

Letter from the Editor

One of the primary goals of the *Baylor Journal of Theatre and Performance* is to stimulate discussion on the place of faith and spiritual practice in relationship to live performance. In our previous issue, “Harmonies of the Soul: Movement, Music, and Spirituality,” this manifested in the invitation of music theatre specialist Judith Sebesta to serve as the issue’s guest editor. The collaboration proved deeply satisfying and opened several new avenues of scholarship to our publication, which is part of our continuing effort to expand the range of inquiry into the intersections between the arts and religion.

This issue seemed the next logical step in that process. Drama of the Middle Ages and Renaissance has from *BJTP*’s inception been a popular topic within our submission pool. We saw that, clearly, plays and performance were part of a lively and longstanding conversation in the disciplines of medieval and Renaissance studies. A favorite subject in theatre and performance studies, these were also historical moments when ideas about religion were so integrated into human life that it naturally manifested in public performance, and when drama seemed a natural compliment to the practice of ritual. Two colleagues from Baylor’s campus, K. Sarah-Jane Murray and Sinda K. Vanderpool, offered their service to make this next issue a truly interdisciplinary conversation. The result is “Between the Sacred and the Profane: Medieval and Renaissance Performance.”

Feature articles for this issue are laid out in chronological groupings. Thus, Veronica Alfano’s “‘I Was Never Bard Ere’: Creation and Charity in the Wakefield *Play of Noah*” and Jerry Jaffe’s “Catharsis in an Augustinian Context: Understanding *The Murder of Abel*” offer two very different kinds of textual analysis for the mystery plays in question. Next, “Apocalypse Then: *Tamburlaine* and the Pleasures of Religious Fear,” by Richard F. Hardin, considers the cultural context for the performance of Marlowe’s sweeping and bloody tragedy, while John D. Martin’s “The Depiction of Jews in the Carnival Plays and Comedies of Hanz Folz and Hans Sachs in Early Modern Nuremberg” gives thoughtful consideration to the uses and limits of Bakhtin’s ideas in analyzing theatrical considerations of the cultural other. Our Features section closes with a unique meeting of classical material with current practice: “The Actor’s Carnal Eye: A Contemporary Staging of the Digby *Mary Magdalene*.” Peter Cockett’s article relates the difficulties of guiding modern actors (and audiences) through the process of staging mystery plays—an embodied meeting of the sacred in his largely secular (“profane”) environment—in order to suggest Jerzy Grotowski’s theory of the holy actor as an interpretive framework for understanding both the medieval and postmodern acting practice.

Our Profile section for this issue attempts a new direction for this aspect of our work. Rather than examine a new or little known contributor to theatrical practice and inquiry, C. Thomas Ault offers a fresh conception of fifteenth-century material. The diary entries featured in “*The Passion of Christ* and Ritual Performances in Fifteenth-Century Ferrara” have been available in archives and early-to mid-twentieth-century scholarly materials. With his introduction and new translation of selected passages, Ault attempts to create a previously unconsidered, holistic vision of Duke Ercole I’s public spectacles within the world of Renaissance Italian intellectual and artistic inquiry. It is intended to suggest a need for renewed intellectual inquiry in the subject.

As *BJTP* grows, we continue to seek opportunities to offer our readership new information on the study and practice of theatrical performance. So, this issue also

introduces a new occasional feature to our Highlight section: the performance report. Stephen Prickett's account of his staging of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* at Baylor's Armstrong-Browning library is notable for both its unconventional location and campus-wide collaboration. We invite our readership to consider his work as a model for new submissions in the area.

As I close this introductory letter, I will take the opportunity to declare my own elation at this new development for *BJTP* and my great pleasure in working with Drs. Murray and Vanderpool. At the very least, I hope our readers will be indulgent with my unabashed enthusiasm. Moreover, I hope it is contagious. *The Baylor Journal of Theatre and Performance* has high hopes that this issue will be the start of a fruitful and high spirited conversation between academic disciplines. The moment could not be better; the lived experience of faith has more academic currency than ever as we confront current events on the world stage. Let this discussion of the sacred and the profane in earlier periods of great growth and change be the model for many such future exchanges.