

## Communities and Performance

Editorial for *Platform*, Volume 5 Issue 2, Spring 2011

In performance, communities are constantly constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed through processes of surrogation, imagination, transformation or decline. This edition of *Platform* explores the ways in which theatre interacts with pre-existing communities, and also how it creates and is created by diverse groups. In particular, this issue focuses on issues of space, geography and globalization and how communities are created and problematised through performance and performative acts.

Three of our contributions offer divergent perspectives on the effects of globalization and globalized theatre practices on communities in Latin America. Taken together they present a thought-provoking dialogue about the positive and negative effects of globalization on disadvantaged communities: in particular, about how favela or inner-city communities can exploit or be exploited by global cultural structures.

Jorge Perez Falconi's article, 'Space and Festivalscapes,' provides analysis of the ways in which global festivals reshape local urban space, focusing on how the development of festivals disrupts and defines space and community. As an example, Perez Falconi uses the case of the *Festival de México* in Mexico City to show that festival organizers can be instrumental in negotiating with social organizations and city inhabitants to develop privately administered historic-cultural space. In this case, a globally inflected cultural project supported privatization and changed the lived reality of a city's communities.

Poppy Spowage's article 'An AfroReggae Explosion,' presents an optimistic and contentious perspective on the effects of globalization on community. Taking the example of Rio de Janeiro's globally renowned favela-based performance group AfroReggae, Spowage discusses the potentially empowering and economically enabling results of community engagement with global economic and cultural systems. Spowage uses the example of AfroReggae's weekend-long performance installation at London's Southbank Centre in 2010 to argue that such events can be understood as community theatre insofar as they prioritize community-focused practice.

Marina Henriques Coutinho's article 'The Brazilian Favela as Stage and Persona,' engages with the interaction between community and globalization in a more critical way. Henriques Coutinho recognizes the extent to which favela performances can be co-opted by hegemonic socio-economic forces and exploited. However, she makes the argument that alternative-narratives can and do arise from the cultural output of marginalized spaces.

The other contributions to this issue variously explore the role of performance in building or problematising communities. Andrew Ryder's article 'Here on the Edge' utilizes archival material to understand how the play *Tennessee Justice*, performed in 1945 by interred conscientious objectors (COs) in Waldport, Oregon, built a community through performance. Ryder's case study shows his theory of 'community-building theatre' in action. The COs at the Waldport Civilian Public

Service camp shared an identity off-stage. In focusing the COs' attention on their shared pacifist commitment, *Tennessee Justice* helped to unite various factions at the camp, effectively using the COs' shared identity to build community.

Beth Phillips's profile piece on the Irish performer Little John Nee and his play *The Derry Boat* offers a lively, engaging and personal insight into how Nee's work unites community in the present through theatrical interaction with a shared past. Dealing with issues of immigration, identity and homeland, Nee plays characters across generations and locations, conjuring up a nuanced, funny and sometimes poignant impression of community and home.

In Liam Jarvis's interview with Darren O'Donnell of the contemporary company Mammalian Diving Reflex, O'Donnell intimates that his work aims to connect people with each other and urban spaces. O'Donnell wants a deeper connection with the people in his immediate surroundings, and this impulse has led to work that facilitates local face-to-face encounters, internationally, in urban contexts.

Where Mammalian Diving Reflex's reaction to the alienation of the modern urban subject is to facilitate interpersonal exchanges, Yelena Gluzman's performance practice responds differently to contemporary problems of community and individuality. Gluzman's *One Acts* are a series of projects in which the performance is reduced to a single action, and in which the spectator and performer are one and the same. Drawing on Jacques Rancière and Niklas Luhmann, Gluzman removes the operative structure of a performance from the discourse of performer and spectator, from discourses that prioritise conceptions of community, and focuses instead on the relationship between action and environment. Gluzman's work reflects contemporary subjectivity in a non-didactic and non-communitarian way.

*Platform* is grateful to the Royal Holloway Department of Drama and Theatre for its generous support, both financial and practical. We would like to express our thanks to our peer reviewers for their time and expertise, to our book reviewers for their thoughtful analyses of recent titles in the field of theatre and performance studies, and to Palgrave Macmillan, Routledge and Sussex Academic Press for sending us publications for review. We would like to acknowledge Eugénie Pastor's special efforts as a substitute head editor on this edition. Lastly, we would like to extend our warmest thanks to all our contributors for sharing their research, practice, and insights.

Mara Lockowandt and Emer O'Toole (Head Editors)  
On behalf of the *Platform* editorial board  
March 2011.