

Editorial

[JONATHAN P. JONES](#)

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

It is with great enthusiasm that I present this third volume of *ArtsPraxis*. In 2003, I worked as a research assistant for Philip Taylor cataloging the extant journals in the arts, arts education, and arts therapies disciplines in order to demonstrate the need for the first volume of this publication. To find myself now as Editor is both humbling and gratifying, given the time and attention that I have contributed to this journal over the years.

This volume features a number of articles that were presented in some form at the Forum on Educational Theatre in April 2016, for which I served as manager. The Forum celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Program in Educational Theatre at New York University: building on the past and looking towards the future. The event was a fine testament to the legacy of the Program's founders, Lowell and Nancy Swartzell who began the Program in 1966. All told, with presenters, performers, staff, volunteers, and delegates, the participant pool exceeded 400 individuals, demonstrating the strength of the field and a commitment from colleagues the world over to come to New York, share their work, and celebrate this milestone.

I first came into contact with the Program in Educational Theatre

during my freshman year at NYU. I was a student in the College of Arts and Sciences with an undeclared major. At the time, I had dreams of transferring into the Tisch School of the Arts to study musical theatre, but as students were not eligible for internal transfers in the middle of their first year, I had to wait. And that wait turned fortuitous as I took my first class in the Program in Educational Theatre that spring: Acting I with Craig Duke. In that acting class, Craig spent quite a bit of time talking about “Ed Theatre” and trying to clarify what the Program in Educational Theatre was about. I can’t say I understood then, but I did find that I had a connection with the people in the course and, as such, developed a curiosity about the field.

As the semester drew on, we were encouraged to attend a performance of *Young Eugene*, written by Lowell and directed by Nancy, and I did so on opening night. This would be my first encounter with the historic Provincetown Playhouse on MacDougal Street, and my first exposure to theatre for young audiences. While the production itself failed to make much of an impact on me, the after-party in the downstairs lobby certainly did. I quickly got a sense that there was something special about this group of people—a people whose passion extended from the faculty to the students to the stage and beyond. As I made my way back to the dorm that night, I recognized that something had shifted: I had found my place in Educational Theatre.

Eighteen and a half years have elapsed since that fateful night at the Provincetown, the walls of which are now adorned with images from the performance history of the theatre, known to be the historic home of Eugene O’Neill and the Provincetown Players. I was the chief researcher and curator for the installation, and hanging high above are two key images: one of Eugene himself, looking on at all the work that followed his own, and on the opposite side of the wall, a very large image from that production of *Young Eugene*. Down below, centered at eye level is an image of Lowell and Nancy together outside the Playhouse. Much has been made of the renovations of the theatre over the years, but in many ways, the Playhouse has become a second home for the Program in Educational Theatre. And given my history with the Program, I now feel very much that the Program has become a second home for me.

One of the highlights of the Forum was an alumni celebration. At the event, distinguished Program alumni John Patrick Shanley was

interviewed by Philip Taylor. In his closing remarks, John noted that above all else, he loved the theatre. Sitting in the audience, preparing to present the Swortzell Innovator Awards, I thought to myself: professionally speaking, what do I love above all else? And as I made my way to the podium and thanked Philip and John for their time and reminiscences, I looked out into the audience of current students, alumni, faculty, and Forum delegates, and it became all too clear: above all else, I love the Program in Educational Theatre. As such, in the spirit of building on the past and looking towards the future, I present this volume.

IN THIS ISSUE

Following the Forum, I asked the presenters to consider sharing their articles with a wider audience through publication in this journal. I hoped that we would get a range of material covering the scope of the Forum which was meant to mirror the three areas of specialization that the Program focuses on: Drama in Education, Applied Theatre, and Theatre for Young Audiences and Play Production. The articles that follow do indeed represent that range, but also, the authors represent the diverse range of practitioners and researchers in the field.

The first article grew out of one of the plenary experiences at the Forum which comprised a three-day lunch time podcast recording session, each of the three on a separate topic. The first podcast was about mentoring, a topic so central to the experience of established practitioners and researchers in the field, and the relationships they develop with subsequent generations. The experiences shared by **Juliana Saxton**, **Carole Miller**, and **Monica Prendergast** seemed so universal, that I jumped up as the recording came to an end asking them to consider writing up their discussion as an article for this issue.

In the Drama in Education section, **Roger Wooster** begins by questioning the current state of Theatre in Education (TIE) which was once so central to the field though it has seemingly taken less prominence in recent years. Wooster questions what the future holds for the methodology while making an impassioned plea to keep it alive. **James Mirrione** provides a reflective piece detailing his female Muslim students' experiences as they study *The Taming of the Shrew*. Kate's reversal in the play is controversial to many contemporary students looking at the play through a feminist lens, but how do Mirrione's

students feel about it and to what degree does the reversal resonate with their lived experience?

In the Applied Theatre section, **Ross Prior** investigates a selection of graduate and post-graduate applied theatre programs in service of identifying themes from the represented coursework. **Trent Norman** and **Rebecca Brown Adelman** (two of four recipients of the 2016 Swortzell Innovator Awards at the Forum) partner with **Ligia Batista Silverman** to detail some of their innovative approach to facilitating applied theatre work in Colorado. Thereafter, **Anne Smith** explores her arts-integration work with *Creative English*, an applied theatre program focused on supporting English language development for adult refugees and migrants in the UK.

In the final section on Theatre for Young Audiences and Play Production, **Sonya Baehr** recounts the experience of devising an original theatre piece with her high school students in Brooklyn which subsequently traveled to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. In the last article, **Jim DeVivo** surveys young playwrights programs in the United States, providing both a historical overview as well as documentation of currently active programs.

LOOKING AHEAD

During the next few months, we will accept papers under the same headings (drama in education, applied theatre, and theatre for young audiences) looking to engage members of the Educational Theatre field who may or may not have been present at the Forum yet want to contribute to the ongoing dialogue: where have we been and where are we going? The call for papers has been released concurrently with this volume and the submission deadline is February 1, 2017.