

# Preface

As editors of this collection, we imagined a book where professional theatre artists would be found alongside educators and critics and students of drama, all of them concerned with theatre's power to teach in all of the different contexts in which we find this complex art form. With this book, we are arguing for a broader and more inclusive understanding and definition of theatre as an educative force, because we view theatre as a way of learning that continues throughout one's life. Keeping 'education,' with its curriculum components of dramatic literature and theatre studies in formal school settings, separate from 'theatre' occurring outside the frame of traditional contexts for learning diminishes both enterprises.

The carefully chosen eclecticism of this book – the essays, plays, reminiscences, conversations, observations, addresses, songs, and poetry – offers a cohesion of a different sort. Cohesion, conventionally understood, is not necessarily a value for such a collection as ours, which aims to play pieces against one another and create some unruly marriages between the fields of theatre and education. Such counterpoint suggests the liveliness and diversity, the real activity in the field of theatre/drama education in Canada at this historical juncture. The convergences between ideas and authors do emerge because of the different contexts and perspectives explored and not because of a prescriptive thematic mandate. We hoped that the varied chapters would begin to point to some of the unexpected ways that theatre educates and for that reason we did not constrain each contributor to remain closely tied thematically to fixed ideas of how theatre might educate. We have organized the chapters into smaller sub-groupings to feature the positive and critical differences and to create a dialogue between the richly different

fields of theatre and education. Since we view education and theatre as coexisting, life-long experiences, the selections in this book should be relevant to teachers and students of drama, educators in universities and colleges, those artists working in theatre, and the theatre-going community in general.

One reviewer wondered how to categorize this book, where to place it on one's shelf. It is its very interdisciplinarity that makes the collection so unique. To set up a dialectical relationship between theatre and education, to pull readers in several directions at once, is our hope for this book. In Canada, we have an astonishing number of brilliant theatre artists, many accomplished scholars writing and teaching about theatre, and a creative community of drama/theatre practitioners engaging young people's imaginations and animating their experiences of schooling. We are thrilled to have brought together such an impressive group in this collection, a group whose scholarship and artistry bring splendid scope and breadth to this project of *How Theatre Educates*.

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