**Jamie Mackay**

Could you introduce yourself and say a little bit about your arts education context?

**Amy Wright**

My name is Amy Wright. I am from Scotland, and I have just graduated from the Conservatoire's Master of Education, Learning, and Teaching program. I am currently teaching drama in a high school in China, and I hope to return to work in Scotland next year.

**Jamie Mackay**

Can you say a little about why you applied for the MEd programme?

**Amy Wright**

Before I held this current position, I didn't have any experience working in a high school context. I had gained teaching experience, leading drama workshops, but of course, teaching in a high school setting requires an in-depth understanding of the curriculum, the key learning stages, teaching strategies, and so on. And it was very apparent that if I wanted to teach really well, and have more efficacy as a member of staff, then I should study teaching practice. And so, when the opportunity arose, I jumped at the chance to develop myself and gain a strong qualification.

**Jamie Mackay**

Could you describe your journey through the MEd?

**Amy Wright**

My journey through the MEd program has been arduous, but of course enormously beneficial. My writing skills and my understanding of how to write academically before I started the program were weak. My time at High school was tumultuous, and I didn't learn as much as I should have. After school, I attended college then I worked for a few years before getting into university. At University, I found writing my dissertation challenging but manageable. However, the academic leap from honours to masters for me was huge. I have had to rewrite my work many, many times, as I kept failing to either address the question or answer with the required level of complexity. Of course, the masters requires you to do a lot of reading, and as a slow reader I found my time would just disappear. I wasn't familiar with academic journals and getting used to working with them was absolutely exhausting. Certainly, some are written better than others, but in general I find them difficult reads, and it takes me a long time to process their content. So, as the course progressed, I learned how to navigate them, and became more comfortable with them, learning how to locate the pertinent content, and eventually the more I read the easier they became. And then there was learning how to cite correctly and how to recognize a weak source from a strong source, and so on. It felt quite overwhelming, as I was in full-time employment, and there really just wasn't enough time. And when I enrolled on the program, It was September 2018 [editor’s note: it was 2019], I think only 5 months had passed when Coronavirus hit. I was already teaching in China when the pandemic began, but I was outside the country at the time, and I inadvertently got stuck outside of China for 22 months. So even though I wasn't in full-time employment anymore, it caused me huge problems, since I was constantly on standby trying to return, and it also meant I no longer had access to my learners, which is what happened to most people in the course. So, I had to adapt my projects and change my learners. It was a little daunting at first, but it turned out to be positive, since I got to cooperate with other teaching artists and professionals, who then offered great insight and feedback. So, even though I did have to apply for mitigating circumstances, and it took me an extra year to complete the programme, I felt really happy with the outcome, since my interactions with my learners were so positive. And I was always supported by the Conservatoire staff throughout. That was great.

**Jamie Mackay**

Thanks Amy. What did you focus on for your final project.

**Amy Wright**

My final project examined theatrical masks, its use in drama classrooms, and whether it could be used to enhance the Scottish drama curriculum. Currently mask isn't an embedded part of the curriculum for excellence. and there's no requirement to integrate it into lessons. The literature indicated there was a lack of mask resources for teachers, so I made a series of 6 progressive, bite-sized videos showing teachers how to introduce masks to learners along with exercises that could be used to address the requirements of the Curriculum for Excellence.

**Jamie Mackay**

What impact did have in your practice as an arts educator?

**Amy Wright**

The impact the final project has had on my practice an Arts educator has been huge. I had identified gaining proficiency in mask as one of my top priorities at the beginning of the course. I've always been drawn to it, but I never had any real experience with it, and I really wanted to rectify that, because for me it really stands out as an intriguing and important element of theatrical performance. So, in order to make videos, I had to learn how to wear a mask, they have technical rules that need to be learnt, you need to alter your blocking and expand your spatial awareness and such then, of course, as you're now wearing a mask, the experience also becomes about examining your own physicality and exploring gestures and characterization. It was good fun. It was good to be performing again and getting to be creative. But, most importantly, I learned enough about masks from both the performer and the teacher's perspective to feel confident enough to use masks in my arts practice. And my participant feedback was very positive. I was encouraged to share the videos on drama teacher platforms. So, I would say, the final project has definitely had a positive impact on my ability to design a learning experience and a learning resource.

**Jamie Mackay**

This might be too early a question given you are just about to graduate what has changed as a result of studying the MEd?

**Amy Wright**

Well, the impact of the program on my growth mindset has been really positive. It was really overwhelming at many points, and I did sometimes doubt my capabilities, but I stuck in, and I made many achievements, becoming all the better for it. I am better informed about the world, since the course is rooted in sociological examination, and the instruction I received in how to search for the complexity in everything has altered my comprehension entirely. I have improved my criticality, my reading and writing skills, and I have learned about teaching strategies, the psychology behind them, allowing me to better understand how to apply them to benefit each individual learner. I have improved in my lesson planning. I've developed my ability to design learning experiences and resources. It has undoubtedly increased my understanding and knowledge of teaching. I am absolutely a better teacher for it. And I've also increased my knowledge and skill set in the artistic areas I wanted to improve upon, which has certainly impacted my confidence and my ability as a performer as well.

**Jamie Mackay**

Thanks Amy.