

## BOOK REVIEW

### ***How Theatre Educates: Convergences and Counterpoints with Audiences, Scholars, and Advocates.* Edited by Kathleen Gallagher and David Booth. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003. 272 pp.**

Reviewed by Kelsey Blair

In *How Theatre Educates*, editors Kathleen Gallagher and David Booth bring together academic essays, personal reflections, plays, speeches, and interviews on the topic of theatre and education in Canada. The diverse pieces in the collection are linked by a central argument: one of theatre's most powerful attributes is its ability to teach. The collection was published in 2003 and has some minor weaknesses that have become more pronounced with time; on the whole, however, the book continues to be an essential resource for thinking about pedagogy and performance in Canada.

The strength of the collection is, undoubtedly, its breadth. It is divided into six sections: a double Introduction by the editors; Theatre, the Arts, Pedagogy, and Performance; Critical Voices; Culture, Community, and Theatre Practice; Theatre for and with Young Audiences; and Creative Processes, Audience, and Form. Each of the sections includes traditional essays alongside plays, dialogues, and personal reflections. The formal diversity in each section makes the collection highly accessible for readers and reflects the range of work being produced in the field of theatre and education in Canada. The academic essays are particularly strong, and there are several pieces that deserve special mention. Belarie Zatzman's essay "The Monologue Project: Drama as a form of Witnesses," part of the "Arts Pedagogy and Performance" section, clearly lays out the "memory-work" model she used to help students consider their own relationship to historical events such as the Holocaust. The article lucidly details the project, which resulted in student-written monologues, and convincingly argues for the potential of reflection and performance as powerful pedagogical tools. Similarly, "The Land Inside Coyote: Reconceptualising Humans Relationships to Place through Drama," by Cornelia Hoogland—and included in the "Theatre for and with Young Audiences" section—deftly combines theory and practice and considers how drama and theatre might be used to help children reconnect with the natural world. As with Zatzman's piece, the essay provides a theoretical framework for future teachers and researchers while also convincingly arguing for drama's potential to develop an ecological consciousness of the world.

The academic essays in the fourth section, "Culture, Community, and Theatre Practices," include many highlights. Walter Pitman's essay, "Drama through the Eyes of Faith," about a theatre-viewing group based out of a church, intriguingly considers the relationship between contemporary faith-based practices and theatre-going, and Lori McDougall's essay, "As the World Turns: the Changing Role of Popular Drama in International Development Education," about the evolving place of drama and television in international development education, is informative, even if it did make me wish for an update which could account for the changes in the global media landscape in the last ten years. The most effective piece of this strong section, and perhaps the entire book, is Janice Hladki's "Negotiating Drama Practices: Struggles in Racialized Relations of Theatre Production and Theatre Research," which examines how people learn across racial differences in drama. The nuanced article focusses on Hladki's interviews with Indigenous theatre artist/activist Monique Mojica and Mojica's collaboration with Djanet Sears and Kate Lushington on their co-authored play *Onions, Strawberries, and Corn*. Hladki's approach—in which she carefully positions herself in relation to her research—is

thoughtful and rich, and she convincingly argues for the potential of collaborative theatre production to function as an educational site to learn about identity and racial relations.

Of the personal reflections, interviews, and speeches, there are also a number of excellent pieces. The dialogues conducted by Gallagher, including conversations with Linda Griffiths and Ann-Marie MacDonald, are impressively dense. It helps that the interviewees are two of Canada's leading female theatre artists and both provide a number of anecdotal gems, like a story told by Griffiths about writing *The Book of Jessica* with Maria Campbell. The personal reflection pieces are more varied. It is interesting and informative to read leading scholars, critics, and playwrights discuss their pedagogical practices; however, the tone of these pieces—which include Judith Thompson's "I Will Tear you to Pieces: The Classroom as Theatre," Lynn Slothink's "Confessions of a Theatre Addict," and Diane Flacks's "Education through Empathy: Using Laughter as a Way In"—sometimes relies so heavily on personal narrative that they left me craving deeper engagement with their subject matter. I also could not help but notice that the majority of the personal reflections are written by women and that the two keynote addresses anthologized in the collection—John Murrell's to the National Symposium on Arts Education and Richard Rose's commencement address to Thorneloe College—are both by men. The result is that the men are granted a more authoritative voice and denied a more personal voice; similarly, the addresses lack a female perspective. Gender balance in these pieces would have further strengthened the collection as a whole.

While many of the individual contributions hold up incredibly well, in the twelve years since its original publication, the collection as a whole has some pronounced weaknesses. Throughout the collection, the essays primarily focus on theatre and education in urban centres. One might argue that this is, at least in part, because universities tend to be situated in cities. Nonetheless, theatre and education in Canada is not an urban-only issue, and the lack of a rural perspective is pronounced. In addition, the book's contributors and the subject matter of their contributions are primarily focussed on Ontario. Including perspectives from multiple provinces would have provided a more detailed and nuanced exploration of theatre and education across the country. Finally, reading the collection in 2016, the lack of Asian-Canadian voices is striking, and while there are a few pieces that highlight works by Indigenous theatre artists, there are no considerations of Indigenous pedagogy and knowledge. If there was to be a second edition of the book, these are gaps that would, surely, need to be filled.

Despite these weaknesses, however, the individual pieces are so strong that the collection remains an essential resource for students, teachers, and critics who wish to consider the place and potential of theatre and education in Canada.