

Editorial

I am pleased to introduce to you our Guest Coeditor, Abigail Shabtay (PhD). Dr. Shabtay is an Assistant Professor at York University in the Children, Childhood, and Youth Studies Program, and a former PhD student of mine. Since beginning her work at York, she has led five SSHRC-funded projects focusing on Children, Youth, and the Performing Arts with a range of community organizations. One of these projects was the 2021 *Children, Youth and Performance Conference*, an international conference of over 350 attendees. *LEARNing Landscapes* collaborated with the conference in our call for the 26th issue of *LEARNing Landscapes* on “Arts-based performances, perspectives, and approaches in research and pedagogy.” While articles in this issue are not solely from the 2021 CYP Conference, we are very pleased with the number of excellent submissions that emerged from it and hope that the 2022 CYP Conference, which Dr. Shabtay is again directing, will yield some equally interesting articles for the 2023 issue of *LEARNing Landscapes* on “Education in a pivotal time: The moment for inspiration, innovation, and change.” www.learninglandscapes.ca

Arts-based research and pedagogy are not new. Extensive literature has shown how arts-based work extends understanding in embodied and meaningful ways, reveals dimensions of research and learning that otherwise remain elusive, renders work accessible to others, builds on propensities that could be stifled otherwise, and engages and gives voice to marginalized populations. Elliot Eisner (1933-2014), painter and Professor of Art and Education at Stanford University, did a great deal in his lifetime to encourage the arts in both education (Eisner, 1998) and research (Barone & Eisner, 2012). He wrote extensively on curriculum reform that emphasized the arts and opened doors to the acceptability of arts-based research through his writing and work as President of the American Educational Research Association (1991-1992) and the AERA arts-based institutes that he ran for over a decade for scholars worldwide. Those institutes, when held in Palo Alto, California, incorporated wonderful evenings which were hosted by the Eisners at their lovely home, and are still remembered and revered by attendees. Dr. Eisner always spoke about living poetically. He was the epitome of that in all that he did. He also was a strong supporter of the work published in *LEARNing Landscapes*, and we were honoured when he contributed a commentary for the 2008 issue on “Education and the arts: Blurring boundaries and creating spaces.” The work in the current issue builds upon what he advocated for in education and research, and we hope adds in some small way to his tremendous legacy.

The articles in this issue represent inspiring work in multiple levels of education and a myriad of contexts. They all include a wide variety of arts-based research and practices that illustrate the positive role that the arts can play in research and learning contexts. It should be noted that while articles are arranged alphabetically in all our issues of *LEARNing Landscapes*, for the purposes of the editorial they are arranged and discussed thematically.

Invited Commentaries

We are pleased to have engaging commentaries on arts-based research and practices on performance, comedy, and poetry. They “set the stage” nicely for the articles that follow. The opening commentary is by Associate Professor **Naila Keleta-Mae** (PhD), who holds a Canada Research Chair in Race, Gender, and Performance at the University of Waterloo. She is also an accomplished practicing artist. This piece, titled “Only staging whiteness: What we lose,” is an abridged version of the passionate keynote speech she delivered at the opening session of the 2021 Children and Youth Performance Conference mentioned earlier. Keleta-Mae attributes her work to the negative experiences she had as a Black child and student. She begins by acknowledging the suffering of all marginalized groups and recounts recent examples of atrocities caused by White supremacy and experienced by marginalized and racialized communities in Canada. She argues that artistic performances provide excellent spaces for sharing and interpreting issues of social justice. She emphasizes how much is lost in intellectual and artistic work when “whiteness” predominates, and how much can be gained when the voices and practices of Black educators, writers, and performers can reach Black and racialized audiences accessibly and easily with material that provides resonance with their histories and experiences. An interview with **Mary Walsh**, a well-known Canadian comedian, actress, and writer, titled “An odd way of looking at things,” shares how growing up in Newfoundland where “comedy is at the heart of things” gave Walsh a rich start for her career. She began working at CBC on a summer show in her early 20s and never looked back as her work morphed into working in amateur theatre, studying theatre at Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson University), and coupling these skills with journalism to write for “This Hour Has 22 Minutes.” She suggests that to become a comedian requires a very unique perspective, admitting that studying comedy is definitely helpful. She emphasizes, however, that some comedians become actors, but the reverse is seldom true, suggesting that there is something “basically innate” about comedy. She affirms that women still face challenges in the comedy world, for example, whether or not women can ever be funny, and suggests these challenges become more extreme with age. Walsh shares with personal experience how comedy featured large in the success of “Canada, It’s Complicated.” In it she performed and toured across Canada with Indigenous and Settler youth to help unpack for audiences the tragedies in Canada’s history, which require acknowledgement, discussion, and greater understanding for healing to occur. She believes, advocates for, and concludes that comedy and music really do help to make learning engaging in classrooms. Our third commentary, “Composing and translating poetry: Learning from scholarly and daily activities,” is by **Botao Wu** (PhD), senior lecturer at the Jiangxi University of Finance and Economics, in China. He received his doctorate from the University of British Columbia in 2019. A prolific writer and poet, Wu discusses how he uses his scholarly and daily life to write poems in both Chinese and English. Even with his seamless ability to shift from one language to another, he shares how difficult it is to do the translations, and often turns to literature and famous poets to help him in this work. He provides an interesting glimpse into the historical and cultural context of Chinese poetry, which no doubt will provide fruitful thought for poets for juxtaposing with and thinking about the historical and cultural context of poetry written in English. The beautiful tone of his written and poetic text provides the reader with a sense of the ease he brings to the task and the satisfaction he garners from his writing passion and production.

Creative Approaches Inclusivity, Access, and Social Justice

Ruth Churchill Dower, from Manchester Metropolitan University in the United Kingdom, discusses the theoretical underpinnings of contact improvisation, a process of creating unscripted dance movements carried out with others. The author shares how she used it in sessions with six children, four of whom had received a diagnosis of selective mutism by age three. Through her piece, she shares that more attention should be paid to reducing anxiety among children by honouring different ways of communicating using the arts. **Laura Yvonne Bulk**, at the University of British Columbia, describes a workshop meant to deepen cognitive and affective understanding of disability, ultimately to affect change in university settings and beyond. This workshop involved research-based theatre using data from conversations with 35 people with varying degrees of visual challenges, and the development of an audio-based performance piece reflecting on the data and how the campus might become a more welcoming space. **Lisa A. Mitchell**, from St. Thomas University in Fredericton, and **Kerri Kennedy**, a teacher and interdisciplinary artist in Ontario, Canada, discuss a project in which 90 Bachelor of Education students used portraiture (literary and painted) and appreciative inquiry to better understand student needs, the complexities of classroom management, and unpack systemic social inequities that play a role in students' learning environments. **Christine Liao** and **James DeVita**, at University of North Carolina Wilmington, share a collaborative performance-making project that they developed to help students advocate for social justice in education. Through sketches, poetry, video, and dance, they identify five interconnected experiences that emerged in their research and discuss precarity in the field.

Identity, Belonging, and Community Through the Arts

Jason D. DeHart, from Appalachian State University, discusses his work with undergraduate and graduate students, using the visual and poetic arts to help students reflect on literature, and their own emotional responses, as well as the processing of complicated experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. He shares how these multimodal visual portrayals helped students to illustrate elements of the readings that resonated with them and explore their own identities and experience. **Shirley Clifton** and **Kathryn Grushka**, at the University of Manchester in Australia, report on a case study aiming to better understand if and how visual art classrooms can promote empathic understandings. The study took place across three visual arts classrooms that included 13 youth participants, three teachers, and two preservice teachers. This piece demonstrates how visual arts methods offer opportunities for students to engage with the worldviews and experiences of others. **Shyam Patel**, a graduate student at the University of Ottawa, examines his in-between identity and sense of belonging through a written text interwoven with poetry. He grounds much of his poetic inquiry in the often-asked question: "Where are you from?", which, in some contexts, can be interpreted as unwelcoming and accusatory. He discusses his own experiences, and those of others in the South Asian diasporic community in Canada and relates these to identity and belonging. **Terry G. Sefton**, from the University of Windsor, and **Kathryn Ricketts**, from the University of Regina, share an article that is adapted from a catalogue essay published for the 2017 Windsor-Essex Triennial. These authors describe a collaborative research initiative which involved mapping sites of memories and personal histories and transforming the stories through improvised movement and sound. This process, which they call "Carto-Elicitation," builds on the belief that stories of our past matter, and

that they can contribute to our sense of belonging, identity, and community. **Ramona Elke**, who self-identifies as Anishinaabe, Métis, and European, is a high school teacher, and doctoral student at Simon Fraser University. Through the weaving together of life writing, poetry, photography, and theoretical discussion, this article describes her approach to Indigenous pedagogy and suggests that her research practices are transformative by inviting ways of building and being in community. This piece highlights the importance of attending to dreams, honouring ceremony, drumming, and making in creating communities that are inclusive for Indigenous students and inviting for all learners. **Michelle Lavoie**, from MacEwan University, writes about a three-year narrative study exploring the diverse experiences of three transgender young adults in Alberta as a way to broadly explore asset-building processes within relational learning. The author describes how artmaking and reflective conversation helped the youth participants make sense of their experiences, formed and changed community networks, and reduced social isolation. **Kathleen Gallagher**, **Nancy Cardwell**, and **Munia Debleena Tripathi**, from the University of Toronto, share how even in virtual spaces, the arts can help to sustain a sense of community. As part of a larger, five-year international research project, this article focuses on how the Toronto High School Drama Club, their teacher, and researchers made adjustments when COVID-19 required that they move online. Their work together helped strengthen feelings of community during times of crisis and isolation.

Performing Arts Approaches in Learning Contexts

Kendra N. Kahl, at Arizona State University, reflects on the differences she experienced when teaching dramatic arts to children and university students in in-person and synchronous online settings. These included how presence and contact were affected in the virtual environments, and how individual and collective embodiment play an important role in learning. **Keely D. Cline**, from Northwest Missouri State University, **Meghan Sheil**, from Tree Top Academy in Jupiter, Florida, and **Cindy Rouner**, from Northwest Missouri State University, demonstrate the strength of emergent curriculum planning, process drama, and the idea of “pushing limits” in preschool classroom planning and teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. **Jeffrey M. Schouela**, a professional comedian and educator in Quebec, shares his experiences of using comedy in the classroom and discusses how comedy is an important tool that can be creatively woven through the primary and secondary curriculum. **Joana Calçada**, an elementary French immersion teacher in Ontario, and **Chris Gilham**, from St Francis Xavier University, discuss research focusing on social-emotional learning, and Biodanza (a facilitator-led dance form that integrates music, dance, play, and interactive exercises) to understand how it may be implemented in classrooms across age groups.

Artistic Innovation and Reflective Practice

Inci Yılmazlı Trout, from the University of the Incarnate Word, **Shaniek Tose**, from the Desmond Doss Health Clinic, as well as **Caitlin Caswell** and **M. Candace Christensen**, from the University of Texas San Antonio, write about using personal written reflections and arts-informed inquiry (including poetry, drawing, photography, and digital collage), to explore their professional collaboration over three years. Through this experience, they found that the doing of art itself strengthened their connection and allowed them to engage with their research more deeply. **Tetsuro Shigematsu**, a playwright, performer and radio

host, **Graham W. Lea**, from the University of Manitoba, as well as **Christina Cook** and **George Belliveau**, from the University of British Columbia, reflect on the use of Research Based Theatre, an innovative, arts-based methodology that shows, rather than tells, using theatrical methods, and in so doing, brings research data to life. **Sheila O’Keefe-McCarthy**, from Brock University, **Michael M. Metz** and **Bernadette Kahnert**, artist-educators, share how they engaged in Mirror Theatre to deepen understanding in an embodied way about symptoms of heart disease resulting in an educational play titled: “He-ART-istic Journeys-Heart DIS-ease.” **Jonathan P. Jones**, from NYU’s Steinhardt Department of Music and Performing Arts, discusses the use of ethnodrama and devised theatre in three separate projects, including creating scripts and activities with students in ways that invited them to reflect on their own experiences in a safe context. **Janet L. Kuhnke** and **Sandra Jack-Malik**, at Cape Breton University, discuss how the creation of aggregate narratives, poetry, sketches, and paintings can be used as reflexive practice and lead to deepened understandings of qualitative articles in medical contexts. **Peter Shaner** and **Robert Donmoyer**, at the University of San Diego, reflect on the use of visual anthropology and video research as tools for disseminating research. They discuss four rich examples through video links and supporting written text to reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of using video as an approach to research dissemination. Last, but not least, **Elizabeth MacDonald** and **Kristin M. Murphy**, from the University of Massachusetts Boston, discuss the use of photovoice, semi-structured interviews, and poetry to reflect on and discuss undergraduate student experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. They emphasize the need to attend to the voices of college students when university policies that affect them are made, arguing that photovoice is one arts-based way to do this.

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References

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Abigail Shabtay (B.A., York University; M.A., King's College London; PhD, McGill University) is an Assistant Professor in the Children, Childhood, and Youth program in the Department of Humanities at York University. She is currently the Principal Investigator for several SSHRC-funded projects related to children, youth, and the performing arts, focusing on drama-based research approaches, social justice issues, and digital theatre programming. Dr. Shabtay has also received awards for excellence in teaching and research in her field, including the Humanities Award for Excellence in Teaching (2020-2021), the York University Faculty Award for Student Accessibility (2020-2021), the Ada Slight Drama-in-Education Award (2018-2019), and the Jackie Kirk Fieldwork Award (2018-2019). Dr. Shabtay's research and publications focus on drama-based participatory action research, child-centred research methodologies, youth activism, children's rights, and arts-based pedagogy. Some recent publications in 2021-2022 include an article titled "Dramatic Scene Creation as a Participatory Research Methodology with Youth" in *Youth Theatre Journal*, and a chapter titled "Ethical Considerations in Drama-based Research with Children and Young People" in the book *Ethics and Integrity in Research with Children and Young People* (Emerald, 2021). She is an executive member of the Association for Research in the Cultures of Young People (ARCYP) as well as the chair and primary organizer of the annual *Children, Youth and Performance Conference*, an international conference exploring performing arts work by, with, for, and about children and young people.



Lynn Butler-Kisber (B.Ed., M.Ed., McGill; Ed.D. Harvard) is a Professor of Education in the Department of Integrated Studies, Faculty of Education and an Associate Member of the Institute for Health and Social Policy, Faculty of Medicine, McGill University. She was recipient of the 2022 Faculty of Education, Distinguished Teaching award at McGill and recently elected Chair of the Elliot Eisner Special Interest Group at the American Educational Research Association.

Her teaching and research include qualitative research methodologies; leadership; multiliteracies; and professional development. She is particularly interested in arts-based methodologies, more specifically in visual inquiry (collage, photo/film, and visual narratives) and poetic inquiry on which she has written and presented extensively. She focuses on issues of marginalization, equity, and social justice. Some recent publications include a chapter titled “Getting Out of the Armchair in Qualitative Research: A Constructive Approach,” with coauthor Nicola Bourassa (Richards, Skukauskaite, & Chenail, 2022, Brill), the second edition of her book, *Qualitative Inquiry: Thematic, Narrative and Arts-Based Perspectives* (Sage, April 2018) and *Collage-making*, in the 2019 *Sage Research Methods Foundations* (edited by Atkinson, Delacourt, et al.). She is founding (2007) and continuing Editor of *LEARNing Landscapes*, an online, open access, peer-reviewed journal that integrates theory and practice, encourages multimodal submissions and the inclusion of a variety of voices. Current projects include: The NEXTschool Initiative; the Human Displacement and Narrative Inquiry Project (Routledge 2022) and online Sage Nvivo Webinars on arts-based research. She has done a range of international research and development projects in Dominican Republic, China, Indonesia, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, and in the UK and USA.

