

Editorial

When we chose a theme for this issue of *Platform, Mapping Performance – Intercultural Spaces, Negotiable Boundaries*, we wanted to investigate performative trajectories, without neglecting to map the histories and genealogies that inform them. We hoped to explore the ways in which critical tools - such as postcolonialism and interculturalism - can help us to understand a new cosmopolitan geography and the power relations it reflects. In this regard, we have not been disappointed. We are very proud to publish the five papers in this edition, each of which interacts, from its own nuanced cultural specificity, with contemporary conceptions of community and universality as represented in performance.

The fields of interculturalism and postcolonialism are under scrutiny in this increasingly globalized era. At the International Federation of Theatre Research conference in Lisbon last June, there was a suggestion from some quarters that the term ‘intercultural,’ imbued with the negative connotations of the arguably neo-colonialist, arguably exploitative work of practitioners like Schechner, Brook and Mnouchkine, represented something of the past, something irrelevant to today’s, again, arguably, more ethically aware, more culturally sensitive, post-Schechner performance practice. New terms, it was proposed, needed to be found in order to explore the creativity that collaboration between two cultures can engender. Similarly, postcolonial paradigms are being called into question. In a world where East/West binaries are rapidly shifting, and developments in communications blur the boundaries between the local and the global, it can seem as though Fanonian calls for the cultivation of national cultures, or Bharucha’s exhortations on the economic exploitation inherent in intercultural encounters, must inevitably be muted. But has so much changed in the thirty years since Edward Said published *Orientalism*, or is there still much to be said about the sensitivities inherent in making theatre that crosses borders? The papers published here, we believe, make a case for the importance of finding the spaces where local performance, global performance, the theatre of the centre and the theatre of the margins overlap. The work of our postgraduate contributors explores intercultural and postcolonial themes, while helping to develop critical schemata to deal with race, nationality, gender, and identity in performance.

For some of our writers, history and national identity are the locus of their work. Ching-Yi Huang’s exploration of Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan’s *Portrait of the Families* points to the power of theatre to give expression to Taiwan’s complex colonial past, helping to forge a sense of national identity from the fraught and ultimately unanswerable question ‘which country should I love?’ Mara Lockowandt’s article on Sephardic theatre has a similar historical bias. It deals with a New York based collective, the Ladino Players, who aim to keep the Sephardic language and customs alive through performance; in so doing they negotiate issues surrounding linguistic and cultural conversation and adaptation. She terms this phenomenon ‘theatre for survival.’ These two papers speak to the importance of performing national histories, whether post-colonial or diasporic, in the search for, or conservation of, identity. Leaning more towards the cosmopolitan, Marcus Cheng Chye Tan’s paper interrogates the notion of music as a ‘universal language’ in Ong Ken Seng’s intercultural project, *Awaking*. In the show’s merging of the musical traditions of Northern Kunqu opera, Chinese classical music and Elizabethan folk tunes there is a negotiation of the binaries of East and West, and a fusing of disparate musical forms to forge a ‘universal’ acoustemology which simultaneously contains the past and reflects the present.

With Lise Uytterhoeven and Mark Hamilton's scholarship, there is a move away from the drive to understand the past or preserve national cultures; they still foreground the issue of identity, but it seems to be individual identity that is interrogated. In *A Cosmopolite's Utopia*, Uytterhoeven argues that the work of the half Flemish, half Moroccan choreographer Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui's embodies a cosmopolitanism that defies the traditional and restrictive Flemish generational dance history model. Using the scholarship of Joseph Roach, she understands Cherkaoui's body as a crossroads of intercultural exchange, a site of hybridity, of merging identities and discourses that cannot be contained by national or ethnocentric paradigms. With *Mika's HAKA*, Mark Hamilton discusses the work of another choreographer and dancer who rejects traditional performances of his cultural heritage in favour of subversions that can express his layered otherness. Following Christopher Balme, Hamilton argues against the rigid conservation of cultural forms in his discussion of Maori performer Mika's queer cabaret show. Mika capitalises upon Western desire for Maori otherness, attracting charges of irreverence towards Maori tradition, or exploitation of the young Maori and Pasifika men who perform his work. Hamilton, provocatively, defends the legitimacy of Mika's representation of his identity and his otherness.

In thinking about how these papers interact with and speak to each other, it becomes apparent that the intercultural is individual: it is tangled up in questions of identity. When a Flemish-Moroccan rejects a nationalised discourse that cannot define his work; a Sephardi wrestles with the task of keeping cultural and linguistic heritage alive; a gay, adopted, Maori performer subverts both Maori tradition and Western stereotypes of Indigenes; when a fusion of three distinct musical traditions can be understood as universal; or a Taiwanese asks 'what country should I love?' then each speaker, each voice, is making a statement about identity in this increasingly globalized, yet culturally diverse world.

Continuing *Platform's* dedication to publishing performance responses, in this edition Georgina Guy uses a phenomenological lens to insightfully examine space and liminality in *Atelier Brancusi* by André Avril.

We would like to express thanks to Palgrave Macmillan and Intellect Publishers for the review copies of Patrick Lonergan's *Theatre and Globalization: Irish Drama in the Celtic Tiger Era* and Olivia Turnbull's *Bringing Down the House: The Crisis in Britain's Regional Theatres* respectively. As always, we are very grateful to our academic and peer reviewers, to the Royal Holloway Drama Department, and to all our contributors for their hard work.

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(Issue Editors)