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### INTRODUCTION:

### CANADIAN PERFORMANCES/GLOBAL REDEFINITIONS



From the last decades of the twentieth century to the present, new structures of globalization have increasingly characterized our world. From an economic point of view, the influence of such institutional and regulatory structures as NAFTA and the IMF has deeply affected relationships between countries on various continents. From a cultural perspective, the internet and social media have contributed to quick knowledge dissemination across national boundaries and both a growing similarity among developed nations and an increasing sense of disenfranchisement in developing nations. As a fraught issue, globalization has generated new forms of critical discourse in various fields, including literature and theatre studies. While its advocates praise it for its ability to develop new connections between different world cultures, its detractors underscore its tendency to favour cultural sameness on a global scale. As Dan Rebellato reminds us, the phenomenon of globalization can be understood in many ways. Already heralded by Karl Marx in the nineteenth century as an inevitable process leading to productive dialogues between nations, globalization gained special significance towards the end of the twentieth century (Rebellato 14). Broadly speaking, globalization now designates the manifold political, cultural, and economic exchanges between the world's contemporary nation-states. This process stands in marked contrast to the insularities of nineteenth century nationalisms (4-12). More specifically, Rebellato regards globalization as "the rise of global capitalism operating under neoliberal policy conditions," by which he means the non-protectionist economic conditions typical of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries (12). Similarly, in this special issue, globalization is understood as a phenomenon closely linked with these recent phases of capitalism. The articles collected here foreground the ways in which Canadian artists engaged in theatre and performance negotiate the cross-cultural advantages and homogenizing pitfalls of such globalization.

In 1827, Goethe already envisioned a concept he called *Weltliteratur*, a form of global literature transcending national

boundaries. This notion, David Damrosch argues, foreshadowed our global modernity. In his *What Is World Literature?*, he redefines Goethe's *Weltliteratur* as a "mode of circulation and of reading," which points to a network of literary works across nations (5). Damrosch's concept of refraction suggests that borrowed works of literature tell as much about the host as about the source culture (283). Refraction thus counterbalances the homogenizing impact of globalization. Similarly, postcolonial scholar Gayatri Spivak critiques the universalizing tendencies of globalization, setting it in opposition to her concept of "planetary," which emphasizes fruitful encounters with alterity (73). In a 2010 essay, Mariano Siskind likewise contrasts globalization to a renewed version of cosmopolitanism, embracing both the local and the global, as a way of truly engaging with the literary production of other cultures. These notions of globalization naturally invite comparative studies of different cultures throughout the world, both from literary and performance perspectives. Globalization has led to a welter of recent publications in the fields of comparative literature and postcolonial studies, focusing mainly on prose and poetry. This yearning for an extended form of cosmopolitanism also characterizes theoretical studies of theatre and globalization.

In theatre studies, globalization is related to issues of cross-cultural exchange, transnational influences, multiculturalism, and intercultural performance practices. As such, it has led to a number of significant publications, although perhaps to fewer than have appeared in comparative literature and postcolonial studies—a lacuna that this issue aspires to remedy, at least in the Canadian context. In their important works, Dan Rebellato and Ric Knowles acknowledge that while globalization can potentially lead to meaningful interactions between cultures, it can also reveal forms of Eurocentric appropriations. They both regard reinvigorated forms of cosmopolitanism as a useful means of diminishing the homogenizing side-effects of globalization. Enlightenment cosmopolitanism, Rebellato reminds us, "is a belief that all human beings, regardless of their differences, are members of a single community and all worthy of equal moral regard. Cosmopolitanism also entails a commitment to enriching and deepening that global ethical community" (60). As envisioned by its historical initiator, Immanuel Kant, cosmopolitanism retained a primarily Eurocentric urge towards the universal (Knowles 56). Ric Knowles, in this respect, pleads for what he calls a "cosmopolitanism-from-below" (57): that is, one

that takes into account minoritized ethnicities. Such cosmopolitanism could foster mutual understanding among different cultures while avoiding the drive towards fixity that typifies globalization. Such a focus would, therefore, generate “a new kind of rhizomatic (multiple, non-hierarchical, horizontal) intercultural performance-from-below that is emerging globally, that no longer retains a west and the rest binary [. . .]” (59). Knowles’s theories echo those of Helen Gilbert and Jacqueline Lo as developed in their influential *Performance and Cosmopolitics*. These scholars endorse a new cosmopolitanism that would be free from “its traditional associations with privilege and with impartiality to the demands of the local” (Gilbert and Lo 4). In this way, a contemporary cosmopolitanism would more adequately address the “challenges of cross-cultural and transnational encounters” (5). All in all, as this rapid survey has shown, comparative literature, post-colonial studies, and theatre studies are currently engaged in a reconfiguration of their respective fields from the perspective of globalization.

Arising from the editors’ collaboration at the *Université Libre de Bruxelles* in 2011, this issue combines the methodological tools of intercultural studies and comparative literature to further interrogate the impact of globalization on Canadian theatre. Building on Knowles’s pioneering discussion of intercultural performance in Toronto (Knowles 61-79), this special issue of *Theatre Research in Canada/ Recherches théâtrales au Canada* brings together articles analyzing theatrical and filmic responses to globalization from a wide Canadian perspective. This issue, then, comprises five case studies that examine how the phenomenon of globalization can generate cross-cultural fertilization on the Canadian stage. These essays cover considerable geographical territory and adopt a wide range of theoretical perspectives.

Yana Meerzon’s “Staging Memory in Wajdi Mouawad’s *Incendies*: Archeological Site or Poetic Venue?” focuses on the transposition of Lebanese-Quebecois playwright Wajdi Mouawad’s *Incendies* into film. Focusing on the trauma of the Lebanese war, *Incendies* deals with exile, one of the salient features of our “global” world. By contrast, “shot in Jordan not Lebanon, the film mimics the palimpsest history and the imaginary geography of Mouawad’s play. It engages with the playwright’s postmemory and satisfies the director’s personal search for the ‘imaginary point of view,’” which suggests an innovative blending of the playwright’s and director’s cultural affinities (23).

Ginny Ratsoy's "Interculturalism and Theatrefront: Shifting Meanings in Canadian Collective Creation" concentrates on a specific instance of "global" collaboration between Toronto's Theatrefront and Cape Town's Baxter Theatre. This essay is devoted to *Ubuntu (The Cape Town Project)*, a collaborative theatre venture that subtly enacts generational conflicts in two different families, a South African one and a Canadian one. Ratsoy argues that Theatrefront expands the parameters of Canadian collective creation through this intercultural, indeed "global" collaboration.

In "Constellation Translation: A Canadian Noh Play," Judith Halebsky focuses on another cross-cultural project, one that involves Japan. She examines how a production of Daphne Marlatt's *The Gull* sought to translate Noh theatrical style for Canadian audiences. In an echo of Knowles's rhizomatic intercultural performance, Halebsky proposes "constellation translation" as a means to create non-hierarchical forms of cultural exchange. In contrast to traditional translation theories, "[c]onstellation translation seeks to diminish the romantic possibility of a work that can be both translated and unchanged." Indeed, Halebsky regards constellation as a "series of independent points that connect to and shift proximities with other points. This constellation image reflects the creative process of finding points of connection among lived experience, cultural knowledge, and the source text" (61).

Diana Manole's "From Seaton Village to Global Village: Metonymies of Exile and Globalization in Judith Thompson's *Sled*" explores similar issues closer to home, in Toronto. Manole argues that "[f]rom the perspective of globalization, *Sled's* metonymic depiction of 1990s Canadians shows that they have experienced the consequences of daily exposure to people from other national communities earlier than the rest of the world" (93). Thus, Manole reconsiders the contested politics of Canadian multiculturalism from the perspective of globalization. She identifies "exile as a shared identity marker determined by globalization" (79). Her single focus on Toronto recalls Rustom Bharucha's discussion of intraculturalism, a concept referring to cultural exchanges between communities living within the same nation state (Bharucha 8-9).

The closing essay, Alex Lazaridis Ferguson's "Symbolic Capital and Relationships of Flow: Canada, Europe, and the International Performing Arts Festival Circuit," productively

employs Bourdieu's theory of symbolic capital to analyze the cultural exchanges offered by performing arts festivals in Canada and Europe. Further drawing on the theories of Csikszentmihalyi (flow), Dewey (qualitative thought), and Fischer-Lichte (radical concept of presence), Ferguson demonstrates how festivals and systems of cultural capital can either enhance or hamper cross-cultural exchange.

Taken together, then, the essays collected here "[. . .] compare and contrast both within and across the continuities and discontinuities in the flux of [national and international] systems [. . .]" (Gillespie 201), to explore some of the ways in which Canadian performances are being reconfigured in our age of globalization.



## Works Cited

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