

The Council of Ontario Drama and Dance Educators (CODE) was privileged to host Dorothy Heathcote by videoconference at its 2008 provincial conference. Having almost single-handedly founded the theory and practice that reshaped how drama and dance are taught in many places around the world, it is appropriate that her words give us a context about how the arts help students learn about themselves and their world.

Reprinted with the kind permission of Dorothy Heathcote and CODE.

**Keynote Speech to
The Council of Ontario Drama and Dance Educators
October 19, 2008
By Dorothy Heathcote**



I have been privileged to live in circumstances which have always fused my personal and professional life because my interests revolve around people and everything affecting individuals and communities. My professional life has been conducted under two headings: “drama” and “teacher”. The first was inevitable from the moment I was a conscious thinker, and the latter I am still discovering the meaning of in practice. Some years ago, I realized that “teacher” is a gift word and you cannot give it to yourself. Some days I think I've earned it, but often I'm not so certain.

What I am certain of, is that I never tire of the challenge of trying to make meaning alongside the classes (groups) of people I'm privileged to work with. Drama based work to me is always concerned with “what it is to be human” and the amazing variety of ways we have that we have developed in sharing our stories and experiences. That is why I find the schisms which we have generated between the arts, sciences and humanities so irrelevant. The arts create the means of expressing, and teaching must attend to the means by which changes of understanding can be achieved. As Aristotle¹ has pointed out “We deliberate not about ends but about means. A doctor does not deliberate about whether he shall heal, nor an orator whether he shall persuade; nor a statesman whether he shall produce law and order. Nor does anyone debate or deliberate about his end; they assume the end and consider how and by what means it is to be attained”.

¹ Quoted in “No Royal Road to Geometry” by Eileen Pennington and Geoff Faux., pub. Education Initiatives, Carden Farm, Dalston, Carlisle. CA5 71Q. 1999.

Exploring what it means to be human, and planning learning engagements mirroring all the affairs of humankind naturally involves me in any joints I can find where arts and sciences meet.

A few voices.

Richard Selzer², poet and surgeon:

“I sing of skin, layered fine as baklava, whose colours shame the dawn, at once the scabbard upon which is writ our only signature, and the instrument by which we are thrilled, protected, and kept constant in natural place. Here is each man bagged and trussed in perfect amiability. See how it upholsters the bone and muscle underneath, now accenting the point of an elbow, now rolling over the pectorals to hollow the grotto of an armpit. Nibbled and umbilicated, and perforated by the most deverse and marvelous openings, each with its singular rim and curtain.”

And again Selzer³:

“I am finished one operation and am waiting to begin another. The room in which I am working must be cleaned and prepared. For this time, I have entered the room adjacent to mine, to learn, to encourage, to measure. An operating room is not a quiet place. The voices of men rise and fall. Orders are given. There is anger. One hears laughter. Somewhere a machine bubbles. Electronic beeping counts out the rhythm of a heart, and always the to and fro sound of breathing that is controlled by a hand squeezing a rubber bag. But this operating room that I visit is quiet. There is none of the clangor that punctuates these labours. In this room, voices are used softly. They murmur. They purr. The wrists of these surgeons are slender, their fingers fine. When men huddle around an operating table, their heads bowed between bulky shoulders, they have the appearance of strength and mass. They group like buffalo. But these, in this room, are deer. Their necks are long. They turned them like deer. They are women”....

Your members of CODE surely, as I do, cannot avoid hearing and seeing the dancer’s art lifting from the pages of Selzer’s meditations. The transformative vision of humans. Now “see” James Kirkup’s⁴ poem written whilst watching an operation in Leeds infirmary. Kirkup makes us see movement upon a fine detailed canvas; as through a telescope, the line and color leap to our gaze in fine detail.

² Richard Selzer “Confessions of a Knife.” *Meditations on the Art of Surgery.* Paladin. Triad/Granada 1982. “Skin.”

³ Ibid. “Amazons.”

⁴ James Kirkup. “A Correct compassion” from *Seven Centuries of Poetry.*, ed. A. N. Jeffares. Longmans, Green and Co. First published 1955.

*Cleanly sir, you went to the core of the matter.
Using the purest kind of wit, a balance of belief and art,
You with a curious nervous elegance laid bare
The roots of life, and put your finger on its beating heart.*

*A calligraphic master, improvising, you invent
The first incision, and no poet's hesitation
Before his snow-blank page mars your intent:
The following stroke is drawn like an uncalculated inspiration*

*A garland of flowers unfurls across the painted flesh.
With quick precision the arterial forceps click.
Yellow threads are knotted with a simple flourish.
Transfused, the blood preserves its rose, though it is sick.*

We have sculptors like Barbara Hepworth drawing surgeons at work, and Henry Moore capturing images of Londoners during the blitz in World War II which invite the dance form, and the physicist Fritjof Capra⁵ turning to Leonardo da Vinci's drawings to consider natural forms of grasses, water and human hair "... seeing nature as a model and mentor, is now being rediscovered in the practice of ecological design... underlying such an attitude of appreciation and respect for nature is a philosophical stance that does not view humans as standing apart from the rest of the living world but rather as being fundamentally embedded in, and dependent upon, the entire community of life in the biosphere."

Finally, to return to an earlier point. "Stories are the secret reservoir of values; change the stories individuals and nations live by and tell themselves, and you change the individuals and nations."⁶

All my teaching practice draws constantly upon this symbiotic relationship of arts and scientific ways of expressing meaning and concerns. Drama is the universal joint among all the affairs of humankind because it is expressed in now, immediate time of doing. Thus, all the behaviors of people are its source of energy, ideas and forming. In the English language, there is no opposite to "behaving". We cannot not behave: in stillness or action, silence or sound, seen and unseen, we do. These six elements form the palette of all "sign" in theatre and life. This is my mantra.

⁵ "The Soulful Scientist". Fritjof Capra. Doubleday, 2007, quoted in Resurgence Magazine 238, Sep/Oct 2006

⁶ *ibid.* "Imagination Holds the Key." Tim Smit, creator of the Eden Project in Cornwall, U.K.

My experiences (as yours) have formed my teaching “culture” -- used in this instance to be interpreted as science and humans interacting.

I worked in a weaving mill among noise, patterns and movement. I was privileged to grow up in a family where children were not excluded from any business arising, and time with my grandmother who told stories and let me be around when she and neighbors and friends gossiped. There’s a wholesome word -- spreading the news, holding opinions, widening my areas of reference regarding what grown-ups get up to. Like all children, I made what sense I was able to at any time and the rest slid away, sometimes to be comprehended later.

I was able to study at the newly formed Theatre School in Bradford and had three years working with Rudolph Laban and Esmé Church and meeting the “greats” in theatre of that time in Britain. All this was possible because my mill owner listened to some of his weavers regarding my talents, such as they were displayed there in a local concert party and village festivals around the mill.

For two years afterwards I taught evening classes in the villages of Yorkshire, meeting a wide variety of humans! Businesspeople, wealthy landowners, farmers, professional people and strange idiosyncratic characters, all united by wanting to produce plays in their village halls and churches. I also had a part-time position in the theatre school working with teachers meeting in the evenings for a variety of reasons. Improving their public speaking, selecting and producing plays in school were of special concern to these.

One such person, a headteacher, made me apply for a newly created post at the University of Durham (later to be split and form also the new University of Newcastle upon Tyne). I was amazed to find myself in an academic milieu at 24, and when I left the university aged 60, I remained still somewhat bewildered by the attitudes of some, by no means all, of the “grey men” who could reduce to dust some of the splendid aspirations of the students who took the trouble to study with us. For thirty-six years, I worked with a succession of deans and professors who let me “do it my way”. I wonder if it could happen today?

I married a supportive engineer who was concerned with form, design, processes, interaction of making, working with machines and responsibility that all should be “fit for purpose and formed”. His support also involved tolerating a frequently full house of strangers of many cultures, professions and creeds and my frequent absences in other countries and areas of the United Kingdom. (I kept the deep-freeze full from the yields of our large garden, worked in harmony

by ourselves and he was good at taking things out in date order and mixing menus.)

A huge bonus was all those willing teachers to lent me their classes of all ages and abilities to practice developing Aristotle's means of achieving changes in knowing and understanding. This generosity still continues, and so I still am privileged to keep honing and understanding bit by bit how to structure learning situations using the “I do” elements in drama and dance forms. But I am also privileged to work in the total curriculum of human affairs, so you will find as much writing, painting, reading, talking, calculating and making, as you will see, the “I do” of drama in my encounters with learners.

This brings me inevitably to considerations of power relationships between learner and teacher. I have never divided these positions; other than I hold myself responsible for the safety of those I'm working with. Dramatic forms also include considerations regarding the emotional and private safety areas of my charges. I have always wanted students to be colleagues/apprentices, and to share in the making process. Thus, when confronted with three “naughty” boys deemed to be antisocial, this dilemma of power had to be resolved if we were all to survive for a whole week in a cell of a room and get ourselves by hook or by crook to a certain stable around Judea by Friday, last lesson. Inadvertently, I invented Mantle of the Expert. Their elevation to Kingship enabled my “go for” teacher position to preserve point of view, responsibility and episodic story development. These three elements are at the heart of the style of learning.

The name confuses, but I've never found a more useful one. “Mantle” is in this instance not a cloak of protection, but a signifier of stature and responsibility. My mantle declares my standards, integrity and service in my culture. “Expert” means I am a continual student, aware that information must be sought for, skills constantly honed and shared with others. So the style of learning absolutely embodies what our schools are supposed to do. Nurture young people into becoming interactive, generous members of their society/culture and remain open to learning whatever is required of them throughout their lives.

Once I could name the process, I could see how appropriate it is to formal schooling situations IF the teacher power to tell, know more, and generally be in control of the ordering of the learning encounters, can be changed. One model could be the master/apprentice relationship. But that relationship requires clients to demand results appropriate to their expectations. From considering this, I evolved the notion of running enterprises. Running enterprises involves

cooperation and collegiate practice. Enterprises can be invented to suit learning needs and such inventions involve recognizing that we are playing at a very deep level. Playing at using power to positive ends (the clients needs) and playing at being grown up in legitimate circumstances which bring dignity, not embarrassment. Teachers and students play alongside each other in “growing” the enterprise which is also in “process of becoming” during dramatic action -- we do, we are doing to make meaning.

An important drive for me in trying to help teachers to use drama in their classrooms, was that many teachers fear the active, unpredictability of drama. Even today, many teachers have little notion of the “dramatic event” though they may encounter some learning about it during their training. Often their own schooling experiences involve taking part in or watching plays, and the position of director seems a natural one for the teacher to assume. This is not so. I have to constantly develop the playwright muscle. To structure, as colleague, action events which through productive tension engage the students in exploring encounters relevant to the mantle learning and the expert practicing of knowledge.

Mantle of the Expert requires three teaching positions, and these are demonstrated by the twin “signs” of voice and physical stance and gesture. There are three negotiating positions:

1. The sustainer of the invented an enterprise. This is the manager/collaborator in the firm and keeps the play element seriously engaged. I do not mean ponderous or gloomy.
2. The second voice is that of the negotiator of our developing ideas, skills and responsibilities to our client
3. The playwright voice/planner which uses the amazing variety of possible human encounters to be planned and experienced in drama mode. Thus the teacher and student -- master/apprentice relationship sustains three levels of thought and action.

Mantle of the Expert. The Three Levels of Thought and Action/Purpose

- A. Context: running an enterprise. The supporting tasks of dealing with client, the day to day routines, car parking, advertising, taking collegiate decisions sustain POINT OF VIEW for all.
-
-

The sustaining of schooling generated from within the contextual demands. – not just the arbitrary school timetable.

- B. Curriculum work required by students is introduced by the leader as needed by the enterprise above e.g. some “compass” understanding, learning new information, skills, researching, anything relevant to advancing student development.
-
-

- C. The episodes which arise to point up crises, tension points, opportunities for encounters and to enable the “intelligence of feeling” to make the learning memorable and important. These create the opportunities for high level thinking, morality and decisions which shape the enterprise, such as meetings with clients, genuine experts in the community, officials the enterprise requires which are but later may require actual mentoring, officials from the community, witnesses, professionals, specially invented characters or clients. This level permits “safe adventures”, tensions to be explored, story, and plot lines to be woven into the enterprise and resolved in dramatic encounters, and then incorporated into the history of the firm.

+++++

Teacher contributions

Voice A: Manager of the enterprise.

Builds belief, creates action and detail of enterprise. Sustains deep play.

Voice B: Leader/Mentor.

Points out direction for more mastery of expert areas, whilst anchoring it all into the enterprise context. Working at skills.

Voice C: Engaged with special episodes of a wide range.

Playwright stance to empower students towards high order drama work. Constantly keeps Voice A as the context for all these experiences. (A sort of soap opera input!)

My next move into understanding was when I encountered the “Thomas Jefferson System of Education.”⁷ I had long been disenchanted with the way teachers were using textbooks to augment their own factual information. I had been encouraging them to seek out primary sources -- archives, speeches, writings and paintings, biographies and autobiographies, so that children could feel more in touch with the period or personalities they were encountering. These resources seemed to make it natural to use roles in drama encounters. It also placed the materials rather than the teacher in the mediation position, so teacher and class could interrogate the information alongside each other. Thus the curriculum was engaged through case studies in context rather than the “over there” memory learning.

Oliver Van DeMille suddenly made me recognize the positions most useful in Mantle of the Expert work and how the power shift can be consciously achieved. I had naturally been doing this and teachers were saying things like “Well, you can do it, because it's your natural style” or “We're not inventive like you.” Armed with Thomas Jefferson, I have realized how quickly teachers can plan what their classes will be doing and create a wider range of tasks by which learning can happen. It still remains very subtle as to language styles and vocabulary, plus the arrangements of classrooms to reinforce the particular engagement with the tasks. The setting in of sign in the working environment.

⁷ “A Thomas Jefferson Education”. Oliver Van DeMille. George Wythe College Press. Cedar City Utah. 2000.

TYPE	GOAL	METHOD	CURRICULUM	CAREER
CONVEYOR BELT SYSTEM Early schools developed this system	To train workers for jobs. Maintain compliance. Teach numeracy, reading and writing. TEACHING WHAT TO THINK	Grades are set, if low, to help students improve. If high, students often have to work on their own. Preset guidelines. Repeat courses each year often in same order.	Text books. Students in “sets”, pre- judged and assessed by teacher. Students learn <u>about</u> material.	To be suitably employed. (for life, but this is changing now)
PROFESSIONAL SYSTEM	To acquire career and knowledge skills. To be the best informed practitioner in the field. TEACHING WHEN TO THINK	Competitive. To enter system. To pass with suitable grades. No work – you are out of the course. No instant gratification – in for the long haul.	Case studies bring ethics and responsibility into the professional practice.	To be recognized as fully qualified. To develop a career, and move with the times and prospects.
LEADERSHIP SYSTEM	To become a mentor of others. TEACHING HOW TO THINK	By tutoring. Uses the classics – the best available to be face to face with greatness in any field. To “shape the soul.”	Studying sources and resources over and over again. Refine, review, reassemble, rethink. Constant productive obsession. E.g. you <u>read</u> Luther’s words.	Ownership of knowledge. Constant searching. Never retire. You go on working at and for others who may need help.
There is overlap between the three systems. Even the textbook may be useful now and again.		Build program around students.	Lifetime relationship with field of preference and see connections with other fields.	

The Thomas Jefferson System of Leadership, from “A Thomas Jefferson Education.” Oliver Van DeMille, 2000.

Suddenly, I could see why in Mantle of the Expert learning, the huge range of tasks, the theatre conventions⁸, the ordering of information expertise and the mantle were endemic to the structure and thus changed the instinct to hold the power, to be the source of the knowledge. Once they embarked on Mantle mode, teachers felt free to invent tasks to enable learning. It also allowed individual children to reveal their needs (social, emotional and practical information) from within the fictional enterprise which protected them from ridicule or racist remarks. Further, the client becomes the case study from which derives the quality responsibility and ethical behavior. Lastly, children and teachers mentor each other.

Mantle teaching seems haphazard and demands much organization of tasks and focused preparation together with tracking the network shape of the learning. It is more like a river with streams, lakes, tributaries moving toward a wide estuary, than a railway with set lines of tasks and stops for reviewing till some learning and is accomplished. In ideal circumstances, it means long-term periods of time, team teaching and support systems, children constantly publishing when “plateaus” are reached from which they can verify they own their knowledge. Given these ideal conditions, schools would radically change in children's (and teachers') lives. In and out of schooling would fuse. However, many teachers are managing to work for short and occasionally intensive periods of time. The result is consistent. Children become deeply engaged, take power and responsibility, face complex issues and decisions, communicate in a wide variety of ways, search for information and teach each other. Standards and the self-spectator⁹ emerge and social health improves. It is belief in the shifted context which wins these changes.

The student usually comes into the school doffing their private inner and family life with their coats and lunch bags. They remain people come to learn from teachers, and increasingly, the Internet. When students are engaged in Mantles with their clients, they leave “clock time” behind and enter the “sacred time” of being engaged directly in embracing the Mantle required by the enterprise.

Lastly, I am realizing the importance of selecting the context for this change of time from that of clock measurement to experiential time of being involved in doing. I realize I'm perverse and sometimes seem to go out of my way to make

⁸ Collected Writings on Education and Drama: Dorothy Heathcote. Ed. Liz Johnson and Cecily O'Neill. Hutchinson, 1984. Chapter on “Signs and Portents.”

⁹ Self spectator is not self-consciousness through embarrassment. It means that work is monitored by the self-awareness of intention to shape, selection of tools and style of construction to achieve desired purpose. Thus, the artist arises in the process of doing to create form.

things difficult to prepare the learning resources. The context must be made believable and reasonable of accomplishing to the students, and the resources create the materials which are interrogated by teacher and class. These early preparations are crucial for they lay in the mandatory field of study. Later, class and teacher will create all other resources. These early preparations sometimes daunt teachers for they can seem excessive. The question I ask myself in seeking for learning contexts is “Why would we want the children to learn about these matters?” Seeking an answer gradually grows the context, and the context and social health of the class teaches me what I need to prepare to embark on the enterprise so they manage.

Recently, I've been asked to teach about “The Great Fire of London”. All British children in primary school hear of this along with the Egyptians, the Romans and the Greeks. Why should we continue to teach children about that day -- September 2, 1666? There were many such fires, for the closeness of the wooden buildings was a perpetual hazard. I cast about for a context which could be a reason why children today need to know, or be interested in the event. I decided to challenge myself to make The Great Fire relevant to primary and high school students. I came up with two contexts, both of which could use the same prepared materials. I hold it a point of honour that the best account of these events during those days should be accessible to them. Because I live close to Derby, I decided I could make two commissions be the means by which the fire will be central and highly relevant to both groups of students.

Commission One. The Junior Children.

Derby's firefighting force are concerned that the huge new shopping mall which has recently been built and opened to the public in time for Christmas shopping in 2007, presents a variety of security issues -- not only fire hazards, but also social dangers -- thieves, racism, drugs, gangs -- which may impact on shoppers.

These factors have not in fact become an overt issue in Derby, but councils must be held responsible for any adverse social events likely to arise.

This frame will open practical areas -- surveying all the placement of shops, fire appliances, entrance and exit arrangements, safety of steps, floor treatments, lighting, appointment of security officers, access to fire engines, “signing” of notices, their placement and a variety of languages must be considered, as Derby has a very mixed population and many faiths within ethnic groups.

Less factual, but equally important, is the range of ages and purposes of those who will visit the mall. The old people who come in search of warmth, the cleaning

staff to service the mall, the delivery arrangements to the restaurants, stores, and waste disposal. The effects upon workers who spend their working hours in artificial daylight. Access to chaplaincy, prayer rooms and mosques and temple arrangements, for Derby has a large number of Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Jews and Taoists. All these considerations bring children into the social aspects of community.

The Great Fire of London. There is an account, based on many archives dating from the time of the fire -- eyewitness accounts, Royal documents relating to how Charles II put himself in danger by working close to the fire. The way the fire caused St. Paul's Cathedral to destroy all the city documents which had been placed therein for security. To make this account accessible to young children, I have created, "fragmented" along with archivists' notes, so now there is a research archive giving the most truthful accounts available, searched out by the historian Hollis¹⁰ and written most graphically via the different voices of witnesses. I have had this taped as well, using six different readers. The variety of speed and tone creates awareness of different points of view and styles of delivery, which enrich the account.

To enable the young children to realize their understanding, they will (for the firefighting force) create a modern mystery play to be shown in the Derby Playhouse at a gala opening to remember September 2, 1666. All seats will be free to every citizen and the Fire force will be distributing leaflets written by the children regarding safe use of the shopping mall, and explaining the way the Fire force is trained and operates.

All this could actually occur if a school would embrace the idea. But, an invented shopping mall could be designed and become a model for "thinking security" if the real mall is deemed too complicated.

Commission Two: High School Students, aged 16 - 18 years.

Commissioned by the University of Derby, involving departments of anthropology, social sciences, architecture, building science, town and country planning. The Vice Chancellor, on behalf of the above departments, is requesting that a pilot study be undertaken by young people around the general theme of "what is lost and what gained in the new urban building using the Derby shopping mall as the first location". This commission enables the team of researchers to find discrete ways to study how the mall is enabling social intercourse. Where do

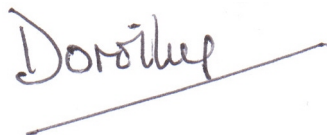
¹⁰ "Phoenix" by Leo Hollis. "The Men Who Made Modern London." Pub. Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 2008.

people gather, arrange meetings, socialize? How might the young people liaise with architects, sociologists, building workers, social services and planners so that the University “experts” work as mentors to the social politics of changing places? There are already videogames which are commissions for the players and they can call on actual present mentors to work alongside them¹¹ as they study the building potentials as social spaces to be researched.

The Great Fire of London archives will also be used by these young people studying the mall, to cause them to create a modern mystery play, using the medieval model, to show how the shopping mall of 2008 reflects and parallels the area of the City of London which was in operation before the fire. The “story” of 1666, in parallel with 2008 as a social document for citizens of Derby.

An interesting factor for both commissions is that in each period, the ordinary workforce and the planners together, help create culture and give rise to the stories each generation tells it to itself using the means of communication available.

Both these models satisfy me in that the answer my self-imposed question “Why should we bother to keep remembering the Great Fire of London?” Questions like that continue to be a central factor in selecting contexts for using drama/dance systems for learning which makes them a constant source of creative teaching.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dorothy". A single horizontal line is drawn underneath the signature.

Dorothy Heathcote
October 2008
Derby, UK

¹¹ “How Computer Games Help Children Learn”. David Williamson Shalfer. Reviewed by Krause, October, 2007. Blog review