

EDITORIAL NOTE FROM THE INCOMING EDITOR

This issue of *Theatre Research in Canada/Recherches théâtrales au Canada* marks the official changing of the editorial guard. For the last seven years, Glen Nichols has shown exemplary leadership as General Editor, overseeing the publication of sophisticated, award-winning, discipline-shifting articles and theme issues on such topics as intermedial performance, intercultural performance, and francophone theatre in western Canada. Needless to say, I have some rather large shoes to fill and so I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Glen for his kindness, patience, and support throughout the transition period. I am also grateful to Stephen Johnson, Barry Freeman, Erin Hurley, Louise Ladouceur, Kelsy Vivash, and Shelley Liebembuk for their encouragement and hard work in the past year.

Looking ahead, we have several exciting theme issues planned. Issue 35-1, co-edited by Stephen Johnson and me, will focus on the theme of gender and empire, with a specific emphasis on pre-Confederation performance culture and articulations of masculine identity. Issue 35-2, co-edited by Erin Hurley and Hervé Guay, will look at the production, performance, and reception of Quebec theatre *outside* Quebec. Both of these issues will continue *TRiC's* recent exploration of francophone theatre (33-2), globalization (see 34-1), and the transnational flow of plays, performing bodies, performance styles, and theoretical concepts, past and present.



The articles gathered in this general issue offer richly diverse scholarship by new and emerging academics. Although their subjects range from Internet blogging and carnivalesque dramaturgy to queer gossip and the Žižekian death drive, each author makes skillful use of contemporary theory to explore theatre and performance in the Canadian context. In "The Feminist Spectator as Blogger," Michelle MacArthur usefully extends Jill Dolan's work on feminist criticism by considering the potential for "feminist theatre reviewing in the blogosphere" to "address problems posed by the static, single-authored nature of traditional theatre criticism" (164). Her article surveys the work of contemporary bloggers and concludes with an insightful analysis of the blog run by Montreal-based performer Pol Pelletier. While acknowledging blogging's limitations as a political vehicle, MacArthur nevertheless concludes that feminist critics might

continue to challenge hegemonic critical discourse through innovative blogging practices.

Dirk Gindt is likewise interested in highlighting the political potential of a relatively under-theorized form of communication: gossip. In “Sky Gilbert, Daniel MacIvor, and the Man in the Vancouver Hotel Room: Queer Gossip, Community Narrative, and Theatre History,” Gindt explores “the potential of gossip to engender subversively gay and queer community narratives, which in turn invite us to discover and reclaim absent and neglected remnants of theatre history in Canada” (191). Through a comparative analysis of Sky Gilbert’s *My Night with Tennessee* (1992) and Daniel MacIvor’s *His Greatness* (2007), he examines how the economy of gossip that surrounded Tennessee Williams’s 1980 visit to Vancouver shaped the personal and communal narratives of gay theatre artists for over three decades. Building on the work of Joseph Roach, among others, Gindt makes a compelling argument for taking gossip seriously, while offering a fresh perspective on two of Canada’s most influential queer playwrights/performers.

James McKinnon takes a different spin on cultural memory and the destabilization of cultural hierarchies in “Looka me, I’m the force o’ wisdom and progress!': Un-crowning the Classic Text Through Carnavalesque Dramaturgy.” McKinnon analyzes the dramaturgy for Michael O’Brien’s 1995 play, *Mad Boy Chronicle*, a comedic twist on *Hamlet* that received broad critical acclaim despite suggestions that its target audience was the “*Dumb and Dumber* crowd” (Morrow in McKinnon, 217). But O’Brien’s dramaturgical strategies deliberately questioned *Hamlet*’s cultural status and subverted audience expectations to encourage a rethinking of the hierarchies that distinguish highbrow from lowbrow. By examining O’Brien’s skillful deployment of intertextual references, public discourses, paratexts, and carnivalesque conventions, McKinnon not only develops a persuasive explanation for the play’s success but also outlines a model that might benefit other playwrights and dramaturgs when approaching revered classical texts.

Graham Wolfe takes on more sombre subject matter in “Normand Charette’s *Fragments d’une lettre d’adieu lus par des géologues* and the Žižekian Death Drive,” offering a fresh and sophisticated reading of Charette’s 1986 play about the death of a geologist in Cambodia through an engagement with Slavoj Žižek’s conception of the “death drive.” Advancing recent scholarly investigations of “the intimacy of theatre’s relationship with death,”

Wolfe seeks to “locate a more radical dimension of Chaurette’s theatre in its capacity to stage the *undead* supplements of a contemporary reality increasingly deprived (like the Geologists’ mission) of solid ground and stable structures” (240).

Karina Smith also looks to the 1980s in her analysis of the relationship between Canadian development agency funding and popular theatre companies in “North-South Exchanges: Sistren’s Tours of Canada in the 1980s and Early 1990s.” Using the Sistren Theatre Collective of Jamaica as a case study, Smith argues that the Canadian government’s effort in the 1980s to position itself on the world stage as a benevolent, socially-conscious nation encouraged funding bodies to support popular theatre companies in the global South who conformed to a particular ideal of grassroots outreach. However, as Smith astutely argues, while the funding presented opportunities for cross-cultural exchange, particularly when Sistren toured Canada and gave workshops to popular theatre workers, it also turned the company into a mouthpiece for the development agencies in a troubling replay of colonial power relations, inhibiting rather than enhancing Sistren’s ability to fully engage with popular theatre workers.

Two Forum pieces and the Book Review section round out the issue. In “Merrill Denison: The Political and Modernist Writer at 120,” Allana Lindgren celebrates the life and achievements of the modernist “playwright, radio dramatist, essayist, journalist, environmental advocate and writer of corporate histories” (281) who would have had his 120th birthday in 2013. Through extensive archival research, Lindgren paints a compelling portrait of a man who was, in many respects, ahead of his time. Nicholas Hanson looks to the not-too-distant past in “Solo Census: A Numerical Analysis of One-Person Performances in Canada,” a statistical study that charts the rise in the number of one-person performances produced by professional theatre companies over the last two decades. Hanson queries whether the perceived surge of solo shows results primarily from economic conditions and offers some surprising conclusions.

Taken singly or as a whole, the articles in this issue of *Theatre Research in Canada/ Recherches théâtrales au Canada* attest to the richness and depth of theatre studies in Canada today. I look forward to what the future holds for all of us! ❁

Marlis Schweitzer, May 20, 2013