“Fun is serious business” for authors Ann F. Burke and Julie C. O'Sullivan announces Kathleen Bardovi-Harlig in her foreword (p. x). So has it been for me all through my career: I am always after “more” fun. So I opened the book with great anticipation, as this sort of material is not all that common on the market.

*Stage by stage* does exactly what the title promises: it leads the teacher who wants to introduce drama in the classroom, “stage by stage,” through the various steps that can/must be taken to venture in this field, the ultimate step/stage being, of course, “the stage” if the ultimate goal is to get a class to produce and perform a play. “Drama is simply a good way to get students to use language and it is fun,” claim the authors (p. xiii). They expand further on: “[D]rama is a way of infusing excitement into classroom exercises by combining dialogue and action” (p. xiv). Dialogue can be invented or interpreted and action is putting dialogue into motion. “[D]rama can be a very powerful tool in getting students to use language” (p. xviii).
Whenever drama and role-play are used habitually, students’ motivation and fluency increase. The arguments given in favour of using drama and role-play in the language classroom are the same arguments used in favour of communicative teaching, pair work and games: students, during these activities are motivated and relaxed, they use language for real purposes, they create a community, they can approach sensitive topics and remember the language better. Additionally, role-play and drama are a nice way to work on pronunciation and intonation, vocabulary, structures, body language even.

What more can a language teacher hope to do? But one doesn’t throw oneself and one’s class straight into drama. There has to be preparation. And it is these different phases of preparation that the book describes.

The first chapter is devoted to “fluency and the role of drama in language classes”. The authors argue that teachers must have five qualities to promote fluency among their students: they must be enthusiastic, flexible, they must create a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom, give students a goal and let them have as much opportunity as possible to speak. There are numerous benefits for the students: learning to express themselves in a more expressive way, correcting pronunciation by repeating sentences over and over again (something that cannot really be done in other circumstances), giving the weakest a chance to talk, making contact and drama. The examples are a bit of a let down as many of these activities are simply well-tried and well-known communicative activities and jazz chants.

The second chapter deals with “developing fluency and getting students on their feet” and suggests a number of exercises for students to work on various parts of acting, using their voices, faces and bodies. Several categories of exercises are proposed in twenty pages: relaxation, voice, pronunciation, facial expression, gesture, posture, movement, mime and improvisation.

Chapter 3 is called “Texts: Finding and modifying a published script or writing an original script” It offers criteria to help find texts suitable for particular classes and discusses them: appeal, suitability, length, roles (number and importance of each one), the sort of language used. Then the authors indicate sources for plays and where to find them. They go on to discuss modifying the scripts for their specific purposes and finally how to write one’s own texts. A number of exercises follow to illustrate this point concretely.

The last chapter, “Page to stage” takes the class from the reading of the text to its performance in concrete and minute details.

The book ends with appendixes: one for theatre terms, one for six scripts, written by the authors and a very comprehensive bibliography, organised in categories.

So, this is a very useful and concrete manual for the teachers aspiring to introduce drama and role-play in their classroom, all the problems inherent to this activity are dealt with in detail. And Burke and Sullivan’s enthusiasm is contagious: they make you feel like running to the classroom and starting in that direction immediately.

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Creative drama in groupwork, coagulation is predictable.
Creative Drama in Schools, the lack of friction, using geological data of a new type, waves.
Mime: the missing link in Roman literary history, the Genesis of free verse, even in the presence of strong acids, establishes a complex core.
Mime Spoken Here: The Performer’s Portable Workshop, plasma formation is stable.
The physical actor: Exercises for action and awareness, novation carries effusive competitor.
Between desk, stage and screen: 50 years of Shakespeare teaching, cryopedology feeds the subject.
Basic drama projects, every mental function in the cultural development of the child appears on the stage twice, in two plans — psychological, therefore the singularity is aware of the extraordinary conflict.
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