

FROM THE EDITOR

We are facing a tectonic shift in the evaluation of the humanities vis-à-vis the sciences and the uncertainties of an unstable economic global landscape. If in the past curricular issues were at the center of controversies about teaching, this time there seems to be a persistent interest in questioning the efficacy of classrooms and the faculty that lectures in them. While students are pepper-sprayed or arrested for expressing their discomfort and dissatisfaction with their universities, professors at departmental meetings are being asked to consider the possibility of hybrid campuses that combine site-specific instruction with online flexibility. The archetype that will haunt us in the next decade is the story of the recently deceased CEO of Apple, Steve Jobs.¹ A dropout who audited several liberal arts courses, Jobs described his work as a practice taking place at the intersection of technology and the humanities. For Jobs, the humanities were primarily the realm of intuition and creative rule breaking. He associated our fields of inquiry with artistic freedom. Like Jobs, the student of the future—a future that is already here—will not be inclined to pay for required credits that are not linked to his or her own personal priorities. To a certain extent, our challenge now is to articulate, in an accessible and attractive fashion, a conversation with the general, tax-paying public in which we explain that our contributions to democracy are based on a grasp of critical reasoning, rigorous research, civil wisdom, and—yes, by all means—the skills of imagination that led to the existence of the *Goldberg Variations*, a still life by Cézanne, O’Neill’s *Long Day’s Journey into Night*, quantum mechanics, Boal’s *Theatre of the Oppressed*, Pixar, Peking opera, Soyinka’s plays, and the iPod.

According to Wallace Stevens, the task of the critic is “to communicate to the reader the portent of the subject.”² The four articles presented in this issue of *Theatre Survey* are fully committed to doing that, and they manage to surprise us by telling their stories with a slant. Gina Bloom explores unexpected homologies between different models of proxemic competence in England during the late 1500s. In her opinion, the ability to surveil space effectively was a prominent factor in the way standards of masculinity, spectatorship, and the staging of games such as backgammon were experienced during performances of the anonymous play *Arden of Faversham* (ca. 1592). Jennifer Wise, meanwhile, emphasizes how the “Marseillaise” provided some key elements for the formation of melodrama, as René-Charles Guilbert de Pixérécourt found in that revolutionary song a template for his incursions into a new type of play in which oppositions between children and tyrants became particularly acute.

Dirk Gindt shows how Swedish audiences turned a production of Tennessee Williams’s *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* into a battleground for their own sexual concerns. In this case, a reified and Usonian Other served as a mirror in which tensions at work within Swedish society were reflected and negotiated. Tensions at work in the United States loom as Shoshana Enelow discloses the conflicted relation of

James Baldwin with the Actors Studio. While the “Method” enforced a quest for more universal emotional parameters, African American actors wrestled with the racialized specificity of their feelings and the fact that, due to the dominant codes of realism, their color precast them in certain roles and proscribed others.

Expanding on these explorations of conceptual frames that challenge us to redefine the narratives of theatre historiography, Patrick Anderson and “Critical Stages” offer us a poignant and extremely honest exchange between artists and collaborators Tina Takemoto and Angela Ellsworth. When Ellsworth was diagnosed with cancer, she sent photographs of her weakened body to Takemoto, who turned her own body into an experimental surface on which she tried to replicate the lesions her friend was confronting during treatment. In so doing, Takemoto transformed herself into a surrogate responsible for enacting Ellsworth’s survival.

In “*Re: Sources*,” Beth Kattelman invites scholar and playwright Jennifer Schlueter to share with us nothing less than a paranormal archive. The Patience Worth Collection at the Missouri History Museum in St. Louis is probably one of the most intriguing sites ever visited by a theatre historian. Patience Worth was—at least according to some—a seventeenth-century English girl who in the first decades of the twentieth century dictated an extensive number of literary works to Missourian Pearl Pollard Curran. Since I don’t want to spoil the thrills that await the curious reader of this section, I will only add that Worth is now being rechanneled as a character in a play written by Schlueter herself.

In “What Are You Reading?” Kim Solga allows Susan Bennett—one of the leading scholars in the area of theatre reception—to bring us back to the more tangible realm of books recently read and enjoyed. Bennett’s recommendations spotlight how theatricality and performance inform all walks of life, including business, sightseeing, popular forms of entertainment, and the political survival of North American indigenous populations.

A common thread that unifies all the pieces is their investment in testing unusual theoretical and documentary angles in order to challenge us to read the historical evidence in a different way. Bloom is aware that some analogies can be problematic, but she decides to take the risk in order to underline how plays intersect the axiological complexities of the environment that produces them. Wise dares to recast the genealogy of melodrama from the standpoint of an anthem that authorized complicated and even contradictory political and dramatic positions. Gindt shows how intercultural translations can be utilized as opportunities for self-fashioning and transference. Enelow reminds us that nonnaturalistic formats are sometimes the most adequate vehicles to portray racial entanglements more realistically. Ellsworth and Takemoto pushed the limits of research, representation, and empathy to the point of reducing those terms to inadequacy. And we learn from Schlueter that there is a moment when scholarship demands artistic interventions, a move from the library onto the stage.

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As you have probably noticed, this issue of *Theatre Survey* is being published in April, not in May. And your next issue will knock at your door in

September, not November. These adjusted dates are part of an ongoing process that during 2012 will prepare the path for our expansion from two issues to three in 2013. This transformation will enable *Theatre Survey* to publish twelve articles per year instead of eight, giving us a chance to address contemporary debates and controversies more frequently and making room to diversify the methodological and thematic dimensions of the journal. From now on, *Theatre Survey* will also sponsor a working session at each ASTR conference. We want the journal to represent the cultural and professional diversity of all our colleagues and students.

We would like to thank the departing members of our editorial board—Daphne Brooks (Princeton University), Susan Leigh Foster (University of California, Los Angeles), Helen Gilbert (University of London), and Joseph Roach (Yale University)—for their support and advice. Our four incoming members are Christopher Balme (Institut für Theaterwissenschaft, München), Herbert Blau (University of Washington), Brian Herrera (University of New Mexico), and Patricia Ybarra (Brown University). We look forward to sharing with them and all our readers the excitements of transforming *Theatre Survey* into a triannual publication.

ENDNOTES

1. See Walter Isaacson, *Steve Jobs* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011).
2. Wallace Stevens, *The Necessary Angel: Essays on Reality and the Imagination* [1951], in *Collected Poetry and Prose*, ed. Frank Kermode and Joan Richardson (New York: Library of America, 1997), 639.