

On Theatricality and the Space Between: Relationships and the theatre(s) of learning disability

Jennifer Goddard

In recent years, there has been an increasing body of work that explores disability and performance (for example, Sandahl and Auslander 2009; Henderson and Ostrander 2010; Kupperts 2011, 2013; Hadley 2014). There is also an emerging body of work on theatre and disability (Johnston 2016) that falls under the theatrical in the American sense of theatricality (and anti-theatricality) as outlined by Reinelt (2002). However, if we take the view of Josette Féral that theatricality is a dynamic of perception, creating a special condition theatricality between the spectator and the one looked at (the actor) (1998: 358), it is not just about the 'performance' of disability as processes of performing and valuing the processes of signification in performance of the subject in process that are important. It is not just about cultural performance or a post-cultural critique of agency and subjectivity: the 'scenes of development' of performance, performative and performativity as outlined by Reinelt (2002: 201). Fundamental to an understanding of theatricality is the role of spectatorship and the meanings generated by the audience. Bree Hadley speaks of the disabled artists whose intention is to draw awareness to the spectators' habitual responses in any given space and 'how their habitual ways of seeing, imaging and imagining disability are complicit in the Western cultural compulsion to define the disabled body, by and large excluded from the public sphere' (2014: 16). However, in seeking to separate the disabled performer from the non-disabled spectator, there lies the danger that the binary is simply inverted. That is, in seeking to (rightly) challenge ableist thinking, the non-disabled spectator is automatically labelled as ableist. There is an emphasis on confrontation rather than togetherness in this viewpoint—a sense of separation of the spectator and the actor rather than people who inhabit the same space and have the potential together to challenge ableist thinking.

In considering Féral's understanding of theatricality, there is perhaps a less oppositional, more nuanced way of approaching the relationship between the actor

and the spectator in terms of deconstructing disability and ableist thinking towards disabled performers.

For Féral, theatricality is a condition in which a certain cleavage in space opens up where the spectator looks to engage and to create the theatrical. Outside of the everyday, or rather a breach in it (*brisure, clivage*), this space of theatricality requires both the gaze of the spectator and the act of the other, but the initiative lies with the spectator. (Reinelt 2002: 207)

If we accept that the construction of meaning lies with the spectator, then to address an ableist viewpoint it would seem apposite to draw in and work *with* the audience to create a shared sense of space. My question is this: In exploring the *clivage* that arise, this breach within the everyday that is inhabited by both actor and spectator, is it possible to take a more *relational* view in which on the part of the audience, both recognition and difference, gaze and participation take place?

For the increasing visibility of disabled and in particular learning-disabled actors, problems arise when the audience's gaze is left critically unchecked. I therefore suggest in the following paper that theatricality is in urgent need of reframing in terms of a critical disability perspective in accord with Féral's European understanding of theatricality, in which the 'othering' of the actor can be re-considered and the audience re-cast in a more positive light: a consideration of what happens at the borderline of the 'outside' and the 'inside' of theatricality (Féral and Bermingham 2002: 97) at the point at which the audience and actor experience each other. In other words, the place at which the audience and actor cross over into each other's awareness. I argue that this *shared* space of performer and audience allows *identification* (for the audience to share with the experience and sentiments of the actor, find a common understanding with the performer) as well as seeing the performer as *other to* (or existing in a different space—both physically and metaphorically—to) themselves, even when the roles inhabited (that of 'gazing' or 'performing') are different.

The idea of the 'space between' is one that is particularly pertinent to approaching the theatres of learning disability. In relation to learning-disabled artists, however,

this space is often perceived as a 'gap' that is both material and perceived, for example, with regard to access to training, experience, opportunity and cognition. However, as long as it is perceived as a 'gap', it is perpetuated by the extremes of a binary opposition. In simply re-categorizing the gap as a theatrical 'space', it is possible to move beyond the realms of pure 'spectator' or 'actor' to consider the relationship between the two, and how they inform each other within theatricality. As such, I take a slightly amended view of Féral's space of theatricality, that the initiative thereof lies in the shifts and turns in the relationship between actor and audience, and thus with both.

This 'space between' is a concept that was explored in an Arts Council of Northern Ireland funded arts research project *Black/White* (2018) in which I acted alongside an actor with a learning disability under the direction of Richard Hayhow, Artistic Director of Open Theatre Company, Birmingham. We were particularly interested in how a different understanding may be reached of the way in which theatricality can be constructed within this context. Yvonne Schmidt, in her article on directors with cognitive disabilities, speaks of the question 'as to who is acting as a mouthpiece for whom, and who gets the final word during the creative process, which is too often "shaped" or "filtered" by non-disabled company directors' (2017: 446).^[note]¹ The power dynamics at play within this relationship are of particular importance in relation to learning disabled (as opposed to physically impaired) actors where '[t]he need for care, or as many would rather say "assistance," is viewed not as a sign of dependence but as a sort of prosthesis that permits one to be independent' (Kittay 2011: 50).

Based on concepts of co-creating theatre, defined by Schmidt as 'artistic collaboration between different artists on the same level' (2017: 450), *Black/White* aimed, therefore, to explore the ways in which two actors, one with a learning disability and one non-disabled, approached the 'space between'. In other words—(how) is it possible to create work where each actor is considered equal in their contribution to the process, where the work is neither Disability Arts, nor imposed by the non-disabled contributor, but exists in the 'space between' that uniquely arises when they come together? How does this translate to the audience? Can they engage with co-created practice to meet the actors within the *clivage* as

collaborators and co-creators of the theatrical? To this end, a work-in-progress performance was held at the end of a week of intensive rehearsals, in which an invited audience experienced the event, participated in a Q&A session and gave further feedback in the form of a written questionnaire. This allowed significant information to be gathered as to the way the performance was viewed and how the audience identified with the actors and the relationships being portrayed on stage.

Background of *Black/White*

The performance project that became *Black/White* sought to create a space to consider the development of co-created professional performance work, that is, performance created between a learning-disabled actor and a non-disabled actor. 'Co-creativity' in this context is understood to be the equal status of creative partners in developing and exploring the 'space between' artists, creating a new aesthetics of theatre that is neither disabled nor non-disabled and thus challenging notions of difference. It is predicated on the idea that each individual creative partner brings different ways of working (primarily (but not exclusively) embodied / physical / multi-sensory / vocal, depending on the individual's strengths) to the workshop floor and that these have equal weight. Thus, they shape an emerging creative process rather than one that is fixed from the beginning. The underlying values of the approach are equality, playing to each individual's strengths, skills-building and co-intentional learning (in other words, that each person, disabled or non-disabled, is conscious of their own learning processes within the work). In this way, facilitated by the director, each of the actors has an equally significant creative input to the work. A space is created for people with learning disabilities to develop performance skills to their strengths, and for non-disabled creatives (in the case of *Black/White* it was myself) to extend their understanding of theatre form and theatre practice, rather than an industry-imposed idea of what performance should be. Such work is essential, as there is little co-created performance work (where learning-disabled and non-disabled actors are given the same status) that is professionally showcased. It seeks to elevate the standing of learning-disabled actors *and* create deeper understanding

of non-disabled creatives as to how theatre can be shaped, thus deeply challenging perceptions of disability and equality.

Black/White was the result of a multi-stage project, which involved observing workshops and training programmes with learning disabled theatres in both Northern Ireland and England, identifying a learning-disabled actor from within Northern Ireland who had skills and experience in performance work, taking part in performance development processes under the mentorship of Richard Hayhow and the Open Theatre Company in Birmingham and finally undertaking a week-long residency in Belfast under the directorship of Hayhow, to co-create a 'work-in-progress' performance. Hayhow has more than thirty years of experience in creating theatre with actors with a learning disability (he founded both The Shysters and Open Theatre Company) and his expertise allowed the two actors (of which I was one) to explore ways of co-creating performance.

Black/White—process

Sean (the other actor within the performance) and I had never worked together previously. I had known Richard Hayhow for less than a year, having met him at a pathways to professional theatre conference for learning-disabled actors in July 2017 (we were devising this piece in May 2018). I had invited Richard to come and work with Sean and myself over the space of five days, in which we spent five hours a day playing, getting to know one another and establishing a connection. Sean had been acting with ActionAbility, an amateur drama group of learning-disabled actors, for the past ten years. ActionAbility had put forward Sean's name as someone who would stand to benefit from developing his acting techniques and extending his exposure to different ways of working, a different kind of theatre and input from a different director. It emerged over the five days that he had a good singing voice, a very good ear for rhythm and music, but that he was much more comfortable working with his voice and a script, rather than with physical theatre, so this was a way of working outside of his comfort zone.

We had a number of different stimuli and points of departure for the performance. One of those was the short story of 'The Black Crow and the White Dove' (Higashida 2013: 141–2), in which the black crow, after asking himself, 'How come it's always the crows who are the bad guys?' (141), helps the white dove to understand that the path she is on is the one that she has been searching for all along.

In excellent spirits, the white dove flew off, up into the blue sky. Then the black crow, too, turned his head skywards, then flapped his wings vigorously, and away he flew. And the black crow looked no less perfect against the deep blue than the white dove. (Higashida 2013: 142)

In addition, we used the found objects in the rehearsal room we were using at the Brian Friel Theatre, Belfast, to play with and create connections. We didn't know what, if anything, we would have to show at the end of the five days, only that we wanted to perform a 'work-in-progress' piece to an invited audience of funders, friends, colleagues, academics and other interested parties. There were many connections we made between the 'found' items left behind in the room from previous rehearsals and the theme black and white, which slowly came together in a series of short, disparate physicalized exercises. We supplemented the found objects (balloons, black wooden stage blocks, a black-and-white golfing umbrella and a broom with a white brush-head) with tissues and black-and-white material, which reflected bird-like qualities. Although there was little vocal work to the piece, we worked with breath, sound, music, singing and the occasional word to enhance the physicality of the performance. From initially not knowing one another, finding physical touch uncomfortable—even eye contact was difficult at first—Richard guided us playfully through a series of exercises that made a game of resisting or making eye contact, using props to connect, directing me to sit on Sean's knee, to help one another up, to tease, taunt, and connect in our use of the space and intentions in exploring the material and meeting the challenge of the exercises. Between us we chose the music for the exploration. The material gradually became performative—on the final day we rehearsed a sequence of short abstract moments that were beginning to take the form of a journey taken by the black crow and the white dove and how their brief encounter left them affected and both changed and unchanged by each other.

The theatricality of the performance emerged in the presence of the audience. Of the thirteen invited audience members who attended, ten filled out short questionnaires indicating what they considered to be the areas that worked well in performance and moments the audience particularly liked, those that needed improvement and how the performance could be developed in a future iteration. ^[note]²

Reflections on audience engagement

Those moments particularly enjoyed by the audience and those that they picked out as being particularly successful could be broadly categorized into the following interconnected themes: (a) emotions, (b) props and physical theatre and (c) comedy and playful connection.

(a) Emotions

Through playing with the contents of a box of tissues, Sean and I discovered we could keep them up in the air for a while if we took turns in blowing them upwards. It became a game, a shared joke, as we progressively moved closer to the ground in an attempt to fleetingly reverse the effects of gravity. As the piece unfolded in performance, the tissues came to represent different things as the characters used them for different purposes: sadness (in wiping away tears), emotional support for one another (as they offered the tissues to console one another) and the accumulation and dissipation of loneliness (as piles of tissues collected and were swept away).

The demonstration of emotion and the responsiveness of the actors to one another's emotional states were integral to the piece. This seemed to produce affective moments for the audience, allowing them to engage, through comedy (at the over-the-top 'crying' of one character), or recognition (at the character's pleasure at or annoyance towards the other) on an emotive level with the action. Indeed, the strong relationship between the characters was cited by many of the audience members as working particularly well within the piece, one stating, 'The connection between the

performers was lovely to watch' and that there was an 'emotional depth and good sense of ensemble between the two performers'.

(b) Props and physical theatre

As suggested above, the props were used as an integral part of the physical theatre, becoming an extension of the characters and often an expression of the connection or break in connection between the two. They became strong signifiers within an otherwise stark set. The audience enjoyed 'the imaginative use of materials', in particular 'when "Black" was on the floor and "White" was poking him to get up'. Black wooden cubes were the only set, used to delineate the physical space, act as points of connection and separation and create levels (both physical and indicating status—whether the same or hierarchical). The 'openness of abstract staging' allowed a 'stark visual display of black/white', allowing the audience to focus on the physicality and choreography of the piece.

The props became imbued with a certain meaning or emotion, similar to Bond's idea of cathexis: the process whereby an ordinarily banal or 'invisible' object becomes, through the layering of meaning and structuring of the action, significant (Katafiasz 2005: 35). By this process, the audience is exposed to the variety of values—rational, emotional, instrumental—incurred by the objects that allow 'different possibilities for value for the audience to piece together creatively' (39). Thus, 'the theatrical event is able to take a *banal* object and uses it to create enormous *significance*' (ibid.). Within *Black/White*, the use of objects in this way became important as a point of connection (or lack thereof) between the actors. Even the use of balloons, which remained within the control of 'Black' the entire time, became symbolic of his boredom and loneliness and therefore his *need* or *desire* for connection, or at least the lack of colour in his life as a result of being alone. In order to develop the engagement of the audience further to analyse their position in terms of learning disability, the idea of cathexis sits ideally at the point of connection between actor and audience at the conception of theatricality: the audience is enabled to contemplate their own responsibility without feeling judged. According to Katafiasz, the effect of cathexis is to allow the performance to shift from what Bond calls description to analysis, without compromising the story, without using signs from outside the play to reveal the hidden ideologies (ibid.). In seeking to explore

and deepen an understanding of theatricality and learning disability within the further development of this piece, a more detailed attention to cathexis (the 'layering of the significance of an object' in which 'all the meanings coexist and are not functioning to cancel each other out' (41)) could prove worthwhile.

(c) Comedy and playful connection

Black/White was anything but a serious experience, however, and it was the 'creative connection and fun elements to the physical theatre' that were most enjoyed by the audience. In deconstructing what is at stake for the learning-disabled actor and in attempting to reframe the position of the audience with regard to the disabled performer, it would be errant to conclude that the 'worthiness' or seriousness of such an act should bely the audience experience. Rather, the comedy seemed to be what enabled the audience to engage on an affective level in the theatrical space with the actors. It was the sense of play that seemed to allow them to connect with the emotions of the actors, perhaps even allowing them to place themselves *with* the actor within the theatrical frame—on an emotional and psychological level, if not physically. Indeed, it is the consideration of affective moments such as these that is explored in Thompson's *Performance Affects: Applied theatre and the end of effect*, in examining how 'encounters between people in performance processes can become the site of felt individual responsibility' (2009: 10). Thus, the audience feedback in response to the performance of *Black/White* indicated an insight into the occurrence of such interpersonal encounters.

The co-creative way in which we approached the performance of *Black/White* differs, however, quite significantly from the way in which learning-disabled actors traditionally have engaged (or been engaged) in creating theatre. Writing in 2009, Palmer and Hayhow state that '[w]hilst there is an admirable and growing body of literature on learning disability, and also on drama therapy and other therapeutic applications of drama, professional theatre made by actors with learning disabilities seems barely acknowledged, indeed invisible' (2). Despite the increase in the profile of professional theatre made by actors with a learning disability in the last decade, this same statement could also be made today. Until now, the two broad approaches to theatre and learning disability have been in the application of drama for therapeutic purposes, and theatre with a social and/or emancipatory aim. The past

two decades have, however, seen a move towards professionalization of actors with learning disabilities that, although under-theorized and under-documented in terms of aesthetics, is explored in an emerging body of work that seeks new approaches by which to develop an environment conducive to nurturing the talent of actors with learning disabilities through collaborations between non-disabled people and artists with a learning disability in the construction of professional performance.

Hargrave's 2015 monograph *Theatres of Learning Disability* is the first in-depth, scholarly consideration of the aesthetics of such theatre, 'as uncontainable within other categories' (26). His treatment of the aesthetics of learning disability gives insight into how the learning-disabled performer might be read on stage, the ways in which they might disturb assumptions and what acting or artistic authorship means for the actor with a learning disability. He investigates a range of examples of theatre created out of the 'double bind that is disabled/nondisabled collaboration' and argues for an examination of aesthetic form and the role that form can play in reshaping the discourse on content, and, therefore, social relations (45). Indeed, it is 'only by embracing more subtle theories of embodiment and cognition can theatre and learning disability escape the current theoretical straightjacket' (ibid.). In doing so, theatres of learning disability bring into particularly sharp focus the binary opposition of disabled/non-disabled upon which, historically speaking, the social model of disability, disability arts and much of the discourse within disability studies have been constructed. In many ways the social model of disability has failed to adequately engage with learning disability (Stalker 2012), or the central role that non-disabled advocates, mediators and facilitators play (Perring 2005; Shildrick 2009; Stalker 2012; Hargrave 2015). In effect, learning disability 'queers' the social model of disability, becoming the grey area located between binary oppositions. First, the social model has been criticized for being too fixed and too divisive, based on simplistic binary oppositions (see Shildrick 2009, 2012; Stalker 2012; Shakespeare 2014; Hargrave 2015) of disabled/non-disabled, disability/impairment, social/medical and in disability arts—social outcomes/performance excellence (Conroy 2009; Roulstone 2010; Hargrave 2015). Such binary thinking can be considered to reproduce an inverted form of discrimination. Second, the social model has been deficient in addressing the real needs of people with a cognitive impairment, many of whom, even if society completely adapted to their needs, would still need to avail of

the support of others to help them make decisions and live their everyday lives (Stalker 2012; Shakespeare 2014).

From within Critical Disability Studies (CDS), Margrit Shildrick offers a deconstruction of these two aspects that are continuously recurring in the field of learning disability: the treatment of binary oppositions and the position of the non-disabled voice within disability studies. Both of these are essential in positively reframing the 'gap' to open it up as an empowering space, for the audience as well as the actor, in challenging the reception of the theatrical. In relation to the former, Shildrick calls for a strategy of 'queering the norms of embodiment, a commitment to deconstruct the apparent stability of distinct and bounded categories' and to 'remind ourselves that the embodied self is always vulnerable'. Thus, bodies that are further away from normative standards become revalued as 'different' rather than 'deficient' (2012: 40). In engaging bodies through the medium of theatre, the 'messy, disorganized and insecure set of indicators' (38) that CDS seeks to investigate can be considered.

Petra Kuppers refers to a similar lens through which to reframe disability as rhizomatic—multiple, interconnected and self-replicating—allowing 'different interpretations and articulations [that] do not vie for space to open into a single interpretation. Instead, they shift tectonically together and against one another' (2013: 107). In other words, the emphasis becomes the interconnectedness of ideas and moments of interest rather than a single answer or resolution to the extremities that lie at the binary edges—even where these contradict, oppose and compete with one another. Following such a view, it is important for theatres of learning disability to emphasize the shared space at the point at which the 'cleft' opens up between actor and spectator, if we take Féral's view of theatricality as:

more than a property; in fact, we might call it a process that recognizes subjects in process; it is a process of looking at or being looked at. It is an act initiated in one of two possible spaces: either that of the actor or that of the spectator. In both cases, this act creates a cleft in the quotidian that becomes the space of the other, the space in which the other has a place. Without such a cleft, the quotidian remains intact, precluding the possibility of theatricality, much less of theater itself. (Féral and Bermingham 2002: 98)

Thus, in seeking a rhizomatic deconstruction of theatricality, theatricality can be considered as a 'messy, disorganized and insecure' *relationship* between actor and spectator happening at the point at which the *clivage* occurs. How this relationship is constructed and cared for within performance makes all the difference for theatres of learning disability.

The second area contained within Shildrick's approach that is critical to understanding the relationship between non-disabled spectators of disabled actors and the actors themselves is the treatment of non-disabled persons within disability studies. The intention within CDS is to challenge the entrenched oppositions that create a 'putative divide' between disabled and non-disabled, highlighting the constructed nature of such definitions (Shildrick 2012: 35). Instead, the responsibility to interrogate everyday assumptions and values is placed squarely at the feet of each individual, whether identifying as disabled or non-disabled. Indeed, far from not having a place within disability discourse, non-disabled voices perhaps have 'the weightiest responsibility in the matter, not to speak on behalf of, or to pre-empt the experience of, others unlike themselves, but to interrogate precisely their own cultural and psychosocial location as non-disabled' (37).

This clearly has particular importance for the consideration of theatricality and learning disability. Through considering the relationship between co-creative actors and between disabled actors and non-disabled spectators the role of the non-disabled spectator can be repositioned through the lens of theatre practice and in light of a complex reading of dis/ability within a 'slippery, unfixed, permeable, deeply intersectional, intrinsically hybrid' (34) *social-relational* context.

Importantly, this approach renders the binaries of the social model of disability as obsolete. Equality frameworks and the social model of disability have undeniably revolutionized the livelihoods of people with disabilities, particularly in relation to physical access issues. However, the hard part is operating on the level of people's hearts and minds—in contesting the attitudes, values, prejudices and fears that underlay intolerance. Thus, there arises a need for reframing and subsequently exploring the ways that audiences perceive the relationship between disabled and

non-disabled. The social model of disability would suggest that the audience's perception of the learning-disabled actor needs to be challenged. However, according to a *relational* view, the audience needs to not just be challenged in their gaze towards the actor but encouraged towards seeing themselves within the theatrical frame. This new space should allow them to also be 'part of' as well as 'other to' what is happening in the performance space. If there are ways that the audience could consider themselves as 'together with' *at the same time as* being distinct from the actor within a complex and interwoven relationship, then something may be able to happen that is not possible when each is considered separately.

In such a way, the 'spectator' becomes integral to the theatricality of the theatres of learning disability, and not held in binary opposition to the actor. The space becomes a shared one of connection and not simply of othering. Just as in considering learning disability the non-disabled creative must be considered within the process of co-creation, so too the spectator and their gaze and the re-framing of this must be considered if the theatrical is to have an impact beyond reinforcing preconceptions or 'othering' the actor. Understanding theatricality as a relational, rhizomatic process can allow for an in-depth consideration of the relationship between actor and performer, and how this may develop to changing people's perception. By considering the liminal point of connection at the edge of the *clivage*, we open ourselves up to the co-existence of multiple ideas, textures, frames and understandings in a relational becoming. In such a way, the performance plays out in the relationship between the actor and the spectator, as demonstrated by the analysis of *Black/White* above, each defining and determining the other in a series of complex interactions that play out over time.

Even through such a cursory collating of audience responses to the work-in-progress performance *Black/White*, an indication is given of how the theatricality of the piece is negotiated within the space between audience and actor. The feedback from the audience suggested that they were drawn imaginatively across the *clivage* into the world of the actors through comedy and playfulness, which allowed them to respond to and recognize themselves within the characters' emotions. Much of the comedy came about through the interaction of the characters with one another and their props, which opens up the possibility of imbuing such props with a range of

meanings—relational, emotional, rational and instrumental, among others. Such a process of ‘cathexing’ objects in this way would, thus, offer potential to allow the audience to safely analyse their own position in relation to the material and the characters. Such an engagement between audience and actor is necessary in constructing the theatricality of the ‘space between’ in order that non-disabled actors and audience members may consider their personal role, relationship and responsibility towards disability. Especially so, if, as Shildrick argues, non-disabled voices have ‘the weightiest responsibility’ to interrogate their cultural and psychosocial location as non-disabled. Within a relational understanding, this is only possible *with* the ‘other’ recast as someone we place ourselves in relation to, where the audience both remain outside looking in on something that is ‘other’ to them, at the same time as transcending to the theatrical and being able to re-imagine themselves inside the theatricality of the space. At the liminal borderline of the *clivage* of the ‘space between’, multiple simultaneous gazes are permitted to exist. If these, through the consideration of cathexis and affect (which allow a ‘safe’ framing of the self in relation to the other), among others, lead to deeper analysis and greater recognition of self within them, the audience may be permitted to cross over from considering themselves to be outside of the frame to entering into the theatrical frame itself, and thus a relationship with, the actor—something that is necessary if non-disabled audience members are to assume responsibility for interrogating their relationship with disability.

Notes

1 Schmidt provides a useful consideration of co-creation between learning-disabled and non-disabled artists in the theatre, for which she provides a working tool in order to understand what she terms the ‘spectrum of collaboration’ that arises in such work (2017: 450).

2 Invited audience members included representatives from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, academics from Queen’s University Belfast, members of disability organizations (ActionAbility and Open Arts, Belfast), arts practitioners who work in and for disability organizations (ActionAbility, and Stage Beyond, Londonderry) and

the Executive Director of Open Arts, Belfast. Members of Sean's family and the Artistic Director at ActionAbility had been invited but were not able to attend. This is perhaps of particular note as their perspectives would have been interesting to include regarding those without an impairment but nonetheless personally affected by disability. Thus, audience responses were invited from people engaging with disability from a range of different and variously invested perspectives. It was important for us as actors to be able to show our work in front of an invited audience who had some understanding of what we were aiming to achieve in order to gain feedback on future development of the work within a guaranteed supportive environment. Resulting changes to the performance work will allow us to test the audience's theatrical reception of the piece with a broader range of perspectives.

References

Conroy, Colette. (2009) 'Disability: Creative tensions between drama, theatre and disability arts', *Research in Drama Education: The journal of applied theatre and performance* 14(1): 1–14.

Féral, Josette. (1998) 'La théâtralité: Recherche sur la spécificité du langage théâtral', *Poétique* 75: 347–61.

Féral, Josette and Bermingham, Ronald P. (2002) 'Theatricality: The specificity of theatrical language', *SubStance Special Issue: Theatricality* 31(2/3), Issue 98/99: 94–108.

Hadley, Bree. (2014) *Disability, Public Space Performance and Spectatorship: Unconscious performers*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hargrave, Matt. (2015) *Theatres of Learning Disability*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Henderson, Bruce and Ostrander, Noam. (2010) *Understanding Disability Studies and Performance Studies*, Abingdon and New York, NY: Routledge.

Higashida, Naoki. (2013) *The Reason I Jump: The inner voice of a thirteen-year-old boy with autism*, trans Keiko Yoshida and David Mitchell, London: Sceptre.

Johnston, Kirsty. (2016) *Disability Theatre and Modern Drama: Recasting modernism*, London and New York, NY: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama.

Katafiasz, Kate. (2005) 'Alienation is the "Theatre of Auschwitz": An exploration of form in Edward Bond's theatre', in David Davis (ed.) *Edward Bond and the Dramatic Child*, Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books, pp. 25–48.

Kittay, Eva. (2011) 'The ethics of care, dependence, and disability', *Ratio Juris* 24(1): 49–58.

Kuppers, Petra. (2011) *Disability Culture and Community Performance: Find a strange and twisted shape*, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

Kuppers, Petra. (2013) *Disability and Contemporary Performance: Bodies on the Edge*, London: Routledge.

Palmer, Jon and Hayhow, Richard. (2009) *Learning Disability and Contemporary Theatre: Devoted theatre, physical theatre, radical theatre*, Huddersfield: Full Body and the Voice.

Perring, Giles. (2005) 'The facilitation of learning-disabled-arts—a cultural perspective', in Carrie Sandahl and Philip Auslander (eds) *Bodies in Commotion Disability and Performance*, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, pp. 175–89.

Reinelt, Janelle. (2002) 'The politics of discourse: Performativity meets theatricality', *SubStance Special Issue: Theatricality* 31(2/3), Issue 98/99: 201–15.

Roulstone, Alan. (2010) 'RiDE themed issue—On Disability: Creative tensions in applied theatre: An extended review', *Disability and Society* 25(6): 753–9.

Sandahl, Carrie and Auslander, Philip. (2009) *Bodies in Commotion: Disability and performance*, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press.

Schmidt, Yvonne. (2017) 'Towards a new directional turn? Directors with cognitive disabilities', *Research in Drama Education: The journal of applied theatre and performance* 22(3): 446–59.

Shakespeare, Tom. (2014) *Disability Rights and Wrongs Revisited*, 2nd edn, London and New York, NY: Routledge.

Shildrick, Margrit. (2009) *Dangerous Discourses of Disability, Subjectivity and Sexuality*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Shildrick, Margrit. (2012) 'Critical disability studies: Rethinking the conventions for the age of postmodernity', in N. Watson, C. Thomas and A. Roulstone (eds) *Routledge Handbook of Disability*, London: Routledge.

Stalker, Kirsten. (2012) 'Theorizing the position of people with learning difficulties within disability studies', in Nick Watson, Alan Roulstone and Carol Thomas (eds) *Routledge Handbook of Disability Studies*, London and New York, NY: Routledge, pp. 122–35.

Thompson, James. (2009) *Performance Affects: Applied theatre and the end of effect*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.