

Christopher Balme

Editorial

We are currently living in a time of postponement. The disruptions caused by the Corona pandemic have also affected the journal as all schedules of all contributors were suddenly rearranged. With some delay we are pleased to present the current number of the journal. It comprises three contributions, two of which touch on Augusto Boal's global theatre movement, the Theatre of the Oppressed (TO). Any study of theatre in a globalized context must engage with Boal and his seminal influence on both political and applied theatre. The article by Clara de Andrade and Christopher Balme examines the Theatre of the Oppressed from the perspective of institutional theory and how the movement coalesced into an autonomous organizational field that continues to flourish in many countries even after Boal's death. The ability of the method to adapt to the most diverse contexts, cultures and especially to the social development field demonstrate that, more than just circulating a theatrical method, the global network of the Theatre of the Oppressed reveals itself as a vehicle for the circulation of policies connected to the idea of cultural democracy.

The connection between Boal and Theatre for Development (TfD) is undisputed but the valorization of this connection sometimes is. The potential tensions between the two movements, TO and TfD, are the subject of an extended discussion between African and Asian-based TfD practitioners and an Afro-Brazilian Theatre of the Oppressed practitioner, that took place in Zambia in 2015. It is edited and presented here by the German-Bolivian Theatre of the Oppressed and Playback Theatre practitioner, Hjalmar Jorge Joffre-Eichhorn. The discussion provides a wide-ranging exploration of TfD, especially in Southern Africa but also further afield, and the list of discussants and auditors from around a dozen countries gives a good indication of the transnational interconnectedness of both these approaches. The third article, by Berlin-based Syrian actor-dramatist-theatre scholar, Ziad Adwan, examines the Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts (HIDA) in Damascus, established in 1977, where Adwan used to work as a lecturer before going into exile. His approach is also institutional in the broader sense, asking under what conditions such a prestigious tertiary institution could come about and, more importantly, also retain a certain degree of autonomy under the Assad dictatorship. He shows how the strong ties to former socialist countries facilitated the invitation of several East European theatre makers to teach at the institute, and that many Russian instructors

served as ‘experts’ at the acting department for decades. He traces the ongoing tensions between two antithetical developments: market forces on the one hand and intellectual autonomy on the other. Indeed, the Institute became, as he argues, a ‘place of the intellectuals’, a highly problematical reputation in the country moving inexorably into ever more restrictive totalitarian control.