



National Theatre Scotland Adam panel –learning through dialogue

Lyndsay Muir

On Wednesday 21st April, National Theatre Scotland (NTS) hosted a post-broadcast panel discussion on the adapted for TV, filmed during lockdown version, of their Edinburgh Fringe First (2017) winning production of *Adam*. We were very proud to have our colleague, Lyndsay Muir, as a member of this panel alongside fellow *Adam* World Choir member Harrison Knights and Adam Kashmiry.

Lyndsay's PhD thesis, *'A Teacher's Progress – professional identity development with trainee secondary teachers'*, explores practice research based on principles of learning through dialogue. Whether that be classroom based dialogic teaching, now part of the ITE Core Curriculum Framework (CCF) (Nov 2019) or the well-established practices of social arts (Kester, 2013) both are inspired by and based on Bakhtinian ideas of verbal exchange (Alexander, 2020). Indeed, *Alexander's Dialogic Teaching Companion* (2020) is now recommended reading as part of the CCF in relation to planning and teaching well-structured lessons (Teachers' Standard 4, CCF, p38). Key for existing and future teachers and teacher educators is that 'dialogic teaching hinges on professional repertoire and agency, rather than procedural formulae' (Alexander, 2020, p.9).

This principle of learning through crafted conversational exchange is at the heart of Lyndsay's own social arts practice *'Tea with Trans – what's*

on (and off) the menu', facilitated with members of the *Adam* World Choir in collaboration with National Theatre Scotland's production of *Adam*. In a café style setting, people are invited to have one-to-one dialogues, hosted by gender diverse volunteers who set their own conversational menu of what they enjoy talking about, what they are interested in exploring, together with indicating what is, for them, 'off the menu'. This mirrors the foregrounding of *Adam*'s own autoethnographic performance as himself in NTS *Adam*.

The film version, broadcast on BBC 4 and now available on BBC iPlayer (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m000t3h1/lights-up-adam>), tells the true story of Adam Kashmiry's extraordinary journey through geography and gender. The *Adam World Choir*, a collage of global trans and non-binary global voices, supports *Adam* as he tries to work out who he is and whether there is anyone else 'out there'. We witness him caught in a double bind as an asylum seeker, denied access to the very services he needs to prove his identity and the legitimacy of his claims.

First and foremost, *Adam* is *Adam*'s own story, yet its particularity resonates beyond itself.

The National Theatre Scotland panel which met on 21st April discussed the hostile environment that many trans and non-binary people experience

'Adam'
Photo by Tommy
Ga-Ken Wan



and the significance of *Adam* as an authentic self-representation of gender diversity, expressed powerfully by the protagonist's story and the digital *World Choir*. The panellists foregrounded how promises under Theresa May's government to reform the Gender Recognition Act (GRA) (UK Gov., 2004) have not come to fruition, despite more than 80% of over 100,000 respondents to the UK government's GRA consultation being in favour of removing the requirement for a medical report (King et al., 2020). They identified how trans people are thus still expected, whilst 'compos mentis', to advocate convincingly for their own mental illness, without which the legitimacy of their own identity will not be recognised (Mason, 2017).

For us as teachers and teacher educators this is an important issue. Research tells us that more than 2 out of 5 trans young people of school age had attempted to take their own lives (Bradlow et al., 2017). Support could be provided by enabling supportive, sensitive, well-informed discussion on these issues as, as Alexander suggests, 'vocalised dialogues ... reflect and articulate inner dialogues of thinking, learning, knowing and understanding' (Alexander, 2020, p.10). The new Core Curriculum Framework for ITE (DfE, 2019) states that trainee teachers should learn that 'High-quality classroom talk can support pupils to articulate key ideas, consolidate understanding and extend their vocabulary' (p.18).

Resources are starting to be produced that can be used in schools to support this dialogue with young people; the panel discussion highlighted that there are now more than 80 trans and non-binary authored texts to support young people and educators on the Jessica Kingsley Publishers *Gender Diversity* list (JKP, 2021). However, if these resources are to be valuable and if dialogue is indeed to be supported, teachers have to be ready to bring this literature and these discussions into the classroom.

Perhaps the film *Adam* could be an ideal place to start.

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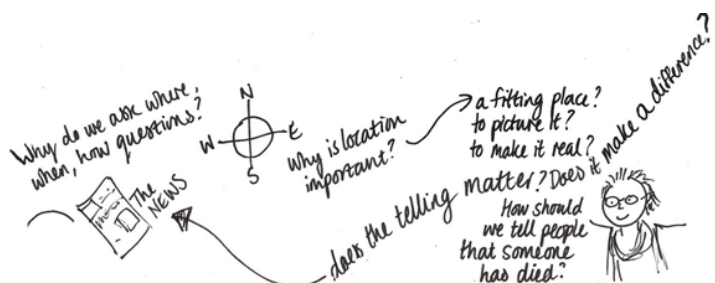
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Using an arts-based design to explore the experience of Shared Reading: a pilot study

Dr John Rimmer

This methodological pilot study explores the use of an arts-based design to record the experience of a Shared Reading workshop. There is considerable evidence of the effectiveness of Shared Reading as a support for well-being across a wide range of situations and settings (for example, Billington et al., 2016; Longden et al., 2016) and studies have suggested that this literature-based intervention may have the potential to support both thinking and feeling. However, describing the personal and emotional responses that provoke the impact of Shared Reading is a challenge.

The capture of the discussion occurring during this pilot workshop was made visual using both words



and pictures. This article discusses the process, the effectiveness and the value of this arts-based approach as evidenced during data collection, in interpretation and again in dissemination. Indications are that using multi-model and visual approaches in both capture and dissemination of data may allow for consideration of 'emotional and symbolic aspects of people's experiences [that] might not be accessed

by ... people's verbal or written competence (Van der Vaart, van Hoven and Huigen, 2018, p.3), and has the potential, therefore, to be more inclusive and democratic (Divers, 2014). Further uses of this methodology are explored.

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Representation, Representation, Representation

Dr Sheine Peart



According to the last published census data from 2011, 87.2 percent of the total population of the United Kingdom were White British with Black British citizens of African or Caribbean descent forming the largest ethnic minority population making up three percent of the total population. Further there has been a continued Black presence in Britain since Roman times confirming the real and ongoing need to include the histories and experiences of Black people in all aspects of the taught curriculum. However, this ongoing presence and influence of Black people to social, cultural, artistic and economic life of the UK and beyond has not always been acknowledged.

Taking Black History Month as a focal point, Black History Month Magazine in conjunction with Museumand (the National Caribbean Heritage Museum) commissioned the secondary PG Trainees

at BGU to produce resources which could be used for teaching in secondary schools across the curriculum which sought to bring the contributions of Black people to the fore. Working in subject teams ranging from two to eight students, the trainees produced teaching packages which included lesson plans and all teaching resources needed to show how Black people have contributed and continue to contribute to life in the UK and beyond including the work of such luminaries as Inaki Williams a Black Spanish footballer to teach Spanish and Jackie Kay a Black Scottish poet for use in the English curriculum to inspire, inform, enthuse and engage young people.

For information on how to access the teaching resources, please contact Sheine at Sheine.peart@bishopg.ac.uk

Visualising the PhD journey

Edward Collyer

My experience learning at secondary school (2006-2011) was one which was driven by tests. If you'd asked me what the point of school was when I was sixteen, I'd probably have said 'to take exams.' This output-driven approach to education was one I carried through all of my subsequent education. At the start of a university module, I'd want to know how I was going to be assessed and how I could hit the assessment criteria exactly. This, then, posed a problem when I came to starting my PhD in April last year. A PhD is examined through an oral viva and you are only 'tested' on your understanding of the ideas and knowledge generated as part of the doctoral journey.

In January, I worked with one of my supervisors, Dr Clare Lawrence, on a project that used visual artefacts to explore this PhD journey. We each selected artefacts – artwork, items of literature, objects - that represented the PhD for us. We then each presented this artefact to the other, and each had the opportunity to articulate and explore why

the artifact might have been selected and what it might mean.

The findings were interesting in that it began to make me consciously aware of how my experience in school had shaped my view of what education was; I'd never actually enjoyed the activity of learning before as I was so preoccupied with 'passing'. Initially, I had carried this over to my PhD study, anxious about writing the dissertation and passing the viva at the end. Clare, on the other hand, saw the value of the PhD as a messy, tangled journey, expressing how this a valuable part of the true, rich doctoral experience.

In addition to being a PGCE tutor, I am also a practicing English teacher. Undertaking a PhD has been the most valuable form of professional development I have ever engaged in and is one that I would encourage other teachers to consider.

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LORIC Autism Café and PARC Research Symposium

Dr Clare Lawrence

This was BGU's first event for the Participatory Autism Research Collective and was very well received. 140 people registered including delegates from Europe, Africa, Australasia, and North America. Delegates included autistic researchers, members of the wider autistic community and allies/family members of autistic individuals, as well as a wide variety of other researchers and interested parties.

Presentations were given on four on-going participatory autism research PhD/Masters projects currently taking place at BGU, including an investigation into autism and the gig economy, consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of pursuing an autism diagnosis and two perspectives on the experience of being an autistic teacher. After the main presentations, breakout rooms were facilitated that gave delegates an opportunity to discuss the research in smaller groups.

Feedback from the event was positive, with many comments made about how interesting the research subjects are and that delegates appreciated the opportunity to learn from other researchers. People reported that the breakout group discussions were interesting and useful, and some people reported making useful contacts. People found the session varied, and a particularly welcome insight was that it was good to have autistic people at the centre of the experience and for autism to be presented in a positive way.

Future PARC events are planned for next academic year when it is hoped that undergraduate research may also be represented.

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