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Performing Academic Spaces: An Ethnodramatic Exploration of Drama Curriculum Design in Teacher Education

New perspectives in teacher education call for ways to decentre our practices and reflect on the ideological discourses that frame approaches to teacher preparation. As a group of newly hired professors asking how best to prepare drama teachers, we realize that our life journeys as artists and educators situate our teaching in particular ways. In this piece we shared the results of a collaborative process of self-reflection. The performative approach allowed intersections, social complexities and multiple ideologies between us to become sites for devising and mapping teacher preparation in drama.

Les nouvelles perspectives de formation à l'enseignement ouvrent des voies à nos pratiques et sont le reflet d'un discours idéologique structurant les approches des étudiants. En tant que professeurs nouvellement engagés à l'université, nous nous interrogeons sur les meilleures façons d'enseigner. Dans le texte qui suit, nous échangeons sur le résultat d'un processus de collaboration et d'auto-réflexion. L'approche performative nous permet d'échanger sur nos idéologies devenant un lieu de division et d'articulation à la formation de futurs enseignants en art dramatique.

Introduction

Three bodies are frozen with their backs to the audience.

GEORGE. Okay girls are you ready to go? Say goodbye to your house in PEI. We're off to UBC and the West Coast!

Coming alive and miming picking up bags, looking at watch…

CARMEN. Vamonos Gustavo. We have a long way to go.

Same type of preparing to leave activity.

GUS. Let me put the dog in the car and we'll be ready to roll.

Same as the other two.

Multiple Voices:

Image of encounter—shaking hands/ break image and move into multiple voices and positions around the stage throughout the dialogue.

GUS. The courses need revisions.

CARMEN. Get published.

GEORGE. We need to increase the numbers in the drama classes.

GUS. Is there a theatre space to work in?

CARMEN. We have to attract more teachers from the system.

GEORGE. Get published.

GUS. Are you a drama or a theatre person?

CARMEN. We need to revisit the elementary drama program.

GEORGE. We need to build the secondary drama program.

GUS. Don't forget drama in the multiliteracies.

GEORGE. Get published.

CARMEN. Where is the social justice piece?

ALL. Get published!

Actors return centre stage, then stand next to each other and face audience.

All three turn their backs to the audience and freeze.

During the following monologues actors turn to audience as they begin to speak.

CARMEN. Yep, the work ahead is extensive but it is quite exciting and the possibilities are endless for what we could do and contribute. At first this excitement of being a group of drama educa-

New perspectives in teacher education questioned the nature of pedagogy as fixed and authoritative where there is an impulse to "manage technique, discipline bodies, and control outcomes" (Britzman 60). *A call is made to look at ways to*

tors all in one institution translated into an impulse to just start doing and producing. We had lots of well-intentioned ideas and quickly realized that our impulses sometimes connected with each other and at times did not.

GEORGE. As a group of newly-hired professors in a "developing" drama education program within a teacher education program we bring diverse experiences and understandings of pedagogy and research. In our dialogue on how to best prepare drama teachers and practitioners, we quickly realized our life journeys as artists and educators situated our teaching in particular ways. We also realized that as part of deciding what constitutes effective drama in education and teacher preparation in drama we had to take a "self-reflective stance" to examine the multiple "teaching positions" we bring.

GUS. In understanding the possibilities and tensions of drama in education and drama in teacher education we acknowledge new perspectives in pedagogical theory that question the nature of pedagogy as fixed. With this in mind we see the development of our drama/theatre in education program as emergent, something to be discovered.

decentre our practices and reflect on the ideological discourses that frame beliefs and approaches to "doing" teacher preparation. Grounded on these notions in this performance/ presentation we share the results of a collaborative process of self reflection using an arts-based inquiry approach (Barone; Diamond and Mullen). *Our goal was to examine the subjectivities constructed in our narratives to disrupt claims for neutrality that tend to situate drama teacher preparation in a false generic space. In order to represent our data in a manner that reflects our field of study, we decided to dramatize our reflective journals and create this ethnodramatic script. Ethnodrama represents a relatively new approach of disseminating data in qualitative research inquiry, with researchers in various fields analyzing and sharing findings using this methodology* (*bullying*—Belliveau*; cancer research*—Gray*; drama*—Saldaña*; health care*—Mienczakowski*; multiculturalism, social justice*—Goldstein; Taylor).

It is important to note that Ethnodrama, as a field of study, borrows heavily from the African American Feminist tradition of performed autobiographies/ethnographies such as those found in the work of Dr. Robbie McCauley and Anna Devere Smith. As in a radical pedagogical positioning that intends to subvert the dominant white patriarchal capitalist paradigm (hooks) *these African American Feminist Performance Artists and scholars intended to present research in an alternate form that would not necessarily adhere to the rigid structure imposed through the academy* (Garoian). *It is also this subversive form that assisted us in presenting our written reflection in a non-traditional way.*

GEORGE. In this piece we share a collaborative process of self-reflection using personal narratives in an attempt to better understand who we are, where we come from, and where we may be going with the drama program.

CARMEN. This reflective and performative approach allows the intersections, contradictions and competing ideologies in our work to become productive sites from which to begin mapping our identities as scholars, the programs we envision for drama in education and drama in teacher education.

GUS. The themes we share in this exploration include the debates between drama as subject and/or as approach to learning, drama as process and/or as product, and drama in light of the New Literacy Studies.

CARMEN. By engaging in this process our goal is not to establish hierarchies or to say that one thing is better than another.

GEORGE. As you listen to our voices, there are multiple places of encounter but also places of tension and separation.

GUS.
We work through our narratives and use these as the points of departure for our future work in drama education at UBC, perhaps coming to our next steps with a better understanding of …

ALL. … who we are as educators, artists and human beings.

Act 1: Ideologies, Identities, and Culture in How We Come to Understand Drama

GEORGE. As a long distance runner, I push my physical (and mental) capacities in competitive events as I test myself against the course and distance. The racing events, however, represent but a small fraction of my love and commitment for running. The daily runs through trails, on the beach, in the rain, snow, and sun, with friends or on my own, encompass most of my running. These daily runs are where I think, learn about myself, persevere with small aches and pains, contemplate the world, and, most importantly, feel truly alive and awake. When I run, I may be thinking about other things, but I am always running. When I teach drama education, I may be (and usually am) making connections to other areas, but I must keep drama at the forefront.

GUS. In life I strive to remain critically diligent. By this I mean to always search for new ways of bringing meaning to life. As one who is working towards disassimilation from a Western Patriarchal Capitalist identity I feel obligated to never take anything for granted. This is true of my involvement with teacher education as it is of all my social interactions. I hope to allow meaning to emerge, being ever aware of libratory moments as well as oppressive systems and

As part of the process of coding and organizing themes in our narratives as data we discovered three connected aspects that guided the way we organized the script: 1) Ideologies, identities, and culture in how we come to understand drama; 2) Current and emerging positionalities within situated pedagogies; 3) Pedagogical multiplicity: possibilities, tensions and contradictions. Our goal was to represent the hybridity of voices in our narratives in a nonlinear form.

During this series of lines after each actor speaks, he or she crosses upstage and puts on a costume piece to signify the change from introductory narrative information to a more definite performative mode.

doing my best to support the former and challenge the latter.

CARMEN. To engage in this process of looking at the "legacies" of work that inform my current thinking on drama I cannot detach the cultural, political, gender and linguistic identities and discourses that frame my life and pedagogical beliefs. Actually, if you were to analyze my journey as a drama educator perhaps you would quickly become disappointed to know that my formal theatre training is not what would be considered formal in North American institutions. You will also realize that my knowledge of Western theatre is okay but not what is expected from a "real" drama educator up *en el norte*. That is not to say that the Western does not live in me in other forms; to make that claim will be an oversimplification of my identity as a Puerto Rican feminist woman. These identity border crossings situate me in the cultural "borderlands" or a location where new multiple forms of identities, discourses and experiences emerge through hybrid constructions of languages, gender, race, and class and that inform my pedagogies.

Anzuldúa

Act 2: Past, Current, and Emerging Positionalities: Situated Pedagogies

During the next series of monologues each actor crosses upstage to an overhead projector and places education- related words on the projector that are shown on a large screen upstage. Some of the words are process, product, literacy, political, aesthetics etc…

GEORGE. I come to drama/theatre education as a trained actor, director, and playwright. Because I am currently situated within an education department versus a theatre department, my training in developing productions has shifted towards a more process-oriented model, which is more aligned with drama in education. In this shift of my teaching within a faculty of education, I am aware that I sometimes forget/neglect/compromise the potential, beauty, power of drama and theatre by using the art as a cross-curricular approach.

Bowell and Heap; O'Neill

GUS. Coming from a traditional Western theatre background I struggle with the inscribed conceptions of theatre versus drama, liberation versus oppression, positivism versus progressivism. I see academically defined borders, yet that very academic sensibility complicates separation.

CARMEN. In living in the borderlands I must acknowledge that drama or theatre came to me from the south. It was through the work of Boal, Rubio in Peru, and Marquez in Puerto Rico that I began my journey as a drama educator. Each of these *teatreros* had unique styles and approaches but also had in common a perspective of theatre that seems more situated in current studies of

Draws a line on the floor representing a border.

Diamond; Garoian 8-9

performance that re-presents culture and politics through multiple signs and expressions.

Steps back and disrupts the border.

GUS. What type of balance, if that is what we are looking for, is possible?

GEORGE. Do we want a comprehensive educational theatre training element—with some solid pedagogical elements—and a smattering of theory?

Steps back and disrupts the border.

CARMEN. Or do we have a focus in drama education with a really strong literacy element, with great attention upon theory and research?

GUS. If we took some of the theatre education and mixed it with the drama in education and upped the pedagogy and maintained the intra/inter cross-curricular focus supplementing that with an articulation of the multiple educational possibilities within theatre (in multiple forms not solely Western) while establishing a constant dialogue surrounding the aesthetic of all forms of drama/theatre through firmly theoretical and researched based action. . . we'd have something.

Crossing back up to the overhead projector and placing multiple words on the machine ending with a jumbled mass while speaking in a rapid, excited tone.

GEORGE/CARMEN.
(*With interest*.) Hmmh?

Act 3: Pedagogical Multiplicity: Possibilities, Tensions, and Contradictions

Crossing to overhead and un-jumbling part of the mess.

CARMEN. In light of the recent shifts in understanding literacies as multiple and situated, I have become very interested in analyzing drama as process and sites where participants construct knowledge and perform identities grounded in personal and ideological discourses: discourse not just limited to language but also to ways of acting and performing identities, in summary designing and reinterpreting. By looking at the drama spaces through discourse I explore how culture, power, and identities are negotiated. My goal is to be able to better understand and rethink drama in education practices as sites that are complex, contested, and never neutral.

Fairclough

Pineau

GUS. My current interests lie in how identity and power relationships emerge within any one teaching moment. I question whether the notion of democratic education has run its course, whether or not it needs to be problematized through a post-structural feminist lens, and if an emergent educational paradigm can be articulated. I view the drama experience as that "teachable thing" through which ideology/power are negotiated. How the participants understand and "learn" drama strategies is directly connected to our ideological interactions.

Postman; Giroux; Dewey

Ellsworth; Diamond

Crossing to the overhead and un-jumbling yet another bit of the mess.

GEORGE. In my research I hope to build upon the work of previous scholars and practitioners in drama education, rather than reinvent the wheel. I want to continue to examine their work closely and not perpetuate cursory readings, out of context. I also want to challenge binaries and demonstrate how rich drama/theatre education consists of a seamless interweaving and overlapping of process and product. A well-developed classroom process drama, like a thoughtful production rehearsal process, enables participants to experience process and product, quite often simultaneously.

Booth; Bowell and Heap; Heathcote; O'Neill

Crossing to overhead and un-jumbling the final bit.

CARMEN. I connect these notions of drama processes to literacy—acts of reading and writing—as well as critical performative pedagogies, in light of the New Literacy Studies. These "new" and performative perspectives are gounded in pedagogies as social practices where people use different signs and symbols to communicate knowledge such as in visual arts, performance, media, and of course print.

The New London Group

GEORGE/GUS. (*With interest.*) Hmm?

GUS. I align with post-structural public intellectuals who see knowledge and identity as emergent through ideological positioning. The pedagogy of drama/theatre and drama/theatre as pedagogy, as socio-culturally constructed sign systems, are

This moment refers to the work of cultural theorist hooks*, linguist and cultural philosopher* Baudrillard, *and Performance and cultural theorist* Phelan. *A central idea is that the identity is not fixed nor is it separable from social influence. As the identity is present within learning and teaching, pedagogy*

equally emergent and ideologically situated. Any consideration of these pedagogies must take into account inherent complex identity-based negotiations. Engaging in a non-critical use and/or "teaching" of these pedagogies will merely further intellectual and physical oppression, marginalization and colonization.

then becomes transient, emergent and inseparable from social influence. In this way pedagogy, classroom practice becomes suspect when I attempt to function through non-critical positivist approaches.

GEORGE/CARMEN. (*With interest.*) Hmm?

GEORGE. When I speak of a seamless weaving of process/product I am thinking of the work of Mnouchkine, Brook, Boal, among others, who are creating meaningful theatre and drama through explorations/processes that inform their ever-evolving yet polished product. If I wish to get to the art or heart of drama/theatre education I need to share and engage in drama processes that are richly textured, embedded in learning about self and others, and filled with connections that branch from the drama/theatre work.

Delgado and Heritage

GUS/CARMEN. (*With interest.*) Hmm?

Final Thoughts

CARMEN. The legacies of my work as a Latina *teatrera* and my current thinking on discourse and identity informed by new literacy and critical studies have helped me find a place to do my art and live my politics. I believe I am creating a borderland where my

ALL cross up stage and take a chair, then walk down stage and speak from behind the chair.

artistic, academic and political identities coexist.

GUS. Stanislavski challenged actors to reflect upon their lives as a means to reach an understanding of a character's emotions. Like those actors of the Moscow Art Theatre, we as artist/pedagogues hope to build an inclusive and expansive program, immersing ourselves fully in continued reflection within the ideological ramifications of using any educational strategy, whether arts-based or otherwise.

GEORGE. Returning to my original running analogy, if I stop running and only do the thinking and planning in my head (well, first of all I'll be standing still and likely won't win any races that way, but most importantly), I will have lost my initial intention which was to run. This is not to deny the importance of thinking and planning, yet my goal and purpose was to run. The art or heart of drama/theatre education, in my view, must include the aesthetic/integrity of drama and theatre, and the connections we make from that space, albeit important, should not overshadow the primary focus of drama and theatre.

This ethnodrama represents our desire to blend our work as artists, researchers, and teachers. This métissage, as Irwin *and others refer to in their work on A/R/Tography, represents our ongoing journey of finding ways to voice and weave the multiple and complex negotiations within ourselves as writers/artists/researchers and participants and data. We seek ways to articulate, debate, and perform the connections and spaces between us, so that we can share, explore, and expand our art, research, and drama teacher training program in dynamic and multiple ways. Likewise,* Garoian *points out that "The second attribute of cultural production, performativity, represents the performance of subjectivity, a means by which students can attain political agency as they learn to critique dominant cultural paradigms from the perspective of personal memories and cultural histories" (8). In this way our performed explorations are spaces of discovery for ourselves as well as the spectators or readers. Through performance we exist simultaneously as students and teachers of the lived experience, place ourselves in the role of subject, as that which is examined within the moment of doing. Here we are forced to consider that which is done, its politics and motivation.*

ALL. In this process we realized that diversity in our ideological beliefs works as a strength but also as a challenge. Our common commitment to drama/theatre in education provides the basis for a

Following this moment the actors step out of the fiction and engage the audience in a dialogue about the event they have just witnessed.

common dialogue that will always bring multiplicity of perspectives making our program a stronger one. As we explore the tensions and possibilities amongst ourselves, colleagues, students, and the community at large a powerful opportunity emerges to create an expansive drama/theatre education program based upon our diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and lives.

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