

Celebrating Ten Years of *Platform*

We are very proud to announce that this edition of *Platform* marks the 10th anniversary of the journal. The milestone demonstrates the commitment of Royal Holloway's Drama and Theatre department to supporting postgraduate research, for which we are sincerely grateful. To celebrate the occasion we decided to gather a collection of responses from past editors, asking them to share their memories, experiences and hopes for the future of *Platform*. Here's to another ten years!

Dr Vicky Angelaki

Why did you set up *Platform*?

We set up *Platform* because Matthew Cohen advised us that there was such an opportunity and it seemed like an excellent way of creating something that would be rooted in the Department but at the same time would benefit the broader postgraduate and early career researcher community. It would also give us the chance to experience, first-hand, how journals and editing work – from creative vision to logistics – and this was invaluable for scholars (very young then!) preparing to enter the professional field. More than anything, though, this was about enhancing the experience of our fellow postgraduates at Royal Holloway and well beyond by providing them with a quality forum for publishing.

What in your view makes *Platform* unique as a publication?

Platform is unique because it began by postgraduates, for postgraduates, and ten years later it represents the labour and love of many different generations of academics who at some point passed through Royal Holloway, bringing their commitment to

the project. So it's the continuity of this that I find particularly inspiring.

What did editing *Platform* teach you?

Platform taught me to work in a team towards publishing goals and it was an early foray into the world of digital publishing for me, which I have since become quite invested in.

Dr Marissia Fragkou

Why did you set up *Platform*?

In the beginning of 2006 Professor Matthew Cohen invited expressions of interest for setting up a postgraduate journal based at the Drama Department at Royal Holloway. This was a great opportunity for us to further consolidate the Department's existing community of students and scholars through collaboration and to learn more about what our peers across the globe were researching on.

What would you like to see *Platform* do in the next ten years?

It is truly rewarding to see that *Platform* carries on its excellent work (the fact that theatre scholars who now thrive in the field first published their work in the journal is a testament to that). I would like to see *Platform* continue its legacy of and commitment to publishing high-quality postgraduate and early-career work and to sustain a lineage of editors.

Do you have a favourite *Platform* memory?

Loads of hectic deadlines and editorial meetings which could take place anywhere! Philip Hager and I even had to take a web design seminar in order to create our first bespoke webpage.

This is where the current *Platform* logo originates from.

Dr Marilena Zaroulia

How did you get involved in *Platform*?

I was not one of the initiators of *Platform* as I was coming to the end of my PhD at the time, but I was involved in the conversations and I was one of the organizers of the first symposium, “How do we receive reception?”, that took place in spring 2007. For that event, we did think collaboratively about interests that we had in common – that was the first experience I had of ‘curating’ an event, an invaluable experience. Apart from opening up a platform for postgraduates and early career researchers to publish their work, *Platform* was also a way of responding to the rapidly changing environment in higher education at the time. I don’t think that we, as PhD students back then, were quite aware of how important it would be to launch a journal edited by PhD students for PhD students and early career researchers. But looking back at the range of work that the journal has presented, the networks that were set up thanks to editing or peer-reviewing or publishing for the journal, I think that it would not be an exaggeration to say that *Platform* – established around the same time with TaPRA – has really been influential in fostering a new generation of theatre/performance researchers in the UK.

What would you like to see *Platform* do in the next ten years?

I hope that *Platform* continues to publish exciting and excellent work by new researchers. I would like to see the journal opening up even more to possibilities of collaborative, experimental writing or new media /forms of publication that go beyond the ‘traditional’ academic journal article. I hope that *Platform* offers

a space for the emergence of other kinds of outputs – especially using the possibilities that the Internet and new technologies present.

Who would your dream editor of *Platform* be, and why?

The first person that crossed my mind, so I don't know if she is a dream editor *per se* but is certainly the one I would choose today, is Sara Ahmed – because I am reading a lot of her work at the moment and I find her writing extremely inspirational, diverse but also very clear. I think we would have learned a lot from her; about how to be sharp in our critique but also poetic in our imaginings of future worlds.

Dr Emer O'Toole

How did you get involved in *Platform*?

Rachel Clements and Jim Ellison, the previous editors, got me involved as a reviewer first, and then I joined the editorial board. I was incredibly impressed with the professionalism and ethos of the project. I enjoyed the work and Rachel and Jim seemed to think I had a talent for it. Rachel (an exceptional editor and really the powerhouse behind the journal at that point) needed to step down to concentrate on her thesis, and so I came on board to head edit with Jim and another PhD student from my cohort, Yasmine Van Wilt. Honestly, I was a little loath to do so - I was in the first year of my PhD and worried that it would detract from my academic work, my theatre practice, and my social life. And at first it did! Yup, due to a series of unforeseen events, *Platform* nearly killed me that first year. Jim moved to New Zealand, Yas left the programme, and - as I'm sure neither of them (both dear friends of mine) will mind me telling you - I

was left holding the scary baby that was edition 4.2 “(Mapping Performance”) on my own. Rachel, like the angel she is, stepped in at the end to help me format and proofread. But there are many salty tears and late library nights in that edition.

For the next edition, “Transformations,” Mara Lockowandt agreed to co-edit with me, but we knew we needed to attract more people to the team to keep the journal sustainable, workable and robust. We managed to grow the editorial board through recruiting from a brilliant new cohort of first years, as well as through reaching out to Royal Holloway students in parallel disciplines, like Dan O’Gorman from the English department, who ended up being our book review editor for the next two years. We hooked “Transformations” into a postgraduate conference at the University of Surrey, and asked Lise Uytterhoeven, who organised that conference, to come in as a guest editor. With an expanded network, support and fresh energy in place, we were able to achieve exciting things with zero salty tears. For “Transformations,” alongside some great academic articles, we published a photo essay, some new dramatic writing and interviews with practitioners. Because of Mara’s formatting and design skills, as well as the theatre department’s kind gift of an annual grant, we were able to produce print copies of the journal for the first time. It was a wonderful feeling.

Mara and I head-edited another edition, “Communities and Performance”, together, during which time we continued to foster an interdisciplinary and multi-format approach to the journal, as well as assembling a world-class advisory board of theatre scholars. Adam Alston was on the team at that stage, and it was clear that he’d be a great person to take over from Mara and I (we both needed to finish our theses). Adam and I edited the next edition, “Spectatorship and Participation”, to-

gether. During that time, we engaged in talks with EBSCO to include *Platform* in their database, making the journal fully accessible through academic search engines for the first time but keeping it open source - something which raised our and our contributors' profiles. Knowing that *Platform* was in the most capable of hands, and sad there would be no more cake-fuelled Senate House editorial board meetings for me, I left – having made some of the very best friends of my life and with a range of skills and network of contacts that it would have been impossible to accrue any other way.

How did being involved in Platform help you develop as a scholar?

In so many ways! It gave me a keen eye for an argument and, I think, a sharp ability to look at academic work and think “okay – this is good, but what can it do, realistically within a given time frame, to make itself even better.” Never underestimate the power of academic pragmatism! PhD-land can be an isolated place sometimes, but with *Platform* I was constantly surrounded by energetic, dedicated fellow students, and this made things a lot easier when it came to my own submission time: I had many seasoned reviewers to ask to read chapters. Platform put me in contact with established academics around the globe, both reviewers and advisors, and that was excellent for my professional profile – it was probably a large part of the reason that I was nominated new scholars representative of the International Federation of Theatre Research, and probably a strong contributor to the fact that I found a tenure track position just three months after graduation. *Platform* is CV gold. Every academic knows how hard it is to edit a journal – it looks incredibly impressive if a doctoral student has managed to do so at the same

time as writing a thesis. And also, *Platform* kept me passionate about what I do - because scholarship is fun, you know. That is a large part of why we do it. Engaging with other people's arguments, learning about other people's case studies and theoretical frameworks, hashing out the pros and cons of those arguments and frameworks with colleagues, that's such intellectually satisfying and exciting work. I miss those editorial board meetings (not to mention the pints afterwards).

What in your view makes *Platform* a unique publication?

That graduate students have a forum to share their research and get impartial feedback from experts in their field and from their peers is immensely valuable. That graduate students get reviewing and editing experience is immensely valuable – our disciplines rely on these skills, after all. I've heard from so many scholars that they wished they'd had something like *Platform* in their departments or universities. In spite of the fact that the ethos of the journal privileges giving a platform and academic training to graduate students, the standard of research that it publishes is extraordinary: you can rely on finding cutting edge, boundary pushing stuff in every edition. Here's to another ten successful years of *Platform*: may it be filled with all the innovation, occasional tears, and intellectual excitement that a decade can bring.

Dr Adam Alston

What did editing *Platform* teach you?

Editing *Platform* taught me two things - one selfish and one not-so-selfish. Selfishly, it helped me to better my own academic writing style. Approaching academic writing from an editorial

perspective made me think much more about things like structure and methodology, but it also made me more aware of the importance of writing creatively - of trying to capture the reader's attention (through poeticism, for instance). The medium isn't necessarily the message, but working on written expression as a carrier of meaning certainly helps with making a point stick (though I can't yet claim any real expertise in this area). The second thing that *Platform* taught me is that (most, but not all) theatre and performance academics are wonderfully supportive of one another and are often more than happy to give up their time and energy to review work in time-poor circumstances that really don't lend themselves to this kind of generosity. Generosity perseveres. While there are somewhat dubious connotations to a weirdly warped 'general will' within the academy to be ever more productive - and the acceptance of peer reviews arguably plays into this - I nonetheless think that this particular kind of productivity, one grounded in social ends rather than individualism, is to be celebrated. The exception to this rule is of course when the ego of the reviewer takes precedence over the provision of useful feedback, but in my experience of editing with *Platform* and in some more recent contexts, this kind of review is in the minority.

Who would your dream editor of *Platform* be, and why?

I was tempted to note a senior academic whose work has for some time inspired my own in response to this question, but on second thoughts I don't think that's quite right... *Platform* is a postgraduate journal, primarily publishing postgraduate research, and it is edited and managed by the postgraduate community at Royal Holloway, for the most part (although there's a historical link with the University of Surrey as well, where I

now work). My dream editor, then, would be a postgraduate - any postgraduate who is keen to explore the role of editor, and who is up for engaging with the rich array of work that gets submitted to the journal on its own terms, and who's willing to step down after a couple of years to give someone else a chance to experience the role of editor.

What do you think makes *Platform* such an important publication?

Platform is not the only postgraduate theatre and performance journal - nonetheless, it has accrued an impressive reputation over the years, thanks not least to the quality of the postgraduate research submitted to the journal. My hope is that this will encourage other departments to start up their own postgraduate journals, giving rise to a greater number of opportunities across the country (beyond big metropolitan centres) to participate in editorial processes - not just peer reviewing, which can be done remotely, but the nitty-gritty discussion that unfolds around a table during editorial meetings. It's somewhere in the middle of that table, between board members, that some of the most exciting aspects of editing take place - aspects that stem from listening, negotiation and compromise. Editorial board meetings, at their best, approach the discipline as a social activity, sharing ideas and points of view and working towards the publication of each issue as a collective endeavour.

Dr. Will Shüler

What was your favourite Platform moment?

Choosing a favourite moment is tough; there were so many great experiences. I would say the most joyful I felt was in completion

of the “Performance Legacies” cover for publication. It was my first issue as editor without Adam and we had no designer. As such, I decided to learn the InDesign software and do the layout myself. I got four proofs of the front cover from the printer, because none were turning out the way I wanted. After we finally got it right, Marika at *printondemand* sent me an extra large version of it to keep. I framed it.

What in your view makes Platform unique/standout as a publication?

For me, what made/makes *Platform* standout is the people behind it. Everyone involved is passionate about making it a high-quality publication and dedicated to integrity in scholarship and innovation in spirit.

What would you like to see Platform do in the next ten years?

I would like to see it not make the shift to online only, and continue to hold a prominent position on the Senate House Library shelves. But because it's the future it will be able to, like, hover and stuff.