**Contents**

**Page**

**Dorothy Heathcote: Active Learning 2**

Brian H Burnett

**Editorial 4**

**Chair’s Report 10**

Liam Harris

**‘A Great Gathering’: The *Dorothy Heathcote Now* Conference 14**

David Allen

**Dorothy Heathcote: Teacher power and student choices 20**

Cecily O’Neill

**What sort of society do we want? 30**

**Introducing: *Humanising education with dramatic inquiry: In dialogue***

***with Dorothy Heathcote’s transformative pedagogy.***

Brian Edmiston and Iona Towler-Evans

**My Work and Dorothy 39**

Vaishali Chakravarty

**Dorothy Heathcote (DH), the archive and me: What sticks out? 45**

Sandra Hesten

**The Alchemical Model of Leadership: From Classroom to Boardroom 62**

Bogusia Matusiak-Varley, Eleni Kanira and Sarah Mills

**An overview of articles written by Dorothy Heathcote and published by 73**

***The Journal for Drama in Education***

Curated by Maggie Hulson

**Biographies 84**

**Editorial**

In a hospital, in a bed on a burns ward, lies a man. Usually he doesn’t have a bed. He usually sleeps rough. He is homeless. On the burns ward he is treated with the utmost care and consideration. As he should be. A great deal of money is spent on him in the form of anaesthetists, surgeons, nurses, care staff, canteen staff and a therapist to help him come to terms with what might be life-changing injuries. He makes a good recovery and is ready for discharge. It is realised that he has no clothing. The clothing he had stood up in was beyond usefulness. Eventually a social worker is found who brings him some jogging bottoms, a top, trainers and a coat. He returns to the street. He is still homeless.

This Issue of The Journal for Drama in Education is a reflection on the *Dorothy Heathcote Now* conference run by David Allen of Midland Actors Theatre at Birmingham University in October 2021. Speakers and workshop leaders from the conference were invited to contribute to this issue and the response is a measure of Dorothy Heathcote’s continuing significance to the daily practice of teaching, be it in classrooms, boardrooms, a youth project in Wales, after school provision in New Dehli or the future.

Dorothy’s pedagogy articulated, made visible the functioning of society. She modelled the choosing of matter which could reveal power relationships. She advocated the practice of questioning that enables both teachers and their young people to become adept at *the business of being able to unfasten the social scene[[1]](#footnote-1).* What questions might a teacher formulate in response to the social scene outlined above? How might teachers and young people pursue those questions and come at what such matter can reveal?

In *Dorothy Heathcote: Teacher Power and Student Choices* by Cecily O’Neil, we see that Dorothy’s questioning is at the heart of her reflection. So too is her lifelong concern with ‘what it is to be human’. Cecily’s elegant metatextual piece guides us through a demonstration given by Dorothy Heathcote of how a teacher manages power sharing. In a week-long workshop Dorothy teaches young people and at the same time demonstrates this teaching to student teachers. The learning is further folded in through the detailed and thorough plans and in Dorothy’s reflection. She raises four questions that place the young people, her own practice and the meaning of the work firmly in the social culture. This reflection is further scrutinised with Cecily’s own question,

What does the quality of Heathcote's response to the essentially unpredictable nature of the work tell us of her stature as an educator?

Dorothy says, in a moment that must have been shocking,

There is nothing we do in this room that isn’t happening somewhere in the world.

The graduate students learned that you can give your students power but you never take away the power of having them face the consequences of their choices.

David Allen opens this Issue as the convenor of the *Dorothy Heathcote Now* conference, not by looking back at the life of Heathcote but looking forward to where her legacy and influence will take us next. He juxtaposes the *Interactive Research Conference* which was held at the University of Central England in 1996 and run by Heathcote herself with the event that bore her name in 2021. He compares the two ‘great gatherings’ and teases out their similarities as both groups grappled with the methodology and the pedagogy of Heathcote albeit twenty-five years apart. He points to 2022 and the plan to continue the work of understanding her impact and applying it to the benefit of teachers and young people around the world. He quotes Heathcote in 1996:

It seems to me what you're exemplifying there is the notion that children should interrogate the world; and that possibly the teacher then has a new view of how to present material, what material to present, in what way to present it, so that they shall interrogate constantly the world.

Vaishali Chakravarty is a Drama practitioner who is based in New Delhi, India. She presented a paper on the first day of the *Dorothy Heathcote Now* conference, the 8th October, at the internationally democratic virtual element of the event. She told the story of her development as Drama teacher and has formalised her thoughts for us here. Before her theatre training, as a big sister she invented ways of engaging her younger sibling with her learning and with the world:

I started coming up with my own funny ideas to help her with her history lessons. For example, I wrote a letter in the name of the Mughal Emperor Jagangir to his son Prince Shahjahan (who later became the Emperor Shahjanan and built the Taj Mahal). The letter had a reprimand from a father to his careless son. I used it to get her interested in their lives and get her started to find more about them. We would also write peace treaties and war declarations for kings and queens.

She describes how, later, she became frustrated with the limitations of training young people to act when in fact, what they wanted and need to do was to ‘create their own stories. And so, she went looking and found Heathcote on YouTube, her Guru. She concludes that,

Drama is the only way we can learn or teach.

One of the key strands of the *Dorothy Heathcote Now* conference was the exploration of the enormously rich archive material that Heathcote generated across her lifetime and, since 1993 has been curated by Sandra Hesten. The sessions were facilitated by Drama practitioners who had been there when the work was undertaken in the first place. Far from being an attempt at recreating the earlier experience, each session became an interrogation of Heathcote’s concepts and approaches. In her article, *Dorothy Heathcote (DH), the archive and me: What sticks out?*, Hesten fills in the gaps between the material we have and how it was created. It is an extraordinary piece that is at once highly personal and insightful on a very human level and at the same time, universal, a reflection of the professionalism and imagination of both women. Writing of the photograph, *Quo Vadis*, that Heathcote gave to Hesten she says,

For me, *Quo Vadis* encapsulates the learning journey I experienced when creating her archive. Philosophically, her concerns were with the condition of human beings and the effects which a holistic education could engender. To her, it was like a perpetual journey, similar to the archetypal quest of the hero, in that the learning is never completed and the process of becoming is always just beginning.

It is a moving and highly incisive piece of work that champions the need for the Dorothy Heathcote Archive to be properly housed, curated and opened up to the world in perpetuity. We are also pleased to announce that we will be sharing this article with National Drama in their magazine, *Drama*.

Brian Edmiston and Iona Towler-Evans gave a keynote address and led two workshops at the conference *Dorothy Heathcote Now*. We invited them to contribute to this Issue with an introduction to their forthcoming book *Humanizing Education with Dramatic Inquiry: In Dialogue with Dorothy Heathcote’s Radical and Transformative Pedagogy* due to be published by Routledge in May 2022, and which grounded their contributions at the conference. This intriguing and thought-provoking introduction, *What sort of society do we want?* gives us a taste of a book that embeds, analyses and advocates both the practice and the stance of Heathcote. Practical examples are aptly placed, acting almost as a chorus offering a harmonising rhythm and tone. As the authors state;

This book is about humanizing education with dramatic inquiry… the human condition is our curriculum

and as they go on to explain the ‘why’ of each of the book’s elements they draw us into deeper considerations; to find out, for example, more about the relationship between sense of purpose, the community and the context. They see the classroom as a place where we can

…inquire into how the world could, and should be, better for all, where we may celebrate and sustain connections among all people and with the world…

and where

...dramatic inquiry as humanizing education can help bring that vision into reality.

In *The Alchemical Model of Leadership: From Classroom to Boardroom* Dr. Bogusia Matusiak-Varley, Eleni Kanira, and Sarah Mills also give us a tantalising glimpse into noteworthy work yet to come. Based on Matusiak-Varley’s PhD thesis they are developing a leadership training programme which takes Dorothy Heathcote’s teaching methodology as a paradigmatic tool. As with Edmiston and Towler-Evans, they reveal the transformative nature of drama, applying it here to the teaching of leadership. One key element of the work is the recognition of the particular way in which,

Dorothy Heathcote built commitment to task. The seminal features of her interactions with others brought about consensus in learning.

The article explains the choice of research methodology, highlighting the relationship between that being observed and the form of analysis used and goes on to offer us a fascinating preview of how a particular Mantle of the Expert *The Manx Myth*, is being meticulously developed

…into an experiential exploration of leadership skills and attributes… to enable leaders to look deeper into the impact that their leadership styles have on the work force. As the authors make clear in their piece the world needs good leaders with integrity and empathy...who can help resolve conflict rather than pursuing narcissistic gain.

This Issue concludes with a rich resource. On behalf of the Journal Committee, Maggie Hulson has created *An overview of articles written by Dorothy Heathcote and published by The Journal for Drama in Education.* Heathcote was a prolific writer, always challenging herself, inventing and reflecting upon what she had just done. The articles that she wrote for the Journal were always ground-breaking and dense with possibilities. They were always written longhand and it invariably fell to Hulson to decode them and correspond with Heathcote by letter to ensure that she had captured exactly what she needed to say in her own idiosyncratic style. This overview was prepared for the *Dorothy Heathcote Now* conference. We publish it here for NATD member to discover or re-discover the astonishing power that Heathcote has gifted to us to enable us to keep asking, ‘Is this how the world should be?’

David Allen’s endeavours have offered us a lead on looking to the future, asking where Dorothy’s pedagogy might take us next. Perhaps the next step is look concretely at

‘how’?

How can we fashion, in our classrooms, in our curriculum, in our measuring of how well we are teaching, a humanising education? In these times? When the most needy are the most neglected, when compassion is mere currency for point scoring and deception, when integrated thinking is scattered by the winds of the free market, when so much of what is needed is carelessly cast aside by so few acting only in their own self-interest. **How** can we?

There is an approach that fosters integrated thinking, that views education in the round through the lens of empowering the young.

In 1984 Dorothy Heathcote said:

In drama, above all, you can't make vague promises. If you have any papers about drama being written at the moment, have a close look at them. When they say something like, "Drama improves the children's language," get rid of it. It doesn't tell anybody how it does it, because it's too vague. "Drama is good for their personality" and all that - get rid of it because it does a great deal of harm. It doesn't point to what we really have to consider, which is - *how*[[2]](#footnote-2) does it do it? Can we test this a little bit and I don't mean put tests on it. I mean look carefully at it and say, "we won't say it does anything we can't actually see is occurring when we're there."

Obviously we do want children to have a say in their curriculum but we can't suddenly “magic” them into being instant curriculum makers. Somewhere along the line we have to see where we can gradually wean them away from teacher dependence, get them to have a serious look at their curriculum and then make the contracts of responsibility that they will fulfil That's part of my utopia. Can I get children to learn with responsibility and not just habit or else just going along with things?

I can't open the gate to society so that society recognises children are capable persons. That's what I can't do. And when you try to do it yourself people don't really believe it. Children don't even believe it. I teach children who can't believe it when I say, "'Well, we're going to have to decide this together." They sit back because they know from past experience that nobody really means that and you use a lot of energy trying to convince them. Then they go through a phase whereby they think they can decide everything and then get into trouble with the next teacher.

All the child laws that have been passed in Britain since the nineteenth century have disenfranchised children. They didn't mean to do it but that is what they have done. I don't know about New Zealand laws. I am personally grateful to Earl Grey and some of those early pioneers that I didn't have to go down a mine at six years old. However, one of the outcomes is the disenfranchisement of the power of children to be a productive, positive influence in our society. It's the disenfranchisement of them as political beings and I mean political with a small 'p', of adding and bringing their energy to the culture.

From: ‘Our Community Versus our Schools.’ In: ‘Drama and Social Change: 1984 New Zealand Lectures’ by Dorothy Heathcote (Kohia Teachers Centre, 1988). Edited by Carmel O’Sullivan (ADEI, 2009).

**Chair’s Report: Our Emperor Doesn’t Bother With Clothes**

by

Liam Harris

I was recently struck by an educator’s response on Twitter to a question presented by Owen Jones. The question asked, ‘Who are the best thinkers on the left when it comes to education (in any country)?’. In response the educator replied that ‘the issue is in the question. Can’t imagine a heart surgeon asking for “Great medical journals written exclusively by social democrats”’.

To me the above exchange exemplifies one of the greatest unspoken issues within our professional community: a failure to acknowledge that education is inherently political. What we teach, how we teach it and how it is assessed is determined by or, at the very least, heavily influenced by the politics of the day. Whether this manifests in an obsession with policing uniform policies or the choices we make in regards to curriculum content, the decisions we make as teachers and our treatment of young people are political: they are determined by our own attitudes. Our practice as teachers either reinforces or challenges the power structures held within our society.

Current trends in education lean to the right. Some may argue that the best way to achieve greater social mobility is via a knowledge-rich pedagogical approach relying on direct instruction. Actually, this is only gaming a system that is abhorrently neo-liberal by design. This is best exemplified by the maintenance of the grade distribution for GCSE examinations: for every child a teacher helps to secure a grade 4, a child in another school is pushed below the threshold for a pass grade in order to maintain the bell curve. We can only have so many grade 4s after all…

Some research evidence suggests that direct instruction will lead to better examination results. Yet the more pertinent question to ponder is ‘better for whom?’ The current examinations are not fit for purpose in a progressive, humane and socially just society. What can a test of memory, in an examination hall, in complete isolation actually tell us about the skills of a learner or what they might contribute to society? What do two hour tests tell us about a learner’s ability to empathise, critically reflect upon the world and develop agency? I am sure as members of NATD, you will stand with me in saying ‘not a lot’.

While I am sure many of us are familiar with operating as a minority opposition when raising our voice in defence of the young, I sense the tides are beginning to change.

At the time of writing, the Conservative Government in the UK are being investigated for Covid-19 lockdown breaches and facing allegations of sleaze. Current Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, has failed to deny attending a party at the height of lockdown, has faced a humiliating climb down in relation to payments for renovations to his Number 10 flat and was forced into a U-Turn in his support for rule changes that would have prevented MP Owen Paterson from being suspended from Parliament for a breach of lobbying rules. Against a backdrop of false promises and the questionable handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, this is no longer an ‘Emperor’s New Clothes’ scenario. Boris Johnson is knowingly and unashamedly baring all to the public and is naïve enough to think that he can get away with it.

But he underestimates the young. And he underestimates the proper politic of their teachers.

As an Association, NATD has maintained the sense of the political within education. We acknowledge the damage done to the child in the current system, understand the power of child-centred, humanising pedagogy and develop progressive models that stand in direct opposition to the status quo. We proudly call out the emperor’s nakedness.

This has been demonstrated by the NATD’s most recent work in developing a child-centred assessment model that places the needs of the child, rather than the needs of the market, at its heart. It is unfortunate that the NATD could not run its planned Assessment Conference last November, which aimed to explore more humanising forms of assessment with delegates. However, the NEC instead met to outline a path for the future. It was the first face-to-face NEC meeting in held in over 2 years and reminded us of the importance of face-to-face collaboration. At the meeting, members of the NEC developed a series of exciting motions for the upcoming AGM that charge the incoming NEC with an ambitious programme of activity for the year ahead. I hope that you will vote in favour of the motions outlined below:

1. *The Association calls upon the incoming NEC to create a social media sub-group. The work of the group will be, in the first place to:*

* *Develop strategies to promote the aims of the Association as embedded in The Policy Document;*
* *Promote the content that is held within The Journal for Drama in Education;*
* *Explore and, if appropriate, use social media specialists to help develop a strategy for the Association.*

1. *The Association calls upon the incoming NEC to develop a three-step programme focussed on the teaching of set text and pretexts.*

*To this end, the NEC of NATD will organise a series of workshops focused on A-level and GCSE set texts and KS3 pre-texts or stimuli/stories.*

*The workshops are to be promoted to practising teachers and lead to face-to-face workshops during a school afternoon.*

*Participants will be charged a reasonable rate to cover the costs of the Association in running the events.*

*The work is to be co-constructed with the teachers.*

*All events are to be organised on a regional basis.*

1. *Preamble: This Association believes that we are living through a moment when Drama, politics and the world are in crisis. The old ways of working are being challenged, previous practices are splintering and people are searching for new ways of working.*

*Motion: The incoming NEC of NATD is committed to cooperation whilst holding to the principles as laid out in the policy document. It will strive to bring together those practitioners who seek to advance child-centred, humanising education. Where possible, the NEC will plan events and develop practices that build bridges and work towards collaboration with like-minded Associations and individuals.*

The forthcoming AGM will be held on Saturday 5th February 10am to 11.30am. Once again, the meeting will be held on Zoom both to mitigate the risks of Covid-19 and also to maximise the attendance of the membership. I do hope that you will join us for one of the most important membership gatherings of the year. It is an opportunity for you to hold the current NEC to account, to reflect upon the work of the year gone by and to contribute to the future direction of the Association.

I would welcome hearing from any members who would be interested in standing for a role on the National Executive Committee (NEC). As always, I would encourage anyone who is passionate about Drama Education to consider standing, no matter your level of experience. The roles that will be elected this year are:

* The Chair
* The Secretary (Vice Chair)
* The Treasurer
* Up to 3 Committee Members
* The Journal Committee (as a collective)

If you would like to stand for election, you will need to seek nominations from 2 other NATD members. If you are interested in standing for election, please do email me at [liam.harris@natd.eu](mailto:liam.harris@natd.eu).

The NEC continues to be represented on the Drama and Theatre Education Alliance (DTEA) Steering Group by Maggie Hulson, Sorrel Oates and myself. After a plea from the Executive of the DTEA for more diverse representation and a desire from the NATD’s NEC to have more practising teachers represented at the meetings, Theo Bryer stepped down to allow for Sorrel and I to take up the position. My thanks to Theo for her exceptional work with the group, particularly in representing the NATD’s views on the challenges facing Drama at KS3.

I remain convinced that our involvement with the DTEA is an important facet of our work. While still in its infancy with much work to be done to uncover the common ground between the various bodies, it is a significant collection of organisations that could have a powerful influence in the future.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Geoff Readman on his election to the position of Chair of National Drama. As one of the main driving forces behind pulling various Drama Associations together under the umbrella of the DTEA, I hope that we can continue to work together and campaign to stand up for Drama in Education.

In November the NEC said goodbye to Helen Hallissey, who resigned from her position as a member of the Journal Committee to focus on her PhD. She was an important part of our team and was a true champion for Primary and Irish Educators on the NEC. Her contributions will be dearly missed and I would like to wish her the very best with the completion of her Doctorate and all her future endeavours.

Back in 2015 the Association entered a ‘hibernation’ period, operating with a skeleton crew to keep the NATD seed alive for more fertile times. In my Chair’s report in The Journal for Drama in Education, issue 34.1, I wrote that the Association was ready to re-emerge: ‘Despite the chaos, we are on the brink of great change within the education system and NATD has a fundamental part to play in it’. Today I believe that, for the first time in my 10 years as a member of the National Executive Committee, the Association is ready to confidently take the lead in setting the educational agenda. We have a sizeable membership, an increasing number of allies and conditions that are desperate for the progressive voice of the NATD.

Now, despite the world around us seeming more chaotic than ever, the NEC will be elected from a position of strength.

This Association of like-minded individuals has never been afraid to call out an emperor’s grotesque nudity. And, through providing a child-centred, humanising education system, like the story, the streets will soon be full of young people pointing and laughing at the emperor’s inadequacies.

1. quote from a meeting with Dorothy attended by Gill Adamson, Iona Towler-Evans and David Allen 9 February 2007 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Editor’s emphasis [↑](#footnote-ref-2)