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FROM THE EDITOR

Movement Theatre

For me, the truest form of theatre often lives in the moments between words. These are spaces where subtext demonstrates itself in physical terms that either support the dialogue or cut radically against it. For psychoanalysts, this is the body telling its own narrative. For poker experts, it is the "tell." For performers it is the story that rides beneath what is spoken and determines blocking choices as well as vocal tone. It is choreographer Martha Graham's belief that the body never lies. I sent out a call for scholarship on movement theatre for this special issue and have been thrilled at the variation in response.

Karen Jean Martinson and Julia E. Chacón's "Crossing Collaborative Borders: The Making and Becoming of *ÓRALE!* by David Herrera and El Vez, the Mexican Elvis" harnesses physical resistance against an implied separation of music, dance, and theatre in performance. They trace a learning through doing, a disidentification that rejects essentialist notions of race, ethnicity, and culture to build a utopian present. Their interviews with Herrera uncover a love for modern dance even in its cultural erasure of nonwhite subjectivity. Their goal is to promote embodied practice that creates a progressive social space where performance becomes "an active site of knowledge production." Onstage, El Vez— the Mexican Elvis—blends theatre, performance art, and rock music to center Latinidad in American modern dance to transcend borders, express new identities, foster connection, and redress erasures. In these performances, El Vez offers an invitation to "fill in the blank" in ways that redress what Elvis Presley borrowed, begged, or stole from African American music. Martinson and Chacón flag moments of asynchrony where lip-synched performance creates "a kind of movement theatre leveraging pantomime in place of dance." They end their article with a timely discussion of how race as biological fact is a problematic construct. Herrera's antiessentialist El Vez encourages audiences to leave proud to be Mexican, no matter what their racial identity.

Janice Norwood's article "Stage Echoes: Tracing the Pantomime Harlequinade through Comic Ballet, Trap Work, and Silent Film" retraces earlier movement theatre that makes use of sight gags and stage traps to build physical story line. Norwood posits "a direct line of inheritance from the harlequinade through standalone comic ballets to chase scenes in early film." She draws on Marvin Carlson's notion of ghosting to explore "both animate bodies and inanimate phenomena." During May–June of 1871, *Ki-Ki-Ko-Ko-Oh-Ki-Key* showcased the Lauri family in a comic ballet that included monkey tricks and trap door escapes. Such work depended on physical precision and often led to accidents and injuries that today's acting guilds would likely consider actionable offenses. At the time, stagehands were bribed with beer money to keep performers safe. As Norwood suggests, "The use of traps is just one of the ways in which *Ki-Ki* reproduces elements of pantomime

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tradition in the form of a stand-alone comic ballet." The Lauri family relied on embodied knowledge passed from one generation to the next through "dynamic theatrical apprenticeships." For each new generation of performers, audiences witness a form of ghosting to see if these apprentices lived up to their predecessors. Keeping shows in-family had the advantage of exact corporeal repetition. And as stage made its segue to film, harlequinade knockabouts provided perfect material for silent film's physical charades. Thus, early cinema was ghosted by these earlier pantomimes.

Another avenue for physical theatre is of course dance theatre. In "Recruiting Places: Pearl Primus's Plans for Global Activism through Community-Engaged Dance Theatre," Jessica Friedman leads us through Primus's career "praxis of performed ethnography" in her work with communities in the American South and abroad in Europe's World War II era. Following Katherine Dunham's anthropological field visits that engendered what VèVè Clark called "research-to-performance," Primus sought to "connect the fight against Jim Crow to the struggle against Fascism abroad." What set Primus's dance theatre apart from Dunham's choreography was its reliance on community engagement. Her fight against racism in the Southern United States later allowed her a link to anticolonial protest and explains the African dance influences in her later career. As Friedman attests, "This emphasis on community engagement for racial uplift helped Primus to not alienate potential liberal funders with her typically more staunch communist politics." She strove to build a border-crossing dance theatre company that would move her from performance ethnography to community engagement in New York City, the US South, and Liberia. She made strong use of lecture demonstrations and performances to unify disparate communities toward political action.

S. Daniel Cullen's "The Constructive Deconstruction of Mary Overlie's Six Viewpoints" demonstrates this practitioner's success in crossing borders between dance and theatre. In his discussion of Overlie's *Window Pieces*, Cullen explains how her work redefines performance space in ways that both isolate and crowd movers, much like New York City's densely populated physical realities. Using found space in windows of a retail store, Overlie's dancers learn to "speak space," one of her six original Viewpoints (Space, Shape, Time, Emotion, Movement, and Story). The tight proximity of these window displays demand that space become a scene partner. In her own ways, Overlie matched literary theorists like Ferdinand de Saussure and Jacques Derrida by "suggesting that the physical material of space can be theorized as a linguistic sign." In some respects, all of Overlie's Six Viewpoints work to make the materiality of the stage speak its own language. Her experience choreographing for the Mabou Mines theatre troupe was in part what brought Overlie from dance into movement theatre as she developed the Experimental Theatre Wing at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts in the 1980s. Overlie and Anne Bogart taught simultaneously in this wing of the school. Bogart and Tina Landau then expanded Overlie's original Six Viewpoints to nine, excluding some of Overlie's initial six. While this more expansive interpretation of Overlie's work has now gained much more traction in theatre classrooms worldwide, Cullen takes great care to clarify that, whereas Bogart and Landau's version of the Viewpoints defines them as "tools" to be used by theatre artists, Overlie preferred to think of them as "materials." He explains that

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"Materials and tools are both things people use in the making of new things. Yet materials . . . become part of the final product. Tools do not."

All four of these authors have crossed intermedial boundaries, much as the movement theatre practitioners they discuss did in their day. This is an ongoing conversation: Martinson and Chacón's mention of Pearl Primus's birth in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, puts her in direct conversation with what they call "a rich, intersectional Creole aesthetic that documents the presence of Spanish, Indigenous, Black, and Latin aesthetics in the origins and foundations of modern dance"; the harlequinade of Norwood's Lauri family continues its rigorous physical pursuit through contemporary cinema; Primus's community engagement through performance-as-research continues today as PBR (practice-based research); and Mary Overlie's prototypical application of Viewpoints to stage space has now become a major player in theatrical practice at a level equal to Stanislavsky's method. And as El Vez encourages, theatre that crosses boundaries also facilitates new cross-cultural connections. Movement theatre is a term and a practice that crosses these many borders to start new conversations about where performance can take us.

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