

***Contribution to Panel at Weaving Our Stories
International Mantle of the Expert Conference August 2009***

**Tena koutou katoa
Nga mihi nui ki a koutou**

Greetings to you all and especially to Luke, Julia, Tim & Allana, visitors from afar.

Te kaiwhakahaere, Viv, tena koe

Thank you for inviting us here today and may your Conference have as far reaching effects as the two on *Mantle of the Expert* held in New Zealand, perhaps before some of you were born.

Before I get on to the history of Dorothy Heathcote's visits to New Zealand in 1978 and 1984 (no Orwellian overtones) I want to put our drama history in perspective and tell you how I came to be in a position to facilitate those visits.

In 1950 many schools were presenting fine theatre productions with their students. I doubt any were using drama as a method of learning or even that students were making up their own plays, other than review sketches.

Like many young people that was the time when I did my post war overseas experience, OE, to Britain. In the early fifties I attended many drama courses working with Brian Way, Peter Slade, and later Cecily O'Neill et al. I met most people who had written drama books at that time. In fact the first person who introduced me to children working in the round on the hall floor rather than out front was that old doyenne, Maisie Cobby. She too later visited New Zealand.

I returned home to Wellington Teachers College in 1955 and introduced all those ideas about child drama and working in the round, improvisation and drama for social development, to the students, among whom was Ralph McAllister who becomes significant in the Heathcote story.

Later I went in to professional theatre overseas and back in 1970 to Downstage in New Zealand. In 1975 I returned to education with that job in the then Department, now the Ministry, as Education Officer (Curriculum for Drama) My brief was to give leadership in the development of drama in primary and secondary schools and at a tertiary level as required. Also to establish liaisons with community theatres to exchange information and develop cooperative activities. The job was a national one. There was only one of me. There were no drama advisors at that time. I set about developing resource teachers through in-service training and liaison with schools and the teachers colleges. I travelled madly all over the country, nearly disappearing in a puff of smoke!

At this time I was also alternate for the Director General on the Q.E.11 Arts Council. At that time we had good partnerships for work in Education and they supported a Performers in Schools programme. One day the Arts Council Officer for Drama, Nonnita Rees said to me "I've just seen this amazing film *Three Looms Waiting* with this extraordinary teacher who started as a mill girl." We looked at it again together and the germ of the idea began.

Ralph had already been to Newcastle so knew Dorothy. He helped me facilitate her visit. After due negotiations with Dorothy by snail mail, phone and fax I suppose (no e-mails or clever cell phones then) the Curriculum Development Unit supported and funded our proposal to bring Dorothy to NZ. A few Kiwis had already studied with her in Newcastle. Carole being one of those pioneers, also Jean Howell and Ralph McAllister who went more than once. I believe he went for two weeks and stayed about 5 months, working particularly with adults and children with special needs. When he became Lecturer in Drama at Wellington College Of Education he took drama students to both Tokaanui and Porirua Hospitals on Mantle of the Expert projects. So on Dorothy's second visit we also worked at Porirua – many revelations for the Staff at those institutions.

This is where the detail and exact happenings get a little hazy as I have truly left all this behind. In 1978 we had a small team of resource teachers, who trailed for the full month with Dorothy, in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. In each of these centres we ran a course with a group of selected teachers observing Dorothy working Mantle of the Expert in a chosen school. I do remember that in Christchurch alone some 100 teachers got some experience of her work. You are going to see an excerpt from the first of these, *Sanctuary*, at Ponsonby Intermediate School. As I remember it those teachers were Ralph McAllister, Richard Nunns, Philip Tremewan, Gina Holland, Anne Todd, Jean Howell and myself, plus observers. You will recognise some of those names I'm sure. Each day Dorothy talked to the teachers for about an hour, then worked with the children for two hours. In the afternoons we analysed the morning's work.

We didn't have that much money and we billeted Dorothy. She stayed with me in Auckland and she certainly stayed with Ralph for a week. I have a strong memory of her going up in the open domestic cable car on the steep Wadestown hill, in a Wellington wind. She clutched her only luggage – a small leather grip, containing a change of underclothes, her embroidery and perhaps a book or two, with her hallmark olive green cape flying in the breeze.

At each place she gave a Public Lecture, one of which *Excellence in Teaching* is contained in the book *Dorothy Heathcote* that was edited by Liz James and Cecily O'Neill.

Of this visit Philip Tremewan said "We were working towards the new English syllabus. She sparked a huge burst of energy for us. It was her work ethic. She gave me much more rigour in my teaching. Made me think and analyse and plan in a more rigorous way.'

Most of the teachers who worked or observed on Dorothy's courses had been through In-service training for drama as devised work and social development, improvisation, to enhance theatre work and so on. They were hand picked and a mixture of secondary and primary, teachers college lecturers, recreation officers and special schools.

Among our aims for the 1984 return visit was to try to find a form for in-service work with teachers inexperienced in the use of drama. More basic was to extend the work of ten master class teachers to help fulfil that aim.

Three of those Master Class teachers are with me now. They have all been with Dorothy in Newcastle and they will tell you about 1984 and what it has meant to them.

In 1984 our home base was the Kohia Teachers Centre on the Auckland Teachers College Campus. I had my office there as by that time I had leapt over the wall and escaped the South Wing of the Department of Education in Wellington. There was much more going on in the arts in schools in Auckland at that time. It was here, towards the end, and as a consequence of Dorothy's visit that NZADIE, the New Zealand Association of Drama in Education, now known as Drama New Zealand, was formed and strong district networks were established.

We did have great support from the then Department of Education and the Arts Council. In 1978 the J.R. Mackenzie Trust supported filming of *Those Who Sailed With Cook*. The NZCER, New Zealand Council for Educational Research, gave us grants towards the video recordings in 1984

Of the 1984 visit Denise Walsh says: 'Dorothy showed us how to help students to search, instead of us telling. She improved our ability to be facilitators. She took us to the next stage and had a profound effect on our teaching. She made you look at your self'

Several teachers went to Newcastle to study with Dorothy. I had to retire in 1988 because under Public service rules you finished on your 60th birthday . (You do the arithmetic.) Due to economics that job was disestablished. At that point it was the only official position ever for the promotion of Drama.

I must say that over the past 20 years much has faded from my memory and I am not au fait with developments. In 1978 and 1984 we were part of an idea bigger than all of us, but Dorothy was as ever up to it.

Many developments followed. The seminal joint drama Conference with NADIE, the Australian National Association for Drama in Education was held early in 1989. Titled *Making Connections* it furthered my belief that everything connects. On both of Dorothy's visits we had some ex-students from overseas. I recall Dr John Carroll from Australia, Vilisoni Hereniko a Rotoman now eminent at the University of Hawaii. I am delighted that Luke Abbott is heading the group from Britain for he was on the course when I visited Dorothy in Newcastle. I know there will be many connections among you and many more after this Conference is over and the stories are woven.