Editorial

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Beyond topography: space and time in the creative imagination

‘Nations, like narratives’, writes Homi K. Bhabha in *Nation and Narration*, ‘lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind’s eye’. As a theorist of post-colonialism, Bhabha was acutely aware of how society’s relationship with space and time is socially constructed, used by the powerful to manipulate, seized by the powerless to fight back.

Those edges of our own spatial reality are currently becoming blurred. With the politics of memory rocking the lives of citizens and their experience of public spaces from Palmyra to Charlottesville, we have become ever more aware of that which we think of as fixed and unchanging suddenly being a negotiation. That historical ‘truth’ is once more being argued over for political ends, it is the physical spaces in which these battles for meaning take place: statues and parks, border controls, our own and others’ bodies.

We may only hear in the media about the negative side of these social transformations, but in our uneven times it is often artists and performers who take the boldest steps to make real the topographies of our social imagination.

This sixth issue of the *Scottish Journal of Performance* celebrates these creative possibilities of meaning-making within the negotiation of space and time: Scotland a narrative of its own; its complex history, territorial uniqueness and the collective imagination constructing its own myths and horizons. This issue features practitioner reports from two inter-disciplinary, site-specific collaborative projects, alongside two articles: one that examines the ways in which site-specific theatre companies in Scotland responded to political processes from the 1990s onwards, and one re-framing the historical research

parameters of the highland bagpipe. Reviews of recently published books from performance studies are also presented: from the small-scale and intimate performance, through the use of improvisation in theatre, to a full-blown history of British theatre from 1965 to 2014. Music history is also reassessed with a book review concerning scholarship in the field of late-twentieth-century women composers.

By the latter half of the twentieth century, critical theory took a decisive turn towards the spatial: 'Space still tends to be treated as fixed, dead, undialectical; time as richness, life, dialectic', Edward Soja wrote in his seminal text *Postmodern Geographies* in 1989. The spatial turn is magnified even further as a creative possibility in the twenty-first century, where communities can be built online and digital worlds imagined and created, access to vast quantities of information and ideas can both de- and re-territorialise and historicise our social realities. These principles inform our papers for the issue.

In the first article of this issue, *Play between worlds: Inchcolm Project*, Mona Bozdog and Dayna Galloway report on the first stage of an applied collaborative research project in which theatre, music, and game design methods bring the world of a video game to life on Inchcolm Island in the Firth of Forth. Audience-participants were transported to the island and set free to explore for one hour with the help of a printed map and a Sonic Maps application on their phones, where audio files played when the participant stood at a particular location. The participants explored the physicality of the landscape and the island's buildings, and discovered in-situ performers along the way. After an hour of individual exploration, the audience gathered at the abbey and were then guided to the Refectory where a projection of the game *Dear Esther* was set up. The authors describe the experience as 'an interplay between two islands, one real and one virtual, and three experiential worlds, the world of the performance (*Dear Rachel*), the world of the game (*Dear Esther*) and Inchcolm Island, as a world in and of itself, its physical presence in constant tension with the visiting worlds'.

Cara Berger and Brianna Robertson-Kirkland report on *Burning the Circle*, a project that emerged from a collaboration between researchers in Archaeology, History, Music and Theatre Studies, and industry partners Northlight Heritage and National Trust for Scotland, which took place in 2014 on the Isle of Arran. Berger melds

practical research and critical theory to investigate contemporary, postdramatic theatre forms, while Robertson-Kirkland examines how historical vocal education can be used to inform the performance of historical works.

András Beck presents a paper that examines the work of Scottish site-specific companies and how they responded to Scotland's political processes in the 1990s. In *Devolutionary sites: NVA, Grid Iron and Scottish site-specificity in the 1990s*, Beck gives an account of Angus Farquhar's NVA and Ben Harrison's Grid Iron, arguing that both companies have responded to political processes such as devolution through site-specific theatre—by finding alternative, more localised performance venues and building communities. He goes on to describe how they have had a lasting influence on the Scottish arts scene, inspiring new theatre companies such as Fire Exit, Poorboy and Highway Diner.

Andrew Bova presents his research into the choice of repertoire for piping competitions in his paper *Identifying canons in competitive light music for the great highland bagpipe, 1947–2015*. Bova suggests that there is inclusivity and exclusivity within acceptable repertoire for competitive solo piping, and posits the notion of the formation of a canon of tunes, featuring boundaries and rules, rather than a repertoire. He discusses ways in which canons of competitive bagpipe repertoire form, and through a detailed methodological comparison suggests that a better understanding of this process will allow practitioners in the competitive piping community to reflect on their musical and competitive decisions.

This issue also showcases a variety of new publications within performance studies, with a selection of reviews by scholars from across Scotland.

Flavia D'Avila reviews *Semiotics and pragmatics of stage improvisation*, by Domenico Pietropaolo, in which 'improvisation as a compositional practice in the Commedia dell'Arte and related traditions from the Renaissance to the 21st century' is analysed. Topics include historical accounts of the development of performance improvisation, semiotics, and the process of production.

A three-volume compendium of a history of British theatre companies spanning the era from 1965 to 2014 is reviewed by Ben Fletcher-Watson. In *British theatre companies: 1965–*

1979, edited by John Bull; *British theatre companies: 1980–1994*, edited by Graham Saunders; *British theatre companies: 1995–2014*, edited by Liz Tomlin, each period is examined in detail. The historical and cultural background to each period is explored, theatre companies are examined, and archival materials that shed light on the inner workings of funding bodies such as the Arts Council of Great Britain are revealed to give fresh insights to the history of British theatre.

The kaleidoscope of women's sounds in music of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, by Kheng K. Koay is reviewed by Lucy Hollingworth. The book provides analysis of the work and lives of six women composers including Judith Weir and Chen Yi, and contributes to this important and developing area of scholarship.

Shona Mackay reviews a collection of essays on the life, teaching and practice of the acclaimed Glasgow based performer Adrian Howells. *It's all allowed: the performances of Adrian Howells*, edited by Deirdre Heddon and Dominic Johnson provides an intimate portrait of Howells, describing how he encouraged and inspired practitioners and audiences to risk themselves emotionally in order to more fully connect with others. The review concludes this edition of the journal, but the legacy of Howells will be explored more fully in the forthcoming special issue of this journal, *Art of Care*.

Bede Williams stood down as Co-editor after the publication of the last edition of *Scottish Journal of Performance* and has been replaced by Benjamin Redman (Royal Conservatoire of Scotland), we thank Bede for his hard work and send our good wishes.

We would also like to welcome Ben Fletcher-Watson and Bethany Whiteside to our editorial board, and thank outgoing members, Anna Birch and Sophia Lycouris for their input and support over the past few years.

We would like to thank the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland for their continued support, Anglia Ruskin University, the editorial team, advisory board, our peer reviewers, funders, and especially our authors.

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Co-editors, *Scottish Journal of Performance*