

# TDR



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**Theatre of Purgation and Cultivation**

*edited by* William Huizhu Sun

Shanghai Theatre Academy Consortium Issue

# TDR

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TDR is scholarly, accessible, and dynamic. TDR is inclusive and interdisciplinary. Each article is tightly focused—but taken as a whole TDR is global. With its broad range of topics, TDR is at the cutting edge of performance studies. Its writers and editors support progressive political and social movements, art and ideas. Written by and for scholars and artists—and their students—TDR is where leaders and future leaders in the field of performance studies go for performance texts, performative writing, editorials, reviews, interviews, and research articles about the performing arts, performance in everyday life, popular entertainments, sports, business, and politics—the broad spectrum of performance.

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*the journal of performance studies*

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*Above:* Theodore Kremer's *Bertha, The Sewing Machine Girl*, New York, 1906. See "Defying 'Death at the Wheel': The Unexpectedly Long Life and Far Reach of *Bertha, the Sewing Machine Girl*" by Heather S. Nathans. (Negative number: UW 41005, PH Coll 253.336a. Theater, Motion Picture and Entertainment photograph collection, University of Washington)

*Front Cover:* Dorje in *Ago*, performed by Jason Zhang at Theatre Above, Shanghai. See "An Illusion that Mirrors a Dream: The Storytelling of Stan Lai" by Chiayi Seetoo. (Photo by Wang Kai; courtesy of Theatre Above)

*Back Cover:* Qingwen of the Yingmei troupe, who is pregnant in this photo, waits to perform in *Liang dai yuan* (*The Fate of Two Generations*). See "Quangang Hokkien Opera: Development by the People" by Chen Shixiong and Dong Guochen. (Photo by Dong Guochen)

I HAVE DAYTIME. WE  
HAVE DAYTIME. I HAVE  
EXCESSIVE DAYTIME  
SLEEPINESS. I HAVE NO  
DAYTIME RUNNING LIGHTS.  
WHY DO I HAVE DAYTIME  
SLEEPINESS? WHY DO

I HAVE DAYTIME  
FATIGUE? DO I HAVE  
EXCESSIVE SLEEPINESS?  
... DAYTIME AND  
... NIGHTTIME ...



# TDR

## PROVOCATION

### DAYTIME . . . . . 2

*Mariana Valencia*

Early on in the pandemic, I was setting up a video meeting time with a friend and I responded with a blank “I have daytime.” Stunned by the bluntness and vagueness of such a statement, I then searched “I have daytime” on the internet and this poem was fed to me by the search. The search results echo my feelings about pandemic time. My handwritten words trace the presence of my body during this time.

Mariana Valencia is a performer and choreographer who works through the presence of the body and writing. She currently activates her work on any axis the world can lend, and looks forward to redefining the meaning of reunion once we can convene again. [www.marianavalencia.work](http://www.marianavalencia.work)

## ARTICLES

### **The Theatre of Purgation and the Theatre of Cultivation: A Comparative Study of Theatre and Culture from a Chinese Perspective . . . . . 8**

*William Huizhu Sun*

In China, theatre studies has been dominated by Western discourse on serious drama, mostly the theatre of purgation. It is equally important, however, to study popular Western theatre genres, such as musicals, comedies, and relatively uplifting plays, especially in terms of their similarities with Chinese opera—an epitome of theatre of cultivation.

### **Defying “Death at the Wheel”: The Unexpectedly Long Life and Far Reach of *Bertha, the Sewing Machine Girl* . . . . . 29**

*Heather S. Nathans*

Some obsessions stay with you for a reason. On its surface, *Bertha, the Sewing Machine Girl; or, Death at the Wheel*, a ludicrously named melodrama peopled with exaggerated heroines and villains, offers an example of the noncanonical, everyday fare that audiences consumed in playhouses throughout the 19th century. But the deeper I dug, the more questions I uncovered.

### **Joy and Love in Zora Neale Hurston and Dorothy Waring’s 1944 Black Feminist Musical *Polk County* . . . . . 45**

*Eric M. Glover*

What makes Zora Neale Hurston different as a musical theatre writer is her concern about the creation of safe spaces for black women actors. By looking at the theatrical representation of black women in Hurston and Dorothy Waring’s *Polk County*, it is possible to see ways in which they resist intersecting oppressions of gender and race. Hurston’s adaptation of the blues and folk music for the musical is also subject to analysis, as is her lasting impact on musical theatre.

**Quangang Hokkien Opera: Development by the People. . . . . 63**

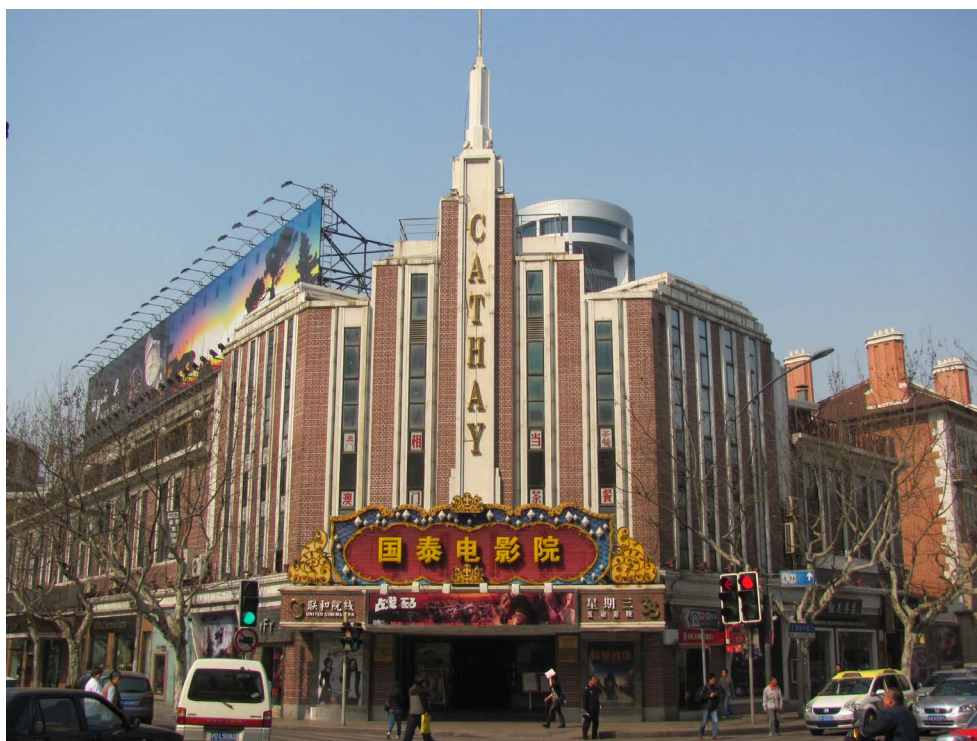
*Chen Shixiong and Dong Guochen*

More than 80% of Chinese opera performances today are presented by privately run professional folk troupes, mostly in rural areas—Chinese theatre’s best kept secret. These performances are rarely noticed by Chinese theatre scholars. There are more than 30 such troupes in Quangang District, Fujian province, which has a population of 300,000.

**Restaging Zhu Yingtai in Early Communist China: Shaoxing Opera, Color Film, and the “New Woman” . . . . . 77**

*Ho Chak Law*

In 1953, Shanghai Film Studio produced a Shaoxing opera film version of *The Butterfly Lovers* as the first color film of the People’s Republic of China. Noted for its immense popularity in the Sinophone sphere throughout the 1950s, the film actually exemplifies a history of Shaoxing opera that is connected to urbanization and nationalism as well as women’s liberation and the cultural politics of early communist China. It is an early example of how Chinese opera and modern media technology contribute to transnational negotiations and imaginations of Chinese identities.



*The Cathay Theatre (Shanghai, 2012) opened in 1932 as part of the rapid urbanization of Shanghai. See “Shanghai: The Road to a Modern Performing Arts City” by Huang Changyong. (Photo by Addis Wang, courtesy of Creative Commons)*

**Foreign Assembly: Toshiki Okada's *Time's Journey through a Room* in the US . . . . . 95**

*Carol Martin*

Okada is one of the most internationally produced contemporary Japanese playwrights. American directors approach his work both as uniquely Japanese and as a synecdoche for the world. The story of Okada's web of institutional, professional, and personal relationships is an object lesson in the foreign assembly of international works.

**An Illusion that Mirrors a Dream: The Storytelling of Stan Lai . . . . . 106**

*Chiayi Seetoo*

Director and playwright Stan Lai premiered his marathon play *Ago* in Shanghai at the end of 2019. Staged in his signature "lotus pond" theatre-in-the-surround, *Ago* is fueled by Lai's cross-cultural sensibilities and Buddhist philosophy. If theatre is an art of illusion-making and life is like a dream, Lai turns theatre-going into a ritual of self-encounter and self-reflection, where an illusion mirrors a dream.

**Drama Etudes: A Pedagogical Experiment in China . . . . . 131**

*Shen Liang*

Teaching theatre and drama in primary and secondary schools is a very difficult task worldwide. In China, there is a huge demand for drama teachers who also know practical theatre. Taking on this mission, the Shanghai Theatre Academy started a program of "drama etudes." This pedagogical experiment stimulated debate about opposing concepts in theatre education: imitation vs. improvisation.

**Shanghai: The Road to a Modern Performing Arts City . . . . . 150**

*Huang Changyong*

From the opening of treaty ports in 1843, the modern history of performing arts in Shanghai traces more than 170 years of development. This history not only summarizes the modern development of Chinese performing arts; it is also representative of the historical development of Chinese urban space and city culture. Theatre arts, culture, and urban development intertwine, as they are refracted through the rise and fall of theatre buildings, yielding a fascinating legacy of cosmopolitan Shanghai.

**CRITICAL ACTS**

***The Chinese Lady*: US History's Object Lesson Becomes US History's Interpreter . . . 167**

*Colleen Kim Daniher*

Magic Theatre's San Francisco production of Lloyd Suh's *The Chinese Lady* plays with theatrical time to stage a confrontation between the 19th-century American past and the Trump-era present.

**Catering to White Audiences: *Fairview* at Woolly Mammoth . . . . . 173**

*Paul J. Edwards*

Jackie Sibblies Drury's *Fairview* attempts to implicate white audience members in spectating Black life in order to make room for audiences of color to imagine a story built outside narratives of overcoming. Yet *Fairview* expects and operates under the assumption that there is a white audience to respond to the work, and leaves audience members of color exposed once more to the white gaze.



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