

# Encouraging actors to see themselves as agents of change: The role of dramaturgs, critics, commentators, academics and activists in actor training in Australia

Bree Hadley and Kathryn Kelly<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

How is the work of dramaturgs, critics, commentators, academics and activists relevant to actor training? In this article, we will explore the role of dramaturgs, critics, commentators, academics and activists in the contemporary contexts and modalities of actor training in Australia. Through specific case studies and examples from our past practice, we will highlight particular interventions that may assist acting training conservators to support their actor/students in training to: develop deeper understandings and relationships to diverse cultural perspectives; grow the reflective capacity of actors through dramaturgical training; and create authentic connectedness to the broader contexts of their performance making practice, their industry, and their world. Through a dialogue, we will broach issues, including broad suggestions about the best way to apply these areas of knowledge into an actor's training. In doing so, we will propose that the concept of the entrepreneurial 21st century actor/performer requires that entrepreneurship is understood in the broadest sense, as the capacity to build career paths, and the capacity to build visions of a better world.

## Keywords

Actor Training; Disability Arts; Dramaturgy; Activism in the Academy; Community Engagement

In this article, we explore how the work of academics, provocateurs, dramaturgs, critics and activists can be relevant to contemporary contexts and modalities of actor training in Australia. Through examples from our own past practice, we hope to highlight specific approaches that may assist actor trainers and actor training institutions in their current efforts to support their students to develop deeper reflexive capabilities, deeper

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✉ Bree Hadley: [bree.hadley@qut.edu.au](mailto:bree.hadley@qut.edu.au)

<sup>1</sup> Queensland University of Technology, Australia

understandings of diverse cultural perspectives, and a deeper connectedness to the broader contexts of their performance making practice, their industry, and their world. The ‘we’ of this article are two practitioner-academics in dialogue – Bree Hadley and Kathryn Kelly, both of whom have rich histories of working ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ of actor and/or drama training institutions across Australia and internationally over the last two decades.

## **Actor training conservatories**

Contemporary actor training conservatories in Australia draw their legacies from at least three critical cultural heritages: first, the professionally driven and predominantly European models of actor training in which many of today’s educators themselves trained; second, the burgeoning ‘New Wave’ theatre movement in Australia across the late 1960s and into the 1980s that has been so pivotal in shaping the modern industry landscape; and third, the evolving landscape of tertiary education, from the six initial sandstone universities in the late 1800s and early 1900s, to the emergence of the landscape we know today as trade and technical institutions became universities after the Dawkins reforms in the 1990s.

The actor training that occurs within the four historical conservatory actor programs at NIDA, VCA, WAAPA and QUT draws from the dynamic knowledge of a generational and now increasingly intergenerational cohort of directors, actors and industry professionals who have found their voice in a professional Australian arts sector. These trainers pass on largely North American and European actor training methodologies inherited by the settler culture of Australian performance, but increasingly draw on relationships with practitioners in Australia, Australasia and Asia, which have been used to develop distinctive national styles, to offer students distinctive training experience. Interrelationships amongst Australian practitioners and trainers have been essential in developing a distinctive Australian theatrical style. “We” have, as Geoffrey Milne puts it, “largely Australianised our theatre through the energy ... of Australian drama companies, with mostly Australian creative personnel and with the nationalistic focus of a new funding agency, the Australia Council” (Milne 1). Conservatory training has consistently been an essential part of the ecology that has grown professional theatre in Australian culture. Laura Ginters, in her interviews with contemporary Australian directors in *Catching Australian Theatre in the 2000s* quotes director Benedict Andrews describing this as a “singing line” of Australian theatre, “you work with people who have worked with different generations” (53), and who pass down their inherited practice, from teacher to student, collaborator to collaborator. Andrea Moor’s comprehensive PhD offers an excellent snapshot of where this history of what she describes as “dense” practice has evolved in the current actor training methodologies embedded in the four longstanding leading conservatories of Australia (National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA), Western Australian Academy of the Arts (WAAPA), Queensland University Technology (QUT) and Victorian College of the Arts) (Moor 147).

Because of the intensity of this conservatory approach, in terms of the number of contact hours and the intimate relationship between teacher and student, there has been sustained debate about how broadly these programs should develop their curriculum beyond core acting skills. This debate has often occurred within the context of neo-liberal university bureaucracies questioning the sustainability of the expensive, high contact hours model of the conservatory. In this way, the notion of 'bringing in' external experts or diverging from the core curriculum of voice, movement and actor training methodology has had the potential to be conflated with the notion of 'watering down' the conservatory model to replace it with the more generic and less skills-focused liberal arts degree model.

How, then, can dramaturgical, community or activist arts processes work in these intensive conservatory programs? In particular, how can actor trainers and actor training institutions offer acting students the opportunity to develop the critical or commentary skills required to understand the broader cultural impact of their work in the public sphere, particularly on historically marginalised groups, such as First Nations people, people of colour, and people with disabilities?

For, just as the historical evolution of Australian theatre, and Australian theatre institutions is long, so too is the history of critique of this theatre and the way its predominantly European cultural perspective represents and relates to First Nations people, people of colour, people with disabilities and other cultural groups. Working as academics, provocateurs, dramaturgs, critics and activists, we are aware of important work done in this area, captured in Maryrose Casey's *Creating Frames*, Rachel Fensham and Denise Varney's *The Doll's Revolution*, Jacqueline Lo and Helen Gilbert's *Performance and Cosmopolites*, Jonathan Bollen, Adrian Kiernander and Bruce Parr's *Men at Play: Masculinities in Australian Theatre since the 1950s* and, more recently, Bree Hadley's own *Disability, Public Space Performance and Spectatorship* and *The Routledge Handbook of Disability Arts, Culture, and Media*, amongst other books. As these books attest, mainstream Australian theatre, and mainstream Australian theatre training, has consistently failed to understand the worldview of the 'Other', the stories 'Others' might wish to tell about themselves, and offer 'Others' the opportunity to represent themselves, and has consistently placed 'Others' who do attempt to enter the industry in difficult, vulnerable, and precarious roles. As a result, a whole counter-cannon of culturally diverse theatre making and training practices has grown over the last several decades, largely parallel to the mainstream industry and its training institutions. While Casey, Fensham, Varney, Lo, Gilbert, Bollen, Kiernander, Parr and Hadley have been teaching this now internationally renowned body of work in broader drama, theatre, performance and dance programs, cultural studies programs, indigenous studies programs, and other programs for decades, their scholarship is rarely taken up within actor training programs – even when these scholars work in parallel drama, theatre, and performance programs in the same institutions. It has been seen as more relevant to the makers, producers, and community facilitators taught in broad-based drama programs, and less relevant to actors taught in audition-based conservatory programs.

This article does not claim expertise in any or all of these areas, or claim to provide expertise in any or all of these areas, a task already being addressed by these scholar practitioners and the artists they write about – and, in many cases, also collaborate with. Instead, we take up the challenge set out by the theme of the AusAct Conference 2019, on “Being Relevant”, and consider how our skill sets, methods and approaches – or those of others like us – or the skill sets of the diverse artists and communities we collaborate with – might be relevant to contemporary Australian actor training. In particular, we attempt to highlight how critical, activist and dramaturgical skills might assist actor trainers and actor training institutions in encouraging their students, and their eventual graduates, to develop the skills required to navigate diverse cultural perspectives, negotiate the needs, interests and desires of diverse cultural stakeholders, and take responsibility for how their stage representations impact diverse people and communities. In the current industry landscape, equipping actors with the skill to be good allies to diverse people and communities is not just a moral imperative it also has a practical urgency. The world is changing. Audiences will no longer accept the stereotyped, and for many diverse people and communities very traumatic, representations of the past – the poorly conceived, poorly executed representations put forward by writers, directors and actors who didn’t have the skills in dramaturgy, criticism and cultural analysis to understand where their responsibilities lie with other people’s stories. Much of Bree Hadley’s professional life has involved mapping and holding to account such representations and much of Kathryn Kelly’s work has been helping artists and makers challenge these often intractable stereotypes in the fulcrum of the development of new Australian performance. Rich and provocative discussions at the AusAct Conference indicated Australia’s actor training institutions are ready to take up this work too, with conversations, presentations and points of tension repeatedly returning to various recent experiments actor trainers had undertaken to broaden and diversify training beyond its historically racist, sexist, heteronormative and ablest legacies.

Our aim, here, will be to draw on key examples from our own practice to suggest that the answer to broadening the actor curriculum lies not – or at least not only – with a focus on new content, new technique, or new ways of doing things. Indeed, suggestions that technique needs to be changed, or ‘watered down’ to make training institutions more inclusive can be offensive to diverse theatre makers, who want to be judged on standards of excellence, like anyone else. Rather, it lies with relationships, and with acknowledging long held bodies of expertise, which are often held, vested or found outside the walls of the conservatory at this point, in artists trained and working in community, independent, or experimental contexts, due to the inequitable history of access to Australia’s mainstream theatre and theatre training institutions. It lies, thus, in bringing artists and professionals (who already have skills, networks and wisdom to help actors in training to develop these broader skills) into the institution, not simply in one-off or casual roles, partnerships or consultation meetings, but as authors of curriculum and content, for 21st century actor training.

## What ‘we’ do

In white, Western, European contexts, asking who you are and what you do is usually the first step in any encounter. In the white, Western, European theatre industry, it is certainly the first step in any encounter.

In answering this question of ‘what we do’ – and thus ‘what we could do’ for contemporary conservatory actor training – however, we need to start by noting a distinction.

For Kathryn, the question of ‘what she does’ is comfortable: she is a freelance dramaturg and academic, who has worked fairly consistently in the last decade as an external dramaturg, both in industry, and in the acting and broader drama, theatre and performance training programs at tertiary institutions (WAAPA, Southbank Institute of Technology and Flinders University). In this sense, her employment has often been explicitly linked to the changes in Australian performance in the millennial decade which has been characterised by

*institutional reform, generational hand-over and the rise of contemporary performance ... [a catchall term] for long established artforms such as physical theatre, cabaret, circus and dance theatre, to new postdramatic artforms, driven by technological change, hybridity and theoretical inquiry (Kelly 2, Post-Millennial 79).*

In response, broad-based drama, theatre, and performance training programs, and to some degree actor training programs, have expanded beyond the notion of training actors for mainstage theatre and film into training programs designed for performers. This is perhaps best characterised as shift from actor to performer and indeed from performer to maker. Many of the most famous acting alumnus of Australia’s acting conservatories now work fluidly across and between roles as diverse as playwright (Brendan Cowell); director/producer (Joel Edgerton) and Artistic Director (Cate Blanchett). Kathryn Kelly has worked in two such programs as a freelancer – Fran Barbe’s performance making course at WAAPA and Lisa O’Neill’s Suzuki-infused program at Southbank Institute of Technology – and now teaches in this area full time in the BFAs in Drama and Acting at QUT. In each course, dramaturgical skills are offered for the emerging actor/performer to develop skills in textual analysis, collaboration, feedback, critical discourse and in the making of their new collaborative work.

For Bree, the question of how to name ‘what she does’ is less comfortable. Bree has tried out rather a lot of roles and labels with a lot of different companies in a lot of different contexts over the last 25 years. Accordingly, that long list of dramaturg, critic, commentator, academic and activist roles in the abstract is largely her CV. And it is not all of it. Bree went through a stage, early on, where she tried out the ‘dramaturg’ title Kathryn now holds. She took on dramaturg, writer, and director roles with independent theatre companies, and arts facilitator roles with community groups. She also, and as she went on increasingly, took on producer and manager roles, again with independent theatre companies, but also with other bodies – a city council, and a number of

membership-based peak bodies. She has also worked as a critic and commentator for *The Australian* and other news outlets, an evaluator for a number of multi-arts companies, festivals and events, a teacher across a range of artforms at Monash, Deakin, Swinburne, Victoria and now QUT as well as a number of international universities, and now a researcher. In one sense, what she has done, and can do – for the industry, and for the individuals in it – is diverse. In another, though, it has also been incredibly consistent. If it could be given a title, then ‘facilitator of processes that make people think about how they are doing things’ would be the most accurate. This role is where she is most comfortable – in practice, in teaching and in research. Because, for Bree, representation matters, and the power relationships that drive and determine representation matter, and she mainly wants to create platforms – in the studio, in the classroom, in conferences like the AusAct conference, and in publications like *Fusion Journal* – that enable people to think about how they are doing their representations and relationships. Particularly when it comes to representations of, relationships with, and impact on First Nations people, people of colour, and people with disabilities and other historically marginalised people.

Together, both of our portfolios of skills, our engagement with actor training conservatories, and our engagement with other industry contexts, has helped us develop some useful observations that could help trainers and their students think about themselves as agents of change with personal responsibility to shape the work they are inhabiting as actors, performers, or any other roles in industry. To see themselves as cultural makers that entertain, educate, politically activate, connect or alienate communities. It was clear, from the rich and productive discussions at the AusAct Conference that actor training institutions are rethinking curriculum, balancing skill development and genuinely questioning how to develop relevance to broader creative and cultural skill sets. Bringing them to a point where our skill set becomes more relevant to the actor training curriculum than it has ever been.

Our position is an interesting one. Or, rather, a series of interesting ones. We both work to facilitate processes which help actors, directors, and others involved in making theatre or making meaning of theatre to think about the methods, approaches, and aesthetics used to tell other people’s stories. We work outside the intimate daily workings of conservatory actor training – but are also engaged with these contexts in our place of work in the Drama area of QUT. We develop methods for facilitating reflection, understanding and cultural change, individually, but also in dialogue with others we encounter in roles that bring us into contact with theatre makers working in a range of different contexts. It is what we have learned from this latter work, in particular, that makes our skill set relevant for actor trainers, actor training institutions and their students.

## **Why would this be relevant to actor training?**

Why would a ‘facilitator of processes that make people think’ be relevant to actor training? The best way to demonstrate the relevance of our work, and the skills, methods, and approaches we have learned in our work, is via examples. Or, rather, via a comparison of examples – cases where the racism, sexism, heteronormativity and

ableism of the Australian theatre sector and the institutions that train for it has had a negative impact on people, communities and/or culture at large, versus cases of practice that have a more positive impact.

There are, unfortunately, a great many negative examples to choose from in recent Australian theatre history, and indeed in recent international theatre history. Chris Hay, a fellow academic and director wrote an article about assumptions about race in an Australian actor training institution. In it, he gave an account of a production in which students, wanting to “critique the assumptions of racial neutrality that underpin their training,” (Hay 58) decided – with full understanding of the provocativeness of the gesture – to wear whiteface make-up for a performance of *The Importance of Being Earnest*. In doing this, students drew attention to what American disability arts academic and artist Carrie Sandahl has called the “tyranny of the neutral” (256) in actor training. In the European actor training traditions from which contemporary Australian conservatories derive their foundational principles, the framing of the actor’s body as a ‘tabula rasa’, upon which character, style and story can be mapped, is absolutely key. “Actors who cannot be “cured” of their idiosyncrasies to approach neutral may be considered physically and emotionally “inflexible,” unable to portray anyone other than themselves or those like them” (Sandahl 256). White, cisgender, straight, able – and, until recently, also oftentimes exclusively male – bodies have traditionally been the tabula rasa onto which Western theatre mapped its stories. The actors who presented the stories, as well as the directors, writers, and producers decided how those stories would be presented. Resulting in limited and limiting stereotypes that bear no real relation to the lived experience of the ‘Other’ people represented. But the efforts of others to enter training institutions, and ultimately the industry, to tell their own stories, have consistently been stymied by a perception that their non-white, non-cis, non-straight, non-able bodies cannot sufficiently disappear into a fictional role, without disrupting the illusion, upon which mainstream dramatic theatre (though not newer postdramatic theatre forms) is built. The historical institution has consistently, at least until very recently, been incapable of “embracing their difference as a source of dramatic power” (Hay 58). At best, actor training institutions have rejected such students for fear they will not secure roles post-graduation. At worst, actor training institutions have rejected such students for fear they cannot work with them at all within the scope of their current techniques – or, indeed, never opened the door to their participation at all. Beyond training, the ongoing difficulty racially and culturally diverse artists have in securing roles other than those that directly mimic their own sex, gender and race is well documented. Hay’s article, like that of Sandahl and others in other contexts, “contributes important insight to the perceived neutrality of actor training” (256). “If conservatoire-style training is to endure in the twenty-first century,” he says, “I argue that it must take seriously the specific cultural context of its students, as well as the historical context in which the institution operates” (58).

In recent years, First Nations and non-First Nations artists have been engaged in a clear re-negotiation about the cultural “neutrality” of Australian mainstages. We are an industry, joyfully, a part of a cultural resurgent movement of First Nations artists who are producing content within non-First Nations institutions but are also calling for

reforms to long-standing artistic practices that they see as culturally disrespectful or unsafe. Indeed, there is a call from many First Nations artists like Alethea Beetson, Artistic Director of Digi Youth Arts in Queensland, for the development and support of “sovereign” theatre institutions that are creatively controlled by First Nations artists and that encode and deploy First Nations cultural protocols (Kelly, *Community Engagement* 56). This echoes longstanding calls by Wesley Enoch and others including Rachael Maza and Megan Wilding for a National Indigenous Theatre Company (Ross and Whitfeld).

This played out visibly in 2018 with the ongoing debates in the media around cultural collaboration and appropriation between First Nations and non-First Nations artists on Australian mainstages. First Nations playwright, H Lawrence Sumner called out non-First Nations theatre director Neil Armfield for the changes he made to the script, *The Long Forgotten Dream*, during a recent 2018 production for the Sydney Theatre Company (Ross and Whitfeld). His call was supported by First Nations colleagues but also critiqued by a First Nations actor in the show, Wayne Blair. There was a great deal of social media debate and *The Guardian Australia* asked a series of First Nations leaders for their commentary and responses. Regardless of opinions or analyses of Sumner’s challenge, and this specific case, what was heartening was the way in which the debate was framed and carried by First Nations artists, again highlighting the tension, difficulty, and trauma that can arise when issues of cultural representation are not managed with due care during the theatre making process.

However, the pertinent issue for our analysis is how theatre makers – not just producers, writers, and directors, but all involved in the culture machine, including actors – respond to these questions with regards to who decides what is represented, when, and how, and what impact it has in the broader public sphere. Theatre training institutions like those Hay describes, and the theatre companies they go on to work with, manage and lead, must become better at negotiating cultural safety. And at recognising that negotiating cultural safety is everyone’s responsibility – not just that of the producer, writer, or director, but the actors, and the crew, and the critics, and the audience, and all other stakeholders involved. Clearly, the advice about how to proceed must flow from First Nations artists and colleagues. The interesting thing about how Kathryn’s work in the fulcrum of new performance work is grappling with these issues, however, and what makes it relevant to actor trainers, training institutions and their students, is how it facilitates people-centred models of collaboration between First Nations and non-First Nations artists that draws from First Nations’ knowledge frameworks. In other words, how it creates and holds space for these conversations to unfold, in safety, and allow reflection and understanding to occur, ideally before and/or without hitting points of contestation, controversy, or trauma, as in some of the other examples we have cited.

In Kathryn’s practice, she describes a complex cultural negotiation around an autobiographical work by Belloo Creative that became a collaboration between First Nations and non-First Nations through “relationship and serendipity” (Kelly 2 57).

*Part verbatim, part fictive memory, Rovers draws on feminist tropes of the road movie and the notion of the ‘wild woman’ to celebrate the power of two extraordinary female performers – Roxanne McDonald and Barbara Lowing – who hadn’t been onstage together since an iconic Mabo inspired revamp of *The Taming of the Shrew* in the mid-1990s (Kelly, *Community Engagement* 57).*

Belloo Creative is an award-winning all-female theatre company that is currently Company in Residence with Queensland Theatre. The critical issue for the company and for the First Nations artists collaborating in building the story (performer Roxanne McDonald) and supporting the cultural process (cultural consultant Nadine McDonald-Dowd) was ensuring that the cultural collaboration of the performance-making process was mirrored by trying to offer a culturally safe space for audiences during its Brisbane Festival season. Kathryn worked in collaboration with First Nations artist Emily Coleman, drawing from First Nations’ Knowledge Framework, 8 ways, to develop a community engagement to firstly reach out to First Nations audiences with a tranche of free tickets negotiated from the Festival, and then to make them feel welcome and safe in the space. While Belloo Creative leveraged resources for the project, it was shaped and framed by Emily and by the company’s relationship to her.

*It was our relationship to Emily that was important and hers to those community members and it would be maintaining both of those webs of relationships that would enable us to build an ongoing connection (Kelly, *Community Engagement* 58).*

The *Rovers* case is a compelling example of cultural negotiation. It is but one in a series we could cite. In Bree’s recent work, for example, she has been involved with *The Last Avant Garde*, a project in which Eddie Patterson, Sarah Austin, and Kath Duncan in Melbourne, Gerard Goggin in Sydney, Katie Ellis in Perth, and others are attempting to examine the aesthetics and approaches of disability theatre across Australia (Austin et al). As part of the project, disabled, queer, Indigenous, and culturally diverse artists have led a series of workshops, demonstrating a decades-long body of established knowledge in acting, performing, and performance making techniques existing outside traditional institutions, how readily it can be leveraged through respectful, interdependent partnerships between disabled and non-disabled artists, and how much capacity could be built by inviting these artists into conservatories in continuing and decisional – rather than one off casual – roles.

If there’s a consistent emphasis across these examples, it is on an approach that is at once simple and complex. An approach that centres around people. Not on single meetings with people, to symbolically ‘tick the box’, but on serious engagement, which might result in substantial change to the actors’, directors’ or playwrights’ work, to avoid conflict or trauma to people or communities or other stakeholders impacted by the cultural representation. One that relies on continual analysis and reflection to come to nuanced understandings of the implications of our work (as actor, performer, dramaturg or ‘facilitator of processes that make people think’) in the performance of other people’s stories. The challenge, of course, is how to take this simple principle and integrate it back into our daily conversations, processes and decision making, during

various practices, at various institutions. And the question, of course, is who we decide or empower to teach our actors to do this, to draw on their own lived experiences, and the knowledge of networks and their allies, to create respectful cultural representations? Traditional actor trainers who have begun only recently to experiment in this arena? Academics, provocateurs, dramaturgs, critics and activists with a longer history of facilitating reflective practice? Diverse theatre makers with decades-long bodies of theoretical and practical knowledge? Or collaborative combinations thereof in people-centred processes? Our preference, by this point, should probably be clear.

| ***Would programs want this?***

## **Conclusion**

At the AusAct Conference, Australia's actor training institutions, and those working in them, indicated a clear desire to open their doors to First Nations people, people of colour, and people with disabilities and other historically marginalised people. A clear desire to move beyond historically racist, sexist, heteronormative and ablest practices in their training techniques, industrial relations and representational practices. Many shared recent experiments, in which they attempted to expand their practice, to make it more inclusive. The focus, however, often remained on methods, approaches and aesthetics, deployed by those already working within the institutions. In partnership with students on a one-off and ad hoc basis. Or in partnership with a diverse theatre maker or company on a one-off basis. Whilst experiments with methods, approaches and aesthetics led by an institution's extant staff may be valuable, the deployment of our skill sets also reveals another opportunity, to engage in a more people-based practice, drawing on decades-long legacies of practice held by diverse theatre makers operating outside the institution. Our work as academics, provocateurs, dramaturgs, critics and activists has enabled us to develop – the reflexive capabilities, understandings of diverse cultural perspectives, and connectedness to the broader contexts required to pursue other alternatives, such as this people-focused alternative. This ability to reflect, flip perspectives, and pursue other alternatives, is ultimately where our work is most relevant to the actors of the future. In this article, we have outlined how our skill set is relevant to the currently pressing question of how we redress the racist, sexist, heteronormative and ablest history of the theatre industry. In the future, who knows what questions will arise, and require reflection? Who knows how actors may use them? With training that enables them to see themselves as agents of change, capable of having an impact on spectators, society and the public sphere at large through their work, they will at least be better equipped to meet these questions, whatever they may be.

Enabling and encouraging actors to see themselves as agents of change, responsible for the representations they create, will not necessarily be an easy, comfortable or quick process – it will definitely make rehearsal and production processes longer and more complex in some cases, for instance. But it will also make the actors feel more connected to the broader world, the bigger picture, and cultural change they might want to see – or might want to engineer and entrepreneur. It will thus help actors grow as humans, not just as a commodity for stage or screen consumption. Which, from our

perspective, with a full understanding of the challenges all theatre makers face, on a range of personal, social and economic fronts, in a fast-changing career environment, seems like a relevant and valuable goal for all involved in actor training in the long run.

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## About the authors

**Associate Professor Bree Hadley** is an internationally recognised authority in disability arts, culture, and media studies. Her research focuses on the aesthetic strategies artists adopt to try to change attitudes towards disabilities, and the way audiences respond to such artworks. Hadley's key books include *The Routledge Handbook of Disability Art, Culture, and Media* (with Donna McDonald, Routledge, 2019), *Theatre, Social Media & Meaning Making*, (Palgrave, 2017), and *Disability, Public Space Performance and Spectatorship: Unconscious Performers* (Palgrave, 2014), along with dozens of journal articles, commentaries, critical reviews and creative outputs. In her most recent practice-led research, Hadley has been working with artists, curators and academics to investigate current interest in 'creative integration' of sign language, captioning and audio description into visual and performing arts works – as part of the aesthetic, not alongside the work. Hadley teaches contemporary, community, and applied theatre at Queensland University of Technology. Prior to joining QUT in 2007, Hadley worked as a dramaturg, director and administrator for independent theatre companies (including, most recently, Theatre@Risk and Walking into Bars in Melbourne), and the Glen Eira City Council.

**Dr Kathryn Kelly** is a dramaturg and theatre historian and is currently a Lecturer at Queensland University of Technology in the Performance Studies area in the Faculty of Creative Industries. She completed her PhD on the Pedagogy of Dramaturgy in 2017 at the University of Queensland and has taught extensively in the last seven years at Institutions including, Western Australian Academy for the Performing Arts (WAAPA), Flinders University, Griffith University and Southbank Institute of Technology. Her publications include a history of Australian dramaturgy 2000-2010 in *Catching Australian Theatre in the 2000s* (Australian Theatre Series, Brill) as well as with the *Australasian Drama Studies* journal, *Social Alternatives* and various industry journals. She is currently company dramaturg with award-winning, all-female theatre company, Belloo Creative, who are the Company in Residence at Queensland Theatre. Her dramaturgy practice is in text-based theatre, contemporary performance and socially engaged practice. She has worked for every major festival and theatre company in Queensland; nationally for Theatreworks (Melbourne); Malthouse (Melbourne); Playwriting Australia (Sydney) and the Darwin Writers Centre and internationally for the Factory Theatre and Cahoots Theatre Projects in Toronto, Canada. She worked as CEO of Playlab (2004-2008), Australia's second largest theatrical publisher, and as Resident Artist for World Interplay, the largest festival for young playwrights in the world. She has also worked for Arts Queensland and other arts organisations in her 25 years in the performance sector.