

FROM THE EDITOR

## From the Vic to the Hollywood Bowl

What do Eliza Vincent's management of the Victoria Theatre in London, the U.S. Army Theatre's 1846 production of *Othello*, the original English version of Jacques Copeau's 1917 lecture "The Spirit in the Little Theatre," and Richard Pryor's 1977 controversial Hollywood Bowl stand-up comedy set have in common? On a surface level, not much. Though the subject matter of the articles in this issue varies greatly, they share a commitment to elevating heretofore forgotten or marginalized artists and performances of the past. Perhaps even more important, the authors of these articles invite readers to ponder critical questions, including why theatre and performance continue to matter.

Stephen Ridgwell's "The Queen of the Vic: Eliza Vincent's Actress-Management of the Victoria Theatre, London, 1841–1856" continues ongoing efforts to recover women's contributions to nineteenth-century British theatre. In keeping with Janice Norwood's endeavor to move nineteenth-century British theatre scholarship beyond the bounds of the West End and into outlying and provincial localities, Ridgwell places Eliza Vincent's (1815–56) artistry within the so-called minor theatres that built and sustained her career. Ridgwell divides his study into three sections. He first uncovers Vincent's work prior to her management of Victoria Theatre in 1841; then analyzes her artistic style and collaboration with writers and actors such as George Dibdin Pitt and E. F. Saville during 1841–5; and, finally, considers her work as "directress," or sole lessee and manager. Through his detailed reconstruction of Vincent's remarkable career, Ridgwell not only captures an important (but often overlooked) relationship between Vincent's artistry and Victorian domestic drama but also helps recover a vital chapter within the history of nineteenth-century British theatre.

In "Put money in thy purse. Follow thou the wars': *Othello*, the Mexican–American War, and Manifest Destiny," Charlotte M. Canning uses a humorous anecdote about the U.S. Army Theatre's 1846 production of *Othello* as an entry point into a nuanced historiographical critique of how theatre shaped national infrastructure in the pre–Civil War United States. "The story of the army's borderland *Othello* produced on the brink of a great land grab should not be understood as a tale about the superiority of amateur culture by which enlightened individuals express themselves through classic works of dramatic literature," writes Canning. "The Army Theatre's *Othello* is more productively interpreted as the story of how theatre was imbricated in the developing national infrastructure in the pre–Civil War United States." By positioning the Army Theatre's production of *Othello* within the framework of cultural and material infrastructure, Canning persuasively demonstrates how theatre both "participated in and benefited from continental expansion."

J. Ellen Gainor and John Un bring the English version of French modernist director Jacques Copeau's lecture, "The Spirit in the Little Theatre" (1917), delivered as part of

the Washington Square Players' lecture series in New York, out of obscurity. In their article, "Jacques Copeau's 'The Spirit of the Little Theatre': Contexts and Texts," Gainor and Un ask: "What exactly does Copeau have to say to his Washington Square Players audience, given this pioneering young company's aspirations and accomplishments to date as part of the Little Theatre movement in America?" In seeking an answer to this question, Gainor and Un provide thoroughly engaging contextual information that not only helps contemporary scholars understand the speech's relationship to the Little Theatre companies of the time but also the Little Theatre movement and Copeau's resistance to commercial theatre. With the permission of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Copeau's speech to the Washington Square Players appears (for the first time in its original English version) immediately following this essay.

This issue concludes with an analysis of epistemological rupture within Richard Pryor's stand-up comedy performance at the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles on 18 September 1977. In her article, "Richard Pryor's Sonic Acts: Epistemological Rupture at the Hollywood Bowl, 18 September 1977," Eleanor Russell looks beyond dominant journalistic perspectives that dismiss Pryor's set as nothing more than the "slurred rants of a coked-up, drunk maniac." Rather than view the set as a troubled celebrity's "spectacular failure," Russell reads Pryor's performance as "a rupture between and through Blackness and queerness, comedy and violence." Russell's nuanced performance analysis not only provides a new perspective on Pryor's violent and complicated performance but also reveals an important relationship between theatre of transgression and radical Black artistry.

Finally, I would like to conclude my final editorial note by thanking all of those who have supported my editorship of *Theatre Survey*. To begin, many authors have contributed their time, talent, and intellectual rigor, providing incredibly rich content for this journal. Thank you. Dorothy Chansky went above and beyond her role as ASTR's VP for Publications (2020–2) and on the journal's Editorial Board to mentor me. She likely does not realize this, but she's truly my "ride or die bestie." She encouraged me and offered me support as I transitioned to Editor during a very difficult pregnancy and recovery. I am happy to call her one of my dearest friends. Noe Montez, current VP for Publications, and former *Theatre Survey* editors Marlis Schweitzer and Brandi Wilkins Catanese showed me the ropes. They provided a sounding board when I needed it most. Associate Editor Telory D. Arendell has supported my editorial efforts from day one. Thank you. Michael Gnat is the most thorough, fun, and patient copy editor I have ever had the pleasure of working with. ASTR Executive Director Aimee Zygmanski, thank you for answering my many questions and supporting our editorial efforts. Jonathan Geffner, Craig Baxter, Thesam Ameena Hakkim, and the Cambridge University Press staff keep this journal moving forward like a well-oiled machine, and I am forever grateful for their work. Finally, I would like to thank Layne Forsgren and our five squirrely kiddos for their love and support all along the way. Jacoby, Piper, Cruser, Emmett, and Phoebe: you are a gift.

Dear readers, please keep an eye out for incoming Editor Telory D. Arendell's "Movement Theatre" special issue—coming to you in September 2024!