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FROM THE EDITOR

Theatre, at its best, invites us into a common space and offers the opportunity to see, hear, and experience life from another perspective. It engages our intellect, educating us of the myriad possibilities in the world, while providing the thrill of being lifted above the constraints and limits of our everyday realities. As numerous artists and scholars have observed, theatre can incite feeling and excite emotion. It can make us feel good about ourselves. It can help us believe that we are a part of a larger community. It can spur thoughts of action toward positive social change.

This issue is dedicated to both the artistry and the business of storytelling in the theatre. It focuses on artists who actively worked to protect their unique vision from being copied by other practitioners or censored by government authorities. It looks at how historians and archivists fashioned narratives by collating multiple perspectives and arranging objects for display. It explores actor training methods and the pursuit of performing authentic, emotionally real moments on stage.

Jane Wessel introduces Charles Macklin, an eighteenth-century English actor and playwright. Macklin began acting in the 1720s and quickly developed a popular following for his inventive interpretations of comic roles. An artist who had spent years refining his approach to playing a particular character, he eventually found himself competing against his imitators. This posed a problem for Macklin, who was a notoriously difficult person with whom to work. Theatre managers wanted Macklin's interpretation but rarely the actor himself. He had a "reputation for litigiousness and volatility." Wessel notes that he "stabbed fellow actor Thomas Hallam in the eye with his cane and killed him, simply because Hallam had used his favorite property wig." With decreasing professional opportunities, Macklin began to write plays in which he himself starred. The success of his plays, combined with the performer's refusal to publish them, enabled the mercurial man to own and protect his work. It was how he preserved the integrity of his stories while keeping the spotlight on himself as the storyteller.

Jacob Gallagher-Ross offers a glimpse at actor training in the famed Actors Studio. He looks at the scene of studio classes and focuses on the presence of recording devices, specifically audio recorders. In drawing attention to technology in the rehearsal room, the author asks his readers to reconsider their assumptions about Method actor training. Gallagher-Ross writes, "The Method's most salient legacy may have more to do with media than with emotional recall." A secondary benefit of these audio recordings is that they give the listener (or reader of transcripts) a chance to enter the classroom, a space that was available only to studio members and their special guests.

Elif Baş provides an overview of the state of contemporary Kurdish theatre in Istanbul. She traces the roots of present-day theatre to a centuries-old tradition of storytelling and singing by *dengbêj*s. These master storytellers were integral to the

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preservation and sharing of culture. The necessity for such efforts was apparent in the early 1980s, when a military coup increased the oppression of the Kurds and banned the Kurdish language. Baş identifies the early 1990s and the lifting of the ban as the beginning of a new Kurdish theatre that simultaneously revives cultural traditions and engages present-day politics. The author spotlights two theatre companies—Theatre Avesta and Destar Theatre (both founded after 2000)—to reveal the vitality of contemporary Kurdish theatre in Turkey.

Zoltán Imre showcases the power of theatre to enrapture audiences regardless of political sensibilities or geographical location. He chronicles the Eastern European tour of Peter Brook's 1972 Royal Shakespeare Company production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Against the backdrop of cold-war tension, the tour won wide acclaim throughout its visits to Belgrade, Budapest, Bucharest, Sofia, Zagreb, and Warsaw. Imre reveals the uncertainties around the production by citing "secret reports of Eastern European authorities" and accounts of the positive, often enthusiastic reception of audiences as recorded in newspaper articles and reviews. The article contributes to the growing scholarship on cold-war cultural performances and propaganda and expands the geographical scope of such investigations.

Dassia Posner reads the theatrical intervention (and inventiveness) of Vsevolod Meyerhold. Her article looks to the Russian director as part of a larger examination of the role of "duality" within the theatre. Posner writes, "Actors are always both themselves and their characters, productions make meaning through content and form, and spectators are aware of the fiction they are watching." Meyerhold, according to the author, sought to encourage audience members to contemplate this duality not by staging naturalistic fare but by foregrounding a series of "collisions" that drew attention to the frame and apparatus of theatre. Posner gifts us with the concept of "refraction" to account for Meyerhold's process, which acknowledges the imprint of the director on a production.

Ellen MacKay meditates on the presence of Staffordshire figures, inexpensive painted ceramics that were popular among working-class consumers in mid-nineteenth-century England, and their appearance at the Folger Shakespeare Library. The author found herself prompted to consider the meaning of these objects as a result of their temporary relocation during the library's renovation. These visible figures, which might be analogous to contemporary bobbleheads, referred to specific individuals but possessed a form that was generally indistinguishable beyond the particularity of their decoration. The vagueness of the figures helps MacKay see that these objects are poor bases in which to anchor the writing of history. She notes that "pottery figures are bad evidence" because of the "unpredictable relation of form to content." MacKay observes, "It would be foolhardy to extrapolate from the lunging stance of the figure of Kean, for example, that he showed great agility in the role or even that his Richard was clad in scarlet."

The issue concludes with an article-*cum*-prospectus by Christopher Balme and Tracy Davis, general editors of a multivolume collection currently in preparation on the cultural history of theatre. Theirs is an ambitious project that seeks to tell the story of the theatre and, along the way, determine which people, places, periods, theories, and movements to include (and exclude). The authors, who

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openly acknowledge the "constraints" of such an undertaking, outline with infectious scholarly enthusiasm the potential for the series to encourage the writing of a history that represents "significant cultural approaches as opposed to purely regional, national, aesthetic, or generic categories." As a prospectus, the article outlines a vision for a type of engaged, critically informed and theoretically sophisticated scholarship. In generously sharing their intentions, the authors erect the standard for understanding and evaluating the forthcoming *A Cultural History of Theatre* volumes.

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This is the final issue of 2015. As the year winds down, I would like to acknowledge the labor and good cheer of the outgoing editorial board members. Henry Bial, Gay Gibson Cima, Susan Manning, Martin Puchner, Jonathan Shandell, Haiping Yan, and Ted Ziter have been stalwart supporters of this journal. Their efforts and energy have improved *Theatre Survey*.

Harvey Young
Editor

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