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ABSTRACT

This editorial elaborates on the processes and practices of Open Call and its iteration as a print and online issue of *Studies in Theatre and Performance*. It offers a collaborative framing of the issue that includes the voices of its editors and peer reviewers, and suggests some possible pathways through the texts and artworks that comprise this special issue, which is titled open-call+response:

‘(. . .) we must create the space for feminist intervention without surrendering our primary concern, which is a devotion to making art, a devotion intense and rewarding enough that is the path leading to our freedom and fulfilment.’

bell hooks, *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics*

This is an experiment into wayward livingS – hyper-focused on the pile of un-piable experiences of beings in performance (arts). This is just a dance amongst Oothers. Open Call is a revolutionary project whose void is un-dip-able.

2021 marked the opening and has been quite intensive in terms of labour, if we are to scrutinise our financial and emotional capacities. 2022 is a slow-downed version. In just over a year of existence, we have been supporting the labour of 28 artworker-researchers with a total budget of £8,580. Most of Open Call invited contributors are Black and brown creators of worlds within and at the outskirts of theatre and performance studies. We originally worked from a Black feminist perspective guided by the understanding that artist-researchers that have been systematically marginalised not only for their background but also for not conforming to monolithic canons of the discipline deserved a hand (or a fist bump).

This issue of *Studies in Theatre and Performance (STP)* diverges, in some important ways, from the usual pattern of those that have come before it. In terms of form, format, length and scope of contributions, and the collaborative and transparent peer review process, 42.3 documents and elaborates on the radical work of Open Call, ‘an experimental space to imagine, build, share, and transform knowledge by any means necessary honouring multiple roots/routes of theatre and performance studies by intervening in present practices, and visioning the future of knowledge-sharing inscribed in justice and multiplicity.’

As a response to and development of Open Call – the **open-call+response**: of the issue's title – we invited contributors to Open Call's 2021 working group, website, and events to revisit, renew, or repurpose their work for the print and online issue of *STP*, which would also be linked to the webpages of Open Call itself: <https://www.opencall-stp.com/>

i am extra quirky and when i invited each and everyone of Open Call contributors with 'an invitation that tastes like a tiny revolution' i did not know yet where words would take me/us.

Echo: Be careful of what you are wishing for because words are spells – orality. Words bring volume to my existences. They – spilled out from other beings' images – sit with me and stick with me. They transform beings, spaces, possibilities to breathe and expand one's body beyond its own embodiment.

There was no thematic remit imposed on the contributions, but authors were invited to develop their work along lines of importance/urgency for their own practice, or to offer performative, text- and image-based provocations that spoke to the themes and questions inhabiting their own practice.

The process of peer review of individual pieces and the issue as a whole were composed as conversations between (known) reviewers and (known) contributors; for individual articles, the editors each offered their responses, comments, and feedback in written form (in the form of text and suggestions on Google docs), or as voice notes/files that authors accessed and were invited to respond to.

As such, guidance and suggestions were offered by both editors and peer reviewers, and in this process, the meanings and associations of each of these and related terms – editor, artist, author, reviewer, maker, scholar, practitioner, thinker, contributor – began to become detached from their conventional (and sometimes restrictive) moorings.

It was within this practice of (uncertain) knowing that we felt better able to pose questions whose answers were not necessarily contained or neatly tied up in the issue, but which offered possibilities to be re-composed and re-turned to.

This, we hope, ensured that the process of peer review was less detached and more bodied/embodied as a conversational exchange.

Echo: Multiple persons composing, wrestling with text, with space for textual-textural ideas to manifest onto the physical-digital-page/world. The effect is doubtless interruptive, and interrupting, and perhaps irritating, and may require a bit more pause than generally required to read, rest, and respond.

At *STP* we have tentatively begun to plan book reviews that are staged as conversations between scholars, readers, artists, and practitioners, again to

illuminate the review process as one of dialogic exchange which might take place verbally, digitally, visually, or textually. We hope this process might also make its way into future iterations of academic articles, artist contributions, and both open and special issues that *STP* offers.

i/we have been wondering for a very long time – what it meant to be free – what it meant to access a fuller presence/ present – and to be porous enough to stay in – there/here.

Echo: I-we have been wondering whether we all wish to be free, wish to be in the plurality of there-here, linked by dashes.

i/we feel in my/our fractal ways. And it is eye-watering to produce psychotic e/affect by the encountering and *bousculade* of artworks in a singular issue.

If you were expecting a guiding hand from us in this editorial – the card is reversed – not because it is delayed – but because it is not happening.

If we are to offer a hand, it is the possibility *de picorer* (Echo: to peck at) here and there.

This special issue is a fleshy, vibrant, and earthy meet-up point.
i am/ we are just tripping under the influence of the contributors' offerings.

Fumes, blood, sweat, saliva, blood, sugar enter an ensemble that was never meant to be tied together. There is an excess of us and its – an excess of objects that de-limit the possibility to even think of objects as a concept – anymore. A diachronic, non-diagetic choreography of verbal and embodied vocabulary some of which previously buried or erased.

Echo: What was the wor(l)d promised – and what now remains? What is our work to piece back together and what is the song that accompanies? What song is our mourning, what hands hold us, need holding?

This is a capsule, an anarchic playground – you know the ones where you have to look after yourself and the collective, the ones where highs and lows are mashing up, the ones where “possibilities” is more than a pluralised word.

This is the type of non-addictive drug/trip we are inviting you in – yes ok – it's a dance *voilà tout* (Echo: that's it!). IT is an *ensemble au milieu du public* – a de-staged work of art/life. Yeah that's decentralisation, re-infrastructuring, feel-ing and questioning

- among other things.

Echo: Calling us safely back to the hard learning; nudges us to grow in soft slowness?

What is IT for you?

Reaching the stage of this editorial note – noting that “white-cis-hetero-[capitalist]-patriarchy is running through my veins” – it’s *affligeant* (Echo: distressing). Mis/mal-using substances from grieving processes – queering grief as well as practices – to what end? And what’s the means?

Echo: What was the wor(l)d promised – and what now remains? What is ours that was promised, and what is the song that accompanies as wor(l)ds come falling down?

Well well well –

- what now?

Echo: - why is the overarching theme of this un-themed issue grief – queering – grief – still? *Pour moi/nous ce fut un été indien*. Summery vibes that can’t be controlled, can’t be contained, we wished it lasted even longer but i am/we are glad we found a way to wrap up this creature.

Adelina Ong and Royona Mitra, whose practices inspire us, accepted to feel through the special issue as external reviewers, and offered the following provocations respectively: ‘is there a particular aspect of grief as experienced by the subaltern that you want to highlight through this composting of grief? I am compelled to think of compost as an organic, fertile archive. . . I think about decomposed grief now as fertile ground for the future, for connections, for solidarity,’ and ‘call and response that guides us through a queering of grief towards a promise of new world(ing)s, that offer critiques of cis-white-hetero-ableist-capitalist-patriarchy, and channel grief into generative acts. I am excited by such a promise of bringing new worlds into being through grieving; of grieving as worlding.’

we would like to offer this provocation to the emergent-editors of this playground: the readers, the experiencers, the atmosphere-makers – all of you.

This exercise in wor(l)dlessness would be a close enough translation of my-our murmurations.

Echo: close enough – not quite – almost – what to do with this flicker of dissatisfaction?

Before re-experiencing each part, we imagined excavating our own soil – the one in the guts – and meticulously sanding it on the ground – offerings. Bits of us to be treasured – always. The weirdness in experimenting with each other (sometimes in our own corners) and the entre-shocks of being in proximity – which creates a solidarity practice through this playing with the rules, and with what emerges.

As you access routes/roots – here is an advice – re-member to take a beat/bit and get your feet/ armpits/ and ears massaged.

Echo to suggest: beat – breath – bit – hold – release – fold – breathe – in – out – hold – return – repeat. Emerge when it is time.

Ce qui est sur maintenant (Echo: what is certain now) is that we have a burning need to express our gratitude to all the accomplices in making this thing we are still making (non) sense of (Echo: sensing, sense-ible): Adelina Ong and Royona Mitra for opening portals, to Ash Williams, Raju Rage, Lou Sarabadzic, nomi blum, Izdihar Afyouni, Fannie Sosa, Clareese Hill and Elly Clarke, Seán Elder, and Stelly G who gifted their magical potions and invitation to grow together otherwise.

Pour ce(ux) qui ne sont plus là (Echo: for those that are not here anymore).
For the divine guidance towards –

Notes on contributors

melissandre varin: Relation, displacement, multiplicity, interdependency, and language emerge from melissandre’s work. Making from an Afro and Caribbean diasporic context, melissandre adds layers of complexity using a situated Black feminism.

Through performance arts, moving image assemblages, and site-specific installations - among other things

melissandre investigates love, intimacy, and tenderness.

melissandre is a potion of i/its who is deeply in love and co-parents wonderful Eole 3yo. They are the (co-)founder of cross-border and hyper-local arts collectives Papaya, and B. O.O.K (Building Our Own Knowledge), and are tending to the slow growth of Open Call part of *Studies in Theatre and Performance* operating as an artist-curator.

Carmen Wong is an artist-researcher who experiments with food for convivial collectivism. They are a beginning in qi-gong and permaculture, and a student of nonviolent communication. They co-animate [JarSquad](#), and grounds-keep the [care-as-commons](#) reading group. They operate ferally sans-website but [persistent digital work traces can be found](#).

Harriet Curtis is an Editor of *Studies in Theatre and Performance*. She is Senior Lecturer in Drama at De Montfort University. Her research focuses on contemporary performance, live art, documentation and archives, and queer, feminist, and activist performance practices: www.dmu.ac.uk/harrietcurtis

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