



Editor's Note

Daniel Smith

This ninth volume of *Theatre/Practice* is my first as editor. While previous editors of this journal have elected not to write introductory notes for each issue, I wanted to take this opportunity to reflect on the scope of the journal (without necessarily obligating future editors to maintain the practice of the Editor's Note). Though *Theatre/Practice* began as the journal of the Practice/Production Symposium under founding Editor Peter Campbell, its focus expanded under Editor Jennifer Schlueter. The contents of this volume offer a strong sense of overlapping possibilities among the three MATC Symposia most directly served by *Theatre/Practice*: Practice/Production, Pedagogy, and Playwriting. Each of the three peer-reviewed essays in this volume made its way through a different Symposium, yet each has applicability across the areas represented. This volume engages the 2019 conference theme of "Invention" through digital creation, dance dramaturgy, immersive theatre, and innovative forms of collaboration in theatre practice and pedagogy.

MATC members present in Cleveland for the keynote address by artists from Pittsburgh-based Bricolage Production Company were energized by the dialogic structure of this

presentation, which the speakers crafted with our specific audience in mind and continually adjusted in the moment. Their keynote presentation thus modeled many of the company's practices as described within it. For this volume, Jeffrey Carpenter and Tami Dixon have provided a modified version of their keynote that should serve as an excellent resource for scholars analyzing immersive theatre and for practitioners interested in replicating Bricolage's success.

Bella Poynton's fascinating essay on her experiments generating dialogue with chatbots provides another inventive approach to theatre-making. Collaboration with artificial intelligence in a digital environment allows Poynton to interrogate dramatic structure based on the varying degrees of predictability exhibited by her interlocutors. "Playwriting with Robots" will be of particular interest to playwrights and devisers looking for imaginative ways to generate material, and to scholars in Theatre and Performance Studies grappling with questions of digital theatre and the post-human.

In "The Job that Pays the Bills and How Theatre History Can Help," Kathy Privatt finds that necessity is indeed the mother of invention. Faced with declining student engagement in her Theatre History courses, Privatt looked for solutions in organizations devoted to career counseling. She advocates strategies of linking learning outcomes with sought-after skill sets described by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) and incorporating student reflection on the relevance of course content to their career aspirations. Privatt's essay will be most useful for teachers of theatre history and for theatre educators tasked with convincing college administrators of the relevance of Theatre Studies.

This volume concludes with Eero Laine's essay on directing *Men on Boats* by Jaclyn Backhaus, along with a dialogue between Laine and dance dramaturg Janet Werther about their collaboration on this production. Already widely produced in university theatre programs, *Men on Boats* invites reflection on gender and performance by presenting cisgender white male characters portrayed by actors who are not cisgender white men. This essay and interview led me to consider various performance texts that might teach well with *Men on Boats*: Caryl Churchill's Brechtian approach to gender in *Cloud 9*; the imaginary biographies and drag names of dancers in *Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo*; and expressions of masculinity and femininity in the Takarazuka Revue.

In the present cultural moment, many of us are charged with moving our face-to-face courses to distance learning formats, as we take measures to reduce the impact of the COVID-19 public health crisis. It hardly seems possible that our organization held a conference in Chicago at the beginning of March! The essays in this volume give me hope that we will use digital technologies to build community, that we will continue exploring models of collaboration, and that we will use the tools of our discipline to help prepare our students to face the challenges ahead in a spirit of empathy and invention.