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FROM THE EDITOR

Inoperativity, inability, indecipherability, and the impossibility of intersubjectivity: these assonant words selected from the following pages summarize this issue. The authors of the four featured articles discuss difficult problems that become even more difficult with analysis and investigation. Whether the problems are politically sensitive or ethically challenging, the authors refuse to find reductively neat solutions and choose to delve deeper into the issues even if their inquiries do not lead to satisfying answers.

In his article "The Inoperative Iphigenia: Race, Law, and Emancipation in Michi Barall's *Rescue Me*," Joshua Takano Chambers-Letson examines how "performance can be deployed to render race and law inoperative." The characters in Barall's play, an adaption of Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*, are aware that they are in a play, and with this self-awareness they turn to involve the audience in figuring out how injustice should be rectified and how unfair laws can be made inoperative. Chambers-Letson effectively argues that performance opens the possibility of emancipation from unjust laws. Aaron C. Thomas, in his article "The Queen's Cell: *Fortune and Men's Eyes* and the New Prison Drama," also questions how the stage can be used to address social injustices. The Canadian playwright John Herbert wrote the play *Fortune and Men's Eyes* in 1967 to expose violence and male/male rape in prison; but as Thomas documents eloquently, the reception and interpretation of the play in subsequent productions departed significantly from the playwright's original intention. The play has been cited as the beginning of "modern gay drama," an assumption Thomas challenges in his article. The conflation of gay sexuality with prison rape is a delicate issue that is rarely addressed in theatre scholarship, and the production history of Hebert's play as described by Thomas begins a much-needed discussion. SanSan Kwan's article, "Even as We Keep Trying: An Ethics of Interculturalism in Jérôme Bel's *Pichet Klunchun and Myself*," questions whether equitable intercultural performance is possible. The French avant-garde choreographer Jérôme Bel created what he calls a "theatrical and choreographic documentary" with classical Thai dancer-choreographer Pichet Klunchun. In the piece, Bel conducts a conversation with Klunchun onstage, and Kwan examines how the spoken words (or the "sayingness") perpetuate the familiar orientalist narrative. At the same time, Kwan interrogates the ethical ramifications of intercultural performance whether it is performed or enunciated. She concludes that "we keep trying," although perhaps a truly ethical intercultural encounter is indeed impossible. Narratives of failure echo throughout all of the articles, and Peter Dickinson's essay, "Murdered and Missing Women: Performing Indigenous Cultural Memory in British Columbia and Beyond," tells the tragic story of British Columbia's failure to protect Aboriginal women from violence and death. He describes how a generation of Aboriginal women

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artists has responded to the "cultural inheritance" of systemic failures and how their artistic responses have led to political action. Yet Dickinson is careful to point out the paradoxical and ambiguous impact the women's works have made on both Canadian politics and Canadian theatre history.

The four articles overlap topically and thematically in a number of ways, and I invite the readers to approach each essay in conversation with the others. Among their topics, contexts, and themes are Canadian theatre, social justice, law, immersive theatre, violence, gender, race, and audience reception. But ultimately the articles are about finding a way to articulate and approach impossibly difficult problems through performance. As SanSan Kwan suggests, we need to keep trying.

In *Re:* Sources, Beth A. Kattelman draws our attention to an important but neglected historical source: trade catalogs of magic supply houses. She presents a history of the catalogs and explains how they can help us uncover popular performances that are seldom examined by theatre historians. The details of the catalogs give us a rare glimpse of the merchandise that had entertainment and entrepreneur value for professional and amateur performers. As Kattelman demonstrates, the research value of such catalogs for theatre historians is indisputable.

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I would like to thank Kim Solga, whose term as the Book Review Editor ends with this issue. With her assistant Sally Colwell, Kim served for three years and spearheaded the review section with generosity and expertise. She also edited the "What Are You Reading?" section and introduced us to the books that are most influential to our field. It is fitting that the review section in this issue features a book review essay by Leo Cabranes-Grant, who preceded me as Editor. I am indebted to both Kim and Leo for their editorial leadership of *Theatre Survey*, and I thank both for their unparalleled and continued contribution to the journal. I also wholeheartedly welcome Gina Bloom, the incoming Book Review Editor, whose term will begin with the next issue.

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