

# Editorial

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This is my first issue as Senior Editor of *Theatre Research International*. Picking up the ‘baton’ from Freddie Rokem is no easy task; I feel the weight of this responsibility and am conscious of a steep learning curve, despite the excellent insight, wisdom and knowledge Freddie has passed on to me during his term of office, for which I am deeply grateful. Joining me as Associate Editor is Charlotte Canning from the University of Texas, Austin, who, behind the scenes, is already proving to be an invaluable journal colleague.

Working in association with the International Federation for Theatre Research, *TRI* is committed to scholarly engagement with the theatre practices ‘of differing world contexts’. As recent issues attest and due in no small measure to Freddie Rokem’s editorial endeavours to attract a greater number of contributors and/or topics from an increasingly diverse global reach, our coverage of ‘differing world contexts’ has expanded. Last year saw us introducing three new initiatives in the journal, all of which are underpinned by a desire to sustain and more thoroughly internationalize it. To recapitulate, these developments are to: (i) create opportunities for review articles on theatre research in non-English-speaking areas of the world, (ii) encourage in-depth dossiers reporting on new and innovative performance in a language or in an area that would not be immediately accessible to readers, and (iii) receive reports on new and innovative research projects or programmes undertaken by a group rather than an individual. I offer this reminder of these new initiatives given my editorial undertaking to see these become an established, familiar practice in coming issues.

Evincing this commitment is the inclusion in this issue of Ravi Chaturvedi’s review article on ‘Theatre Research and Publication in India’. India is a complex, special case: publications appear primarily in Hindi and English; different theatre traditions are performed in a variety of languages. Offering a chronological tracing of the origins and the development of theatre research in post-independence India, Chaturvedi maps the intricacies of a field that is as ‘diverse’ as India’s multiculturalism. Examining how, why, when and where theatre scholarship emerged, university drama departments were inaugurated or doctoral theatre research expanded, the overview offers an insightful account of the directions theatre research in India has taken.

In closing, Chaturvedi signals the future trajectory of Indian theatre scholarship as one principally engaging with issues of ‘globalization, communalism, terrorism and religious fundamentalism’. This mapping together of social, creative and academic

responsibilities brings us back to a fundamental questioning of what theatre and theatre scholarship could, might or should be 'doing'. 'Doing' international theatre scholarship is, as my opening remarks signal, core to the journal's research culture, carves out its identity and indicates where its responsibilities primarily lie. In managing the selection of articles with assistance from an editorial and peer-reviewing body, my/our aim is to continue to open up a critical space that allows for differing theatre and performance cultures to appear beside each other, to create possibilities for thinking about global differences and interrogating our own, local approaches, methodologies or theatrical forms and traditions.

Beside Chaturvedi's overview of Indian theatre research is Hyunjung Lee's 'Performing Korean-ness on the Global Stage', which takes Ho-Jin Yoon's musical *The Last Empress* as a case study for an analysis of South Korea's idea of nationhood and its desire for recognition on the 'global stage' during a period of economic advancement in the 1990s. Lee's examination of the musical in its social, cultural and theatrical contexts, locally and globally, critically exposes the aesthetic exploitation of traditional Korean culture in the interests of creating and marketing Korean-ness as a global product.

In its international coverage, in terms of both contributions and its electronic and paper distribution through the auspices of Cambridge University Press, *TRI* can now claim to be something of a global product – though one resistant to a monolithic branding or endorsement of one kind of theory or one critical approach, or the privileging of one theatre culture more than or above all others. Nonetheless, unsettling the hegemonic hold of anglophone research in our field of theatre and performance studies is, as Freddie Rokem signalled in his first editorial, by no means easily achieved. Like Freddie, I cannot promise that there will always be a broad international constituency in each and every issue, dependent as we are on when and from where submissions come forward. Moreover, as we move through different topics or special issues, imbalances of different kinds will undoubtedly occur – but my editorial aim will be for these to be productive for new or renewed critical thinking and theatre knowledge.

Clustered in this issue are four articles that critically examine performances that, while radically different to each other in form, content or context, share a common desire to unsettle: Helena Grehan focuses on *Aalst*, a play based on the trial transcripts and documentary footage of parents who killed their two children in the Belgian town of Aalst; Fintan Walsh explores a Dublin production of Charles Mee's *Big Love*; Rachel Zerihan turns to live art and two performances by UK-based artist Kira O'Reilly; and Rob Baum to a student play on survival of the Shoah performed in Melbourne, Australia. In each (very different) case the author is moved by the experience of these particular performances to think variously about ideas of witnessing, of productive modes of intense intimacy, of non-violent attachments to 'others', or of ethical catharsis. Each of these contributions in differing ways 'speaks' to the others. These articles were not solicited together; they arrived together. Seen together they suggest a currency and an urgency, creatively (through theatre) and critically (through theatre scholarship), for explorations of (to borrow from Walsh) 'non-violent modes of being with others'.

'Being with others' is what characterizes the space *Theatre Research International* opens up for thinking through and reflecting on theatre. This is not necessarily a harmonious experience – indeed, critical thinking of all kinds arguably thrives on contestation and dissent, on the interrogation of ideas, theories, perspectives or positions in the interest of seeing and knowing differently. My hope is that through its international commitment to 'being with others', *TRI* continues in insightful, surprising, even difficult ways, to map different 'places', geographically, culturally, politically and critically, that are important to the field of theatre and performance scholarship.