Editorial

Since at least the early 1990s, theatre and performance scholars have conceived of the audience not just as an anonymous body of receivers, but as co-producers; this has been especially evident over the last few years. References to audience experiences as participatory, embodied, or otherwise 'active' in the creation and development of meaningful artistic experience has become increasingly common. Scholars of philosophy and the visual arts are making significant evaluative advances in this regard – Jacques Rancière, Nicolas Bourriaud and Claire Bishop are pertinent examples – and theatre and performance scholars are starting to take up these valuable theoretical tools. This issue of *Platform* celebrates the multifarious approaches to spectatorship and participation prompted by a diverse mix of emerging and developing theatre and performance forms: from rehearsed readings of works in progress, to the participatory challenges of 'immersive' theatre and socially engaged art. This edition considers spectatorship as a practice and looks to question or reorient notions of authorship and agency. Approaching what it is to be 'engaged' in theatrical practice, as a spectator or participant, the papers in this edition consider how intimacy and distance are being reformulated in both practice and research; they grapple with the mechanics of audience reception and propose critical lenses appropriate to a diversifying spectrum of spectatorship practices. Further, this edition brings together articles from both practice and research in an effort to demonstrate the variety of critical positions emerging in studies of spectatorship and participation.

This edition employs critical models valuable to the study of spectatorship and participation in a cross-disciplinary vein concomitant with a shifting conceptual landscape. Further troubling the simple binary between 'active' and 'passive' spectatorship, famously problematised by Rancière, this edition serves to highlight the inherent activity of all spectatorship whilst drawing conceptual limits around different participatory forms. The themes surrounding spectatorship and participation are not catch-all and this edition shows that it is useful to approach such performances on a case by case basis.

Rand Hazou's article 'Intermedial Voices' offers a reading of Australian theatre company Version 1.0's *CMI (A Certain Maritime Incident)* (2004). The article explores the effects on spectators of presenting documentary material through multimedia and theorises an 'intermedial' approach to spectatorship. This is useful not only for interpreting the mechanics of audience reception in such a context, but also for stimulating a fresh reflection on Version 1.0's representation of refugee and asylum policy in Australia at the turn of the millennium under John Howard's controversial leadership. A second approach to the mechanics of audience reception is offered by Jane Turner's 'Diegetic Theatre,' which reinvigorates the theoretical concept of 'diegesis' as a means of approaching the conceptually slippery practice of immersive theatre. Using examination of narratology as a tool, Turner interrogates *Iris Brunette* (2009) by Melanie Wilson and *Whisper* (2008) by Proto-type Theatre, arguing that narration is used to place the spectator both inside and critically outside of the theatre event.

John Bray's 'What's Wrong with this Play?' deals with new play development in the United States. The article explores the role of the audience as diagnostician and the extent to which audience involvement at staged readings facilitates or hinders the developmental process. Instead of asking how the spectator's claims to authorship and agency might be developed within a participatory context, Bray suggests that in the context of a rehearsed reading, audience empowerment might hinder the fruition of play texts as a result of structural limitations imposed at the level of production. This is an important point to make, as current debates on audience engagement tend to take for granted the positivity of

empowering audiences, without accounting for any negative artistic impact that this may have. Bray asks how the United Kingdom system of play development may be influenced by the U.S. model, and in doing so articulates important Anglo-American ties, strengthening future considerations and conversations on developmental processes from the perspective of the playwright.

The Artists' Documents section brings together accounts of two participatory events from the perspective of those involved in their creation. Allison Wyper's 'Witness: Notes from the Artist,' reports on a participatory performance which took place in the U.S.; it also evokes transatlantic connections, but in a politically and ethically charged context. The work was created in response to the notorious images of detainee abuse from within Abu Ghraib prison. The performance is documented here as a photo essay, created by the artist, that visually and textually comments on the implications of participation in both art and political systems. The artist interrogates differing levels of agency and subjectivity forged through audience interaction and complicity within performative acts of violence. Similar themes are approached in the second contribution to our Artists' Documents: Astrid Breel's 'Emancipating the Spectator.' Breel offers a reading of the artistic process behind photographer Manuel Vason's participatory project, *Still Image Moving* (2010). Through the author's involvement as artist facilitator, this photo essay presents and explores concepts of authorship and empowerment, examining what happens when the subject of a photograph is able to assert control within the act of image-making.

In view of the increasing challenges to arts research, *Platform* would especially like to thank the Royal Holloway Department of Drama and Theatre for their continuing support, both financial and practical. We are, as ever, extremely grateful for all the hard work of our peer reviewers, as well as those who have contributed book reviews to this edition. *Platform* will soon be searchable via EBSCO, an international academic database; our appreciation therefore goes out to EBSCO for their acknowledgement of the journal in their global network. As always, we would like to thank Routledge and Palgrave Macmillan for providing us with recent titles for review. Finally, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to all our contributors, who have shared their research and practice.

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(Editors)