

Editorial

Jack Shu

Welcome to the new *Journal of Drama and Theatre Education in Asia*! This title has been a bit manoeuvred to have its short form *DaTEAsia*, meaning that it welcomes all friends of Asia to start reading, writing and discussing praxis and issues arising around Asia, somewhat invitingly and excitingly as in a romantic date. In this first Editorial, therefore, I agreed with Ping-kuen Cheung (PK), the other Editor of the journal, to introduce how we perceive Asian issues in our introduction of drama education, or educational theatre in general.

It is not surprising to find that participatory drama education has been introduced in many parts of Asia as an imported asset from “the West” to facilitate the establishment of new mindsets in various aspects of educational work in “the East”. The first implication of issues arising could be the cultural impacts on the eastern minds. While PK, in his Chinese Editorial, is writing from the perspectives of the local recipients of the importation, I am pointing out the interesting position as a translator (i.e. the person who introduces foreign thoughts into the local culture) when all these years I have been trying to render the thoughts and work once bewildered me when I came across them and found them powerful and yet sometimes inaccessible. I would say I have been experiencing the heterogeneous and creative exploration of boundaries mentioned in the paper written by Joe Winston together with his two Chinese students.

Because of the lack of space, I would like to just mention one example on the macroscopic view and one on the micro. Of course, again, discipline is our main concern. To me, there is an overwhelmingly accepted truth “Discipline first

and then teach” (先管後教) especially at the level of primary schooling. Some of our teachers find it particularly unsafe when drama practitioners promote the idea of encompassing discipline within the play (or teaching)! In his article, Ping-kuen Cheung has approached the play issue from a Chinese historical view. Others, such as Ai-hua Huang and Su-fen Fu, addressed it indirectly through inquiring into the Chinese Mainland students’ psychological health. Also, Yun-wen Chen and Rey-fang Hsu both explicitly discussed the fun-making, creative potential for curious drama learning in Taiwan, seen differently through the large-scaled structural curriculum change and a miniature Theatre-in-Education practice. However, we also need to understand the worries brought along with the creative joy of drama when drama curricula are implemented in Hong Kong, as observed by Chi-wai Chan.

On the microscopic level, let me quote an anecdotal utterance when I was having workshops from my British teachers more than a decade ago. I remember there was a usual reminder to students when they were asked to interpret a still image, “Please note that it is not a guessing game—there’re no right or wrong answers.” However, when I used the still image on my Asian students (and teachers), they treated it as a hugely exciting guessing game, and would sometimes require me not to give them the answers before they have made some clever guesses. There are always *the* rights answers in our cultural system, whether you like it or not, and when you hit them correctly, bingo and congratulations! I cannot deny this psychological satisfaction in the process of learning in our students. Thus I certainly agree with Madonna Stinson, with nice reference to the Singapore context she provides, that we need to allow diversity, discreteness and distinction in our curriculum change. With a similar tone, however, Jack Shu gives a reminding example of heritage theatre, in which there are some gaps we might fall into. Understanding all these, I believe we need to look at all the visible and invisible cultural gaps when we use something that is good and culturally different.

Now let’s read and get inspirations to fill these gaps. A reminder about some other gaps: the papers are contained in their most original cultural flavours and conventions, including spelling and morphology, expressions,

translations, etc. This arrangement does give a challenge to some editorial perspectives such as the issue of consistencies, but we choose the inclusive view that positions on respect and descriptiveness.

