



# BROADSIDE

40/3 Summer 2013

a newsletter of THEATRE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

## President's Report

### Update on TLA Activities

Greetings from a sweltering New York City! It is with great pleasure that I share this update on TLA's activities.

#### Conference Planning

##### SIBMAS-TLA 2014

I am delighted to inform you that the planning for SIBMAS-TLA 2014 is in full swing. The SIBMAS and TLA Conference Planning Committees met in New York City on June 21 at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. We had a lively and productive discussion around a full agenda. The conference is tentatively titled *Reimagining Collections: Mind, Body, Artifact*—we will also take into account the theme of *Building Communities*. The SIBMAS Executive Committee members are terrific—we enjoyed their visit to New York City.

The conference will launch on June 10 with early registration and excursions to be scheduled for the morning and afternoon. The programs are scheduled for June 11 – June 13 and include themed days on Dance Preservation, Digital Humanities and the Performing Arts, and Material Culture and Ephemera. We are planning a full range of activities including keynotes, plenaries, working sessions, and an exhibition paper session. At least one of our working sessions will be modeled as an “unconference.” We will also be celebrating the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of SIBMAS!

We are thrilled with the venue—a newly built extension of John Jay College of Criminal Justice. The building offers us exceptional spaces for our programs and a fabulous area for dining which includes an outdoor deck with views of



Nancy Friedland on SIBMAS tour of John Jay College, 2013

*(continued on page 4)*

INSIDE  
This Issue

4 President's Report  
7 News

11 Book/Media Reviews  
16 Upcoming Events

# About BROADSIDE

## Editorial Information and Publication Guidelines

### BROADSIDE PUBLICATION GUIDELINES

*BROADSIDE* is the principal medium through which the Theatre Library Association communicates news, activities, policies, and procedures. Collectively, past issues also provide historical information about the organization and the profession of performing arts librarianship. *BROADSIDE* has no ambition to serve as a scholarly journal. Scholarly and other articles or monographs may be considered for TLA's other principal publication, *Performing Arts Resources*.

In addition, *BROADSIDE* serves as a means for the exchange among members of information that advances the mission of the organization. Examples of this include short news items about recent activities of both individual and institutional members; short reviews of relevant books and other resources; news of relevant exhibits, conferences, and other developments in performing arts librarianship, collections, and scholarship.

In keeping with the aims of a newsletter, and to help the Editor and the TLA Publications Committee to maintain fair and consistent editorial policies, the Publications Committee has developed the following guidelines.

1. Priority in the publication of articles will be given to the Association's officers, members of the Board, and chairs of committees. These articles provide the most important means by which the leadership of the Association communicates recent Board decisions, upcoming TLA-sponsored events, appeals for member involvement, etc.
2. TLA members in good standing are encouraged to submit news items that are in keeping with the statement above. All submissions are subject to editing for length, clarity, and factual confirmation.
3. Letters to the Editor are encouraged, but must be limited to 200 words, due to space considerations.
4. Reviews of books or other resources are an excellent way for members to contribute to TLA and the profession. Reviews should be limited to 500 words and should include a concise summary of the resource, a comparison of it to similar resources, and a brief evaluation. Suggestions and unsolicited reviews should be sent to the Book Review Editor.
5. The copyright of all articles published in *BROADSIDE* will be owned by TLA. Permission to republish an article may be requested from the Editor.
6. Ideas for articles – other than brief news items, book reviews, or submissions from officers and committee chairs – should be submitted to the Editor in advance in order to allow sufficient time to plan layout, provide constructive suggestions, and occasionally seek guidance from the Publications Committee. Articles should relate to performing arts libraries, library resources, or related topics in performing arts scholarship, rather than to general performing arts topics.

*BROADSIDE* (ISSN: 0068-2748) is published three times a year and is now open access—no login required—and available via *BROADSIDE* online at <http://tla-online.org/publications/BROADSIDEonline.html>.

Contents ©Theatre Library Association

**Editor:** Angela Weaver ([aw6@u.washington.edu](mailto:aw6@u.washington.edu)), University of Washington

**Book Review Editor:** Charlotte Cubbage ([c-cubbage@northwestern.edu](mailto:c-cubbage@northwestern.edu)), Northwestern University

### Image Credits

**Page 1:** Photo courtesy of Alan Jones, Drama Librarian, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

**Page 7:** Detail of the costume worn by Nikki M. James in the 2008 production of *Romeo and Juliet*, directed by Des McAnuff; costume designer: Paul Tazewell. Photo by Rick Schmidlin.

Silver casket with puppet. *The Merchant of Venice*, 1989, Stratford Festival. Director: Michael Langham; designer: Desmond Heeley. Photo by Rick Schmidlin.

**Page 8:** Oregon Shakespeare Festival

**Page 9:** Roundabout Theatre Company Archives

**Page 10:** Doris Niles, photograph by Nickolas Murray, J. Willis Sayre Photograph Collection, print S-N-130, UW Libraries, Special Collections.

Carl Switzer, J. Willis Sayre Photography Collection, print S-S-893, UW Libraries, Special Collections.

Scene from *Rip Van Winkle*, photograph by Pach, J. Willis Sayre Photograph Collection, print SU-F-120, UW Libraries, Special Collections.

# About TLA

## Executive Board, Mission, and Membership

### EXECUTIVE BOARD

#### Officers

Nancy Friedland (President, 2013-2014)  
nef4@columbia.edu  
Angela Weaver (Vice President, 2013-2014)  
aw6@u.washington.edu  
Laurie Murphy (Executive Secretary, 2013)  
laurie.murphy@nyu.edu  
Colleen Reilly (Treasurer, 2013-2015)  
colleen.reilly@sru.edu  
Kenneth Schlesinger (Past President)  
Kenneth.Schlesinger@lehman.cuny.edu

#### Board Members

Diana Bertolini (2013-2015) dianabertolini@nypl.org  
Susan Brady (2011-2013) susan.brady@yale.edu  
John Calhoun (2011-2013) johncalhoun@nypl.org  
Charlotte Cabbage (2011-2013)  
c-cabbage@northwestern.edu  
Leahkim Gannett (2013-2015) leahkim@library.ucsb.edu  
Beth Kattelman (2013-2015) kattelman.l@osu.edu  
Diana King (2012-2014) diking@library.ucla.edu  
Francesca Marini (2012-2014)  
fmarini@stratfordfestival.com  
Karen Nickeson (2011-2013) karennickeson@nypl.org  
Tiffany Nixon (2012-2014)  
tiffanyn@roundabouttheatre.org  
Doug Reside (2012-2014) dougreside@nypl.org  
Morgen Stevens-Garmon (2013-2015)  
mgarmon@mcny.org

#### Ex-Officio

Georgia Harper (Legal Counsel)  
gharper@austin.utexas.edu  
David Nochimson (Webmaster) davidnoc@softhome.net  
John Wagstaff (TLA listserv) wagstaff@illinois.edu  
Marian Seldes (Honorary Member)  
Louis Rachow (Honorary Member/TLA Historian)

Theatre Library Association  
c/o The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts  
40 Lincoln Center Plaza  
New York, New York 10023

**TLA website:** <http://www.tla-online.org/>

**TLA on Facebook:** <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Theatre-Library-Association/326948200637>

### MISSION STATEMENT

Founded in 1937, the Theatre Library Association supports librarians and archivists affiliated with theatre, dance, performance studies, popular entertainment, motion picture and broadcasting collections. TLA promotes professional best practices in acquisition, organization, access and preservation of performing arts resources in libraries, archives, museums, private collections, and the digital environment. By producing publications, conferences, panels, and public events, TLA fosters creative and ethical use of performing arts materials to enhance research, live performance, and scholarly communication.



## JOIN US!

### Membership

(Annual dues: \$30 personal, \$40 institutional; \$20 student/non-salaried members. In order to defray the rising costs of international postage, members with non-U.S. mailing addresses are now required to pay a \$10 surcharge.) Includes *Performing Arts Resources*, published occasionally. Dues can now be paid online using PayPal.

For availability and prices of past issues of *PAR* and *BROADSIDE*, contact [info@tla-online.org](mailto:info@tla-online.org)

**TLA listserv:** To Subscribe:

- 1) Send email (nothing in the subject) to: [LISTSERV@listserv.illinois.edu](mailto:LISTSERV@listserv.illinois.edu)
- 2) in the body of the email message type the following line:  
SUBSCRIBE TLA-L your name

# President's Report

## Update on TLA's Activities

(continued from page 1)

midtown. Let the weather gods be on our side! Many thanks to Kenneth Schlesinger for suggesting and helping to arrange this location and to the City University of New York (CUNY)!

### ASTR/TLA Conference

#### TLA Plenary

The ASTR Conference will take place November 7-10 in Dallas, Texas. This promises to be an exciting conference. In deference to our hosting city, we are building on the "Big D"—our plenary is titled *The Big D: Big Data and the Performing Arts*. The following papers have been accepted: *Engaging Big Data Bit by Bit: Mapping Touring Dance Companies in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, submitted by Harmony Bench, Ohio State University, and Nena Couch, Ohio State University, and *Analog Continuity, Digital Granularization and the Challenge of Using the Digital Medium to Study the Historical Record of Performance*, submitted by Kimon Keramidas, Bard Graduate Center and CUNY Graduate Center. Doug Reside, Plenary Chair, will introduce the session by discussing uses of big data in performing arts scholarship. The plenary is scheduled for Saturday morning at 9:00am.

#### ASTR Working Session – Unconference

Mary Isbell invited me to co-chair an ASTR Working Session in the format of an "unconference." Most often associated with THATCamp (The Humanities and Technology Camp), the unconference has no formal papers, rather it supports topical discussions based on the submitted proposals—the group decides what to discuss at the session. We received terrific proposals and look forward to engaging discussions. The ASTR conference co-chairs have been open and supportive in moving this forward. This session builds on the working session from November 2012 on "Digital Humanities and the Performing Arts" and our plenary on "Big Data and the Performing Arts." The session is scheduled for Friday evening at 6:15pm.

#### ASTR Career Session

Along with Sarah Bay-Cheng, SUNY Buffalo, and Debra Caplan, Baruch College, I will be taking part in a discussion on "Navigating New Technologies" at ASTR.

The session focuses on digital content and new opportunities for research and scholarship. We will attempt to frame questions on how a humanities scholar, with focus in the performing arts, begins work using new methods of digital scholarship, tools and applications. We will also discuss evaluating applications, softwares, how to identify support within your institution, training, digital storage issues and more. This session is scheduled for Saturday at 7:30am.

#### Tour of the Wyle Theatre and AT&T Performing Arts Center

Angela Weaver is coordinating a tour of the Dee and Charles Wyle Theatre at the AT&T Performing Arts Center located in the Arts District of downtown Dallas. The tour is scheduled for Friday, November 8, 2013 at 1:30pm.

#### Book Awards

The Book Awards Committee has been hard at work getting the Book Awards in place for works published this year. They have developed a sound process that will address the scope and volume of works that are reviewed as well as the process of receiving works from publishers in a timely manner. They are also considering the future of electronic books as a possible (inevitable) format for review.

We welcome new and returning jurors. The Freedley Award Jurors include new members James Fisher, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and Rachel Shteir, Theatre School at DePaul University, and returning juror Don B. Wilmeth, Asa Messer Professor Emeritus, Brown University. The Wall Award Jurors include new member David Pierce, Library of Congress, and returning jurors John Calhoun, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, and Stephen Tropiano, Ithaca

# President's Report

## Update on TLA's Activities

College. Thank you all for your dedication and contribution to this important process.

The Book Awards Committee is currently planning an event to follow our Business Meeting on October 18. As a result of the Board's strategic thinking session this past March, the Committee is focused on bringing timely topics such as changes in publishing, new modes of scholarship, research methods in archives up for discussion. Save the date—this promises to be an exciting event!

The Book Awards Committee will also be working on implementing a new award for Digital Scholarship which we hope to have in place next year.

I thank the Committee members, Tiffany Nixon, Co-Chair, Linda Miles, Co-Chair, and Diana Bertolini for their outstanding work in proposing change and having put this new program into place. We are thrilled to have the Book Awards back.

### Membership

Beth Kattelman, Chair of Membership Committee, reported on an updated document intended to attract new members. The document serves as a flyer or an email notice for prospective members. In April, the Committee sent the membership information to the ASTR listserv and the Music Library Association listserv.

The Committee is also looking at lapsed members—we want you back! If you have not yet renewed for 2013, please do now—it is not too late. We encourage our members to spread the word on how great TLA is—tell your friends and colleagues who are not yet members—joining is easy.

### Nominations Committee

The Nominations Committee chaired by Kenneth Schlesinger has enlisted a terrific roster of new candidates for Executive Committee for our upcoming October elections. Remember to get out the vote.

### Publications Committee

Congratulations again to John Calhoun, Michael Messina and all the contributors on the publication of PAR 29: *Documenting Scenic Design*. As most recent past editor, John will serve on the Publications Committee as an advisor. Stephen Kuehler is shepherding PAR 30: Symposium III, *Holding Up the Mirror: Authenticity and Adaptation in Shakespeare Today*, through the process and we look forward to this publication.

The next PAR volume in the documenting series, PAR 31: *Documenting Theatre Architecture*, now has two co-editors, Leahkim Gannett and Felicity Brown from the University of Maryland. They have already received responses from interested contributors and are aiming for a 2014 publication. This is an important addition to our documenting series.

### Website

The current conditions for our website are unsatisfactory. In May, the Board reviewed a report outlining issues related to website maintenance, platform, design and storage needs along with suggested solutions. In addition, as a result of the strategic thinking at the meeting on March 8, the Board enthusiastically endorsed exploring the use of multimedia and social media for our website and a rethinking of our newsletter, *Broadside*. Planning is underway to migrate *Broadside* to our website as a more up-to-date information source rather than its current publishing cycle of three times a year. Our Webmaster, David Nochimson, has agreed to chair the Ad Hoc Committee on Website Design. The committee is charged with bringing together a plan for a redesign and migration for later this year. I am pleased to announce that Lisbeth Wells-Pratt is our new Social Media Editor and is working closely with Angela Weaver on *Broadside*.

### ACRL Arts Section/ALA Affiliates Liaison Report

Diana King, Liaison to ACRL Arts, reported that even though TLA was not listed as a co-sponsor in the ALA schedule for the Arts Section program, TLA

# President's Report

## Update on TLA's Activities

was involved in the conference. Doug Reside took part in the ACRL Arts program entitled "Transformations in Performing Arts Librarianship." Diana has been working with Willie Glispie from the Office of ALA Governance who has become the new coordinator for the ALA Affiliates program. Diana attended the Affiliates lunch and we look forward to an update in October. Many thanks to Diana for her perseverance and continued efforts as liaison. Her work has enabled TLA to continue a presence at the ALA Conference.

### American Theatre Archive Project (ATAP)

The American Theatre Archive Project (ATAP) continues to develop regional teams of volunteer archivists, scholars, and dramaturgs to help preserve the archives of theater companies throughout America. Susan Brady reported on a host of activities. Colleen Reilly has been appointed to the ATAP Steering Committee. Colleen brings to the committee valuable experience working with the Pittsburgh ATAP team and her knowledge and experience as a theatre practitioner, historian, and archivist. Jessica Green led a successful Boston Team training session at the Boston Public Library on Saturday, May 4. The group of twelve attendees included archivists and Simmons library school students. An ATAP symposium and training event has been confirmed for September 6-7, 2013 in Austin, Texas in coordination with Austin ATAP Team's Andrew Carlson and UT's Charlotte Canning. The ZACH Theatre will host the symposium on September 6, and UT Department of Theatre & Dance will host the training on September 7. This is just a sampling of all of the wonderful work ATAP is doing. For continued information on the activities, the website is <http://americantheatrearchiveproject.org>.

### Secretary's Report

Laurie Murphy reported our membership for January-May 2013 at 126 personal members, 109 institutional members, and 13 students/non-salaried. She also reported on our lapsed members and coordinated efforts with the Membership Committee to contact these members encouraging them to renew. Renewal

reminders were sent out in early June. Laurie also reported on the budgetary impact of domestic and international shipping costs for individual PAR volumes. TLA has now implemented shipping fees for one-time purchases of PAR volumes –additional information is available from the TLA website.

### Treasurer's Report

Colleen Reilly reported our total balance at \$71,982.21. TLA incurred extra expenses for our Gala Anniversary Event showing a negative balance of \$587.91.

Colleen has agreed to serve as Chair for the Ad Hoc Committee on Finance. The committee will review spending and revenues and draft recommendations for the Board to review in October.

# News

Collections, Exhibits, Staff Transitions, etc.

## Stratford Festival, Canada

**All New for 2013 Four Shakespeare Masterpieces at the Stratford Festival: Present and Past Productions of *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Measure for Measure* and *The Merchant of Venice***



Detail of the costume worn by Nikki M. James in the 2008 production of *Romeo and Juliet*, directed by Des McAnuff; costume designer: Paul Tazewell.

The 2013 Festival Exhibition opened on May 27, 2013 and patrons are enjoying the new display. This exhibition is completely new in content and layout and is dedicated to the four Shakespearean plays on the Stratford Festival 2013 playbill: *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, and *Measure for Measure*. Come and visit us, and enjoy seeing up close wonderful costumes and props, design sketches, photos, rare videos and more! Have fun with our new interactive lighting design display, featuring the set model for the 2013 production of *Romeo and Juliet*. All of the items on display are part of the Stratford Festival Archives collection. The exhibition is accessible and family friendly, free for children under the age of 13. Tours are available at any time, no reservations required. On select Saturdays in the summer Festival, actors and artisans speak at the Exhibition Talks: [www.stratfordfestival.ca/conversations](http://www.stratfordfestival.ca/conversations).



Silver casket with puppet. *The Merchant of Venice*, 1989, Stratford Festival. Director: Michael Langham; designer: Desmond Heeley.

The Festival Exhibition, 104 Downie Street (Stratford, ON; across from the Avon Theatre). Open Wednesdays through Sundays, May 27 through October 20. Weekday and Saturday hours: 10:30am to 6:00pm; 10:30am to 2:00pm on Sundays. Different days or times may be available on request. The space is accessible and guided tours are available; [www.stratfordfestival.ca/exhibition](http://www.stratfordfestival.ca/exhibition).

**Dr. Francesca Marini**  
Stratford Festival

# News

Collections, Exhibits, Staff Transitions, etc.

## Oregon Shakespeare Festival Receives \$200,000 Grant from NEH to Support Digitization of Archival Collection

The Oregon Shakespeare Festival Archives is thrilled to announce that we have received a three-year grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) of \$200,000 for “Digitizing and Creating Access to the Audiovisual Collection in the Oregon Shakespeare Festival Archives.”

The grant will enable us to preserve and make public the work of OSF’s founders, artists, and innovators, which are documented in our extensive audiovisual collection. Funding will help ensure that 2,655 deteriorating reel-to-reel tapes, 8mm and 16mm films, and other aging and obsolete formats are preserved for future use and made widely available—either by visiting the Archives or through OSF’s website—for the first time.

The AV collection spans the entire 78-year history of the Festival, offering an unparalleled comprehensive record of Shakespearean and theatrical performance by a single U.S. theatre company. It contains full-length recordings of every Festival production since 1950, with the exception of just 29, including the entire Shakespearean canon three times over.

The production recordings are supplemented by recordings of 44 adaptations for radio broadcast, artist interviews (in more than 100 hours of oral histories), Shakespeare lectures by nationally and internationally renowned scholars and educators, production music, promotional recordings, and recordings of significant events in the company’s history.

We are particularly excited about the digitizing of our founder Angus Bowmer's home movies. These films include footage of our original company and Angus preparing his characterization of Shylock, a role for which he was well known.

The OSF Archives Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/osfarchives>) will provide updates as the project progresses. For a sampling of the types of materials we will be able to present online as a result of this grant, please check out our Youtube channel playlist utilizing already-digitized materials: <http://tinyurl.com/ao44jp5>.

For more information contact Gwyn Hervochon, Digital Project Archivist; Debra Griffith, Records and Reference Archivist; or Maria DeWeerd, Lead Archivist at 541-482-2111.



1953 radio broadcast recording of *The Taming of the Shrew*



# News

Collections, Exhibits, Staff Transitions, etc.

## Roundabout Theatre Company Archives Receives Grant from the New York State Archives

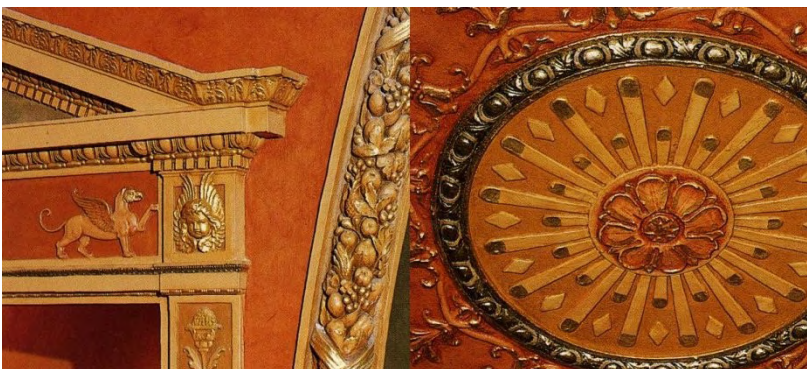


Artist restoring a mural

The Roundabout Theatre Company Archives received a generous grant from the New York State Archives, Documentary Heritage Program, to process and generate a finding aid for its collection of materials connected to the renovation of the historic Selwyn Theatre on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street. The collection consists of photographs, moving image, architectural plans, and construction aspects highlighting the theatre and its renovation; the collection also contains documentation of the Times Square revitalization efforts spearheaded by the City of New York in the 1980s, specifically aimed at rejuvenating 42<sup>nd</sup> Street and its lovely theatres, many of which were architectural treasures worthy of renovation and use.

By providing access to this unique collection, the Roundabout Theatre Company Archives offers scholars of theatre, urban planning, historic theatre architecture, and New York City an intimate look at the detailed process - which spanned a decade from initiation to final renovation - involved in assuming responsibility for the building, undertaking major renovation, and ultimately playing a part in the dramatic revitalization of Times Square.

The Selwyn Theatre Historic Renovation Collection will be available for research by appointment. Please contact the archivist at 212-719-9393 or visit us online at <http://archive.roundabouttheatre.org/index.php>.



Architectural details from the finished renovation

**Tiffany Nixon**  
Roundabout Theatre Company

# News

Collections, Exhibits, Staff Transitions, etc.



Doris Niles, stage dancer, 1920.

## Sayre Photograph Collection Available Online

The mammoth (24,000 plus) J. Willis Sayre photograph collection is now freely available online through the University of Washington Libraries digital collections. Funded by a 2012 National Historical Publications & Records Commission grant, the Special Collections and Digital Initiatives departments collaborated on a year-long digitization project. The result is a site where these images can be seen in all their glory, whether they are exquisitely hand-colored and artfully posed publicity shots or late 1800s theater productions captured through the new (at the time) technology of flash powder. The collection, assembled by Seattle theater critic and promoter James Willis Sayre, is especially rich in images of vaudeville circuit performers and captures both the public personae of performing arts personalities in publicity photographs and the mise-en-scène of touring productions of operettas, musicals and plays. View the collection at <http://content.lib.washington.edu/sayreweb/>

Elizabeth Russell  
Special Collections, University of Washington



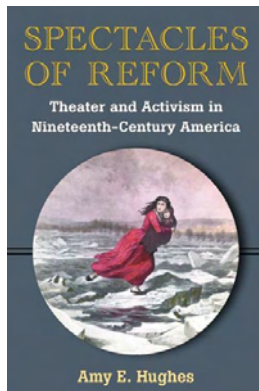
Carl Switzer, Juvenile Film Actor, 1937.



A scene from *Rip Van Winkle*, which opened Nov. 24, 1904, at the Grand Opera House, Seattle.

# Book and Media Reviews

## Reviews of Theatre and Film-Related Books and Multimedia



**Hughes, Amy E.**  
***Spectacles of Reform: Theater and Activism in Nineteenth-Century America***  
**Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2012**  
**248 pp.**  
**ISBN: 9780472118625**

*The all-too-frequent view of 19<sup>th</sup> century melodramas as little more than exaggerated actions, carried out by posturing cardboard characters spouting sentimental or romantic exclamations, is thoroughly debunked by Hughes...*

For those passionate about the American stage, it is heartening to witness a renewal of interest in its 19<sup>th</sup> century history, and even more pleasing when the quality of that scholarship is as original as in Amy E. Hughes' *Spectacles of Reform*, an impressive study of the ways in which "sensation scenes" and spectacle on the melodramatic stage served as more than mere amusement. In Hughes' convincing argument, such scenes framed issues leading to social reform in the areas of temperance, abolition of slavery, and women's suffrage.

Hughes persuasively posits that activist voices of 19<sup>th</sup> century America could be boldly heard in three melodramas of the age: W.H. Smith's *The Drunkard* (1844), featuring an alcoholic suffering delirium tremens; George L. Aiken's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852; adapted from Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel) in which a fugitive slave escapes bondage over a frozen river; and Augustin Daly's *Under the Gaslight* (1867), with its hero tied to railroad tracks as a speeding train rounds the bend. In the nick of time, the hero is rescued by the heroine, a twist on the clichéd image of a helpless woman tied to the tracks by a mustache-twirling villain.

Hughes effectively illuminates the complex social, political, economic, and popular culture climate in which these plays were created. She suggests that iconic images of the social ills depicted fired

reformist zeal and hastened changes in public opinions on the damaging impact of alcohol to the family and the community, on the profound evils of slavery, and on the oppression of women. The all-too-frequent view of 19<sup>th</sup> century melodramas as little more than exaggerated actions, carried out by posturing cardboard characters spouting sentimental or romantic exclamations, is thoroughly debunked by Hughes; instead, she positions these plays, which, admittedly, find little space on today's stages, as significant social landmarks through her admirable guide to deeper readings of their content. Hughes makes a plausible case for elevated places for these plays in the American dramatic canon, which, to put it mildly, is no small accomplishment.

Hughes' book is well illustrated and includes thorough notes and an extensive bibliography. It is an engaging read accessible to all comers, yet rigorous in its scholarship. Best of all, Hughes effectively relates "sensation" images to events and personages of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but also to the present day. For example, the rescue of the hero by the heroine in *Under the Gaslight* is compared with the true-life spectacle of the emergency landing of US Airways flight 1549 by its pilot (subsequently called a hero) in the Hudson River in 2009, and the rescue of handcuffed hero Jack (Leonardo DiCaprio) by axe-wielding heroine Rose (Kate Winslet) on the sinking ship in *Titanic* (1997). In this and other meaningful examples, Hughes demonstrates that the American penchant for spectacle and sensation scenes has not changed, either in reality or fiction, and that the awe and amusement provided, then or now, is also a means by which social values are examined and may change.

**James Fisher**  
**University of North Carolina at Greensboro**

# Book and Media Reviews

## Reviews of Theatre and Film-Related Books and Multimedia



**Thomson, David**  
***The Big Screen: The Story of the Movies***  
 New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2012  
 595 pp.  
 ISBN: 9780374191894

...The Big Screen is a very successful work that marries several perspectives on ways to consider a film as a cohesive whole.

In *The Big Screen: The Story of The Movies*, David Thomson tackles nothing less than the history of the moving image, from the nineteenth century experiments of Eadweard Muybridge to the latest innovations in video gaming. Thomson considers aesthetics, economics, and the effect of the technological medium on its contemporary audience. The result is a one of a kind hybrid of criticism, memoir of his life as a viewer, and box office analysis, all highlighted by Thomson's signature mini biographies.

The structure is ostensibly chronological, but somewhat vulnerable to stream-of-consciousness like leaps across decades. Thomson jumps from a biographical overview of D.W. Griffith to considering the effect of Los Angeles light on the O.J. Simpson white-Bronco, slow-motion car chase, to an examination of the career of Charlie Chaplin in the space of about ten pages. The theme is so strong and the transitions so smooth that, remarkably, Thomson makes this progression seem entirely natural, potentially creating a reader's reaction something along the lines of "why didn't I see this before?"

In order to fit a satisfying fraction of the totality of movie history into a mere six hundred pages, Thomson paints with a broad stroke and oversimplifies many of the finer points. "B" movies are represented by an over-detailed analysis of Robert Aldrich's *Kiss Me Deadly* (here Thomson tips the

scale towards the auteur, and writers get the short end of the stick as far as credit is concerned), and a précis of Roger Corman's career that focuses more on the generation of filmmakers he launched than the movies he produced.

Oddly, Thomson defines a film's profitability as the difference between a film's budget and the income generated on its first release. There is no source that consistently defines either of those figures with a generally accepted accuracy, making any judgment of Thomson on a film's profitability, or lack thereof, fundamentally questionable.

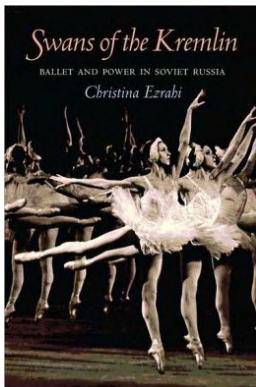
In spite of these failings (which are more attributable to the work's scope and ambition than the author's ability), *The Big Screen* is a very successful work that marries several perspectives on ways to consider a film as a cohesive whole. The section on *Last Tango in Paris* demonstrates this admirably. Thomson combines Pauline Kael's famous review comparing the film's opening to the opening of Stravinsky's *Sacre du Printemps* with stories about the film's shooting (the most intriguing of which involves Marlon Brando's abandonment of a scene where he would have had intercourse on camera with Maria Schneider but for his uncooperative penis), and mixes everything with an incisive critique of the film as it relates to the rest of Bertolucci's oeuvre. The result is an organic description of the film that is truly enlightening and unique.

Thomson presents a survey of the entire history of the moving image that is both broad in scope and personal in point of view. While this should not be the first book one reads while studying film, one's education in the field is incomplete without having read it.

**John Frank**  
 Los Angeles Public Library

# Book and Media Reviews

## Reviews of Theatre and Film-Related Books and Multimedia



**Ezrahi, Christina**  
***Swans of the Kremlin:***  
***Ballet and Power in***  
***Soviet Russia***  
**Pittsburgh,**  
**Pennsylvania: University**  
**of Pittsburgh Press, 2012.**  
**336 pp.**  
**ISBN: 9780822962144**

*Ezrahi writes that “the power of tradition arguably continued to be one of Russian ballet’s strongest acts of resistance to the Soviet system,” a unique thesis that privileges artistic agency.*

### **In the immediate aftermath of the Bolshevik**

Revolution, Russia’s imperial ballet companies found themselves contending with numerous unforeseen obstacles: a petrol shortage precluded heating the imperial theaters despite brutal winter weather, public transport stopped running well before final curtain time, and chronic malnourishment led to dancers literally snapping their legs onstage. As Christina Ezrahi writes in the first chapter of her fascinating look at Soviet-era ballet, the fact that the Mariinsky-Kirov and Bolshoi theaters remained open during this period of upheaval was “nothing short of a miracle.” Yet the years following stabilization saw further complications in the form of coercive governmental attempts at ideological control. This is the climate that backgrounds Ezrahi’s research in *Swans of the Kremlin*, which chronicles the political and artistic debates surrounding classical ballet from the October Revolution through the late 1960s.

Seen as the definitive art form of imperial aristocratic culture, ballet was heavily criticized under the new regime, as demonstrated by a pivotal 1936 editorial in the newspaper *Pravda*, “Baletnaia fal’sh (balletic falsity).” Government officials used anti-formalist propaganda as a way to “help the regime shape a new civilization.” Ezrahi documents the cultural debate through the use of both published and archival resources. Unfortunately, while that first chapter contains a healthy dose of dramatization, its momentum stalls in the following pages. This is mostly due to Ezrahi’s unnecessary reiteration of key

points, a tendency that often detracts from the potency of her observations. Her inclusion of detailed artist biographies, ballet synopses, and a lengthy index already supplement any statements that need further clarification.

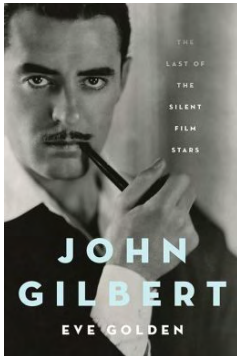
Ideally some of that space could have been devoted to a broader contextualization of the relationship between the major companies and their smaller local contemporaries. Ezrahi does state that topic is out of the scope for the book, but its inclusion would have helped position the ideological debate more clearly within a national framework. One could argue that for non-Russian readers, who seem to be this volume’s intended audience and certainly stand to benefit from its heavy use of Russian documents, this lack paints an incomplete picture of ways in which expressive culture reached the attention of the average Soviet citizen.

Still, the quality of original research that informs *Swans of the Kremlin* is impressive, most notably in the chapters devoted to Leonid Iakobson’s controversial realizations of Vladimir Mayakovsky’s satire *The Bedbug*, and his three divergent settings of Khachaturian’s *Spartacus*, presented in the 1950s and ‘60s. These sections demonstrate the persistence of choreographic innovation even under the watchful eye of the Soviet government and include a rich series of images from the Mariinsky Theatre’s archives. Ezrahi writes that “the power of tradition arguably continued to be one of Russian ballet’s strongest acts of resistance to the Soviet system,” a unique thesis that privileges artistic agency. This minutely researched work may be inappropriate for general readers, but it nevertheless represents a significant contribution to the history of dance in Soviet culture and should bring Ezrahi’s work to a new audience.

**Abigail Garnett**  
**Long Island University**

# Book and Media Reviews

## Reviews of Theatre and Film-Related Books and Multimedia



**Golden, Eve**  
***John Gilbert: The Last of the Silent Film Stars***  
**Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2012**  
**366 pp.**  
**ISBN: 9780813141626**

*The ultimate value of Golden's biography is in providing a balanced social and cultural view of the larger world within which Gilbert was navigating his 1929-1934 career.*

**Eve Golden has been illuminating the lives of stars** of times past since her 1991 publication of *Platinum Girl: The Life and Legends of Jean Harlow*. *John Gilbert: The Last of the Silent Film Stars* marks her eighth foray into an entertainer's life story. Gilbert's biography gains particular relevance through the proximity of its release to the 2011 Academy Award-winning film *The Artist* that was supposedly based on his career and life.

Golden's forte is separating hearsay and innuendo from the facts with balanced research. She focuses on the myth that Gilbert's voice was unsuitable for the cross-over to "talkies:" "It must be remembered that MGM released several really dreadful talkies in 1929 and '30, featuring their biggest stars," points out Golden. Most of the actors she mentions are unknown today, but Golden notes that "Joan Crawford's first sound feature was the abysmal *Untamed* (November 1929, costarring MGM newcomer Robert Montgomery)." (p.204)

In Chapter 10 Golden delineates the early process and challenges of making talking films: "The two chief problems with sound on disc were synchronization and amplification. If the film and the recording did not start at the same instant, and run at the same speed, the result was disastrous." (p. 183). The final product was beyond an actor's control, and Gilbert, who early on had live stage training and was lauded in silent films for his finesse, put it squarely, "No one

questioned my voice. I just had a voice, that's all, like anyone else's." (p. 192).

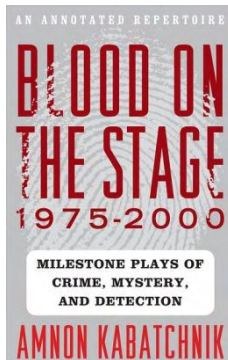
In reality Gilbert was a perfectionist who needed constant assurances his work was at the top of his game. These traits combined in unfortunate ways with more difficult aspects of his nature. Golden analyzes his mood swings and his addiction to the alcohol he used to even out low points with mercurial high interludes. She suggests he might have suffered from undiagnosed bipolar disease. His friends, co-workers, four ex-wives, and multiple other love interests described him as moody. Gilbert recognized he was difficult to live with, yet he charmed everyone. He was dapper, dashingly handsome throughout his life, maintaining a trim physique with tennis and swimming, and during his up-times, brilliant and witty.

The ultimate value of Golden's biography is in providing a balanced social and cultural view of the larger world within which Gilbert was navigating his 1929-1934 career. The journalists of that era shaped what the general public learned about a personality—making some larger-than-life, cutting some down to Lilliputian status. Early in his career Gilbert was in a league with Rudolph Valentino and Douglas Fairbanks. His co-stars included Mary Pickford, Lillian Gish, Norma Shearer, Hedda Hopper, Jean Harlowe, Greta Garbo, and Marlene Dietrich. Yet he suffered the same fate as Buster Keaton and Lon Chaney when, according to Golden, the moguls of the industry chose to blame the actors, rather than examining their script choices and filming techniques as causes for failed movies. Golden affords John Gilbert his rightful due through her well-researched reporting.

**Rita Kohn**  
**Freelance Author**

# Book and Media Reviews

## Reviews of Theatre and Film-Related Books and Multimedia



**Kabatchnik, Amnon** *Blood on the Stage 1975-2000: Milestone Plays of Crime, Mystery, and Detection*  
 Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2012  
 608 pp.  
 ISBN: 9780810883543

*Fortunately, while a clear definition of the genre is never proffered, the eighty entries included in the book more explicitly represent the themes of mystery, crime and detection.*

**Amnon Kabatchnik's *Blood on the Stage: 1975-2000*** is a reference book chronicling dramatic works that feature murder, intrigue, crime and deception. This work is the fourth in a series, with this particular volume focusing on English language plays produced in the last quarter of the 20th Century.

On stage, mysteries have somewhat fallen out of favor in recent years so this series offers a pleasant change of pace from the standard Broadway fare. A work that draws attention to the highlights of this genre would go a long way towards reinvigorating interest in it, and despite a somewhat flawed introduction, this book largely succeeds in that effort.

When attempting to establish a canon it is helpful to be as specific as possible in delineating the qualities that comprise a particular genre. Unfortunately, perhaps in an effort to legitimize the project, the introduction contains a long historical overview of mystery and suspense theatre, which results in a vague notion of what qualifies as a work in this style. Kabatchnik cites a variety of works as examples of the form; however, the author casts the net so wide that it appears that any play that tangentially deals with crime, suspense and intrigue would qualify. This results in clear standard bearers of the mystery genre (Agatha Christie's plays, Sherlock Holmes' mysteries, etc.) being lumped into the same group as plays that don't seem to deal much with the topic (*Tartuffe*, *The Merchant of Venice*).

This may be a minor quibble as any act of canon formation is, to a certain extent, arbitrary and subjective. Fortunately, while a clear definition of the genre is never proffered, the eighty entries included in the book more explicitly represent the themes of mystery, crime and detection. This is not to say there aren't any surprises included. While works such as *Buried Child* might not seem to fall readily within the genre, the author does an excellent job contextualizing the work in a way that not only shows its place within the volume but also may prompt the reader to view the production in a new light.

Beginning with Kander and Ebb's 1975 production of *Chicago* and ending with Moises Kaufman's *The Laramie Project* (2000), each entry includes a plot synopsis, highlights from the show's critical reception, creator bios, publisher information, a summary of awards and references. The synopses and reviews are especially strong features. The summaries are thorough without ever feeling tiresome. And while the author offers little personal commentary on the works, on the occasions that he does they are quite insightful (as with *Buried Child*). The critical reception overview is brief, but the author does an admirable job of representing a myriad of viewpoints and voices.

Due to the specificity of this title, it may not be a selection for libraries on a tight budget or with a small theatre collection but for libraries with a strong theatre collection, or onstage-or-off fans of the mystery and suspense genre, this volume is an excellent reference.

**Michael Saar**  
 Lamar University

# Upcoming Events

## TLA Events and Deadlines

### October 2013

**18**

TLA Board Meeting, General Business Meeting, and Book Awards  
New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

### November 2013

**7-10**

ASTR/TLA Conference  
Fairmont Dallas Hotel  
Dallas, TX

**8**

Tour of the Wyly Theatre and AT&T Performing Arts Center  
1:30pm

ASTR Working Session—Unconference  
6:15pm

**9**

ASTR Career Session: Navigating New Technologies  
7:30am

TLA Plenary: *The Big D: Big Data and the Performing Arts*  
9:00am

### BROADSIDE Deadlines

**November 29, 2013**

Fall 2013 issue