

Editorial: Collaborate* & ^ %!

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In an exhibition at London's Garden Museum, dedicated to Derek Jarman's Prospect Cottage, our attention is always directed towards the manual labours and lesser-known objects that guided Jarman's work: torn gloves, scratched spades, rubbish salvaged as art. My Garden's Boundaries Are the Horizon, in summer 2020, took place on the back of an Art Fund campaign launched the previous year, to raise money to purchase and preserve Jarman's house. The exhibition included a model of the cottage, housing a range of artworks, including some stage designs, diary entries, a painting by Gus Van Sant, and Jarman's own tools, sculptures, drawings and film. There is something odd, sanitizing even, about transporting this stark plot into the reassuring arms of a museum. But observing this miscellany of things, alongside Jarman's own writing, expands what we normally think of as the agents of art and activism, a sense only amplified by the earlier retrospective PROTEST! at IMMA, Dublin (2019–20). Jarman's collaborators were not just the friends and lovers he worked with, those who cared for him during his AIDS-related illness, or those who financially supported his legacy, but the materials and paraphernalia that sink and surface throughout his work.

I take comfort in Jarman's garden, or this idea of it, during the last days of summer, to escape the confinement of online life. Those of us who have descended more deeply into the shadowy underworld of virtual teaching and learning will recognize the need to balance the darkness with light, Moodle with trees. They will know, too, that the hope-polished interfaces of digital collaboration do not always live up to the hype; that despite the best wishes of all parties involved, the infrastructure can just let you down – screens freeze, someone forgets to mute, the Internet crashes without warning.

People who work in theatre are often assumed to be especially skilled in the arts of collaboration; practised at grafting together patiently, over time, towards a shared goal. While all theatre must, to some extent, involve cooperation between those who make it and those who experience it, forms such as applied theatre, socially engaged performance, theatre for development and intercultural performance typically consider collaboration as central to their rehearsal practices and production goals.

Collaboration often appears flanked by its more ethically dubious siblings – Demand and Aid. The former wields power to insist on what must be done, and the latter can end up telling you what it thinks you need, sometimes through financial incentives. In working together, we often find ourselves negotiating with all three, trying to strike the best overall deal.

This issue of *Theatre Research International* features articles that ask questions about theatre as a collaborative enterprise, with a particular focus on the ways in

which it navigates its expected role as an agent of cultural diplomacy or purveyor of help. Articles attend to the ways in which theatre is called upon to serve very specific social and political goals, to alter material circumstances or to tell new stories, and the possibilities and frictions that these approaches yield.

The first three articles work as a particularly close unit that investigates theatre's role in development, peacekeeping and social justice. The impact of funding theatre for development and conflict resolution in Palestine is at the heart of Rashna Darius Nicholson's opening article. In 'On the (Im)possibilities of a Free Theatre: Theatre Against Development in Palestine', Nicholson explores how funding and organizational structures create conditions of dependency that complicate and delimit the possibilities of theatre as an agent of cultural resistance.

Deployments of theatre to produce peace and social change in Africa are the focus of Maëline Le Lay's contribution. In 'Performing for Peace and Social Change in Africa's Great Lakes Region', Le Lay evaluates the extent to which theatre in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Burundi is funded by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the effect that this has on the kind of work produced within that region. Le Lay's article challenges us to think about the unique role and risk of NGO-funded theatre in intervening histories of mass violence, inter-ethnic conflict and social cohesion.

Neloufer de Mel analyses Janakaraliya, or 'Theatre of the People', and its peace-building initiatives in Sri Lanka. In 'Actants and Faultlines: Janakaraliya and Theatre for Peace Building in Sri Lanka', de Mel examines the effects of the governmental and financial structures that support the project, while arguing that greater sensitivity should be paid to cultivating aesthetic forms and styles truly reflective of Sri Lanka's diversity.

Also grappling with the shortfall between intention and effect is Elliot Leffler's 'Performing Protest and Protesting Performance: The International Circuits of Touring Political Theatre'. Leffler discusses a Baxter Theatre of South Africa production of *Waiting for Godot*, tracking how its own perception of its representational politics collided with the views of those who saw it, some of whom even read it as pro-apartheid. Leffler uses this case study to explore how international touring work can unwittingly both support and clash with political activism.

Peter Zazzali's contribution focuses on the actor-training practices of Toi Whakaari, New Zealand's National Drama School. In 'Culture, Identity and Actor Training: Indigeneity in New Zealand's National Drama School', Zazzali draws on an intensive research placement at the institution, to consider its approach to bicultural pedagogy, an expressed aim of the school. Zazzali examines how the institution attempts to synthesize Western and indigenous Māori practices, as distinct from inter-, cross-, or multicultural learning experiences.

Catherine Silverstone, whose own research explored colonial legacies and performance in her native New Zealand, knew what it meant to collaborate. I was fortunate to discover this from working with her myself, like the numerous students and colleagues who also crossed her path. Her untimely death in October last year leaves us at a loss. Many readers will know Catherine for her writing on Jarman,

Shakespeare, trauma and sexuality; through conference attendance, including IFTR; or from her work at Queen Mary University of London. Catherine was a model of our highest values – a scrupulous researcher, a compassionate teacher, the kindest of colleagues, and a wellspring of integrity. ‘A life is remembered’, Catherine tells us, reflecting on Jarman, ‘as part of an iterative process, traced by its disappearance and relations to the past, present, and future.’¹ I remember Catherine too, with this issue, and the time-travelling side to collaboration she discerned – how the past stretches out a hand to the future that the present must know when and how to grasp.

NOTE

- 1 Catherine Silverstone, ‘Remembering Derek Jarman: Death, Legacy, and Friendship,’ *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 32, 3 (2014), pp. 451–70, here p. 453.