Title: This Island's Mine: University Teaching as Inclusive Dramaturgy

Abstract
Despite an abundance of schemes in higher education, disabled students experience disadvantage. In general, the academy takes its lead from equality legislation and establishes specialist teams to address 'access'. This places access plans and agreements, typically assembled from a list of mechanisms matched to impairments, at the heart of disabled students' experiences. This chapter problematises this approach with reference to critical disability studies, exploring how the dominant learning culture of the academy aligns more to the medical than social model of disability. The author explores how possibilities for innovative teaching can be based in the praxis of the growing field of inclusive theatre, anchored in the affirmative model of disability (Swain & French, 2000) and 'universal design' (Center for Universal Design, 1997). Through a detailed description of a workshop run by the author on post-colonialism and *The Tempest*, new ways of working are examined. This practice is grounded on a framework that conceives learning events dramaturgically, where their design takes into account a group's emotional journeys and their social-bonding as prerequisites for dialogic learning informed by critical pedagogy. Ultimately, the author proposes that the achievement of excellent teaching for all can mirror the best inclusive theatre practice, where access is built-in rather than bolted on, containing multiple points of entry whilst building a strong sense of community.

Prologue – Setting the Scene
Before the action of the class starts, I prepare the space. I'm lucky, I'm in a studio. There is no fixed seating and I have thirty minutes to prepare. Typically, when teaching in a UK university, you'd have the space preconfigured with an assumption of 'sage on the stage' mode (King, 1993); banks of the taught facing the font of wisdom. You'd be fortunate to have a five minute turnaround. This however is a 'black box' studio with some audio-visual equipment. The lack of natural light is compensated by the ability to control lighting. I can project images and I can play music. There are walls which I can reimagine, including moveable theatrical drapes. I have enough chairs for participants and a trestle table. I get to work. I have prepared a sign – I've decided it will be handwritten. Taking a cue from Harrison Owen and his advice about setting up Open Space Technology (Owen, 2008), I appreciate that handwritten signs are more friendly, more welcoming and less corporate than something printed. The sign outlines the central question of the workshop: 'How does understanding global issues affect our work on play texts?' This is written purposely in Plain English. I could have written: 'An exploration of post-colonialism in *The Tempest*', but it was important not to present a barrier of assumed knowledge. I have, after all, responded to students expressing their alienation from theory courses, who have told me that terminology and lack of familiarity with the canon present barriers for them. I have prepared something typed, but it is projected: the lyrics to Bob Marley's *Redemption Song*. I scatter the chairs around the space randomly. I place other materials for work later in the session on the trestle table – pens, paper, masking tape, exercise books (for students that want to jot something down). I arrange the materials like a buffet, as if I'm setting up a party. I want the space to be convivial, to spark curiosity and to encourage conversation and creativity. Just before my guests are due to arrive, I play *Redemption Song* on repeat and realise that no matter how much you prepare, the value of the event will always be an act of co-creation contingent on others. This triggers the good kind of performance anxiety I've experienced many times before a show. Teaching is performance; students are audience-participants who alternate between moments of reception and creation. The curation of the teaching space is so often unexamined in universities, but as a dramaturg I can't help but consider how time, colour,

light, sound, image and text combine to set the scene. In a perfect world, I'd take smell and taste into account too, like a nervous house-vendor baking bread and brewing coffee before the arrival of prospective buyers. However, College rules state that no food or drink (except water) are permitted in this studio and I didn't have the wit at the time to create a more welcoming smell with, say, essential oils.

In a way, this is a meta-chapter. Dramaturgy is both its core theme and informs its form. The paragraph above is analogous to the lead up to the performance itself. The meaning of any event is circumscribed by the journey to it. Just as a show's impact is contingent on the buzz of the crowd in the foyer, so a class is similarly dependent on the atmosphere in the institution and the set-up of the teaching space. Correspondingly, this chapter has an opening that intends to welcome you the reader; it aims to intrigue so you'll read on. What immediately follows in this section acts as a prologue; providing you with a map for your journey, a sense of the themes and narrative to follow.

Dramaturgy itself is a notoriously slippery term, with a breadth of applications. This is partly complicated by the role of the dramaturg, which in many theatre contexts is a discreet role which with varied functions, ranging from critical friend, to researcher to in-house philosopher (Turner & Behrndt, 2008). However, in practice, acts of dramaturgy are performed by many creatives, and are chiefly concerned with *composition*; arranging the different elements of performance. There are many principles that can govern dramaturgy. The structure of this chapter, and indeed my own theatre-making practice, are concerned mostly with what Fiona Graham terms the 'concatenate pole' of dramaturgy which 'supports the Aristotelian narrative, in which the structure of incidents in the plot (*mythos*) is the most important element of the drama' (Graham, 2017). I use the assorted elements to compose a journey for my audience/students. I want that journey to have a shape; a beginning, middle and end. I'm also cognisant that our assumptions about audience can seem an awkward fit to the notion of the active learner. However, audiences are never passive. Indeed, my theatre-making work has been informed by the work of theatre/drama practitioners such as Augusto Boal (Boal, 1979) and Dorothy Heathcote (Heathcote, 2015), who place interactivity at the heart of their practice.

My dramaturgical approach to teaching is also influenced by Disability Studies. Drawing particularly from Swain and French's formulation of the 'affirmative model of disability' (Swain & French, 2000), I see positive benefits in disability consciousness for creating profound learning experiences. This means that inclusive practices are built-in to the design of teaching, rather than a bolted on approach founded on individual adjustments. There is an obvious parallel here with the 'aesthetics of access' as articulated by Jenny Sealey of Graeae Theatre Company (Sealey & Lynch, 2007) and now widely practiced by artists such as Jess Thom and Rachel Bagshaw and companies such as Cardiff's Hijinx. Here, elements such as audio description, sign language, captioning and a relaxed environment suitable for neuro-diverse people are woven into performance. In setting the scene for my class, the creation of a 'soft opening' was informed particularly by the movement for relaxed performance in theatre. This challenges many of university teaching's orthodoxies: the start time is relatively fluid; students can come and go as they please; they can interrupt; and they can participate at a level where they feel comfortable – including just observing rather than actively participating if that's their choice. Of course, for the class to maximise learning, I want the students to engage actively. So, it is my responsibility as the teacher-dramaturg to create a compelling and engaging journey for them.

The dramaturgy of this chapter is in a classic three act structure. Act One has parallels with the script writer's notion of the 'inciting incident'. This impetus was to find better ways to teach students with hidden disabilities. Therefore, Act One will harness the 'social model' of disability (Barnes, 2012) to analyse the barriers that those students face, particularly with regard to conventional approaches to the teaching of theory. Act Two, characteristically the longest act of a traditional play, explores possibilities. I'll posit a different way to approach designing teaching by digging more deeply into underpinning disability theory. This was the foundation for the practical experiment of *The Tempest* workshop itself, which I'll describe and analyse as it unfolded. Act Three will, as Dorothy Heathcote would have termed it, 'drop from the particular to the universal' (Heathcote, 2015) and seek to identify general principles behind taking an inclusive dramaturgy approach to university teaching.

So, now I've set the scene and introduced our journey through a prologue, let us open the curtain on Act One.

Act One: What is: the managerialist-adjustment model

Caliban's famous speech in *The Tempest* starts with the bold declaration: "This Island's mine, by Sycorax my mother,/which thou takest from me" (Shakespeare, 1999). This resonates not just with colonialism, but by extending the island metaphor, with other thefts of rights. If we consider education as a colonised island, a case can be made that disabling barriers contain and limit the non-normative student. Caliban goes on to declare that Prospero originally showed him kindness and even taught him "… how/to name the bigger light, and how the less,/that burn by day and night." However, Prospero's teaching came at a cost to Caliban, imprisoned in "this hard rock, while you do keep from me/the rest of the island." So, in the neoliberal university, disabled students are advertised to, recruited and offered support from disability-specific schemes, but still have lower levels of achievement and participation (Office for Students, 2019). There may not be segregated 'special needs' provision in universities, but *integration* is on non-disabled terms, and should not be confused with *inclusion* (Leite, 2012).

The social model of disability was a breakthrough in Disability Studies, particularly in the UK, as it identified the dominant medical model that places an emphasis on normalising and curing disability, proposing in its place a human rights focus on the physical and attitudinal barriers society puts up that prevent disabled people from full participation (Barnes, 2012). As we shall see, the social model has been critiqued and built on, but an analysis of disabling barriers remains a useful tool in addressing educational disadvantage. Ironically, the language of 'access' and 'adjustment', driven by equalities legislation, reflects a generally agreed shift to social model thinking by the academy, but the measures set up by universities are themselves experienced as barriers by many students. This largely comes from the onus placed on the disabled student to wrestle with bureaucracy. As Magnus and Tøssebro state: '… when applying for supports the individual will always run the risk of being met with suspiciousness and rejection, to be considered not deserving' (Magnus & Tøssebro, 2015, p320). While mechanisms such as reasonable adjustment agreements are well-meaning, they tend to address physical barriers, rather than the much more complex area of disabling attitudes and the psychological barriers that arise as a consequence of disabled people's experience of ableism. Although disabled students continue to struggle to have concrete adjustments made, there are discernible improvements in access: for example, a wheelchair user may have improved physical access to teaching spaces; a Deaf student signing and captioning; a blind student text-to-speech software; and a dyslexic student their readings

printed on coloured paper. Even where these measures are absent, and despite financial arguments to excuse lack of access, there is usually agreement that disabled students should have these concrete adjustments put in place … when time and resources permit. However, it is still typically the case that work generated by disabled people as role models is rarely part of core study. Furthermore, in, say, literature or theatre studies, representations such as Dickens' Tiny Tim or Shakespeare's Richard III are rarely systematically critiqued from a disability perspective. Disabled students' peers and teachers may also unwittingly display unconscious bias: a chronically ill student may be perceived as lazy; a student with ADHD is criticised for talking too much; a Deaf student has to navigate an 'eyes-closed visualisation' exercise.

When I was considering how to improve disabled students' experience at Goldsmiths, it was quickly apparent that the vast majority of disabled students had what are frequently termed 'invisible disabilities'. Indeed, all the Reasonable Adjustment Student Agreements (RASAs) produced for undergraduates in my department, Theatre & Performance, for 2020-2021 indicated that all our disabled students declared 'invisible disabilities'. These were mostly concerned with neurodiversity (46%) – a term which I use to include dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD and Autism – or mental health (50%). The Office for Students assert that 'the social model of disability is widely accepted as the most effective way that universities and colleges can respond to the needs of disabled students'(OFS, 2019), and certainly much of the terminology used can appear congruent with the social model. However, closer examination reveals characteristics in the process which align more with medical model thinking. Diagnosis and medical evidence are at the heart of obtaining 'reasonable adjustments'. Documents are framed by outlining a 'condition' or 'disorder', to be verified by those Vic Finkelstein terms 'professions allied to medicine' (Finkelstein, 2001, p7). The adjustments, then, can be read as a 'cure' to a 'problem', a way to normalise the impairment. Indeed, there is now a standard menu of adjustments that purport to render access needs adequately addressed, such as consideration of assignment deadlines, the recording of lectures, allowance for lateness/absence and alerts to lecturers not to put a student 'on the spot'. This is what Sheila Riddell and Elisabet Weedon refer to as 'managerialist methods' to tackle disability inequality (Riddell and Weedon, 2014, p39). I'd argue we should term the current *modus operandi* of most university disability access processes a 'managerialist-adjustment' model.

Let us look more closely at whether these disabilities are really as 'invisible' as claimed. Certainly, much neurodiversity manifests in the kind of non-normative behaviour often considered aberrant in traditional academic settings, and is frequently coterminous with episodes of mental distress. As an example, it is clear from Jeff Gawthorpe's description of his ADHD symptoms while a student, that his 'invisible disability' would have been apparent:

> "I've been to GPs dozens of times both exhibiting and describing the core symptoms of ADHD: racing mind, inability to relax, fidgeting, feeling overwhelmed, terrible sleep quality, anxiety, and treatment resistant depression." (Beckett, 2017)

Despite adjustments, a student with these experiences is often unable to supress their manifestations. Moreover, the act of trying to supress behaviours to appear 'normal' is likely to exacerbate poor mental health. Correspondingly, a student with a fluctuating chronic health condition such as inflammatory bowel disease or diabetes will have their stamina and cognition impaired at different times. The very structures of university life – governed by

timetables, deadlines, preparatory reading, scholarly writing conventions and often complex navigation of rooming arrangements – present barriers to full participation. There is a presumption that the prototypical student will have no difficulty in navigating these default organisational arrangements and that what is needed is adjustments to the status quo. The managerialist-adjustment model is therefore a 'bolted on' approach, requiring the non-normative, disabled student to conform to institutional norms, often in ways that are not possible for them.

It is therefore unsurprising that students with 'invisible disabilities', will feel a pressure to appear 'normal'. There are a clear set of stigmas (Goffman, 1990) associated with these disabilities, which UK studies confirm then leads to the additional barrier of fear of disclosure (Ridell & Weedon, 2005; Stanley, et al., 2011). Indeed, according to Jennifer Marie Martin, 'most students did not disclose their mental health problems to staff at university' (Martin, 2010, p259), which would indicate that the roughly one in eight Goldsmiths' Theatre & Performance students officially declaring a mental health condition to gain reasonable adjustments is likely to be a significant underestimation.

It's useful to use dramaturgical performance analysis to further examine disabling barriers in typical university learning experiences. In consideration of audiences, Whitmore takes a semiotic approach:

> Educational level, cultural heritage, social experience, mood, physical impairment, ability to concentrate, and the like all play a part in the spectator's ability to construct meanings from the performance through a reading or decoding of signs. (Whitmore, 1994, p16)

In other words, each audience member or learner comes to an event with their own individual 'horizon of expectations' (Jauss & Benzinger, 1970, p8). For many educators, this leads to designing classes so that learning is appropriately differentiated. However, the dramaturg will also embrace the need to build a sense of community based in shared identity, friendship and celebration - key elements for students' university experience. The vital community-building component is missing in the managerialist-adjustment model of disability, as disabled students navigate the additional barriers of stigma, disclosure and the emotional labour of burdensome bureaucracy.

An analysis of the scenography of typical lecture theatres (that almost always, ironically, constrain theatricality) also assumes a specific learner-teacher relationship: the teacher-performer presenting to receiving students; the plethora of electricity points for laptops; the neutral-coloured walls with little stimulus; fixed seating; the ubiquity of PowerPoint. The space beyond the lecture theatre is often unwelcoming too, particularly for neurodiverse students: the signage can be confusing; the noise and bustle unnerving; and the turnaround times between lectures very tight to maximise the cost effectiveness of space usage.

Many lecturers are aware of the need to provide a sense of narrative shape to the allocated time for a learning experience, which is typically just short of an hour. This is often hampered by the notion of 'delivering learning outcomes' – terminology that is rarely problematised. The 'delivery' aspect assumes that the primary role of the lecturer is akin to the postal service – the job is to package the 'learning outcome' to reach the doorstep. The reception of the 'outcome' is the primary metric by which successful teaching is frequently measured and is therefore highly problematic. If the 'learning package' is not received, it is

arguably not the fault of either lecturer or student, but a systemic problem baked into an inadequate pedagogy. By contrast, concatenate dramaturgy is contingent on an emotional journey where a diverse audience reaches plot points together. In the teaching of theory, we can treat intellectual insights as analogous to plot points, each building on the last. If significant numbers of students fail to grasp key insights, their experience will be frustrating and might even activate anger. This frustration can be compounded by the need to bring prior knowledge to the learning experience, most often in the form of preparatory reading. Here, many students experience the barrier of unfamiliar terminology, which is particularly problematic for, say, dyslexic students and those whose focus and concentration is affected by their impairment. If the drive to 'deliver learning outcomes' means that a lecturer feels compelled to embed challenging preparatory reading, we can observe a parallel to an audience member's first bad experience of Shakespeare, when the production assumes a basic prior familiarity with the text.

The question then arises: if the managerialist-adjustment model does not adequately enshrine students' disability rights, is there a more inclusive approach?

Act Two: What if theory was taught using the principles of inclusive dramaturgy?
As Clarissa Hope Lynch states in her interview with Jenny Sealey:

> Access is embedded in every production to enable accessible performing and spectating. Graeae's live performance is layered with spoken/signed languages and visual/aural technology, weaving a multi-sensory narrative that engages and communicates with audiences in diverse ways. (Sealey & Lynch, 2007, p62)

What's important here, is that the experience is layered to offer multiple points of audience access. As an example, in Graeae's production of the Ian Dury musical *Reasons to be Cheerful* (Sirett, 2010), audio description is performed on stage by the character Pickles, who describes on-stage events to an absent blind character (Blind Derek). Blind and visually-impaired audience members, wearing headphones, are involved in character as Blind Derek; their experience is built-in rather than bolted on to the dramaturgy. Similarly, in Tourette's Hero Jess Thom's production of Samuel Beckett's *Not I,* Thom not only artfully translates Beckett's monologue into a duet with sign language interpreter Charlotte Wombwell, she also frames the performance as 'relaxed' (Heron, 2018). Audience members can come and go and involuntary sounds are incorporated spontaneously. In these examples, and there are more in this growing and dynamic field of performance, these artists are going beyond the social model of disability with its emphasis on addressing an ableist deficit and are more aligned to the principles of universal design (Center for Universal Design, 1997) and Swain and French's 'affirmative model' of disability.

Swain and French define the affirmative model as:

> … essentially a non-tragic view of disability and impairment which encompasses positive social identities, both individual and collective, for disabled people grounded in the benefits of lifestyle and life experience of being impaired and disabled. This view has arisen in direct opposition to the dominant personal tragedy model of disability and impairment, and builds on the liberatory imperative of the social model. Critiques of the latter have been consistently expressed as, or interpreted as, re-

> affirmations of personal tragedy, particularly in relation to impairment. In this analysis the affirmation model addresses the limitations of the social model through the realisation of positive identity encompassing impairment, as well as disability. (Swain & French, 2000, p569)

The affirmative model helps us to recognise that being disabled brings benefits to the learning experience. This is clearly the case for neurodiverse students, often adept at the kind of divergent thinking that can deepen conceptual learning. Again, artists can signal new ways of thinking. Benedict Philips, whose work centres on his experience of dyslexia and includes his 'lexic to dyslexic dictionary', *A Benedictionary* (Phillips, 2005), and performance piece *The Agenda of the Aggressive Dyslexic* (Phillips, 2020) has taken his practice to higher education. His residency at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland was witnessed by fellow neurodiverse artist, dyspraxic dancer/choreographer Abi Watson, who said of Phillips:

> He spoke of reversing the paradigm of medical and deficit discourse of dyslexia, a reclamation of language, the idea of memory as a cassette tape coil, and the virtues of 3D and visual thinking (Watson & Phillips, 2019).

Equally, those experiencing poor mental health can frame their experiences more affirmatively in learning environments. Perhaps more than in any other area, students experiencing poor mental health are locked into the medical model of disability, and coming to terms with fluctuating conditions is highly challenging, as those affected naturally want to maintain, or return to, times when they are not experiencing mental distress. Often these students are caught in dualistic thinking about their identity, between hoping for a permanent state of being where they are 'well' and fearful that their mental health status is their defining characteristic. Again, arts practice can shed a light on more inclusive ways of working. Rather than seeking to erase students' experience, or exposing them to the pressures of disclosure, the teacher can encourage a more nuanced sense of identity as part of the group. Here the affirmative model leads to connecting topics being explored in class with the amalgamation of individual experiences. In theatre studies and other arts practice, a collective identity as artists can be useful. As Hui et al say in the context of a community arts and mental health project:

> By working together as artists, people may perceive themselves more positively, and develop a sense of belonging through their artistic activities. Furthermore, in a non-medical and non-stigmatising environment, people can change their identities in the context of positive relationships with others. (Hui, et al., 2019, p297)

There is a sense that artists naturally bring elements of autobiography to their work, but, importantly, they have agency in choosing their level of disclosure. Hence, it is contingent on the teacher to create a safe environment, with clear confidentiality boundaries, no pressure for students to disclose, and with open invitations that validate personal stories as a key part of learning. Of course, in the arts and humanities this naturally aligns with the topics and concepts under consideration. Nevertheless, there are subtle strategies where this approach can be applied to other subject areas too. After all, no one can completely divorce their emotional life from consideration of, say, the weather or the human body.

For teachers, the next step is to design university learning experiences informed by the innovations of disabled and community artists (often we are both). As Glass, Meyer and Rose put it:

> The arts push us to recognize and consider the multiple, flexible ways in which people learn and interact with the world. They expand our notions of how content can be represented, perceived, and understood. They also show us that the ways in which we engage, act, express, and interact can be rich, varied, and contextual. In these ways, the arts offer rich, engaging, and meaningful options for teaching and learning. These options provide alternative pathways for addressing variability and enabling learners to find their own directions for learning. (Glass, et al 2013, p107)

Here we can see that the concept of 'universal design' complements the affirmative model. Moving on from the social model, universal design negates the necessity for disabled people 'to "declare" a disability for a socially just, respectful and adaptable workplace, leisure facility or educational institution to emerge' (Brabazon, 2015, p26). The concept was first developed by designers, architects and engineers as 'the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design' (Center for Universal Design, 1997). In many ways, the innovations of the 'aesthetics of access' movement in theatre, treat performance experiences with a universal design sensibility. The designing of performance experiences extends further than the physical access and sensory impact of external environments, and starts to consider the psychological barriers disabled people experience, as evidenced by the recognition by the relaxed performance movement of the need to remove the attitudinal barriers that orthodox audience etiquette presents to neurodiverse people.

Over ten minutes, six students come into the studio in ones and twos. I have invited any student, but especially encouraged those that self-define as disabled. Of the six, five identify as being neurodiverse and/or experiencing poor mental health; one student is non-disabled, but interested in experiencing a more inclusive approach to teaching. There are students here that identify as dyslexic, dyspraxic and ADHD, with mental health diagnoses that include PTS, eating disorders, anxiety and depression. As host, I greet them, prompt talk about *Redemption Song* and point out the lyrics projected on the wall. They naturally either sit or stand, moving chairs around to configure relaxed conversations. I ask them if they know the song; they all do and know it's about slavery. We talk about the line: "emancipate yourself from mental slavery". Christine says that for her the line is about: "recognising your family, your background, will have some very … difficult history. Terrible things have been inflicted on you, back generations. But also good things. Don't let the shadows rule your mind." There's a murmur of recognition.

When we've naturally settled, I point to the handmade sign on the wall: 'How does understanding global issues affect our work on play texts?' "Are we all OK to have a look at this question for the next couple of hours?" I ask. I remind them of the ground rules we've agreed in previous sessions: that this is a relaxed space, people can come and go; that there are no right answers; that we're primarily looking at a practical way to explore theory … but not to worry about that for now, we'll get to it. I always start in a circle, so we gather our chairs. Although I'm leading, I want to establish a sense of parity. As the session progresses, I know that I will also take part. Personal stories will play their part in our exploration of the

topic. Pedagogically, I take a cue bell hooks and her analysis of teacher sharing their experiences. As she says:

> Hearing each other's voices, individual thoughts, and some-times associating theses voices with personal experience makes us more acutely aware of each other. That moment of collective participation and dialogue means that students and professor respect - and here I invoke the root meaning of the word, "to look at"- each other, engage in acts of recognition with one another, and do not just talk to the professor. Sharing experiences and confessional narratives in the classroom helps establish communal commitment to learning. (hooks, 1994, p186)

I frame this simply by saying: "I won't ask you to do anything I'm not prepared to do myself." It is important for me to be open about my own positionality – after all, we are talking explicitly in this session about race, and our mutual interest is disability. I am a cis, white, straight, middle-class man – so already, there are potential tensions in terms of building trust and rapport with a group where none of the participants share all these characteristics. However, I am a disabled Jew. This is an intersectional identity which I can to some extent conceal. I am open from the beginning of the workshops about my disabled identity as someone experiencing chronic illness. Although for some this would have become apparent when I was undergoing radiotherapy and needed to walk with a cane, the barriers I experience are often hidden. My disclosures about chronic illness are important: I may experience periods of exhaustion; my diabetes can manifest in cognitive fog; and my stoma may mean a bag leakage where I have to leave the room suddenly. Disclosure is not just as a means to create the mutual recognition that hooks discusses, but also to model the benefits of 'coming out' as disabled and the affirmative aspects of impairment. My Jewishness is also known to students, largely as they study my solo show *Wot? No Fish!!* (Braverman, 2013) and I don't suppress the mannerisms and Yiddish-inflected vernacular that is part of my personality.

The circle check-in is also relaxed. Although it has its uses in other contexts, I am aware that a formal ritual round in this context might create a moment of high exposure for some students. A core aim of the session is to build what the theatre anthropologist Victor Turner would term *communitas*, a sense of temporary community (Turner, 1982). So, I ask an open and friendly question: "how are things this week?" Barbara, whose natural communication style is fun and garrulous, launches into an a monologue about their workload: "I'm sooo stressed," they say, "I've got two essays I'm totally lost with, I'm loving my practical project." There are nods of agreement. Others pitch in about their workload too, with the core narrative that practical assignments are the "reward", the essays are like "eating your greens". This provides me with a natural segue into the main session. "I hope," I say, "that by working practically this afternoon, we'll blur the distinction with theory, but as you know, this is an experiment to see if these techniques work – so please let me know if there's any terminology we use you don't understand." Just as an overture in a musical or opera, or the call and response rituals of stand-up comedy, traditional storytelling or rock gigs, establish a community of attention, I judge that the group are now 'in the room'. The disparate energies that inevitably comprise the beginning of any class have now been converted to a greater sense of common purpose. The welcoming environment and circle check-in have done their jobs, and we are ready to launch into the content. It may have taken half-an-hour for this to be established, but it is not time wasted. Actually, launching straight into content is likely to have been antithetical to dialogic learning; it's very hard to launch straight into teacher-transmission and create a genuine community of attention.

I change the projection to a Peters' projection map of the world, showing the true proportions of land masses. "Do you notice anything different about this map?" I ask. Initially, it's commented on that it "looks weird", until someone says: "Britain looks small," and so a conversation ensues about maps and how they affect how we think about nations, continents and cultures. Dominic adds that he's seen a map shown "upside down, which makes you think about how the North is assumed to be dominant." We talk about the map that showed the British Empire in pink and how surprisingly large Kazakhstan is. I then invite students to recreate the continents on the floor of the studio with signs and masking tape. I say: "Let's start by going to where we are now." As a group we tightly huddle on the tiny patch that is the UK. Without making it explicit through words, we are experiencing being on the margins of a much bigger world. Because the exercise requires us to be tightly huddled, this exercise has a sense of intimacy. As Drama students, the group is comfortable with touch – I make a mental note that not all groups would find this easy and that this initial physical exercise could, in other circumstances, jeopardise group cohesion. Then I say: "Now move to where one of your parents was born." The group scan the floor-map and I can see them considering which parent to choose. Christine, Dominic and Barbara stay in the 'UK', but they're trying in a tight space to distinguish different regions. I join Christine in what we decide is London. Dominic places himself a fraction 'north' of us in Sheffield; Barbara stakes a claim for a slightly westward Devon. Meanwhile, Eva has located 'Poland', Zac has gone to 'Hong Kong' and Sofia to 'Thessaloniki, Greece'. Already fragments of family stories are generating. Barbara, so often the initiator, says her mum is still in rural Devon and can't understand why Barbara will "never go back there"; she's a confirmed Londoner now. I chip in that my identity is pure East London, but my Mum, although born in Hackney, migrated across the North Circular Road to a leafy suburb when she was a child (I use the term migration ironically, but deliberately). Zac says his mum came from Hong Kong, but his dad is Indian. It was a difficult choice where to place himself for the exercise, but his mum talks more about her 'homeland', Dad is reticent about his life in India. Eva, new to London, in contrast to Barbara, finds herself feeling "like a foreigner", despite London's diverse communities. And so the stories of family tumble out; there are nods of recognition and gentle prompts for people to amplify. We then expand the exercise across past generations. We go to where our grandparents came from, and great-grandparents. We find out that part of Christine's family were the Windrush generation, another branch came from India too – she has this in common with Zach, to their mutual surprise. Christine, it transpires, is encyclopaedic about the patterns of her family migration. She tells us how part of her family weren't "originally from Jamaica", that they'd been taken as slaves from West Africa. "Old pirates, yeah, they rob I!" Sings Dominic. We laugh, recognising a connection made. I tell the group how my great grandparents came from different parts of the Pale of Settlement, including Poland. However, as I move to Poland, I can see Eva is deep in thought. "No," she says, "my great grandfather wasn't in Poland a lot of the time. During the war, as a child, he was sent to Siberia." She goes on to tell the family story of displacement, that her grandmother made a dramatic return to Poland, but that she was told that her great-grandfather had a terrible childhood, torn away from his home. "Until now," she says, "I thought I was the only member of my family ever to move from Poland – but, no, you see, I'd forgotten about my great-grandfather!"

We then shift the focus of the game from the past to the future. We visit places where we wouldn't like to end up and discuss why, say, Afghanistan or Columbia are considered dangerous. We visit places we'd like to live and discuss why the USA is so often perceived as a 'promised land'.

At each phase of the exercise, I give the stories and opinions space to breath. The group are exploring communalities and difference, unwittingly discussing their sense of place and, underpinning it all, within each story we start to understand that geo-politics has had a huge effect on our sense of self.

We shift back into a circle formed across 'the Equator'. I open up from the particular to the universal (Heathcote, 2015). This is a playwrighting reflex, as well as fundamental to Heathcote's process drama. Good plays have strong controlling ideas, which thoughtful dramaturgy brings subtly to the surface so the flow of characters' emotional journeys isn't unsettled by an 'author's message'. As an example, the moment in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* when the protagonist Willy Loman stoops to pick up his new, younger boss' lighter, in one movement sums up the worker's loss of dignity under capitalism (Miller, 2013, p46). Kolb, in another parallel between dramaturgy and teaching, alerts us similarly to the way conceptual tools surface following concrete experience in his cycle of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984). So, we are at that point in our learning journey where we are ready to see concepts flow naturally from experience. It's worth noting here that traditional university teaching methods often start with concepts – which can so often be alienating - rather than having them *derive* from experience. I frame the discussion to look at the reasons people move around the globe; which are choices, which are desperate needs, which are forced. It's now that we define colonialism, referring to the room around us as our map of the world. We see where European powers took control of other parts of the world, and how that intersects with our own stories.

Now is the time to introduce our play. I say we will look at *The Tempest*, but don't assume that students know the play. We move our chairs to face the screen and, in role as cinema-goers, watch a short animated version of *The Tempest* story. We split into pairs and I invite the group to work now as actors, preparing to perform the short section of the second scene of the play where we first meet Caliban, starting with the famous "This island's mine…" speech. Despite being Drama students, I'm aware that some members of the group could feel unsettled by the text and the job of reading aloud. It's therefore important that they feel comfortable tackling the words on the page. Each pair has their own separated space and they are invited to find any position they find comfortable to read the passage. I chunk the exercise into stages. Firstly, "just have a read together," I say. I float between the groups, if they are tripping up over unfamiliar language I lightly coach them. Then I call them to attention to think about the power relationship between Caliban and Prospero; they are to mark up their scripts with status numbers between 1 and 10 to explore the power dynamics. One pair says this is a difficult task; isn't Prospero always a 10 and Caliban always a 1? It's then that we discuss the role of interpretation; that they can experiment with different power differentials. We acknowledge that, hugely problematic as it is, Prospero is threatened by Caliban's alleged attempt to "violate the honour of" his daughter, Miranda. We discuss parallels, that those in power feel threatened by, as one student puts it, "dilution of their precious gene pool". Having marked up scripts in this way, we shift into performance mode. The scene is projected so there's no need for script in hand. As pairs try out the scene, the others become audience-directors. The key question is: what meaning can we generate from this text? Zac says he's fascinated by Caliban's last line in the section: "the red plague rid you for learning me your language." "I resonate with that," he says, "I feel that I've been denied my real language." He expands. "Well, in drama we have to do this – read Shakespeare – learn all that. My form is hip-hop, but it's not seen as proper drama." A thought then occurs to me. I ask the group if they mind if we look at something else,

something not in my lesson plan. So, we return to our cinema-goer formation and I show Jonzi D's TED talk from 2015 (Jonzi D, 2015). In his talk, Jonzi starts with the provoking question: "Why is hip-hop not part of the national curriculum for performing arts?" He goes on to discuss his own journey through hip-hop performance; his encounters with dominant Western dance forms through his training; the fraught decision to turn down an MBE because of its imperialist connotations. At one point, he says: "I ended up leaving the London Contemporary Dance School with this body, this hip-hop body, colonised," punctuating the end of this sentence posing with his arms in a ballet third position. The students erupt into laughter.

Our final practical exercise is to try out rehearsed readings of the scene. Each group scour the internet for images of colonialism, which they project as creative juxtapositions. The images include a white volunteer teaching children in India, a Union Jack flag and a bible. We talk about how these images could inform a production of *The Tempest* that brings out its post-colonialist themes. "What if Prospero's book was a bible," says Maria. As she speaks, I can see her contemplating the role of the missionary in colonisation.

Finally, presented almost as an afterthought, I project a couple of quotations from theory texts:

> Every empire, however, tells itself and the world that it is unlike all other empires, that its mission is not to plunder and control but to educate and liberate
> (Said, 2003)

> Every colonized people - in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality - finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards.
> (Fanon, 2008, p9)

I ask: "If you now had to write an essay about post-colonialism and *The Tempest*, would you be able to link this theory to the meaning of the play in production?" Universally, the students express that they have a grasp now, an essay would be easier, but following up the session with reading the whole of the text is still a barrier, it still feels like "eating your greens".

This tells me that the centrality of the scholarly text in university teaching will continue to represent a barrier to these students with 'invisible' disabilities. Nevertheless, the ideas have excited the group when unpacked practically and accessibly. We've made a start, but there's more work to do.

Act Three – What Next? Being realistic in changing university teaching.
As Tara Brabazon says:

> There are two solutions available for universities: universal design and retrofitting. Universal design ensures that a plurality of users is considered at the point a product, software, hardware or building is developed. Retrofitting transforms disabling architectures, ideas and policies and renders them compatible to multiple users.
> (Brabazon, 2015)

Although Brabazon is primarily concerned with 'architectures, ideas and policies', by extension we can apply this thinking to teaching methodologies. Universal design would entail a paradigm shift where the prototypical student is no longer non-disabled. This would challenge a number of shibboleths, particularly that theory is substantially 'delivered' through preparatory and follow-up reading. Alternative methodologies, where reading complements a much more multi-layered approach, would need to be employed by teachers who have, almost by definition, succeeded in navigating ableist systems. Applying universal design principles would entail substantial additional labour for teachers with already heavy workloads, underpinned by a shift in their consciousness that questions fundamental pedagogic assumptions. Furthermore, the managerialist-adjustment model determines administrative structures too; access agreements have been enshrined as the primary practice to address disability equality. So retrofitting is a more achievable first step and could provide a gateway into embedding universal design principles in the future.

Inclusive dramaturgy offers useful tools for retrofitting existing courses. Teachers can be guided by the way theatre-makers design events that simultaneously resonate with individual audience experiences and create *communitas*. Teachers can give greater consideration to social-bonding, creating a shared group identity by greeting students as 'guests', as we might an audience. The teaching space can be reconfigured; music can be played; the senses of touch and smell judiciously used; and convivial chat encouraged. We can recognise that a class, like a play, takes the student on an emotional journey and find ways to validate personal testimony, that is shared safely and confidentially in the context of content - with teachers prepared to share their own stories too. We can focus intellectual content towards deepening understanding of ourselves within the wider world, aiming for shared insights, pleasurable 'light bulb' moments, where the class reach the same point in the 'plot' together. Let us embrace more embodied learning experiences too, with exploration and articulation through image, poetry, sound and symbol; lifting ideas from the page and so motivating students to engage with their readings. In this way, we begin to address the psychological barriers to learning that so often result in anxiety, feelings of inferiority, shame, fear of disclosure and the anger that arises from exclusion.

The craft of dramaturgy is a complex consideration of how every element of performance combines to compose an experience, with the audience as co-creators. There is always an element of dialogue with an audience, even if this is implicit. The best performance and teaching both generate a delicate balance of invitations for individuals to generate their own meaning and a celebration of community. The best performances and classes are also memorable; they come back to us for the rest of our lives, not as regurgitated facts, but as multi-dimensional lenses to better understand the world. As teachers, we often struggle to design experiences where students don't just grasp something fleetingly with the instrumental and temporary purpose of gaining the best possible grades, but that have the kind of lasting impact of the best performance. If we start to perceive disabled students affirmatively as co-creators that bring powerful divergent contributions, our teaching can inspire everyone in the room.

Bibliography

Barnes, C. (2012) 'Understanding the social model of disability'. In: N. Watson, A. Roulstone & C. Thomas, eds. *Routledge Handbook of Disability Studies.* New York: Routledge, pp. 12-29.

Beckett, M. (2017) *Jeff's story - adult ADHD.* [Online]
Available at: https://www.adhdaction.org/ADHD-Stories/Jeffs-Story
[Accessed 18 February 2021].

Boal, A. (1979) *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1st edn), London: Pluto Press.

Brabazon, T. (2015) *Enabling University: Impairment, (Dis)ability and Social Justice in Higher Education* (1st edn), New York: Springer International Publishing.

Braverman, D. (2013) *Wot? No Fish!!,* London: Bread & Circuses Arts.

Center for Universal Design. (1997) *The principles of universal design.* [Online]
Available at: https://projects.ncsu.edu/ncsu/design/cud/about_ud/udprinciplestext.htm
[Accessed 19 February 2021].

Fanon, F. (2008) *Black Skin, White Masks* (10th edn), London: Pluto Press.

Finkelstein, V. (2001) *A personal journey into disability politics.* [Online]
Available at: https://disability-studies.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/library/finkelstein-presentn.pdf
[Accessed 18 February 2021].

Goffman, E. (1990) *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (5th edn), London: Penguin.

Graham, F. (2017) *Performing Dramaturgy* (1st edn), Wellington: Playmarket.

Heathcote, D. (2015) *Dorothy Heathcote on Education and Drama* (1st edn), London & New York: Routledge.

Glass, D., Meyer, A. & Rose, D.H. (2013) 'Universal design in the arts', *Harvard Educational Review*, 83(1) pp. 98-119

Heron, J. (2018) 'Review: Not I, performed by Jess Thom (Mouth) and Charmaine Wombwell (Auditor), directed by Matthew Pountney, presented by Touretteshero, Battersea Arts Centre, London, 28 February–17 March 2018', *Journal of Beckett Studies,* 23(1), pp. 95-101.

hooks, b. (1994) *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (1st edn), New York: Routledge.

Hui, A., Stickley, T., Stubley, M. & Baker, F. (2019) 'Project eARTh: participatory arts and mental health recovery, a qualitative study', *Perspectives in Public Health,* 139(6), pp. 296-302.

Jauss, H.R. & Benzinger, E. (1970) 'Literary history as a challenge to literary theory', *New Literary History,* 2(1), pp. 7-37.

Jonzi D. (2015) *Hip-Hop Theatre: recognition without permission.* [Online]
Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g10orKvya5o
[Accessed 9 March 2021].

King, A. (1993) 'From sage on the stage to guide on the side', *College Teaching,* 41(1), pp. 30-35.

Kolb, D. (1984) *Experiential learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (5th edn), London: Prentice-Hall.

Leite, S. (2012) 'From exclusion to inclusion going through segregation and integration: the role of the school and of the sociopedagogical mediator', *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences,* Volume 69, pp. 47-53.

Magnus, E. & Tossebro, J. (2014) 'Negotiating individual accommodation in higher education', *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research,* 16(4), pp. 316-332.
Martin, J.M. (2010) 'Stigma and student mental health in higher education', *Higher Education Research & Development,* 29(3), pp. 259-274.
Miller, A. (2013) *Death of a Salesman* (e.edition), London: Penguin Random House.
Office for Students (2019) *Beyond the bare minimum.* [Online]
Available at: https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/1a263fd6-b20a-4ac7-b268-0bbaa0c153a2/beyond-the-bare-minimum-are-universities-and-colleges-doing-enough-for-disabled-students.pdf
[Accessed 7th March 2021].
Owen, H. (2008) *Open Space Technology: A User's Guide* (1st edn), San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
Phillips, B. (2005) *A Benedictionary.* [Online]
Available at: https://benedictphillips.co.uk/portfolio/items/a-benedictionary/
[Accessed 8 March 2021].
Phillips, B. (2020) *The Agenda of the Aggresive Dyslexic.* [Online]
Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UgfFnwrjQ_4
[Accessed 8th March 2021].
Riddell, S. & Weedon, E. (2005) *Disabled Students in Higher Education: Perspectives on Widening Access and Changing Policy* (1st edn), London: Routledge.
Riddell, S. & Weedon, E. (2014) 'Disabled students in higher education: discourses of disability and the negotiation of identity', *International Journal of Educational Research,* Volume 63, pp. 38-46.
Said, E. (2003) 'Blind imperial arrogance', *L A Times*.
Sealey, J. & Lynch, C. H. (2007) 'Graeae: An aesthetics of access - (de)-cluttering the clutter'. In: S. Broadhurst & J. Machon, eds. *Identity, Performance and Technology; Practices of Empowerment, Embodiment and Technicity.* London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 60-73.
Shakespeare, W. (1999) *The Tempest* (1st edn), London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
Sirett, P. (2010) *Reasons to be Cheerful.* London: Unpublished.
Stanley, N., Ridley, J., Harris, J. & Manthorpe, J. (2011) 'Disclosing disability in the context of professional regulation: a qualitative UK study', *Disability & Society,* 26(1), pp. 19-32.
Swain, J. & French, S. (2000) 'Towards an affirmation model of disability', *Disability & Society,* 15(4), pp. 568-582.
Turner, C. & Behrndt, S.K. (2008) *Dramaturgy and Performance* (1st edn), Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillian.
Turner, V. (1982) *From Ritual to Theatre: the Human Seriousness of Play* (18th edn), New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications.
Watson, A. & Phillips, B. (2019) *How to be a dyslexic artist.* [Online]
Available at: https://disabilityarts.online/blog/benedict-phillips/how-to-be-a-dyslexic-artist-2/
[Accessed 19 February 2021].
Whitmore, J. (1994) *Directing Postmodern Theater: Shaping Signification in Performance* (1st edn), Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Biography

Danny Braverman FRSA is Lecturer in Theatre at Goldsmiths College. Prior to his academic post, he had a 30-year career in socially-engaged theatre, including as CEO of the Disability Arts centre The Orpheus Centre, as Senior Theatre Officer at the Arts Council and as Education Director at Theatre Royal Stratford East. As a theatre-maker, he is mostly known for his solo show *Wot? No Fish!!*, which won the Brian Way Playwriting Award (2013) and was named by Guardian critic Lyn Gardner as one of the top ten plays of 2014. His book, *Playing a Part: Drama and Citizenship* was published by Trentham Books in 2002.