aotearoa and join kiwi colleagues at the conference hosted by Otago Boys' High School in Otepoti-Dunedin.

Drama Australia's, Jo Raphael (Vice President and Director of ADEM) and Nina Rossini (Director of International Liaison) represented Drama Australia, and joined with Drama Victorians, Kate Ellis and Nick Waxman who both presented at the conference.

In this article each of us reflects on different aspects of the conference. It's not a comprehensive coverage, but provides some insights into some of the many conference highlights for us, and a reminder of the joy of gathering as a drama community in person again after some pandemic years when this has not been possible.



Figure 1: Jo Raphael, Nina Rossini, Kate Ellis and Nick Waxman at the DramaNZ conference.

A reflection on language and song

– Nina Rossini

As a Drama/Literacy/Languages teacher I never cease to be amazed by the power of words. Our first breath, first sounds upon entering the world must surely have a profound effect on us. If there is one important fact that I have taken with me from this refreshing Drama conference is remembering how deeply the power of connecting to language can affect us and transform us. If anything, this conference has re-awakened in me the power of communication and the need to acknowledge culture through use of language pertaining to ‘country’.

From the moment I walked through the gates at the airport of Auckland in transit to Dunedin, I could not help but feel deeply moved by the welcoming song echoing through the speakers as I passed beneath the carved archway. It mattered little that I did not understand a word. What mattered was the warm sensation of entering a new territory and that the people of the land on which I was walking were greeting me and acknowledging my presence. The ancestral sounds vibrated through me as I felt and understood the sentiments of the song, moving me to tears. What an honour to feel so welcomed to that place, if only for a few delightful days!

At the Otago Boys’ High School in Dunedin, I sat in anticipation for the conference opening and once again I was moved not by what was being said, but by the sounds coming from a young man who spoke at length welcoming us all in his language. The sounds echoed throughout the auditorium with sincerity and humility. As we were motioned to stand, I realised that this was a custom familiar to most as they all joined in to sing a welcoming song in Māori language. I was so overwhelmed by the moment that I could not utter a sound. Funnily enough the same happened at the closing ceremony when all but I sang the song. What was it that I made me feel so emotionally vulnerable? Why was I so choked up that my eyes filled with tears? Perhaps it was the strong sense of respect that emanated through the theatre and the ritualistic nature



Figure 2: Nina Rossini, Jo Raphael and Annette Thompson (President DNZ), Nick Meissel (VP, DNZ), and Emma Bishop (Immediate Past President, DNZ).

of the moment that moved me. Thereafter each presenter began with several sentences in the Māori language before starting their workshop presentation. What a fabulous show of respect and inclusiveness!

Language and identity are so intricately connected because it is communication on a much deeper and profound level. As Drama teachers we are privileged in the work that we do because we bring language to life, one of humanity's greatest achievements in creating societies, each 'dialect' with its own cultural and spiritual norms. Let us also not forget how language and humour are unique to each culture. Dunedin, with its mesmerising backdrop of mountain slopes descending onto the sea, with its impossibly steep roads decorated by the most beautiful and diverse architecture was the perfect place for the conference. Our hosts genuinely cared and curated a friendly, inclusive atmosphere for its delegates to meet, share, learn from each other, regenerate and of course, laugh. We in Australia have made some definite steps in reconnecting with our First Nations peoples but there is so much more we need to do to preserve language and to celebrate both our similarities and differences.

Red Leap Theatre and the art of failing spectacularly

– Jo Raphael

I leapt enthusiastically into the conference choosing the option to follow up the first keynote by Red Leap Theatre's Education Manager, Emma Deakin, and the series of two workshops provided by Artistic Director, Ella Becroft. Red Leap is a women-led theatre company creating innovative collaboratively devised theatre. They are constantly thinking about what collaboration means to the company. Emma explained this through the Māori concepts or ways of living. Manaakitanga is the process of showing care and respect for others including their stories, which means truly listening to each company member considering what they have to offer. The second concept Whanaungatanga is about relationships, connection and a sense of belonging cultivated through working together in a spirit of acknowledgment and respect. The concept of Kotahitanga relates to togetherness and unity achieved through a shared purpose and success and a shared spiritual and emotional connection. Red Leap members collaborate to create an organisational contract and post notes as visible reminders around their working space. For the ensemble members, this includes commitment, aligning with the best energy, and my favourite, daring to 'fail spectacularly'. It strikes me that truly innovative theatre must come from this sense of stretching boundaries, sometimes to breaking point to discover what might be possible, what has not been done before.

The two practical workshops provided the opportunity to test our willingness to fail spectacularly while devising theatre. Walking in space and warming-up our body as an instrument, we were guided through a range of ideas to imagine and physicalise. Amongst them were prompts to shatter, crack, flash, crackle, and sizzle, and in groups to be the person in the desert, and then one-by-one, to become the sandstorm. We worked in small groups to devise the performance

of journey; our group of five became all the elements and characters as we followed rapid fire prompts – climb through a window, down steep set of stairs, through a dense dark forest, past the broken-down car, into a dark alleyway and so much more. We added and curated moments of suspension, chorus, and an explosion –all to be performed within a creative constraint of a two metre by two metre space.

It's always a joy to work with Drama teachers in these workshops, we're always so keen to experience the drama workshop from the other side. With nothing but the imagination, the body as an instrument, and the addition of some evocative soundtracks, we produced some captivating theatre all created within the time space of a few hours and the physical space of a couple of metres. We dared to be brave, to experiment and to fail spectacularly; to be the makers of amazing work that can be produced in such a short amount of time.

What is a performance?

– Nick Waxman

In the final hours of the event the national conference was earning its name for the hundredth time – Timatanga Hōu (New Beginnings). On my last night at Ōtepoti, Dunedin during an elaborate trivia event dinner I met Dr Drama himself James Wenley from Victoria University (Wellington). We shared spontaneous laughs over the limitations of the unstaffed service industry and eventually bonded over a shared love of Augusto Boal.

Lucky for me he was running a workshop the next day. The planets had aligned, and I was able to see his interactive workshop/performance 'Dr Drama Makes a Show With You'. This 90-minute Forum Drama style work ruminated on the history of the actor-audience relationship and provoked us to wonder if modern theatre has the right mix of those who 'do' and those who 'view'. We were given a brief overview of the history of performance from the early drama of childhood play, ritualistic celebrations honouring the gods, ethical Sanskrit drama and communal Māori performance contrasted with the western notions of 'doer and viewer' based in its origins in Greek theatre. This background to different cultural philosophies around theatre and drama was framed to help us consider to what extent we can challenge our traditional notions of actor and audience.

Around this historical perspective Dr Drama also shared his experience of theatre and drama. This included the loneliness and challenges he faced as a child who loved drama, watching theatre shows and collecting programs in an environment that wasn't supportive. We all knew what that felt like. Throughout these explorations of autobiography and theatre traditions Dr Drama fluidly shifted the varying roles of viewer and doer by inviting us to participate in the drama, and eventually to put on our own show as part of his show. The topic? Our favourite shows! So, this was a show, within a show about making shows about shows that changed our lives.

Using cooperative drama exercises, spect-actor activities and guided improvisations the group shared stories of transformative theatre shows and selected one to bring to life. In the last 15-minutes of the session Dr Drama helped direct this recreation of a life-changing theatre experience. Over the course of that quarter hour there was love, laughter, tears, screams, baths of blood and dancing pirates. It was wonderful and moving. And we made it.

As we watched, wrote, listened, observed and acted from different vantage points in the audience, around and on the stage, we explored the possibilities of drama. This workshop/presentation/show/devising session was a genuine and helpful reminder to always ask, what is a performance? And the answer – that is up to you.

Opening at the Close

– Kate Ellis

He oozed past the microphone and murmured ‘I’m 56 years old’ ... before miming the applause we should all rupture into, given this grey-haired legend was (still) doing balloon tricks and feats of physical theatre ... at his age.

Someone would have told Fergus Aitken in school that clowning wasn’t a career. But here he was, still performing, still gifting an audience with stitches of laughter... still earning a wage. Thank goodness he didn’t listen to the career adviser so many young artists are subject to.

We were gifted this performance at the NZ/Aotearoa Drama Conference opening ceremony, and I couldn’t help but wonder what legend of a teacher or artist inspired Fergus to start ... and just keep going. I would never have guessed his age, by the way. But that’s the thing about good drama and drama people. The energy is one of a youthful effervescence which gifts a state of aliveness to the artist, and the audience.

A similar opening happened for us as at the close, when playwright Albert Belz, who also mentioned his age (or at least, that he grew up somewhere in the 80’s), blessed us with the oh so articulate and so desperately needed ‘Thank you thank you, you f’ing legends (teachers), thank you’.

Where I had laughed by way of Fergus’ extraordinary physicality and comic timing, Albert had the audience laughing through a writer’s story (‘I’m a sometimes writer, mostly Youtuber’) ... then shedding a tear with his ability to capture the time we have all had, and are having.

As a parent of four, as a someone whose love of dungeons and dragons (yes, he was the games master) led to him to take up drama lessons himself in his youth, he knew something of our worth and value as drama facilitators ... at this time more than ever:

‘Someone has to help us make sense of it and ourselves in a healthy way. Drama, theatre, film, the screen, story ... and the teaching of Drama ... Thank you thank you’.

While I was standing by the side of the road after the closing ceremony, wondering what to do next, a thick NZ accent called out from a bright aqua car ‘Do you need a luft down the hull?!’. My bright pink haired friend from the conference, who had spoken of how exhausted she was at the end of the term and who wondered, “Do I have it in me to attend the conference?”, lathered me with an echo of bubbles from her every experience and learning *and* connection from the past couple of days. “Everyone needs to know how much good we do ‘ay?’”

And so, I/ we opened at the close.

About the authors

Jo Raphael is senior lecturer in Drama Education at Deakin University, and Drama Australia’s Vice President and Director of ADEM.

Nina Rossini teaches Drama at Reservoir High School and is Drama Australia’s Director of International Liaison.

Nick Waxman is Head of Theatre and Drama at Haileybury College and PhD candidate with RMIT Creative Agency Lab.

Kate Ellis is a Victorian Drama educator whose widespread experience includes teaching at Melbourne University, Preshil Secondary College, the DET and Drama Victoria’s ‘Positive Start and Blended Arts Programs’.

State and Territory Associations' Year Reflections for 2022



ADEM

– Australian Drama Education Magazine • No. 18, 2022



DRAMA NEW SOUTH WALES

President: Sonia Byrnes

Drama Australia Liaison Officer: Kelly Young

A note from Drama New South Wales outgoing President Sonia Byrnes.

The drama education community is one that has gone through great upheaval in recent years. With COVID-19, lockdowns, changes to HSC examinations, online learning, natural disasters, changes to tertiary education, changes to the Australian curriculum, ongoing changes to the NSW curriculum, teacher shortages, mental health issues, declining enrolments and more it feels as though we are in the perfect storm of impossibilities. I have seen first-hand the fatigue and challenges of Drama educators in this state and beyond. I have also seen a community of people whose empathy, professionalism and passion have made them stand out as leaders within schools. Drama teachers have become, more than ever, the ones who students look to for guidance and reassurance. They hold the knowledge of what it means to balance wellbeing with education, safety with risk-tasking, aspiration with reality and resilience with softness. They have often been the voice in school communities able to best see the teacher perspective alongside the needs of students.

The past three years have also seen huge social changes that have changed how we approach Drama education. This is a challenge for us – that we ensure we raise up voices that have different perspectives, pedagogies and ideas that have previously been unheard. We must critique our work and ensure that we are not perpetuating an approach to drama education that excludes or reduces difference.

Drama advocacy is not a new issue, far from it, but it does present in different ways now. Perhaps one of the biggest factors for this can be placed within the COVID-19 years, where lockdowns and restrictions saw school productions cancelled and extra-curriculars changed. Not only this but there were few opportunities for students, parents, and colleagues to see Drama occurring. Changes to the HSC examinations also put students in a difficult position and many reflected on this time as being too difficult to manage or inequitable in how marks were decided upon and delivered. With Drama enrolment numbers on the decline and schools under pressure to manage declining teacher numbers and increasing demands on time, there has also been a tangible fatigue that has blanketed students and staff. This lack of vitality is

perhaps due to difficulties in the wider arts community, our own working conditions, the lack of conviction around going above and beyond and the fear of group work that hasn't been learnt and practised over the years when it was minimal or removed.

Furthermore, with the anticipated roll-out for the NSW curriculum implementation in 2024 and no consultation paper or draft syllabus available yet, we are in a very difficult position to plan, advise our schools and develop rigorous and robust programs that serve our students. Adding to this is the removal of curriculum inspectors across NESA and changes to management, structure and process that have resulted in a neglected expert voice from the teachers themselves. Whilst this is not a new situation for Drama NSW it is a unique one, as NESA relies on us to speak for the whole, but we have little to no knowledge of what moves they will make or when they will desire that consultation to take place. My experience with this process over the years has been frustrating, unclear and, at times, exhausting.

The wider arts community within Australia has also gone through considerable upheaval and difficulties over the past few years. I believe Drama NSW could be doing more to strengthen these relationships and develop opportunities for teachers and schools to work closely with theatre companies. Not only this, but the direct contact with actors, directors and industry professionals gives teachers hope as to the future of their industry and the students coming through whose passion and skills will feed into the future.

Our involvement with Drama Australia is very important. We have moved the role of Drama Australia Liaison Officer (DALO) into the executive and ensured that we attend meetings, communicate with our members, and offer support in both directions. This partnership could be strengthened further, and I believe it will be essential in helping Drama Australia advocate for our subject nationally and in ensuring our longevity and relevance within the state. There is an academic component to Drama Australia that lends value and weight to what we advocate for in NSW and this shouldn't be quickly dismissed. In fact, I would argue that by strengthening this partnership we strengthen our capacity to hold value in the eyes of stakeholders.

This constitution has held Drama NSW together for many a decade and served to guide and facilitate the decisions made by the committee. However, some of the language and principles within the constitution do reflect a different time and the document could better reflect the changes outlined above. I believe a special meeting with extensive input from life members, past presidents, and current members to consider the wording and goals of the constitution would be beneficial in ensuring that the association remains able to meet the needs of its members. A change to the timing of the AGM, consideration of executive roles and the objectives of the association could be discussed.

The past few months I feel I have lapsed in my ability to lead the association with passion and strength. The toll of COVID-19, current school systems, and curriculum reforms have left me little time to keep a balance in my life and it is therefore with sadness that I step down from

the role of President. I hope that my time in this role be remembered as one where people felt heard, valued and seen, and that I was able to equip the association with the means to guide Drama educators through one of the most difficult times experienced by teachers. Drama NSW will always be important to me. I look forward to contributing as a member to the publications, professional learning, and advocacy that the association does in the future.

We are proud to announce that The University of Newcastle will be hosting the 2023 National Conference.

ANTIDOTE

DRAMA AUSTRALIA NATIONAL CONFERENCE

2 & 3 June 2023 | The University of Newcastle



Our 2023 conference theme foregrounds the radical praxis that drama education continues to offer in times of crisis and change. The wealth of research and practice shows that Drama provides the antidote to the fractured contexts we live in, offering remedy and insight, as we battle the poison of divisive politics, widening inequities and devastating climate crisis. We cannot be erased or ignored.

Our praxis matters more now than ever before, as we offer transformative (he)artful experiences that focus on building agency, compassion and critical understanding. In this conference, we will hold space for each other and our communities, tell stories that matter and celebrate our strengths.

Together we trace our vital role in healing and action that relieves, prevents and counteracts.

Join us on Awabakal Country, in the coastal city of Newcastle, as we celebrate Drama as Antidote.

Come and be nourished.

(EOIs & registration information will be available via the Drama NSW website.)



President: Stephanie Tudor
Drama Australia Liaison Officer: Sam Neill

Hello from Queensland!

Drama Queensland have had another great year of spotlighting key advocacy communication, engaging publications, and exciting professional learning opportunities for our members.

Our State Conference, ELEVATE 22, took place in May and it was fantastic to be able to come back together for another conference with our delegates. We always have a strong turnout of around 300 people each year and we love the energy and commitment we see from teachers across the state at this event. We had some wonderful keynotes this year from Margi Brown Ash and Red Leap Theatre, as well as some informative panels from industry professionals, academics, and teachers in regard to advocacy and the world of digital resourcing. It was an honour to be able to celebrate our new Life Members Judith McLean and Julie Dunn in person



The wonderful 2022 Drama Queensland Committee.



2021 Life Member Judith McLean sharing her expertise at ELEVATE 22.



Celebrating 2022 Life Member Julie Dunn at ELEVATE 22.

and hear from wonderful speakers about their inspiring work in arts education. We received excellent feedback from our members and we are looking forward to continuing planning for our 2023 conference.

Early in Term 4 we ran our annual Nuts and Bolts PD which is a professional development day designed for beginning teachers but also offers something for everyone. This day provides the opportunity for attendees to build their professional networks whilst attending workshops that offer practical strategies and ideas in relation to the teaching of Drama. This year we had sessions on curriculum implementation, insight into a new play for junior students, and creating safe and accessible spaces with Screech Arts. This was a great day with very practical ideas and help for the classroom.

Advocacy has been a big focus this year as we continue to navigate our changing curriculum. Our year began with conversations regarding the inter-subject scaling process in QLD, and the concerns around the Arts subjects and their overall performance for students. We worked with the Queensland Advocates for Arts Education (QAAE) to send letters to both the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC) and Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) to request meetings about the inter-subject scaling in QLD. We were successful in scheduling a meeting with QCAA and QTAC in regard to advocacy, curriculum development and ATAR. These letters are published on our website. We continue to work with QAAE to ensure a strong and positive outcome for students across Queensland.

Our president, Stephanie Tudor, was also successful in speaking with Lee Lewis, Artistic Director of Queensland Theatre, on our podcast about arts advocacy which was picked up by ABC News for a follow-up interview discussing all things Arts education, in particular, an important conversation about the number of Year 12 students enrolled in Arts subjects dropping, amid beliefs they won't deliver a high ATAR score continuing with this study. The support from our community was overwhelming and we remain hopeful continuing these discussions moving forward.

Our publications team continued their great work with our monthly DQ News, our Podcast series, DQ Chats and working on our annual journal. Musesheet was retired this year; however we felt our main publications still have a different focus and communicate to our members in a timely fashion. The committee members responsible continue to produce high quality communication for our members and this has been received well. Particularly, DQ Chats has expanded its listenership with notable releases such as two efforts for two-part episode releases with Red Leap Theatre and Lucas Stibbard, arts advocacy with Queensland Theatre's AD Lee Lewis, an informative chat about making our classrooms more accessible with Madeline Little from Access Arts and quality chats about industry and pathways for teachers and students with the Brisbane Festival and facilitators from the Australian Performing Arts Conservatory (APAC).

Moving forward into 2023, we aim to continue our efforts with our professional development offerings and publications as well as advocating for Drama education with our members and affiliates. We have had such a productive and busy year and we can't wait to keep the momentum of Drama Queensland going.

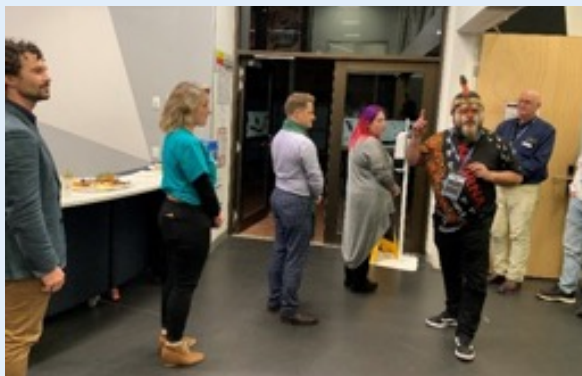
Take care everyone, until 2023!



President: Graham Cox

Drama Australia Liaison Officer: Valerie Harrold

Drama South Australia has just held their State Conference at Adelaide High School in Adelaide on Friday September 30th and Saturday October 1st, hosting approximately 70 participants. Our conference began with a beautiful and heart-warming “Welcome to Country” performed by Uncle Tamaru. We had two very inspiring keynote addresses from Dr John Saunders and Louka Parry who reminded us how important the work we do as drama teachers is and to keep



Top left: Uncle Tamaru giving a short history lesson on Aboriginal culture and language.

Top right: Dr John Saunders giving the Keynote Address on conference opening night;

Above left: Louka Parry giving the Keynote Address on second day of conference.

Above right: Participants enjoying Trent Phillips' workshop, “Getting Started in the Drama Classroom”.

fighting for the things we believe in. We also got a sneak preview of the Adelaide Film Festival showcasing some wonderful Australian theatre makers, telling very important stories.

There was lots of excitement and energy in the air as participants attended a variety of workshops targeted at early-career as well as experienced teachers of all age groups from Foundation up to Year 12. Workshops included *Stage Combat*, *Creative Based Learning Through Movement*, *Film Making for Schools* and *Drama for Talk and Writing*.

We had several other professional learning events this year including our “Walking Together” workshop where we learnt about teaching with Indigenous perspectives and “We are All Arts Teachers” where we explored the power of drama games as well as how to teach the Elements



Top two images: Participants exploring “Creative Based Learning Through Movement/Dance” with Kerrin Rowlands.

Above left: Learning about “Intimacy in Theatre” with Craig McArdle.

Above right: Having fun with Julie Orchard’s workshop “Acting Out: Drama for the Early Years”.

Left: Getting our light sabres on with Jethro Pidd for “Stage Combat”.

of Drama through games. During our “Building Group Dynamics” workshop we explored a variety of ways to teach group skills to students in a sequential and accumulative way so that students gradually build these skills from Foundation right through to Year 12.

Our AGM will be held on 22nd of October where we will hopefully welcome several new members to our board. Our current president Graham Cox will be stepping back from the role of president, but still continuing to support us as a general member of the board. Our board members have worked tirelessly over the past few months to make the state conference the success that it was.

At our Educators SA World Teachers’ Day event this year, we will acknowledge Graham Cox with a Lifetime Achievement Award for his long standing and generous service to Drama South Australia, as well as his commitment and dedication to keeping our association going. Tess O’Callaghan will be presented with a Service Award for her longstanding commitment to Drama South Australia.



President: Michelle Weeding
Drama Australia Liaison Officer: Kelly Howell

Drama Tasmania continues to offer varying activities each year for our state Drama teachers. In the past year we have offered two conferences.

The first was **Collaboration Act 2**, where members came together to participate in workshops, collaborate and share ideas.

In September this year we presented a **Cultural Connections** conference where we felt passionate about bringing members of our palawa kani community together to assist us in starting the conversations about how we might be open to First Nations study. We had Auntie Nola welcome us to Country and Kitana Mansell share her experiences and provide the catering from her business, palawa kipli Tasmanian Aboriginal inspired food. Dwayne Everettsmith shared his experiences, stories and artistic practices. He led a workshop about cultural sensitivities and inclusion. Adam Wheeler from Tas Dance shared their story of the development of a new work, tuylupa. This new dance work carries themes of community, connection, and responsibility to Country. Our Drama Victoria friends, Andrew Byrne, Jane Carter and Danielle Hradsky joined us also to share their stories and experiences from presenting their work at the recent IDEA conference in Iceland, as well as running workshops about their journeys of teaching First Nations content and concepts. All members had an incredibly rewarding, emotional and enlightening day.

Drama Tas is a small vibrant organisation that is at risk. We will only continue to survive if we have members who participate in the PL opportunities we provide. The aftermath of COVID-19 continues to be an interesting space to navigate. Our hope is that as a professional association we continue to survive and garner support from our drama teacher community.

We also thank Drama Vic and Drama Australia for their ongoing support.

DRAMA TERRITORY

President: Mark Bunnett

Drama Australia Liaison Officer: Scott Gooding

Over the last 12 months Drama Territory has increased its membership to 29 people, made up of primary, middle and secondary teachers, and teaching artists. The members are primarily from Darwin but we do have a member in Alice Springs!

The post-COVID era continues to present challenges for professional associations to provide learning opportunities for members but in April we were very fortunate to have Lynne Bradley, the co-founder of Zen Zen Zo, visit for ten days and conduct two full-day workshops on Viewpoints/Suzuki and Practical Aesthetics as well as working with several teachers in their classrooms.

Following on from that, the committee decided to offer a full scholarship for one member to attend Zen Zen Zo's annual physical theatre workshop, Stomping Ground, in January 2023 in Brisbane. Our lucky recipient is Kate Smith, a drama teacher from O'Loughlin Catholic College in Darwin. She is very excited to go!!!



Lucky participants exploring "Viewpoints" with Lynne Bradley.



Learning about “Suzuki” with Lynne Bradley.

We are planning an Augmented Reality workshop in October which will offer participants the opportunity to develop exciting new skills that could definitely be used in performance. At the end of September four Drama Territory members will be attending the Drama SA conference, REIMAGINE.

Drama Territory continues to be an active and innovative association that is continually trying to find ways to support members and overcome the tyranny of distance by providing quality professional development opportunities, and to create links between industry and education. This year we have formed a partnership with Corrugated Iron Youth Arts and have been able to share rehearsal spaces and include members and artists in all professional learning and performance opportunities.

A big shout out to the 2022 committee for all of their work so far:

President – Mark Bunnett
DALO – Scott Gooding
Secretary – Sally Crawford
Treasurer – Thevi Chelliah
Committee member – Cat Hart
Committee member – Sonja Berthold
Committee member – Justin Zammit.



*Drama Territory President,
Mark Bunnett.*



President: Andrew Byrne

Drama Australia Liaison Officer: Lyndy Clarke

What a joy it has been to be back in the classroom, uninterrupted, for the first time since 2019. As an organisation, the sadness of extended lockdown and remote learning has resulted in looking at how we work to service our members in various ways. We don't feel that things are back to pre-Covid normal – teachers are exhausted, and schools are stretched. However, productions are happening again, drama classes are back in person with students collaborating once more, and VCE Drama and Theatre studies students have been able to work with their teachers on their end of year performance exams.

We learnt a great deal in 2021 about how we develop and produce resources and these learnings have carried over to our work in 2022. There has been a call for in-person workshops and professional development opportunities from our membership. Unfortunately we have often struggled to get enough people to attend to warrant the in-person PD. We continue to produce professional development that can be accessed asynchronously, either concurrently via Zoom or by viewing the recorded zoom session in the member's own time. This is one area that we will continue to work in as it allows for greater access to professional learning for regional and rural teachers and time-poor metropolitan teachers.

We are now in the second year of our partnership with the Department of Education for the Blended Arts Program, with expert drama teachers working with 15 regional/rural primary schools to deliver a two-term drama program. We were also awarded a one-year grant to deliver stand-alone drama programs with primary schools across Victoria for the Positive Start Program, reaching over 50 schools in 2022. The two programs combined saw us delivering drama programs to over 4000 students in Victoria.

In Victoria, a new Enterprise Bargaining Agreement was ratified earlier this year. In it is the provision for time-in-lieu for work conducted by teachers outside their 38-hour week, including theatre productions. There are concerns that this costly provision may affect school productions negatively. We all understand how many hours teachers contribute outside of their teaching hours to provide this invaluable opportunity for our students, but the cost to schools to cover



Expert teacher Kate Ellis helping primary school students create some drama with the Blended Arts Program.

these hours in time-in-lieu through casual relief teachers and the consequential interruption to the teachers' classes may see productions fall by the wayside. Stay tuned.

As an organisation, we are continuing our reconciliation journey. This year we have moved towards an Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan. The Drama Victoria Connections Festival: Connect. Challenge. Create was once again offered to schools and students from years 7-10. The unit of work culminates in the students devising a 15-minute performance and for the second year this performance has been filmed and submitted to Drama Victoria for feedback. In 2022 the Connections Festival used a stimulus from a First Nations Performing Artist, DRMNGNOW: his song 'Get Back to the Land'. We worked with DRMNGNW through the development of the resource, and he made himself available to the schools for workshops or advice. The Connections Festival will run in both Semester One and Two in 2023 and 2024. Drama Education students from Monash University are developing the unit of work under the guidance of Michelle Ludecke and our Reconciliation Portfolio Manager. For the next iteration of the Connections Festival, we will be collaborating with First Nations artist Chrissyray Weetra and hope to have students back performing in person in clusters as we did pre-COVID.

We are also endeavouring to maintain our not-for-profit status with an application to be granted charity status with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission. With this comes



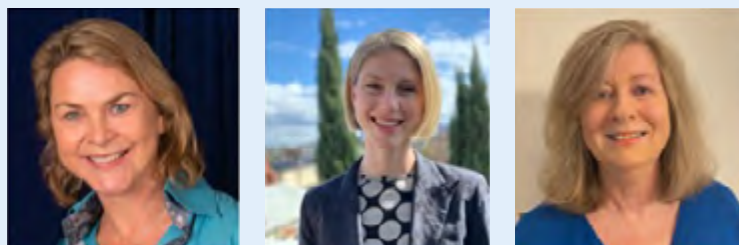
Drama teaching veteran Sam Mackie talks exam strategy with VCE Theatre Studies students.

the need to develop formal documentation on Risk Management, the refining and updating of Child Safety policies and governance policies. We have updated our Rules of Association, accepted by our membership at a Special General Meeting.

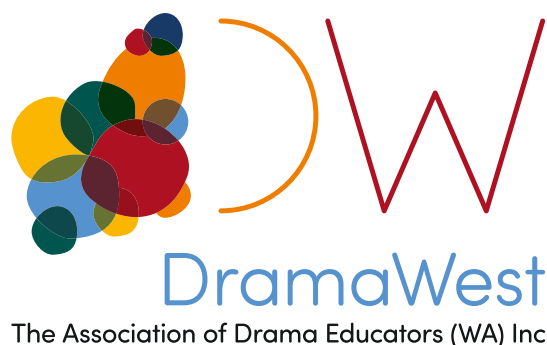
Our fabulous Executive Officer, Susan Cooper, recently stepped down from the role and has taken the role of Director of Community Engagement and continues to liaise with the D.E.T regarding the Blended Arts Program and Positive Start Programs. Sarah Nicholson has taken on the role of E.O over the last week and brings her legal experience and work in business and not for profit organisations into our arena. Thank you, Susan, for all of your dedicated hard work over the last two years, and welcome to our organisation Sarah!

Once again, the passionate commitment of our creative association continues to amaze with many of the committee members generating resources for our membership. Thank you to the committee for all of your contributions this year – an organisation like Drama Victoria does not run without your leadership and expertise.

And it goes without saying, that without Suzie Martens our administrator, we would be up a certain creek without a paddle!



Drama Victoria's fabulous Office Team: outgoing Executive Officer and new Director of Community Engagement, Susan Cooper, new Executive Officer Sarah Nicholson, and stalwart Office Administrator, Suzie Martens.



President: Brooke van Aalen

Drama Australia Liaison Officer: Felicity Glendinning

DramaWest is in a healthy position in the year 2021-22. Our AGM with its attached Professional Learning was forced online again due to a COVID outbreak. The planned keynote will now form part of our State Conference in November.

Each of the AGM Professional Learning sessions was planned as a starting points for a series of opportunities that followed specific strands of for our State Conference. However, the disruption by COVID and the loss of a key committee member prevented some of these going ahead.

We welcomed new committee members Julie Dawe, Josh Long, Daniel McGrath, and Samantha Burt. We thank departing committee members Tania McGee, Siobhan Unwin.

In June ATAR teachers were provided with a masterclass in Steven Berkoff delivered by Feet First Collective.

Our state conference will be hosted by Perth College in November with the theme **Breath: Inspiration, transformation, expression.**

This year's conference theme foregrounds and explores the central role of breath in our work, lives and community as Drama educators and practitioners. Breath provides the foundation on which we build our performance work – supporting the voice, bringing the body into alignment, maintaining focus and control, and acting as a mechanism to bring us into unity and rhythm with one another. Breath can be calming, energising, motivating, connecting. The events of the past few years have limited our opportunities to come together, to breathe freely and connect in ways we may have taken for granted. So, this year, our intention at DramaWest is to bring our focus back to that essential, foundational aspect of our lives and work – the breath.



DramaWest's 2022 state conference, Breath.