

Editorial Introduction: Our 35th Year

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It's spring, a time of renewal and festivity! This special "bonus" issue of *Theatre Research in Canada* celebrates the journal's 35th issue and the beginning of its 35th year (we officially turn 35 in 2015). For over three decades, *TRIC* has served as a site of scholarly debate, dialogue, and discovery for a vibrant community of theatre and performance scholars, both in Canada and increasingly beyond its borders. *TRIC*'s first issue, published in the spring of 1980, featured an eclectic range of articles on such topics as Dora Mavor Moore, the first circus in eastern Canada, Montreal's Theatre Royal in 1825, the nineteenth-century theatre manager Eugene A. McDowell, and Rick Salutin's *Les Canadiens*. In their inaugural editorial, co-founding editors Richard Plant and Ann Saddlemeyer expressed hope that the journal would advance research on "the theatrical and dramatic history of Canada" and "provide a forum for the exchange of thoughtful and studied opinion, thereby encouraging the formation of an informed critical perspective within which to view Canadian theatre." In addition to publishing articles on a broad range of topics, they planned to include excerpts of scripts, book reviews and review articles, and a "Notes and Queries" section with "brief statements of important new projects and specific requests relating to individual research." Plant and Saddlemeyer anticipated that over time the journal would "achieve [. . .] a balanced presentation of contemporary work in the areas of criticism and research into theatre history in Canada."

In the intervening 34 years, *TRIC* has accomplished many of the goals first set out by Plant and Saddlemeyer. Led by eleven general editors¹ and a team of associate editors, executive editors, managing editors, book review editors, editorial assistants, and board members, not to mention the dozens of authors who have published in its pages, *TRIC* has steadily fostered the development of Canadian theatre studies. While the journal no longer publishes a Notes and Queries section, our Forum and Book Review sections continue to reflect on the state of the field and offer commentary on new trends and pressing issues. More importantly, *TRIC* has remained steadfastly committed to publishing articles in English and in French, recognizing Canada's rich and diverse history.

Of course, *TRIC* has set new goals for itself and its readers along the way, in keeping with larger disciplinary shifts and new cultural, political, social, and economic imperatives. In the late 1980s and 1990s, debates surrounding identity politics inspired important analyses of the hierarchies and practices of gender, race, class, and sexuality as they played out both on and off theatrical stages. More recently, questions about postcolonialism, neocolonialism, interculturalism, globalization, nationalism, transnationalism, intermediality, and the very definition of theatre itself have pushed the discipline in exciting new directions. While I do not propose to survey all of these developments here, I mention them as a way of acknowledging the vitality that characterizes our discipline and, I hope, this journal. Here's to another 35 years of deep inquiry and inspiring conversation.

The articles gathered in this issue offer lively and varied approaches to theatre and performance scholarship, visiting topics both familiar and new. In "PuShing Performance

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Brands in Vancouver,” Peter Dickinson considers the social, political, and ethical challenges that performing arts institutions must confront when collaborating with corporate producing partners. How does a performing arts institution make ethical choices and develop viable business relationships when its corporate partners call into question its social commitments? To explore this complicated question, Dickinson undertakes a materialist analysis of the relationship between Vancouver’s PuSh International Performing Arts Festival and SFU Woodward’s, the downtown home of Simon Fraser University’s School for the Contemporary Arts located in Vancouver’s “economically depressed and socially marginal Downtown Eastside” (130). The result is an incisive, sensitive, and balanced critique that explores how rebranding initiatives can expose the cultural, economic, and urban fissures that inform programming decisions and marketing pitches.

In “The Professionalization of a Stage Naturalist, the Making of a Mythmaker: The Theatre Criticism of Urjo Kareda at the University of Toronto’s *Varsity* Newspaper,” Robin Whittaker offers an insightful perspective on the artistic and stylistic education of the renowned theatre critic and dramaturg, Urjo Kareda. Turning to some of Kareda’s earliest theatre criticism, published in the 1960s in *Varsity*, the University of Toronto’s campus newspaper, Whittaker argues that many of the hallmarks of the critic’s later work, “most notably his unwavering preference for neo-Aristotelian stage naturalism and psychological realism, and a dynamic emphasis on Toronto’s theatre ecology” are evident in his early writing (151). Through a careful reading of these primary sources, Whittaker urges theatre scholars to reconsider how they approach extra-professional theatre criticism and to continue challenging biases that privilege the professional over the amateur.

Jessica Langston and Mike Chaulk also offer a new take on a familiar and undeniably Canadian topic: hockey. In “Revolution Night in Canada: Hockey and Theatre in Tomson Highway’s *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*,” they respond to the recent “sports turn” within theatre and performance scholarship by examining how hockey functions both metaphorically and dramaturgically in Highway’s celebrated play. “[A]s a sport that has been adopted and adapted by First Nations communities,” Langston and Chaulk argue, “hockey provides an ideal reflection of what Highway is doing with Euro-Canadian dramatic conventions, on a micro-scale, and with colonial traditions and powers, on a macro-scale” (169).

Kailin Wright looks to another of Canada’s most influential Indigenous playwrights, Daniel David Moses, in “Performing Cultural Crossroads: The Subject-Making Functions of ‘I am’ Declarations in Daniel David Moses’s *Almighty Voice and His Wife*.” Drawing from J.L. Austin’s speech act theory, Judith Butler’s concept of gender performativity, and Miri Albahari’s theory of possessive subjecthood, she analyzes how “I am” declarations function within Moses’s play, particularly during “encounters between historical Indigenous figures and perceived white colonial audiences” (185). With skill and elegance, Wright demonstrates that Moses’s characters use such statements to call themselves into being, perform their belongingness, claim ownership over “identificatory categories,” and declare their individuality in a society that would prefer to ignore them altogether.

Finally, in “Finding the New Radical: Digital Media, Oppositionality, and Political Intervention in Contemporary Canadian Theatre,” Kimberley McLeod complicates recent tendencies to praise the political efficacy of intermedial performance by identifying some of its limitations. Her primary focus is Quebec playwright Oliver Choinière’s sensational

performance *Projet blanc* (2011), in which Choinière led audiences on a clandestine audio tour of the Théâtre du Nouveau Monde's production of *L'École des femmes*. McLeod argues that while Choinière succeeded in creating "affinity and proximity within his audience," he inadvertently undermined his critique by taking an overly oppositional stance (203). She then turns to Jonathan Goldsbie's *Route 501 Revisited*, a performance piece that invited audiences to tour Toronto on the 501 streetcar and encouraged participant collaboration through Twitter. McLeod concludes that while *Route 501's* politics were less overt than those of *Projet blanc*, the former offered a more effective model for using mobile technologies to "politicize spaces and users via performance" (203).

McLeod's thought-provoking analysis of contemporary performance and political action offers an ideal segue into the journal's special Forum section, "Theatre? Research? In? Canada?" This Forum asks readers to reflect on the following questions: What does "Theatre Research in Canada" mean today? What could it mean and what should it mean? Which questions have we ignored for too long or overlooked altogether? And how do we respond to shifting disciplinary, institutional, and national needs?

To begin what I hope will be a lengthy conversation in these pages and beyond, I have invited scholars from across Canada to write short position papers that take up these questions. Many of their pieces identify key issues, worrying trends, or exciting opportunities for our discipline to consider, ranging from knowledge mobilization (Jenn Stephenson) and publishing (Annie Gibson) to issues of language, access, and methodology (Louise Forsyth, Virginie Magnat). Many essays look back to the journal's founding or to an earlier moment in the history of theatre studies in Canada (Susan Bennett, Ric Knowles, Alan Filewod, Yves Jubinville, Hervé Guay), urging us to pay greater attention to our disciplinary past/s. Others identify gaps that remain for future generations to fill (J. Paul Halferty). Several essays offer detailed reports on exciting new developments in the related fields of dance and circus studies (Nicole Harbonnier-Topin, Patrick Leroux), while others call for new journals and new textbooks that offer a twenty-first century perspective on Canada's diverse performance histories (Barry Freeman, Robin Whittaker). The authors write with passion and conviction. They take firm stands on important issues and invite dialogue and debate. And so, on that note, I turn to you: what does "Theatre? Research? In? Canada?" mean to you today? And what *should* it mean? I welcome your thoughts.

Notes

- ¹ Ann Saddlemyer (1980-1987), Richard Plant (1980-1993), Leonard E. Doucette (1987-1993), Robert Nunn (1993-1996), Hélène Beauchamp (1993-1996), Stephen Johnson (1993-2002), Deborah Cottreau (1996-2000), Moira Day (2000-2002), Bruce Barton (2002-2005), Glen Nichols (2005-2012), Marlis Schweitzer (2012-).

Works Cited

Saddlemyer, Ann; Richard Plant. "Editorial." *Theatre Research in Canada/Recherches théâtrales au Canada* 1.1 (1980). Web. 5 Feb. 2014.