

Cirque Global is a nuanced treatment of the Quebecois circus phenomenon that lays the groundwork for future scholarship needed to celebrate the multiplicity of circus traditions whose presence is growing in Quebec. Australia, Finland, and Italy, for example, are just a few countries whose styles, performers, and companies are part of the Quebecois circus scene, but are not discussed in great depth in this collection. The influence of the circus traditions and markets of India, Korea, the Middle East, and other non-western players in Quebec is also in need of further exploration. Contributors to *Cirque Global* are neither starry-eyed fans nor callous critics incapable of acknowledging the wonder of virtuosic live performance. They have all immersed themselves in the province's circus culture and asked difficult questions of it. Their answers constitute a cutting-edge text that promises to serve a wide readership of those who wish to think critically about circus beyond Barnum & Bailey.

DAVID FANCY, ET AL.

Diversities in Actor Training.

Brock University, 2016, <https://brocku.ca/diversities-in-actor-training>

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Issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion—particularly in regard to acting and casting—have garnered significant attention recently in professional and academic theatre circles alike. Just as the musical *Hamilton* brought diversity into the Broadway spotlight, asking audiences to consider “who tells your story,” discussions of the changing face of theatre and the import of including more diverse perspectives within our educational institutions and training practices are gaining momentum. That, coupled with an increasingly globalized and technologically connected society, makes *Diversities in Actor Training*, an online resource edited by David Fancy and hosted by Brock University, a timely and necessary intervention.

Funded by a grant from the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities, *Diversities in Actor Training* provides a dynamic online tool for theatre teachers, practitioners, and students, specifically those interested in the ways actors' bodies are read by audiences on the public stage. As Fancy notes, “*how* people are depicted in the theatre makes a significant impact,” and if certain bodies are depicted as “lesser than” others, “we’re just promoting stereotypes our societies have inherited from long histories of injustice and exclusion.” The site offers historical and contemporary perspectives on these issues from leaders in Canadian theatre scholarship and practice such as Nina Lee Aquino, Conrad Alexandrowicz, Diana Belshaw, Paul De Jong, Michael Greyeyes, Naila Keleta-Mae, Laura Levin, Daniel Mroz, and Alex Tigchelaar. The videos contributed by these artists and scholars extend and animate the conversation begun in the fall 2014 issue of *Canadian Theatre Review*, “Actor Training in a Changing Landscape.”

The “Overview,” the first page encountered by users, is written in accessible, conversational prose, a strategy that invites users of all backgrounds to the conversation. Fancy concisely outlines the project's intention, situating it within current cultural discourses about

the embodiment of diversity on stage—a topic of particular relevance to actors. He argues that actors hold communicative power; they are the “ground-zero of meaning-making in theatre.” Thus, an investigation of the intersecting identities that inform actors’ work and training is essential. Fancy also articulates the complexity of the topic, specifically noting that the site “pluralize[s] the term ‘diversities’ because there are so many types of difference. [...] We’ve focused on a few key diversities. We’ve stressed how diversities intersect.” This approach avoids privileging or isolating one type of diversity over others, allowing contributors to navigate what is clearly complicated terrain.

The core of the content is organized into six sections: “Ethnic and Cultural Diversities,” “Diversities in Gender and Sexuality,” “Ableism and Diversities,” “Diversities in Vocal Training,” “Brecht and the Alienation Effect,” and “Aesthetic Diversities.” While some sections, such as that on Brecht and the stand-alone section on vocal training (without an equivalent physical training section), may initially seem somewhat anomalous, when considered within the larger project and alongside the other videos, they help to form a unified whole.

Overall the site is user-friendly and easy to navigate. The larger sections—“Ethnic and Cultural Diversities,” “Diversities in Gender and Sexuality,” and “Aesthetic Diversities”—clearly lay out their subsections, each of which features a video that takes the user through its designated topic in a digestible timeframe of 10-20 minutes. In addition to the video, each page includes a brief synopsis, a concise author biography, and additional materials including detailed discussion questions, works cited, and suggested further resources. These elements enhance the site’s pedagogical potential, inspiring deeper thought and encouraging connections to larger cultural conversations.

Although the sections and videos can be viewed in any order, the first of the “Ethnic and Cultural Diversities” section, contributed by Keleta-Mae, sets the tone for the entire project, demonstrating the complex history of racial representations in Canadian theatre. Employing theoretical frameworks including Benedict Anderson, Arjun Appadurai, and others, Keleta-Mae lays out the major question that undergirds the project: whose stories are being told on stage, and whose are not?

Most videos refer to others in the series, a rhetorical strategy that creates coherency and emphasizes the inherent intersectionality of identities. However, within each section it is most useful to view the videos in their numbered order, as each tends to build upon the last. Among all the videos there is a relatively effective balance between scholarly contexts, such as in Kelsy Vivash’s lecture on historical gender representations in theatre and in Allison Leadley’s discussion of the disabled body, as well as practical case studies like Nina Lee Aquino’s “Project Other” and Paul de Jong’s vocal exercises.

The videos are all illustrated in the same manner, with black and white sketches that fill in as the narration progresses and reinforce key aspects of the topic under examination. These animations are largely symbolic, a choice that subtly reinforces the site’s intention to be sensitive to and move beyond potential stereotypes that might exist in more specific images. Admittedly, I occasionally found my attention drawn to the drawings’ progression rather than the narration’s content. However, this is also the benefit of the online format: it allows the user to stop, rewind, and revisit the lecture.

The “How to Use This Video Series” page that addresses intended audiences is illuminating. It candidly recognizes that the language and styles of delivery vary widely among the

videos; some are more conversational and introductory, while others are more scholarly and theoretical. Users—particularly students or those unaccustomed to theoretical language—might benefit from reading this disclaimer, for, as the page explains, the use of complex terminology is ultimately a way of “honouring your intelligence.” Its diversity of narration style is perhaps one of the site’s greatest strengths, demonstrating the rich intersections and relationships that exist between theatre scholarship and practice.

What makes this resource especially useful is its Creative Commons designation. Users are able to share, adapt, copy, and redistribute the material as needed. Further, the online format will appeal to tech-savvy users and, perhaps most importantly, will be able to expand as new voices enter the conversation. In fact, Fancy and several contributors encourage users to “reach out to us,” further reinforcing the dynamic, dialogical nature of this type of resource and ultimately demonstrating its transformative potential.