

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Edmund B. Ligan

This issue of *Performance and Spirituality* contains a wide range of articles written by scholars whose work has shaped and complicated the discourse concerning points of intersection between performance and spirituality as manifested within performance and theatre studies. The issue adds momentum to the mission of *Performance and Spirituality*, which is to foster new modes of inquiry and topics of study that relate to such points of intersection. As such, it introduces a new section entitled “Perspectives on Practice,” which contains academically rigorous, first-person accounts of creative practice. It is our hope that the inclusions in 'Perspectives on Practice' will be read as an invitation for the development of further first-person accounts for submission to this section in later editions

In their introduction to the Perspectives on Practice section, entitled “Entering the Heart of Experience: First Person Accounts in Performance & Spirituality,” Deborah Middleton and Franc Chamberlain call for the application of “rigorous first-person” methodologies “to the study of performance and spirituality” (96), and the two accounts in the section strive to realize this goal. In “Mudra Space Awareness,” Lee Worley discusses the connections between her explorations of Tibetan Buddhism and the practice of “Mudra Space Awareness” (113-14). Tray Wilson discusses the intertwining relationship of her Christian faith and the practice of the ancient Indian martial art, *Kalaripayattu*, in her report, entitled “Inside the Work of Phillip Zarrilli” (125). First-person accounts bring us into a close and personal encounter with the experience under scrutiny – and, therefore, with the person reporting that experience. One aspect of the first-person narratives in the Perspectives on Practice section that will become apparent is the manner in which the authors disclose personal beliefs. This disclosure enables Worley and Wilson to take clear critical stances toward their own ideas concerning spirituality and its relationship to the creative process. Rather than adopt the disembodied position of much academic writing, the 'Perspectives' section seeks to include and account for the role played by intention and belief in shaping spiritual and performance experiences.

The articles in this issue are written by authors who have done much to widen and deepen the current discourse concerning performance and spirituality: Marvin Carlson, Khalid Amine, Anthony Kubiak, Anita Hammer, Sharon Aronson-Lehavi, and Daniel Meyer-Dinkgräfe. Carlson and Amine's collaborative article, "Islam and the Colonial Stage in North Africa," challenges an ongoing trope in theatre history that has painted Islam as a unified enemy of the theatre and contributed to the misguided assumption that there has been little theatrical innovation in North Africa between the ancient era and the present. Kubiak compels the self-reflexive theories of Brecht, Blau, Auslander, and others to wrestle with "the *Vajrayana* (Tibetan) Buddhist phenomenological context" (24) in "Caught in the Act: Brecht, Handke and Dzogchen." "In "Researching Spiritual Performance," Hammer explores how "fun is intertwined with faith" in even the most solemn religious performances (32). Aronson-Lehavi shows "the ways in which religious themes and icons remain loaded sites of meaning" within "a broad phenomenon of modern and contemporary experimental theatre performances, in which religious icons, texts, or concepts are directly referred to and represented within a non-religious artistic context" (57). Finally, Meyer-Dinkgräfe relates the reception of a unique operatic voice and operatic singing "to the development and expression of spirituality" in his article, "Spiritual Aspects of Operatic Singing: Klaus Florian Vogt" (71).

This issue appears shortly after the unexpected passing of Daniel Gerould, Lucille Lortel Distinguished Professor of Theatre and Comparative Literature in the Ph.D. Program in Theatre at the City University of New York Graduate Center. Gerould played a role in the establishment of the Institute for the Study of Performance and Spirituality (ISPS), which is the organization that publishes *Performance and Spirituality*. Gerould's contribution to the current discourse concerning performance and spirituality has been profound and far-reaching. Gerould was one of the first scholars to consider Symbolist drama – as well as other avant-garde theatre – in relationship to the alternative religious movements that emerged in Europe and the US between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and he has been credited by many with raising the general awareness of Eastern European theatre in English-speaking countries.

Gerould was a kind soul, a brilliant mind, a generous teacher, and a groundbreaking scholar, and his passing will leave an enormous gap within the worldwide community of theatre and

performance scholars. In order to honor his memory, the next issue of *Performance and Spirituality* will contain articles that are written in response to Gerould's scholarship, which was vastly broad in scope and intellectually compelling. In the near future *Performance and Spirituality* will put out a call for articles that respond to and seek to move beyond Gerould's work.

This issue of *Performance and Spirituality* makes fresh contributions to the discourse concerning performance and spirituality, and it also celebrates the work of those who have done much to make this discourse what it is today. It is our hope that future issues of *Performance and Spirituality* will hold the words of those who will push this conversation forward in striking and exciting ways.