Introduction

Dramatic Experience: The Poetics of Drama and the Early Modern Public Sphere(s)

It is by now well known that early modern theatre as an institution and cultural site represented a locus of accumulation and assembly for social, political, and ideological transformations and tensions that were aggressively reshaping private and public, individual and collective identities during the period from approximately 1500 to 1800. These centuries witnessed an explosion of dramatic theory and theatrical polemics, practice, and production in various dramatic genres; the birth of public playhouses open to socially diverse audiences; and an increased accessibility to dramatic texts through the novel medium of print that was actively forging a new kind of reading public. These developments point to a fundamental question that transcends the disciplinary boundaries of theatre studies and forms the focus of the current volume: how and to what extent did the convergence of dramatic theory, theatrical practice, and various modes of audience experience—among both theatregoers and readers of drama—contribute, during the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, to the emergence of spaces we now call ‘public sphere(s)’?

The public sphere—in a perspective suggested but not exhausted by Jürgen Habermas in *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (*The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 1962)—is a symbolic, social, and cultural space where collective and individual identities emerge and shape each other in a dialectical logic of interdependence. In his classic discussion, Habermas famously outlined a single, if multidimensional, shift from an earlier ‘representative publicity’ (*repräsentative Öffentlichkeit*) associated with royal courts as central sites of power and theatrical production, to a ‘bourgeois public sphere’ (*bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit*) constituted by novels and journals read in private households.¹ An entire academic field that revises and develops his approaches and conclusions has since emerged around the notion of the public sphere. In particular, the large-scale ‘Making Publics’ project, which ran from 2005 to 2010 and explored early modern public spheres, produced two important volumes of interdisciplinary scholarship.² These collections develop a post-Habermasian

1 Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. by Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence (repr. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989).

2 *Making Publics in Early Modern Europe: People, Things, Forms of Knowledge*, ed. by Wilson Bronwen and Paul Yachnin (New York: Routledge, 2010); and *Making Space Public in Early*

understanding of the early modern public sphere, which 'is more likely to be described as a heterogeneous and conflictual ensemble of social entities than egalitarian totality: a multiplicity of publics and counter-publics that produce and occupy, in turn, a multiplicity of social spaces where their collective identity and voice can be created, discovered, asserted and exercised'.³ This understanding of the public sphere is well suited to an exploration of the early modern period characterised by parallel processes of pluralisation across different domains. The demystified notion of plural 'social spaces' does not completely supplant the unified 'public sphere' that is conceived of 'not as a bounded space but a vortex of attention', but is related to it through the multiplicity, virtuality, open-endedness, and performativity of social practices that are engaged in 'making spaces public'.⁴ As one among many early modern social spaces, theatre is examined (particularly in Steven Mullaney's and Rachel Willie's important contributions) through its dual status as performance both in a public playhouse and on the 'paper stage'.⁵ Theatre thus emerges as a form of mediation between private and public, individual and collective; as a 'forum for social thought' and a 'potential catalyst of making of various publics and counter-publics'; and as a 'form of publication' or a 'practical public sphere'. As lived experiences of early modern existence, the 'actual practices of public making give the lie to the myth of a stable and normative public sphere'.⁶

Substantiating and recasting Habermas's claim that theatre as a medium and concept played a central role in the early modern, pre-bourgeois public sphere, these studies provide a strong impulse—along with new

Modern Europe: Performance, Geography, Privacy, ed. by Angela Vanhaelen and Joseph P. Ward (London: Routledge, 2013). Although the 'Making Publics' project has concluded, its website still operates as a resource for scholars interested in the topic: <http://www.making-publics.org/>.

3 Steven Mullaney and Angela Vanhaelen, 'Introduction: Making Space Public', in *Making Space Public in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Vanhaelen and Ward, p. 3.

4 Ibid., p. 5.

5 See Steven Mullaney's 'What's Hamlet to Habermas? Spatial Literacy, Theatrical Publication, and the Publics of Early Modern Public Stage' (pp. 17–40) and Rachel Willie's 'Viewing the Paper Stage: Civil War, Print, Theatre and the Public Sphere' (pp. 54–75), in *Making Space Public in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Vanhaelen and Ward.

6 Steven Mullaney and Angela Vanhaelen, 'Introduction: Making Space Public', pp. 3–8. See also *Beyond the Public Sphere: Opinions, Publics, Spaces in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Massimo Rospocher (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2012); *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. by Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992).

methodological tools—for further exploration of this fertile field.⁷ In their discussions of theatre as a space and practice from the double perspective of ‘spatiality of the social’ and ‘sociality of the spatial’, these innovative case studies for the most part leave aside the relationship between the poetics of drama and the public spheres, both in terms of the practical implementation of dramatic precepts on the stage in order to affect, mobilise, form, and transform spectators, and in terms of the dramatic theories and public theatrical polemics of the early modern period. The present volume aims to fill this gap by exploring the relationship between ‘universal’, internationally transferable theatrical poetics, textual genres, and performative techniques, and the lived experience of specific early modern audiences that diverge socially, geographically, and chronologically.

One of the premises of the DramaNet project approach, championed in this book, is that internationally disseminated early modern theatre constitutes the first mass medium in history.⁸ This assumption implies that techniques of fiction and aesthetic effects were aligned with—if not steered by—a social logic of mass consumption that allowed playhouses to attract consistently heterogeneous audiences that were otherwise divided by geographical and social distance. The terms ‘audience’ and ‘public’ converge when we speak of a play’s spectators, but even in its most conventional sense ‘public’, an adjective referring to something generally accessible or shared and a noun relating to an abstract collective entity, differs from ‘audience’, a form of focused gathering. This volume attempts to illuminate the various and complex dynamics that made dramatic audiences—real and imagined, readers and spectators alike—into embodiments of and blueprints for more abstract publics or ‘public spheres’.⁹

7 For other recent studies that critically discuss and examine Habermas’s theory of the public sphere, see *Drama and Theatre in Early Modern Europe: Drama, Performance and Debate*, ed. by Jan Bloemendal, Peter G.F. Eversmann, and Elsa Strieman (Leiden: Brill, 2012); and Bloemendal and Van Dixhoorn’s chapter on public opinion, ‘Literary Cultures and Public Opinion in the Early Modern Low Countries’, in *Literature and Public Opinion in the Low Countries, 1450–1650*, ed. by Jan Bloemendal, Arjan van Dixhoorn, and Elsa Strieman (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 1–35.

8 This claim is explored by Joachim Küpper, Principal Investigator of the research group Early Modern European Drama and the Cultural Net (DramaNet), in his forthcoming monograph, *The Cultural Net—Early Modern Drama as Paradigm*.

9 Paula R. Backscheider, *Spectacular Politics: Theatrical Power and Mass Culture in Early Modern England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993). For an important study of early modern conceptions of the public on the threshold of the political and the aesthetic, see Hélène Merlin, *Public et littérature en France au XVII^e siècle* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1994).

From Aristotle to New Historicism, theoretical discussions have recognised drama as a medium tailored to produce and manipulate collective emotions (whether anthropologically constant or socially and historically variable) in order to obtain desired aesthetic, social, and political effects. Indeed, from the Renaissance to the late eighteenth century, the history of European drama and theatre was largely shaped by the re-emergence and subsequent proliferation of theory, a persistent inquiry into the workings and implications of dramatic effect and experience.¹⁰ This process was driven primarily by the reading and adaptation of the two major poetic doctrines from classical antiquity that focus on dramatic genres: Aristotle's *Poetics* and Horace's *Ars poetica*. Across centuries and national traditions, theorists and practitioners of drama turned to these two treatises that explored the nature of dramatic experience, its social, political, and moral implications, and its capacity to shape and discipline not only its publics as collectives but also the interior selves of individual spectators (or readers).

Rediscovered in Renaissance Italy, ancient poetic doctrines were immediately (re)interpreted to align with, and to make sense of, the changing social configurations of historical audiences and their expectations as they shaped, and were shaped by, contemporary dramatic practice. In Aristotelian and Horatian exegesis, poetic and moral categories were consistently aligned with the social and the political. Drama and its theory were both understood by neo-classical commentators as media that shaped virtual political communities—'public spheres'. The uses of dramatic poetics as political theory, which can be traced from the very first Aristotelian commentaries in fifteenth-century Italy, can be illustrated by the writings of André Dacier, a highly influential late seventeenth-century French translator and interpreter of classical theory. Dacier's readings of Horace and Aristotle opened up and canonised the procedures and outcomes of humanist exegesis for vernacular publics within and outside France, laying the groundwork for eighteenth-century dramatic theory proper (Jean-Baptiste Dubos, Denis Diderot, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Voltaire, Carlo Goldoni, Carlo Gozzi, and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, to name but a few). Dacier's preface to his annotated translation of Aristotle's *Poetics* into French (1692), itself quickly translated into English, links the rules of dramatic art to political institutions in the very first lines. To quote an early English translation, 'as the Injustice of Men, gave the occasion to making of Laws; so the decay

See also *Le Spectateur de théâtre à l'âge classique (XVII^e–XVIII^e siècles)*, ed. by Bénédicte Louvat-Molozayet and Franck Salaün (Montpellier: L'Entretemps éditions, 2008).

10 Steven Mullaney, *The Reformation of Emotions in the Age of Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

of Arts, and the Faults committed in them, oblig'd first to the making Rules, and the renewing them.' Theatre and poetry, according to Dacier, emerged from the original community rituals, the feasts of the pagans, which were transformed by philosopher poets into 'Diversions, where there is Order, and Shows, where Truth is to be found'. Drama is thus entrusted with the shaping of its audiences in accordance with a specific truth, a process that aligned the rules of dramatic art with political, religious, and moral laws. As a consequence, drama assumes a central place in an all-encompassing collective and political discipline—since, as Dacier puts it, 'the only aim of true Politicks is to procure to the People Virtue, Peace and Pleasure.' Expressly identifying Aristotelian catharsis as the effect of drama with the Horatian principle of combining 'the pleasant and profitable', Dacier interprets the 'purification of the passions' to designate the ethical reformation of the public in general and the socially situated individual in particular: 'Thus the aspiring may learn to give bounds to his Ambition; the Prophane to fear God; the Malicious to forget his Wrongs; the Passionate to restrain his Anger; the Tyrant to forsake his Violence and Injustice.'¹¹

Evidently, Dacier was exploring the same dynamic of collective participation and its role in the forging of individual and group identities that is central to (post-)Habermasian discussions of public sphere(s) and the particular role of theatre therein. Early modern drama was clearly aligned with the grand disciplinary movement of the period that accompanied the emergence of modern statehood and modern subjectivity—even if this movement, which has been variously described by Michel Foucault, Norbert Elias, and Gerhard Oestreich, was itself in many respects a cultural utopia rather than a historical reality. Notably, both Elias and Foucault refer to tragedy as a privileged medium of the new moral and legal economy of discipline, submission, and domination, while the neo-Stoic doctrines explored by Oestreich were central to early modern interpretations of tragic affect and its disciplining effects.¹² Accordingly, in several essays in this volume, the issue of theatrical experience or 'theatrical event'—both as a product of the disciplinary thrust and its

11 [André Dacier], 'Preface', in *Aristotle's Art of Poetry: translated from the original Greek, according to Mr. Theodore Goulston's edition: together with Mr. D'Acier's notes translated from the French* (London: D. Brown & W. Turner, 1705), unpaginated.

12 Norbert Elias, *The Court Society*, trans. by Edmund Jephcott (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), pp. 111–13; Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–1976* (New York: Picador, 2003), pp. 174–77; Gerhard Oestreich, *Neostoicism and the Early Modern State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Hans-Jürgen Schings, 'Consolatio Tragoediae: Zur Theorie des barocken Trauerspiels', in *Deutsche Dramentheorien: Beiträge zu einer historischen Poetik des Dramas in Deutschland*, ed. by Reinhold Grimm (Frankfurt a.M.: Atheneum, 1971).

subversion—emerges as an important vantage point for the discussion of drama and theatre as both practice and theoretical subject.

One dynamic that made theatre—and the subjectivity of the spectator it forged—into an institution of and a paradigm for a specifically early modern order of power has been described by Habermas as ‘representative publicity’. Drawing on the theatrical experiences of Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister*, Habermas links drama—and, specifically, tragedy—to a culture of authority grounded in self-constitutive spectacles of domination that both engaged the populace as their audience and reduced its political role to passive spectatorship. This analysis, which builds on Carl Schmitt’s discussions of authoritarian representation, resonates with and is supported by other (anti-)Schmittian discussions of the politics of theatre in the ‘absolutist’ age from Walter Benjamin to Louis Marin and Hélène Merlin-Kajman. The tragic protagonist is identified with the ruler; the theatrical event with the political state of exception, or *coup d’état*.¹³ In several contributions to this volume, tragedy is explored as a genre that establishes and renegotiates the outlines of sovereignty in its relationship to the public as theatrical audience and political nation, as both sides are mutually defined through dramatic action that simultaneously unfolds as theatre and politics. The inherent affinity of early modern authority with theatrical poetics is further highlighted in essays on early opera, a genre closely related to tragedy that shared its Aristotelian theoretical basis as well as its festive and political functions.

Aristotelian language also reflected—and reflected upon—the relevance of comedy for the shaping of polities and their publics. By the sixteenth century, Italian playwrights and theorists of drama were drawing on the Aristotelian distinction between tragedy and comedy as based on the social standing of the characters, and were reinterpreting and redefining the moral categories of *nobiltà/bassezza* (the noble and the lowly) as notions of social status. This trend connects dramatic texts created in the process of translation and adaptation of ancient models both with local medieval theatrical traditions and with contemporary political orders based on patriarchal family values and regulated by honour and shame. In this volume, we focus on Renaissance comedy as particularly significant for the relationship between the public and the private, which cannot be clearly separated during this period, especially when dealing

13 Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. by John Osborne (London: Verso, 1985); Louis Marin, ‘Théâtralité et pouvoir: Magie, machination, machine: *Médée* de Corneille’, in *Politiques de la représentation* (Paris: Kimé, 2005); Hélène Merlin-Kajman, *L’Absolutisme dans les lettres et la théorie des deux corps: passions et politique* (Paris: Champion, 2000).

with sexual matters and marital issues.¹⁴ This seemingly minor dramatic genre, which exposes the 'private' topics of love, sex, and family life, inverts its original Aristotelian function of detecting and blaming minor vices (weaknesses and foibles) to become a powerful public medium that addresses major social and political issues.¹⁵ Textual and performative strategies of Renaissance comedy are examined in our volume from two opposing perspectives: in their relation to ritual scripts that anchored plays in traditional patriarchal society and in their novel meta-dramatic qualities that constituted a new, emancipated audience.

The variety of perspectives represented in this collection reflects the cross-cultural and transnational approach that has informed the DramaNet project. Chronologically, we begin with late medieval theatrical practice and embrace the entire early modern period. Geographically, we address diverse national, linguistic, and cultural traditions: Italy and France, Germany and Tyrol, the Netherlands and Russia. In one instance, we reach beyond Europe in order to compare early modern European dramatic experience with Japanese theatrical culture as it developed from the fourteenth to the nineteenth centuries. The essays assembled here address dramatic theory and practice, analyse a wide range of theatrical genres, explore different social contexts, and draw on a variety of methodological approaches. At the same time, they all represent focused historical case studies. Presented in chronological order, the essays and their subjects resonate with each other on many levels, exposing geographic and linguistic affinities, common issues of genre and aesthetics, and shared approaches to social and political experience. All of these build an intricate network of bridges between and among individual contributions.

A predominance of essays exploring Italian drama in this volume corresponds to the leading role of early modern Italy in the development of Europe's dramatic cultures. The volume traces significant phases of this development from the beginning of the sixteenth century up to the second half of the eighteenth century. Our Italian case studies are distributed among different cities: Florence

14 *Privatisierung der Triebe? Sexualität in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. by Daniela Erlach, Markus Reisenleitner, and Karl Vocelka (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1994); Guido Ruggiero, *Machiavelli in Love: Sex, Self, and Society in the Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2007).

15 Laura Giannetti, *Lelia's Kiss: Imagining Gender, Sex, and Marriage in Italian Renaissance Comedy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Roger Chartier, 'From Court Festivity to City Spectators', in *Forms and Meanings: Texts, Performances, and Audiences from Codex to Computer* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1995), pp. 43–82.

and Siena, where reflection on the ancient poetics of drama emerged together with new forms of theatrical production; Venice, which played a leading role in theatre history at a later stage when, with the appearance of public playhouses, theatrical performance was transformed from a court ceremony into a spectacle for a socially diverse, paying audience; and Parma, a comparatively peripheral theatrical space which, precisely because of its marginality, provides us with a site of little-studied dramatic reflection and interesting experiment.

The collection opens with Sven Thorsten Kilian's 'Opening Spaces for the Reading Audience: Fernando de Rojas's *Celestina* (1499/1502) and Niccolò Machiavelli's *Mandragola* (1518)', which focuses not on the reception of plays but on dramatic textuality. Kilian defines early modern plays as meta-textual and poly-functional in their potential to model the heterogeneous audience, their reflexive attitude implying multiple readings, and their ability to procure pleasure. He illuminates the precariousness of what is only seemingly the self-evident and triumphant mechanism of didactic effect as it gave way in Renaissance comedy to a not-so-moral *plaisir du texte*. Both texts draw their dramatic effects from deception and from sexually connoted pleasure. According to Kilian, the pleasure of being deceived that is suggested by *La Celestina* is a recurrent and crucial issue in early modern theatre. In *La Mandragola*, Machiavelli explores this same issue through a revision of his own political theory as outlined in *The Prince*. Transposing the notion of deceit from politics to dramatic poetics, Machiavelli now associates it with the aesthetics of dramatic illusion.

The dramatic texts reunited in the analytical *inganno* framework of Kilian's essay were at the centre of attention of playwrights who formed one of the earliest Italian academies, the Accademia degli Intronati. Their productive reception can only partly elucidate the origins, the structure, and the dramatic experience suggested by the academy's first staged comedy, *Gl'Ingannati* (*The Deceived*). Unlike Kilian's analysis of dramatic textuality, Katja Gvozdeva's 'Why Do Men Go Blind in the Theatre? Gender Riddles and Fools' Play in the Italian Renaissance Comedy *Gl'Ingannati* (1532)' is focused on the visual effects of the performance. She shows that this cross-dressing comedy was conceived by the academicians as a visual riddle that refers to their own institutional emblem and that mobilises, in two distinct ways, the visual perceptions of the male and female members of the audience. This playful visual strategy is made to function by the academicians themselves acting on stage in order to reinforce their own fragile micro-society, inscribing it symbolically and emblematically into the public space *par excellence*, the Palazzo Comunale, where the comedy was performed.

The issue of academy performance in the late Renaissance is further developed by Déborah Blocker with the Florentine example of the Accademia

degli Alterati that provided, in the last third of the sixteenth century, a sharp contrast to the official Medicean institution of the Accademia Fiorentina, by cultivating its image as a secret society. ‘The Accademia degli Alterati and the Invention of a New Form of Dramatic Experience: Myth, Allegory, and Theory in Jacopo Peri’s and Ottavio Rinuccini’s *Euridice* (1600)’ interweaves an analysis of the theoretical positions and aesthetic ambitions of the Alterati in their theatrical experiments with the question of their social positioning and of the relation between the arts and political power. Blocker argues that Peri and Rinuccini’s production of *Euridice* (which brought together theatre, music, chant, and dance, and was performed by the academicians in the context of a Medici wedding) was conceived in an allegorical mode that allowed the opera to embody multiple significations simultaneously and to provide a self-reflexive representation of several types of aesthetic and political experience. Transforming an Ovidian myth into a theatricalised ‘miracle’, the opera’s finale both alluded to the immediate social and political circumstances of its production, and directed the spectators towards higher truths. Blocker links the origins of opera in Medici Florence to a complex negotiation of the role of subjects and artists in the new monarchical regime that made a ‘private’ withdrawal from politics into an optimal form of political selfhood and conformity.

Moving from the late Renaissance to the Baroque, Wendy Heller’s *‘Il favore degli dei* (1690): Meta-Opera and Metamorphoses at the Farnese Court’ continues to explore the relationship between academic aesthetics, the operatic genre, and dynastic celebration. Because of its visual opulence and length, *Il favore degli dei* not only transgressed the earlier aesthetic requirements of the genre in terms of moderation and harmony, but even appeared excessive by Baroque standards. Heller solves the aesthetic riddle of this *drama fantastico*—a spectacle that attracted massive heterogeneous audiences from the city and provinces to the court theatre, the Teatro Farnese—by demonstrating that the opera’s design fused three theatrical threads. First, the court’s striving for an opulent dynastic celebration. Second, the originality of the Accademia degli Incogniti’s playful and fanciful Ovidian poetics, which delighted in entwining multiple tales inherited from classical tradition. Third, the reflection of Venetian public theatre’s ‘Ovidian dramaturgy’, which created, in its irreverent, complex, and sensual exploration of the Arcadian realm, an unstable, chaotic, and changeable universe that was intended to overwhelm the spectator.

Taking a step from courtly Baroque spectacle to public performances in Enlightenment Venice, Tatiana Korneeva’s ‘Entertainment for Melancholics: The Public and the Public Stage in Carlo Gozzi’s *L’Amore delle tre melerance*’ further explores the processes of public making, taking as a case study Carlo Gozzi’s fairy-tale play *The Love of the Three Oranges* (1761). Given the comedy’s allegorical association of Venetian theatregoers with Gozzi’s protagonist

prince, this meta-theatrical text offers the opportunity to reflect on the role of audience response in eighteenth-century theatre practice and critical theory. By analysing the motif of the melancholic sovereign (which catalyses the entire action of the comedy), Korneeva reveals analogies between Gozzi's ideas about theatrical entertainment and the *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture* (1719) by Jean-Baptiste Dubos, who established that works of art should be evaluated by their effect on spectators, and who attributed an absolute centrality to public judgment. These insights appear to have influenced Gozzi, who espoused the idea that the audience's response should exercise an aesthetic and cultural authority previously reserved only for a monarch.

Logan J. Connors's 'Pierre Nicole, Jean-Baptiste Dubos, and the Psychological Experience of Theatrical Performance in Early Modern France' shifts the discussion from Italy to France, and to the history of the 'theatrical event'. He expands our exploration of the effects of theatre performances on bourgeois spectators by examining several late seventeenth-century and early eighteenth-century discourses on drama. Tracing the origins of spectator-focused dramatic theories in the works of playwrights and theorists such as Corneille, Racine, Pierre Nicole, Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, Jean-Baptiste Dubos, Houdar de la Motte, and Denis Diderot, Connors emphasises that the histories of psychology and theatre overlap, as 'the theatre was a natural venue for discussing essential questions in early modern psychology.' The essay investigates various types of emotional reactions to theatrical performance, the positive and negative effects of emotions, as well as the somatic and psychic mechanisms involved in the theatrical experience—as they were understood in the context of the period's (anti-)theatrical theories.

Four contributions by Kirill Ospovat, Nigel Smith, Hans Velten, and Stanca Scholz-Cionca focus, from distinct and complementary methodological perspectives, on relationships among spectatorship, sovereignty, the theatricality of political power, and the audience's emotional response.

Kirill Ospovat's 'The Catharsis of Prosecution: Royal Violence, Poetic Justice, and Public Emotion in the Russian *Hamlet* (1748)' explores the interaction of absolutist politics and tragic aesthetics in Aleksandr Sumarokov's adaptation of Shakespeare's masterpiece. Shakespeare's final catastrophe was here substituted with a happy ending: the Russian Hamlet triumphs over Claudius and pardons the captive Polonii, who immediately commits suicide. Sumarokov thus turns his play into a celebration of royal triumph—an allusion to Empress Elizabeth's successful *coup d'état* of 1741. Offering an in-depth reading of the play's double ending, Ospovat compares it with the theatrical mechanics of royal violence and judicial terror as they were mirrored and perpetuated by tragedy. By importing the genre of tragedy into Russia, Sumarokov aligned

dramatic introspection and the emotional impact of drama on the audience with the moral discipline imposed by the 'absolute' monarchy in its claim for disciplinary authority.

Nigel Smith's 'The Politics of Tragedy in the Dutch Republic: Joachim Oudaen's Martyr Drama in Context' undertakes a reading of the martyr plays of Rotterdam republican playwright Joachim Oudaen, which took their subject matter from the De Witt brothers' murder during the Third Anglo-Dutch war, in order to reveal how the dramatist used the aesthetic potential of the tragic form to counterbalance the political culture of the period. By comparing Oudaen's plays to English tragedies, Smith's essay raises the question of how the two nations represented each other in their respective dramatic traditions. This essay argues, in explicit and productive resonance with other contributions to the volume's central theme, that Dutch drama embodied and participated in public life 'in a way that seems similar to the development of both consciousness and artistic achievement in the Italian city states of the later fifteenth and earlier sixteenth centuries'.

Hans Rudolf Velten's 'Devils On and Off Stage: Shifting Effects of Fear and Laughter in Late Medieval and Early Modern German Urban Theatre' investigates the broad field of theatricality that reaches from carnival rituals to religious and secular plays during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. According to Rudolf Schlögl's influential assumption, late medieval communal spaces of 'socialisation among present beings' constituted by corporeal media and cultural performances still lacked a specific medium for explicit self-reflection (later provided by written and printed communication). Velten identifies such a medium of self-observation in the ambiguity of devil performances. Shifting between the effects of fear and laughter, audience response here appears as a kind of shared collaborative commentary constituting a prototype of public sphere construction.

Multiple questions arising in several of our contributions about the early modern audience—its composition, its modes of interaction with actors, its discrepancies in cognitive and emotional response among different groups of spectators—and images of it that emerge from the dramatic texts themselves and from historical reports of performances are brought together in Toni Bernhart's 'Imagining the Audience in Eighteenth-Century Folk Theatre in Tyrol'. Addressing this unexplored area of dramatic text production and theatrical performance, Bernhart aims to fill the 'historical void' in our knowledge about Tyrolean spectators and to provide more precision around the fuzzy and romanticised critical notion of the folk drama. In contrast to the other articles in this collection that are dedicated to eighteenth-century theatre (and deal with the problematic issue of theatrical illusion in relation to demanding

spectatorship characteristic of the cultural spaces of absolutist France and the Venetian Republic), Bernhart explores the rural area of Tyrol and confronts the divergent perspectives of local peasants and occasional upper class members in rural audiences, demonstrating the enormous emotional receptiveness of the former and their agency in solemnising theatrical events. While stressing the magical power of theatrical illusion, Bernhart indicates that illusion contradicts neither the extreme proximity of actors and audience members who belong to the same small rural community nor the interchangeability of their positions.

The discussions of the theatricality of power that are outlined by Smith and Ospovat, and the impact of theatre in creating the early modern public sphere is expanded theoretically and geographically in Stanca Scholz-Cionca's '*Nô* within Walls and Beyond: Theatre as Cultural Capital in Edo Japan (1603–1868)'. By exploring the manifold social and political functions and resonances of *nô* drama in Japanese court and public life from the early modern period to the nineteenth century, Scholz-Cionca highlights how *nô* dramaturgy—investigated in its wide variety of forms, which ranged from court pageants to unofficial amateur practices—served as a leading cultural medium that fostered knowledge transfer across classes and that contributed to the shaping of social cohesion and patterns of cultural identity. Once again, this essay illuminates and explores the fundamental role of early modern theatre in crafting and consolidating public spheres that were equally present in early modern Europe and Asia.

Despite the diversity of their topics, the articles in this collection demonstrate that related, if diverging, conceptions of the 'public' existed in a variety of forms, locations, and cultures across early modern Europe—and in Asia. Together, they highlight the pivotal role of early modern theatre in the construction of public sphere(s) and the shaping of audiences' individual and collective identities in their respective social and political contexts. The case studies presented here are underwritten by an awareness of the crucial significance of theatrical audiences both as sources of social energy and as living bodies and minds subject to manipulation.

This volume is intended to be of use and interest to students and scholars of early modern theatre, but also to reach beyond the framework of theatre history to appeal to anyone interested in the theory of drama, in audience studies, and in current interdisciplinary debates ongoing in the fields of performance studies, comparative literature, and the history of cultural institutions and cultural dynamics.

Katja Gvozdeva, Tatiana Korneeva, and Kirill Ospovat
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