

Nic Leonhardt

## Editorial

Brazil, Japan, Syria: This issue of the *Journal of Global Theatre History* takes you once again to different corners of the world, their theatre cultures and transnational exchanges about eras and genres. The chapters explore central facets of global theatre history and theatre in a global context: the influence of Western aesthetics and aspects of “modernization” and their local adaptation in Japan at the beginning of the 20th century; the transfer and critical negotiation of theatre and theatre education in various post-war Levant cities; and the neoliberal tendencies and interweaving of theatre aesthetics and global economy in cultural sponsorship of Brazilian theatre in the recent past.

In her contribution “A New Notion of Time in Modern Tokyo Life: *A Comedy at High Speed* at the Imperial Theatre in the 1920s”, Ayumi Fujioka examines the Imperial Theatre, which was opened in 1911 in Tokyo modelled on Western theatre, and in which traditional Japanese theatre as well as modern (western) forms and new genres were performed. It shows the role this new urban facility played for city dwellers, and how its repertoire design served the extravagance of the modern lifestyle of Tokyo’s upper and middle classes. Using the example of the so-called contemporary Actress Plays (*joyūgeki* – comedies whose main characters were embodied by female actors, the secondary characters by male ones) and in particular *Kousokudo Kigeki / A Comedy at High Speed* (1925) by Taro Masuda (1875-1953), the author shows how modernity and modernization, the speed and dynamism of modern times were thematized.

The Syrian theatre maker and academic Ziad Adwan dedicates his article “Imaginary Theatre. Professionalising Theatre in the Levant 1940-1990” to acting training in the Levant, i.e. Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan and Palestine, in the period between the 1940s and the early 1990s. Ziad Adwan shows what these new nation states had in common in terms of theatre production and reception, which distinguished them from other Arabic-speaking countries. Using source materials and interviews with theatre makers, the author explains the processes of introducing and adapting theatre in a region “that lacked theatre traditions”. In his contribution he shows that the introduction of theatre was in the hands of influential individuals who undertook study trips to Europe and spread their newly acquired theatre knowledge in their circles. Another focal point of his work is the ambivalent reception of theatre in Syria, especially theatre movements and pedagogies such as the theatre of the absurd or Brecht’s theatre, theatre pedagogies and training centres and the professionalization of theatre. Here, too, Adwan uses selected individuals (such as Hakki Al-Shibli, Ibrahim Jalal, Mounir Abu Debs and Antoine Moultaqa) and their professional biographies as case studies.

Contemporary theatre in Brazil and the influence of global exchange on Brazilian theatre aesthetics are the focus of the essay by Gustavo Guenzburger, “Transnationality, Sponsorship and Post-Drama: “The Flash and Crash Days” of Brazilian Theatre”. In his remarks, he closely examines the aesthetic and productive change in Brazilian theatre in connection with the emergence of global markets, taking Gerald Thomas’ production of *The Flash and Crash Days* (1991) as an example. As Gustavo argues, the return of director Gerald Thomas from New York to Brazil in the 1980s resulted in a “formal and thematic upheaval” in parallel with the upheaval in the socio-economic conditions of

theatre. The author explores the differences and tensions between experimental, artistic theatre on the one hand and commercial theatre on the other, and critically examines the cultural marketing strategies of globally active companies such as Pepsi Cola, Petrobras and Nestlé, which present their names to the public through targeted sponsorship of contemporary art.

We would like to thank the authors for their rich contributions to this issue and wish our readers a stimulating read.

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