Theatre Survey 55:3 (September 2014)
© American Society for Theatre Research 2014
doi:10.1017/S004055741400026X

FROM THE EDITOR

Like most collaborative projects, the intellectual seeds of this issue began with an informal conversation. Charlotte Canning, the editor of *Theatre Research International*, suggested coediting a joint special issue, which had never been done despite the fact that the two journals share many things, including the publisher. The informal conversation quickly led to a more urgent discussion of the current state of global economy and how the journals should respond to the lasting effects of the 2008 economic crisis. We wanted to move beyond the simplistic condemning of neoliberalism and find ways to describe the complex relationship among theatre, transnationalism, and economy. The call for papers emphasized a multiplicity of influences:

> With the special joint issue of *Theatre Research International* and *Theatre Survey,* the editors aim to further the discussion on how theatre and performance intersect with transnationalism and economy. The editors invite essays that investigate how the recent economic developments have profoundly reoriented theatre within the broad framework of transnationalism. The essays should also explore how the economic impact is being experienced, understood, and represented by the many different constituencies involved.

Of the many excellent essays submitted, we selected those that best represent a wide spectrum of topics, theories, and scholarly methods. The four articles featured in the following pages are the first set of essays in the special joint issue. The second set will be published in *Theatre Research International* in October 2014.

While the general focus of the joint issue is the twenty-first century, I have included two essays that predate recent events. The intersections among theatre, transnationalism, and economy can be observed throughout theatre history, and I hope the two essays, which bookend this issue, remind us of the historical links and lasting influences. Debra Caplan's "Nomadic Chutzpah: The Vilna Troupe's Transnational Yiddish Theatre Paradigm, 1915–1935" traces the history of the Vilna Troupe, a Yiddish theatre troupe that rose from "an obscure group of teenage amateurs" to become "a central fixture of the interwar theatrical avant-garde." She argues for a "multimodal transnationalism" to explain why the troupe was popular around the world and how it operated outside of a national infrastructure. The name Vilna Troupe became a brand that, through a network of artists and groups, had a simultaneous presence in multiple locations. In his article "Trafficking in Transnational Brands: The New 'Broadway-Style' Musical," David Savran interrogates the global branding of Broadway-style musicals in the twenty-first century. By focusing on specific productions in South Korea and Germany, Savran argues that the transnational megamusical branded as "Broadway" is much more than a variation of the West's cultural invasion or

https://doi.org/10.1017/S004055741400026X Published online by Cambridge University Press

the McDonaldization of the world. Rather, the brand "Broadway," according to Savran, signifies a world theatre, and the popularity of that theatre deserves serious scholarly investigation.

Popular forms of theatre are certainly a major part of transnational theatre, and the economic and cultural capital generated by these forms have dominated the formation of theatre. But transnationalism has also created a network of intercultural theatre and avant-garde performances that cater to international theatre festivals and smaller audiences. In her article "Troubling Multiculturalisms: Staging Trans/National Identities in Teatro de Ciertos Habitantes's *El gallo,*" Katherine Zien asks: "How do global performing artists negotiate commerce and aesthetics, and how does this balancing act shape a politics of global performance?" Zien examines how the Mexican theatre company Teatro de Ciertos Habitantes positions itself "between Mexico's arts landscape and the transnational desires of the international festival circuit." The ambivalence of the company's mission reveals a number of questions associated with multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism, and class inequities. Zien's poignant questions alert us to many issues we are only beginning to address in understanding the intersections of theatre, transnationalism, and economy.

Diana Looser's "The Fiery Pacific: Volcanic Eruptions and Settler-State Theatricality in Oceania, 1780–1900" engages with the topic of the special joint issue differently than the other three essays. She provides an allegorical perspective of transnational theatre history by examining the representation of Pacific volcanoes on European, American, and Australasian stages from the 1780s up to 1900. Using three case studies, Looser demonstrates that the spectacle of the volcano onstage can offer "captivating insights into theatrical (counter)strategies and competing representational economies in the colonizing Pacific." The volcano was a symbol and an allegory of all that was uncertain: nature, revolution, colonialism, modernity, and urbanization. The volcano also activated what Looser calls the "disaster narrative," one that reflected the anxieties of the time. Both the disaster narrative and the symbolism of the volcano can be extended to the economic crisis of the twenty-first century.

At the same time, the disaster narrative can serve as a warning and a call for strategies. Kim Solga, as the outgoing Book Review Editor, has written the special section "What Are You Reading?" She writes about "neoliberalism's perfect storm" in the contemporary United Kingdom and how she is responding to it with her scholarship. She advocates for "acts of resistance" to "neoliberal realities" with scholarship that is both rigorous and accessible. Whether our metaphor is the volcano or the storm, the ideas articulated in Solga's piece and the four articles of this issue provide a matrix of strategies both to comprehend and to respond to the realities of our time.

• • •

With this issue, my term as the Editor of *Theatre Survey* comes to an end. Needless to say, the past two years have been demanding, but mostly it has been enjoyable. I am grateful to many people, without whom my job would have been impossible. In my view, a journal such as *Theatre Survey* functions within the economy of intellectual generosity that transcends the logic of

https://doi.org/10.1017/S004055741400026X Published online by Cambridge University Press

neoliberalism. The collective labor of everyone involved—the authors, the external reviewers, the Editorial Board members, and the editorial team members—has made each issue a success. I thank everyone who generously offered his or her time and support to the journal. Special thanks go to Kate Babbitt, Michael Gnat, and Jonathan Geffner, who have made the production process seamless with their fine-tuned expertise. This last issue has been special in more ways than one, and I thank Charlotte Canning for her brilliant suggestion of the joint issue and for giving me the opportunity collaborate with her. I would like to thank the University of Illinois, Urbana–Champaign and the University of Maryland for providing financial and graduate assistant support during my term. Many thanks also go to ASTR's Publication Committee and Cambridge University Press for their detailed attention to the promotion and marketing of the journal. As I make my exit, I enthusiastically welcome incoming Editor Harvey Young and incoming Book Review Editor Gina Bloom. With them leading the editorial team, the journal is in excellent hands. As I return to being a reader of *Theatre Survey*, I eagerly look forward to seeing their vision reflected in future issues.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S004055741400026X Published online by Cambridge University Press