

Dramatic Action: Community Engaged Theatre in Canada & Beyond

by Dale Hamilton

“Dramatic Action” is a newly-launched on-line publication, funded by the Laidlaw Foundation, which explores the connections between theatre, performance, community development and civic engagement. This site offers researchers, academics, students, practitioners and community activists (not to mention the many wild and wonderful varieties of thespians and theatre-lovers) an overview of the community-engaged theatre “movement” over the past 20 years, along side the most recent reflections and new directions of some of the foremost practitioners in the field.

The offerings on this website cross several disciplines – the arts, social sciences, community development, political activism, etc. They also cross several provincial and national borders, with contributions from urban and rural based theatre professionals, primarily from Canada, but also from the U.S. and the U.K. But the thread which ties them all together is their passion and commitment to this theatrical movement which has moved many to collaborative acts of creation and re-creation well beyond what they thought possible.

Dramatic Action Contributors:

Esther Farmer, Community Development Specialist with the East Side Institute and Lateral Strategies for Creative Community Development, New York City.

Dr. Dan Friedman, Artistic Director of Youth Onstage (YO!) and a founder and resident dramaturge of Castillo Theatre on 42nd Street in Manhattan’s theatre district.

Dale Hamilton, Artistic Director, Everybody’s Theatre Co., Eden Mills. Dale has been writing, producing and directing theatre for over 25 years and has been instrumental in the community engaged theatre movement in Canada.

Ruth Howard, Founder/Artistic Director of Jumblies Theatre, based in Toronto. She has designed and/or directed community-engaged projects in several Toronto neighbourhoods plus in rural Ontario, the UK, BC; Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia.

Dr. Edward (Ted) Little, Associate Professor, Theatre and Development, Concordia University, Montreal. He coordinates Canada’s first undergraduate program focusing on the theory and practice of theatre for social change.

Simon Malbogat, Co-founder of Mixed Company and its Artistic Director. A Forum Theatre specialist, he has been acting and directing for over 25 years.

Janus McBride, originally trained in jazz and ballet traditions but adapted her repertoire to include interactive, modern, contact, and conceptual performance art.

Jon Oram, Artistic Director, Claque Theatre (formerly Colway Theatre Trust) is recognized as one of England's top directors, particularly in the field of Collaborative Community Theatre.

Fredrick Ouko is a 23-year old paraplegic youth development specialist who is the founder/director of Kibera Community Youth Programme, in Kibera, Nairobi, East Africa largest slum.

Savannah Walling, Artistic Director, Vancouver Moving Theatre, a professional company she co-founded in 1983. She is a writer, director, choreographer, performer, stilt dancer, musician and teacher and has created over forty original works

www.communityengagedtheatre.ca