

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

(proposal deadline: 20 July 2020)

Language and Performance: Moving across Discourses and Practices in a Globalised World

Guest Editors: Malgorzata Sugiera, Karel Vanhaesebrouck, and Timmy De Laet

Within a globalised world, language can act both as a barrier and facilitator for the circulation and visibility of peoplehoods, practices, knowledges, or traditions. The twentieth and twenty-first century have witnessed an arguably unprecedented diversification of local cultures due to the rapid development of digital technologies and online networks, the expansion of transnational migrations, and the commercialisation of relatively affordable travel. Paradoxically, however, the increased exposure to foreign influences has coincided with a peculiar kind of ‘cultural homogenisation’ (Appadurai 1996) that, at best, recognises indigenous hybridity while striving to promote internal cohesion between diverse populations and which, at worse, flips into nationalist leanings that aim to reinforce borders and protect ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson 1983). In these complex societal and political realities, language either serves to enhance communication between people or it is used as leverage to implement exclusionary ideologies.

It is against this backdrop of a deeply diversified and often divided global stage that this issue of the *European Journal of Theatre and Performance* wants to reconsider the fairly strenuous debate on the relationship between language and performance, which has surfaced repeatedly yet in various guises in the field of the performing arts. The editors more specifically invite contributions that critically inquire into how language either enables or impedes the creation and development of performance works, the dissemination of scholarly research, or the reconciliation of local traditions with international tendencies in both the arts and academia. The overarching aim of the issue is to shed new light on the intricate connections between language and performance by focusing on the various ways in which performance always operates on the microlevel of concrete practices as well as in dialogue with the macrolevel of larger socio-political and cultural contexts.

Prospective authors are welcome to submit proposals that explore the interplay of language and performance along one (or a combination of) the following four axes:

1. Aesthetic

Language is vital to many aspects of the performing arts, ranging from creation, production, and performing to spectating, reception, and scholarship. Even in a postdramatic era allegedly marked by the demise of the text’s primacy in theatre, neither writing nor language have disappeared altogether from theatrical practices (Borowski and Sugiera 2010; Boyle et al. 2019). Likewise, whereas dance conventionally foregrounds the moving body as its primary medium, leading to what Rudi Laermans describes as a ‘body humanism’ (2008), both written and spoken words are essential and widely used means for creating and transmitting choreography (Franko 2011). Common belief nonetheless holds that the actual experience of performing or watching a theatre, dance, or performance piece can never be fully captured within the limited means of linguistic expression. To the extent, however, that embodied, verbal, and sensory communication lies at the heart of the performing arts, language and discourse remain crucial to understand how performance engages the senses and generates meaning (Nellhaus 2010; Blair and Cook 2016). Moreover, to clarify the dynamics of what Mikhail Bakhtin aptly termed the ‘dialogic imagination’ (1975) seems all the more urgent in a world in which dialogue and mutual understanding are increasingly under pressure.

Possible topics along this line of inquiry may include (but are not limited to):

- The mutual feedback between scholarly discourse and artistic vocabularies
- The textuality of dance, theatre, and performance versus movement expressed through text
- Writing for the theatre and/or other performative arts in a globalised world

2. Epistemological

As primarily embodied and time-based art forms, the performing arts have a fraught relationship with languages and discourses, becoming subject to the ‘epistemic violence’ with which Western regimes of thinking have traditionally relegated practical, corporeal, and often tacit knowledges to an inferior status (Conquergood 2002). The attempt to counter this tendency has often isolated bodily knowing from the interaction between embodiment and language as one of the foundations for the acquisition of techniques or skills in training and performing. Conversely, the steady growth of artistic research in especially the European contexts has been raising renewed interest in the question of whether and how the performing arts need discourse to become validated as knowledgeable practices in their own right or whether there might be other formats more suitable for the dissemination of artistic knowledges (e.g., Spatz 2015; Bal and Chaberski 2020; Blades et al. 2021).

Possible topics along this line of inquiry may include (but are not limited to):

- The interaction between textual archives and embodied repertoires in acting, dancing, and performing
- The role of language(s) in the acquisition of bodily knowledges, skills, and techniques
- (Non-)linguistic formats for artistic creation and scholarly communication

3. Methodological

In various ways, the disciplinary development of the adjacent yet distinct fields of theatre, dance, and performance studies has exacerbated the dichotomous tension between language and performance. For each of these domains, language served as a splitting surface to claim its distinctiveness and to become identified as a specific field of research and practice: whereas theatre studies sought to distance itself from literary studies, performance studies gained its contours in opposition to theatre studies while also dance studies differentiated itself from the former two through its outspoken focus on movement and the dancing body (e.g., Pavis 2001; Bottoms 2003; O’Shea 2010). As such, the stance toward language became part of discursive operations that were shaped by an entangled myriad of intra- and interdisciplinary dynamics. While these legacies still impregnate current views on the role of language and discourse in performance scholarship and practices, they remain to be excavated, particularly with regard to how transnational influences steered local traditions, both artistically and intellectually.

Possible topics along this line of inquiry may include (but are not limited to):

- Disciplinary genealogies, intellectual histories, and artistic traditions from a friction between local and global points of view
- Tactics of differentiation and assimilation in performance practices and scholarship
- Terminology and translatability in discourse and practice

4. Political

Recent scholarship in theatre, performance, and dance studies has directed attention to multilingualism and migration as two major cultural forces to be reckoned with in both research and practice, often with the aim to undermine the pernicious postcolonial, decolonial, and hegemonic legacies still permeating the arts and societies at large (e.g., Cox 2014; Meerzon and Pewny 2019; Damsholt and Hoppu 2020). In the midst of these concerns, the current field of the performing arts as well as academia appear to be governed by two contradictory movements: whereas globalisation has contributed to a larger international outreach of both practitioners and scholars, the dominant position of English as the main communal language runs

the risk of either flattening out onto-epistemic and culturally diverse backgrounds or dividing the field into centres and peripheries. Various countries with a vivid artistic scene and proliferous scholarship experience difficulties in finding their way into a more global network of peers, raising the question to what extent the performing arts can resist reigning political, economic, and social power relations.

Possible topics along this line of inquiry may include (but are not limited to):

- Multilingualism as a space of encounter and/or conflict
- Travelling concepts and migrating discourses
- Linguistic (de)colonisation and (counter)hegemony: peripheries and centres in globalised performance practices and research

PROPOSAL SUBMISSIONS

- Proposals should be written in UK English, in MS Word format and be between 600 and 700 words.
- Please include a brief bio (max. 100 words) in your proposal submission and send it by email to the guest editors (see contacts below).
- Proposals should specify in which language the article will be submitted. The journal is open to articles written in the language of the author's preference, but please note that for all articles written in languages other than English contributors will be asked to secure professional proof-reading. Authors may also choose to publish their article in more than one language.
- Proposals must be based on original, unpublished work not under consideration for publication elsewhere.
- Submitted articles will undergo a double-blind peer-review process by two anonymous experts.
- The maximum length of the final article should not exceed 9000 words (including abstract in English and in at least one additional language, references, author bio, etc.).
- If your proposal is accepted, you will be invited to submit a first draft of your article by 1 October 2020.
- Publication of accepted articles can only be ensured if authors meet the deadlines included in the schedule below.
- For more information on the *European Journal of Theatre and Performance*, please visit: <https://journal.eastap.com>.

SCHEDULE

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