

Monologues for Living and Learning: Creating and Performing Educational Moments

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This edition of *Journal of Educational Enquiry* (JEE) brings together six authors to examine and share reflections on performing and creating monologues in the context of classroom research, conferences, and theatres for general audiences. What are common, as well as distinct, phases one goes through when preparing a monologue for performance? When reflecting upon performed monologues, what insights can emerge for the arts-based researcher, or the actor who teaches, or the teacher who acts? How might a monologue performance about learning or teaching inform artistic, research, and pedagogical practices? This issue explores these questions with six articles by scholars from across Canada and Australia; each offering critical discourse on what it means to perform research. The origins of each monologue as it relates to its performer differ from one to the next; nonetheless, all of them are about the transformative act of performing narrative.

The first three monologues are autobiographical with common themes of identity, enduring relationships, loss, and vulnerability. We start with *Performing identity through research-based theatre: Brothers* by George Belliveau. He provides an overview of the collaborative creation process, along with reflections on rehearsal and performance discoveries, offering a poignant telling of what it means to follow a creative process that starts with an intent to explore identity and culminates in unexpected revelations. In his account of creating the monologue that revisits childhood experiences in rural New Brunswick (Eastern Canada) with his brother, Belliveau discusses a methodology of writing using exploratory techniques borrowed from drama, playback theatre, and visual arts. Reminiscences of space and time become vehicles for transformation, as in the following piece by Claire Ahn, *(Re)Discovery: Accepting, Enduring & Surviving*. Poetry and narration alternate to tell a story of enduring loss: both of friendship and self-esteem. Ahn shares a story rarely told with bravery and insight as her poetry vividly portrays social experiences during her physical, psychological and emotional battle with an eating disorder. Raw emotions of the lived experiences provide layered and textured understandings offering vivid and heartfelt entry points for an audience.

We then go from intense emotions to another kind of rawness with Graham Lea's monologue *Don't Eat the Raw Vegetables*. Lea highlights his experience outside the classroom in the home where he stays as a guest while teaching in Kenya; an adventure inspired by his mother's teaching experience some 40 years prior. A focal point in this piece is the power that a performed narrative may have to change social behaviour, which Lea comes to question as a type of colonial influence that he may have unintentionally introduced by virtue of being the Caucasian foreigner. The work of Homi Bahbha on mimicry becomes a theoretical lens by which the monologue gets shaped. Doubts and

challenges during the rehearsal process expose the risks of writing and performing autobiographical monologues.

The special issue also includes poetic and dramatic works from esteemed artist-scholars: Carl Leggo, Tetsuro Shigematsu, Kedrick James, and Esther Fitzpatrick. Beginning the artist interlude on love and life is *40 Years*, a poem about an enduring relationship written by internationally renowned poet, scholar, and teacher, Carl Leggo. Following Leggo's poem of lasting love is a monologue by Tetsuro Shigematsu titled *Train Station*, which depicts different ways love may be expressed between father and son. Continuing with a theme of deep unconditional love is Kedrick James' poem *A Horse Called Lacy* which brings to life the attachments and affinities humans can create with four-legged friends. Then, guiding the reader into the second set of articles, a poetic inquiry by New Zealand scholar Esther Fitzpatrick animates the task of learning to live with research method and theory.

For some of us, learning to live is about overcoming fear, a theme seen in the second set of monologues, which are also autobiographical, but unlike the previous three, the narratives do not originate with the performing authors. *A critical a/r/tographical enquiry into the meaning and purpose of performing the monologue Gallop Apace* takes us through Mindy Carter's perspective of performing the monologue *Gallop Apace*. Written by Amy Clausen as an honest (and comedic) teacher's story, the monologue becomes an example and exercise for Carter in speaking the unspoken truth. Through the lens of A/r/tography, defined as an arts-based research methodology, Carter examines what the performance reveals about identity as a researcher-teacher who returns to acting and the doubts that come with it.

As demonstrated by Richard Sallis in *Are You Taking Part, Thomas?*, a monologue as research-based theatre may be repurposed from its origins as qualitative data. With his analysis of this repurposed performance and student feedback, Sallis calls to question the value of remounting previously staged ethno-dramatic texts for new audiences. And finally, Monica Prendergast offers *Reflections on a Peace Education Theatre Project: Performing Dario Fo and Franca Rame's Peace Mum* to examine and respond to her performance of *Peace Mum*; the inspiring story of a soldier's mother who protests for peace and starts a movement. In addition to explaining the process of talking with school audiences in-role after each performance, Prendergast clearly articulates the performative writing quality of a theatrical piece such as a monologue and how it is different from performance writing.

These articles collectively represent a variety of current practices in the area of performed research and arts-based pedagogy. Rich insights in the autobiographical monologues are deepened with the performers' descriptions of process as it ranges from intent and exploratory writing to rehearsing and performing. Each, with their own voice and flavor, demonstrates how narrative can move fluidly from a two dimensional space to live action as it may be used in the field for teaching and learning purposes. A leading international scholar of performed research, Christine Sinclair, closes this special issue with a critical

reflection on the themes and approaches offered within the featured works of the six authors.

Bio

Janice Valdez is an interdisciplinary artist, researcher and teacher who has been applying drama and theatre with diverse populations since 1998. As a doctoral fellow in the department of Language and Literacy Education in the Faculty of Education, Janice's research interests include performed-research, arts-based pedagogy/research, applied theatre/drama, teacher education, and arts in health/healing.