

FROM THE EDITOR

The present issue of *Theatre Survey* has been produced by a new editorial team, and my first order of business is to introduce the new dramatis personae. Catherine Cole, now of UC Berkeley, has joined *Theatre Survey* as the Associate Editor. David Kornhaber, a doctoral student at Columbia University, serves in the newly created position of Assistant Editor. David, Catherine, and I have been joined by Nena Couch, of Ohio State University, who has filled the previously vacant slot of editor of the *Re: Sources* section of the journal. Two members of the Editorial Board are also new: Claire Sponsler, of the University of Iowa, and Martin Harries, of New York University. Along with the existing members of the Editorial Board, we will do our best to make *Theatre Survey* as useful and exciting for you as it has been in the past. Speaking of the past: as often at moments of editorial transition, much groundwork for the present issue was done by the outgoing editor, Jody Enders, who therefore deserves our gratitude and applause. Mike Sell will continue his stewardship of the Critical Stages section, and Ted Ziter will serve for one more issue as Book Review Editor, to be succeeded by Katherine West Scheil.

After a series of special issues and events surrounding ASTR's anniversary, the journal will, for the time being, return to its core business of publishing scholarly articles on a broad range of topics and methods in theatre history. The five essays assembled here are indicative of the types of theatre scholarship that are being conducted today. Robert Henke thinks about the relation between comedy and representations of poverty in commedia dell'arte, overturning many common assumptions about comedy in the process. Robert I. Lublin analyzes costume to reconstruct the contemporary political thrust of Middleton's *A Game at Chess*. Laurie A. Finke and Susan Aronstein take as their object of study a current New York production: *Monty Python's Spamalot*, a show that participates in the recent spate of Broadway musicals that have been adapted from films. (The most recent twist on this phenomenon is *Hairspray*, which, after having been adapted from John Waters's original, has now returned to the cinema through a new film version of the Broadway musical.) Finke and Aronstein show in their article the kind of aesthetic and political choices that went into this production. Gad Guterman discusses a work about the Rosenbergs' trial, combining recent work in law and literature with new insights into docudrama, a genre that is having something of a comeback through such plays as *Guantánamo: Honor Bound to Defend Freedom*, *My Name Is Rachel Corrie*, and the current *Frost/Nixon*. Finally, John Fletcher reflects on something that lies outside the traditional field of theatre studies: Hell House performances put on by certain brands of evangelical Christians in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Perhaps by coincidence, New York's Off-Off Broadway theatre was developing an interest in this phenomenon at the same time, with the acclaimed performance of *Hell House* by the Freres Corbusier at St. Ann's Warehouse last year, written up in the *New York Times* and elsewhere. For better

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or for worse, Hell Houses seem to be a timely phenomenon, both in New York theatre and in evangelical practice.

In addition to the five essays, this issue of *Theatre Survey* also includes a reflection by Janelle Reinelt on migration, exile, and theatre scholarship and a *Re: Sources* piece on the Curtiss Show Print collection at the Ohio State University and on Hatch Show Print of Nashville. I invite you to visit *Theatre Survey* online, where you will find the images reproduced in color.

THE “D”-WORD

I will also use these editorials for brief reflections on topics concerning the study of theatre. I will open with some thoughts concerning the “D”-word, by which I mean, of course, “drama.” I remember how startled I was when I first read inside the cover of *Theatre Survey*: “Dramatic literature studies not substantively related to actual performances are outside the journal’s purview.” Where most journals describe what they do, *Theatre Survey* emphasizes what it *doesn’t* do. I think I understand some of the historical reasons for the existence of this sentence. It was difficult to establish the study of theatrical performance as a legitimate scholarly enterprise. Even today, literature departments are larger, better funded, and more prominent than theatre departments. In many universities, theatre scholars find themselves placed either in theatre practice departments, where they have few scholarly colleagues, or in literature departments, where they have few colleagues interested in theatre. Neither situation is ideal, and there are few signs that things will change: creating full-fledged departments devoted to theatre scholarship doesn’t seem to be part of most universities’ expansion plans. In this climate, it is not difficult to feel that theatre studies needs to carve out spaces for theatre scholarship.

And yet, defensive gestures, when they become routine, should be examined critically. It is worth noting that literature departments, where so many of us work, have changed almost beyond recognition since Brander Matthews and others first fought the good fight for theatre scholarship a hundred years ago. Literature departments have become departments in which cultural history, cultural studies, performance studies, film studies, and, yes, theatre studies, are done with regularity and, I would say, with relative ease. This change is one reason, for me at least, to wonder whether we still need to defend theatre studies against literary study.

Dramatic literature, after all, is one part of theatrical performance. Essays devoted to it should be able to coexist with essays on costume, acting, design, music, and the other arts. The exclusion of dramatic literature is misguided in other, more theoretical and methodological ways as well. All too often, what anchors these antitextual arguments is the idea that somehow literature is fixed, unchanging, dead: so many marks on paper that are brought back to life by the power and magic of performance. This (theological) conception of the dead letter and the living flesh is highly misleading, ignoring most theories of literature, reception, textuality, and language. Even within theatre studies, many recent contributions have challenged this simple opposition between dramatic literature and theatre, I’m thinking of Bill Worthen, Julie Peters and Alan Ackerman,

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for example. More generally speaking, many, if not all, methodological paradigms of the past twenty years, from poststructuralism to New Historicism, were originally developed, at least in North America, in the expanded field of literary study. In other words, opposing literature and theatre, thinking of them as incompatible objects of which one must be chosen, seems no longer necessary, or relevant, or even helpful. I think it may be time to strike the sentence from our self-presentation. At least, it might be worth having this debate.