Theatre Survey 56:1 (January 2015)
© American Society for Theatre Research 2015
doi:10.1017/S0040557414000532

FROM THE EDITOR

Change is hard. Transitions can be difficult. Years ago I attended a student production of Martin Sherman's play *Bent*. In the play's second act, the characters Max and Horst, prisoners in a Nazi concentration camp, are tasked with moving large, heavy rocks from one end of a courtyard to the other, and back again. This maddeningly repetitive activity is what they do. In the production I witnessed, the director decided that every scene involving rock relocation would begin with *all* of the rocks placed on a particular side of the stage. If the previous scene ended with them on the opposite end, then the stage had to be reset. Lengthy scene changes occurred, in blackout. The labor of stagehands—footsteps, heavy breathing, and the *thud* of dropped rocks—could be heard. Transitions can be challenging to endure.

This issue interrogates significant transitional moments in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century theatre. The authors featured in this issue spotlight the work of a range of artistic innovators whose efforts inspired or influenced not only a future generation of theatre makers but also some prominent individuals with more tenuous connections to the stage, including a celebrated novelist and, perhaps, the president of the United States. Of course, influence can be difficult to trace. Was an artist's contribution truly transformative and accountable for a shift in the way people imagined the possibilities of performance? Or was the person's appearance merely coincidental, occurring during a period of in-progress cultural transformation? In pursuit of answers, Paola Degli Esposti, Julia A. Walker, Amy Brady, and David Carlyon explore archives, mine original newspaper accounts, and consult extant scholarship to offer an engaging, deeply historical, and exciting study of the work of designer Edward Gordon Craig, actress Fanny Kemble, director Mary Virginia Farmer (of the Southwest Theatre Unit), and actor Edwin Forrest.

In an essay that promises to change our understanding of Craig's theory of the Über-marionette, Paola Degli Esposti closely reads the writing—books, articles, private letters—of the prominent designer and theatre theorist. The result is an authoritative overview of the evolution of Craig's influential concept. Degli Esposti observes that the designer, who was a notoriously difficult collaborator, deliberately wrote in an opaque style. He frequently contradicted himself and published under pseudonyms in an effort to ward off imitators and plagiarists. To understand Craig's artistic philosophy, scholars and practitioners need to do more than read a single piece penned by him. They must tackle his body of unpublished and published works to detect his carefully inserted obfuscations as well as to trace the consistencies of his arguments. Degli Esposti takes on this labor, and the results are enlightening. Whereas many scholars are quick to summarize Craig's stance as being antiactor, Degli Esposti refutes this oversimplification by noting the designer's affection for the acting style of Henry Irving and the evolution of his artistic philosophy through correspondence with Eleonora Duse.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0040557414000532 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Julia A. Walker focuses on the timely convergence of three moments—the theatrical debut of actress Fanny Kemble in 1829, a shift in acting style from declamatory to Romanticist, and the emergence of a representational economy in the United Kingdom and, later, the United States. Centering on Henry Milman's play *Fazio*, she persuasively contends that the play's popularity in the early nineteenth century, including the frequency of its productions, could be explained by its treatment of themes that were familiar to audiences: the consequences of wrongfully acquired wealth and marital infidelity. *Fazio* invites spectators to consider the importance of wealth, the value of money, and the constancy of their morals. At the time of Kemble's debut, a new monetary system had been introduced in the United Kingdom in which paper notes *represented* value rather than possessing intrinsic worth (like gold). As spectators concerned themselves with these economic changes, many reveled in Kemble's acting on "points," the insertion of meaningful pauses in her performances. Walker convincingly asserts that *Fazio* "facilitated the audience's ability to comprehend new forms of exchange (both theatrical and economic)."

Amy Brady investigates the Federal Theatre Project (FTP) and writes a new chapter in its history by focusing on the Southwest Theatre Unit (SWTU). In bringing our attention to the SWTU, Brady incorporates both a new geography (Los Angeles) and a new set of social issues within FTP scholarship. Her article focuses on the 1938 production of *The Sun Rises in the West*, a Dust Bowl narrative about a white Midwestern family and their move to southern California in search of better opportunities. Brady reveals that, during his research travels, John Steinbeck spent time with the SWTU collective. She analyzes how the play creates space not only for the experiences of white working-class migrants but also for Mexican American farmworkers. In introducing the experiences of this latter population—admittedly, as a subplot—the play succeeds in restoring the presence of the folks who lived and labored in the region but have been overlooked in popular accounts of the period.

David Carlyon studies one of the most significant American speeches ever delivered: Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Noticing striking similarities between that 1863 address and earlier remarks delivered by actor Edwin Forrest at a political event in 1838, the author questions whether Forrest might have been an inspiration for the future president. Although the evidence is circumstantial—the repetition of some key words, phrases, and rhetorical devices coupled with the facts that Forrest's remarks were widely published and that Lincoln was a reader with a voracious appetite for political news—Carlyon provides enough plausible evidence to convince even the skeptic that the resemblance is too significant to ignore. In addition, the author offers an account of how politicians attempted to recruit Forrest to run for office. This demonstrates not only an early awareness of the political potential of harnessing the power of celebrity but also an alignment of the worlds of theatre and politics. The theatre is inextricably tied to the memory of Abraham Lincoln. What Carlyon offers in this spirited essay is a plausible argument that before John Wilkes Booth, another actor impacted the life, career, and political legacy of the president.

• • •

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0040557414000532 Published online by Cambridge University Press

From the Editor

With this issue, I transition from Associate Editor to Editor of *Theatre Survey*. I would like to acknowledge Esther Kim Lee, the previous editor, for her untiring dedication to this journal, her keen editorial eye, and her willingness to share her best practices with me. In addition, the new calendar year marks the end of Christopher Balme, Brian Herrera, and Patricia Ybarra's term on the *Theatre Survey* Editorial Board. Their counsel has improved the journal and given it an unparalleled luster.

As part of the transition, it is my pleasure to welcome the following dynamic scholars to the *Theatre Survey* Editorial Board: Diana Looser, Jon Rossini, Jonathan Shandell, and Steve Wilmer. Also, I am thrilled that Christine Simonian Bean, an astute critic of performance culture and a doctoral candidate at Northwestern University, will serve as an Assistant Editor for volume 56. In addition, I am ecstatic that Nicholas Ridout, a leading theatre theorist and historian, has been appointed as Associate Editor.

Fortunately, not everything or everyone is new. Gina Bloom, Kate Babbitt, Michael Gnat, and Jonathan Geffner continue to serve *Theatre Survey*. Together, they are somewhat like the Super Friends: collegial, highly perceptive, diligent, and passionate about helping others improve. They are both our guides and fellow travelers in this ongoing pursuit of excellence.

Harvey Young
Editor

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0040557414000532 Published online by Cambridge University Press