

CONTRIBUTORS

Leslie Susan Cook is associate professor in the English Department at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina, where she is co-director of the English Education program. Her doctoral dissertation research with young women diagnosed with depression and related neurodivergent makeups has been a springboard for further work in ending the stigma around neurodiversity and educating future teachers about diversity across the human spectrum.

Christine Dawson is the Director of Student Teaching at Skidmore College. She was a secondary English teacher for ten years, served as an English department coordinator for a middle/high school, and was a literacy coach. She earned her doctorate in Curriculum, Instruction, and Teacher Education from Michigan State University, and she holds an MA in Curriculum and Teaching from Columbia University Teachers College and a BA from the University of Virginia. Her research interests focus on writing studies and pedagogies, English teacher preparation, curriculum design, and the significance of teachers' own writing in their beliefs and pedagogical practices.

Marcy Epstein teaches in comprehensive studies at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor and manages a private practice for children and adults in literacy, exceptionality, and academic advocacy. Her books include *Deep: Real Life with Spinal Cord Injury* and *Points of Contact: Disability, Art, and Culture*.

Aaron Feinstein holds an MFA in theater directing from UCLA's School of Theater, Film, and Television. Previously, he co-directed *The Miracle Project* with Elaine Hall, which was the subject of the two-time Emmy Award winning HBO documentary: "Autism: The Musical." He is currently the Executive Director and Founder of Actionplay, an NYC-based 501(c)(3) programming, outreach, and education organization dedicated to providing children, teens, and adults on the autism spectrum and related conditions equal access to education, arts, and culture. Aaron is the director of the film *Ken and Alex (Big Daddy Autism)* about the unconditional love of a father and his non-speaking son on the autism spectrum living in NYC.

Paula Heller (MA Theatrical Directing) has taught theater arts for 25 years at Mehlville High School in St. Louis. She has directed over 70 plays with youth of all ages and abilities, and has worked with Theatre Unlimited, a program for adults of various abilities and the Teen Theatre program at the Jewish Community Center, and currently works with That Uppity Theatre Company's DisAbility Project and the Prison Performing Arts organization. Additionally, she teaches at private schools for autistic youngsters through Stage's St. Louis outreach programs. She is working toward Drama Therapy certification through the North American Drama Therapy Association.

Christine LaCerva, M.Ed. is Director of the Social Therapy Group and of the East Side Institute for Group and Short Term Psychotherapy Therapist Training Program. She leads a large group practice that includes clients aged 4–84 years. With Fred Newman, the late founder of social therapy, Christine has worked over 30 years to advance a philosophically inspired, performatory approach to emotional development, helping clients build environments for their emotional growth. Her multi-family groups explore unexpected ways to support the development of families whose children have been diagnosed on the autism spectrum. She completed her graduate studies at Teachers College, Columbia University, in community psychology and special education (including education of the deaf) and has a performance background in dance.

Joan Lipkin co-founded the DisAbility Project, one of the first and longest theater projects for people with disabilities in the country, with the late occupational therapist Fran Cohen, in St. Louis, MO. As the artistic director of That Uppity Theatre Company, she has worked with people with

disabilities for over 20 years, and also consulted with other companies on techniques for teaching playwriting and theater to children and youth with ADD, ADHD, OCD, and other learning disabilities. A nationally recognized expert on community-based theater, she has also worked extensively with numerous populations including people in the LGBTQ community, people with Alzheimer's and early onset dementia, women with cancer, survivors of suicide, supporters of reproductive choice, at risk youth, foster children, university students, women who have been sexually trafficked or exploited, those struggling with substance abuse, among many others.

Robin Post specializes in Acting, Voice, Movement, Devising, and Community Engagement Theater. She recently joined the Department of Theatre at The University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW) as an assistant professor of acting after a decade teaching for The Ohio State University's (OSU) Department of Theatre. While at OSU, she was the director of a longitudinal empirical research study, Shakespeare and Autism. She is presently establishing programming at UNCW intended to train students majoring in theater, psychology, social work, education, exercise science, and so on on how to implement the work with those on the spectrum. Robin most recently performed with the Royal Shakespeare Company at The Other Place Theatre in a unique production performed with children on the spectrum.

Nicola Shaughnessy is a professor at the University of Kent (UK). Grounded in feminist studies and theater, she now serves as Director and co-founder of Kent's Research Centre for Cognition, Kinesthetics and Performance. Through this role, she investigates the cognitive and physiological processes involved in making, participating in, and experiencing performance. She has also initiated practice-based projects using applied drama and performance in the workplace as part of Kent's Innovation, Creativity and Enterprise network as well as an interdisciplinary project on drama, performance, and intermediality as interventions for autism (www.imaginingautism.org).

Peter Smagorinsky is Distinguished Research Professor of English Education at The University of Georgia. Primarily a literacy education researcher following a career as a high school English teacher, he has begun investigating Asperger's syndrome following his recognition of his own place on the spectrum in conjunction with his daughter's diagnosis. His writing on this topic has been autoethnographic, theoretical, and empirical.

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