Theatre Survey 58:3 (September 2017)
© American Society for Theatre Research 2017
doi:10.1017/S0040557417000242

FROM THE EDITOR

This introductory text comes to you from the Editor. But to whom is it addressed? Who *are* you? This is a real question rather than a merely rhetorical one. Although print subscribers may be reading the journal as a whole issue, most readers of the articles published here, and to which this text might be supposed to serve as some kind of introduction, will probably be reading the articles individually, in PDF form, downloaded from the academic content portal produced and maintained for Cambridge University Press. You—if indeed you are reading *this* at all rather than (or as well as) the article you chose to read after having found it by way of an online search—may never read any of the other articles in this issue.

If you are reading one of the articles rather than these introductory comments—in which case, why am I addressing you at all, other than in order to conjure you, like a "phantom public" (see Jordana Cox, herein) for the benefit of those other readers who do hold a print copy of the issue in their hands?—if, for example, you are a student studying the pedagogy of Jacques Lecoq (see Maiya Murphy, herein), you may not even be aware that the text you are reading once formed part of a single issue of something called a *journal,* a periodical publication, historical descendant, perhaps, of the kind of printed matter whose circulation from the early eighteenth century onward seems to have been so central to the formation of the idea and the practices of what we have come to call "publics."

Michael Warner, in his "Publics and Counterpublics,"[1] writes of three kinds of public. There is the public, a social totality of some kind, to speak of which assumes, somehow, that everyone (who matters) counts as part of it. Jordana Cox's "phantom public"—the public that any group of people imagines themselves to aspire to be—is perhaps both side effect and constitutive foundation of such a public. There is the public as a concrete audience, in a theatre, for example, or at a football game or a "riot" (Warner, 50), which is pretty clearly the people who are there—even if, haunted by some phantom, they might feel themselves to be some fleetingly concrete instantiation of the first kind of public. Finally, and for Warner's purposes most important, there is the kind of public "that comes into being only in relation to texts and their circulation—like the public of this essay" (ibid.). There are circumstances, Warner notes, when a public of readers brought into being by the circulation of such things as "this essay" can come to think of itself not just as *a* public, but as *the* public, as a social totality. However those circumstances may not hold here. "This essay," like the other essays it attempts to introduce, is addressed to what Warner calls an "institutional or subcultural audience, such as members of a profession" (ibid.): the public it instantiates, or, better, reinstantiates, is in fact not a public at all, but a membership of a professional association, the American Society for Theatre Research. For it is primarily the membership of this association who will hold in their hands the print

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0040557417000242 Published online by Cambridge University Press

issue of the journal and who may, therefore, be among the readership for these words I am writing here now.

But as members of that society many, if not all, of us are concerned not just with public questions in general, of the kind that might concern any of our fellow citizens, but also with public questions of publics and publicness. We study forms of making public; we are interested in what is happening when people in concrete audiences get up from their seats and leave the theatre—as, apparently, ten or more people did every night during the first run of Philip Ridley's *Mercury Fur* in London in 2005 (see Alex Ferrone, herein)—or when people become protestors to articulate their objections to other interventions into what we understand as public space—as in the performance protest against the sculpture of Sara Baartman in the library at the University of Cape Town (see Kellen Hoxworth, herein). Some of us, for sure, also like to imagine that when we have given sustained thought to the questions that arise from such events, that thought, in the form of words written to be circulated—even within the limited nonpublic of the academic profession and its various spin-off activities—might address itself also to an *actual* public, a public for whom the codes, conventions, and assumptions that inhere in journal publication may not matter, but for whom the questions of who gets to speak, see, be seen, be safe, and not be shot dead "in public," really do matter.

This, perhaps, is our imaginary public, for whom we are really writing, through our ostensible address to their academic stand-ins (our colleagues, our students).

ENDNOTE

1. Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," *Public Culture* 14.1 (2002): 49–90.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0040557417000242 Published online by Cambridge University Press