

Theatre and Materiality

An Introduction

PETRA DOTLAČILOVÁ AND MARTYNAS PETRIKAS

Since theatre is inevitably a material practice, the material turn, which is still underway in the humanities and social sciences, also made its mark on theatre and performance studies.¹ This approach was already explored in 2004 by Ric Knowles in his *Reading Material Theatre* and later in the 2012 special edition of *Theatre Journal* on Theatre and Material Culture, the 59th Volume of *The Drama Review*, and the 2017 anthology *New Media Dramaturgy*.² Since then, the issue of materiality has grown considerably in the field of theatre and performance studies, but the theoretical perspectives have also changed. Over the last decade at least, costume studies have assumed an increased presence in academia, producing exciting new approaches and findings in theory, history, and artistic research.³ The theories of new materialism, analysing the entanglements of the human and non-human, spread across humanities and social sciences at a considerable speed, as they are highly relevant in the age of Anthropocene.⁴

Therefore, it seemed urgent for Nordic and Baltic theatre scholars to reconsider the materiality of theatrical practice, the agency of things and bodies within performance, the relationships between technology, culture and nature, the human and non-human.

This issue contains six articles which address objects and bodies in performance, analysing the active role of their materiality not only in the immediate situation of the performance, but long after, when they are archived and become evidence for historical research. The latter is

1 See, e.g. Smart Martin & Garrison 1997; Miller 2005; Ingold 2013; etc.

2 Knowles 2004; *TDR/The Drama Review* 2015; Eckersall, Grehan & Scheer 2017.

3 Monks 2010; the foundation of the platform Critical Costume in 2013; the foundation of *Journal of Studies in Costume and Performance* in 2016; Barbieri 2017; Pantouvaki & McNeil 2020; etc.

4 Ahmed 2007; Barad 2007; Bennett 2010; Coole & Frost 2010; etc.

ISSN 2002-3898

© Petra Dotlačilová And Martynas Petrikas and Nordic Theatre Studies

Open access: <https://tidsskrift.dk/nts/index>

Published with support from Nordic Board for Periodicals in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NOP-HS)

DOI: 10.7146/nts.v35i2.149655

the topic of Joanna Weckmann's article, in which she investigated the rich costume collection of Theatre Museum in Finland and focused on how costumes represented the ethnicity of the so-called "Lapp character" in early twentieth-century Finnish theatre. Costume also became the main subject for Murat Türkmen as he analysed – through images, interviews, and videos – the symbolism and agency of the "charcoal suit" in Hanna Saarikoski's *Performance C*, performed in 2018 in Turku, Finland. British performance artist Rosa Postlewait shares the results of her practice research pursued at Aarhus University, in which she explores dramaturgy with other-than-human species on the basis of current theoretical developments within post-humanist thinking. More specifically, she reflects on her experiences of dramaturging with sourdough.

New materialist theory and a post-human approach also informed the remaining three articles of the thematic section. Finnish researcher Marja Silde focused on bodily perception in the performance of *Passage 468* (2019), combining Karen Barad's theory of agential realism with Petri Tervo's sensory field concept and applying them to performance analysis. Camilla Eeg-Tverbakk, dramaturg and professor at Oslo Metropolitan University, drew on the theories of Rosi Braidotti, Jane Bennett, Elaine Gan, and Anna Tsing to develop her concept of dramaturgy of assemblages. And finally, Danish researcher Pernille Welent Sørensen applied new materialist theory to her analysis of participant interactions within children's performances.

In addition to the thematic section, this issue also introduces the open section. Here, Swedish theatre scholar Hélène Ohlsson offered an insight into the fascinating life of Norwegian-Swedish actress Harriet Bosse, emancipating her from the role of Strindberg's muse, the story mainly told in traditional historiography.

REFERENCES

Ahmed, Sarah. 2007. *Queer Phenomenology – Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Barad, Karen. 2007. *Meeting The Universe Halfway – Quantum Physics And The Entanglement Of Matter And Meaning*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Barbieri, Donatella. 2017. *Costume in Performance: Materiality, Costume and the Body*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Bennett, Jane. 2010. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Coole, Diana and Samantha Frost (eds.). 2010. *New Materialism – Ontology, Agency, And Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

Critical Costume platform, <https://www.criticalcostume.com/> (12.4.2024).

Eckersall, Peter, Helena Grehan, and Edward Scheer (eds.). 2017. *New Media Dramaturgy*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ingold, Tim. 2013. *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture*. London: Routledge.

Journal of Studies in Costume and Performance. <https://www.intellectbooks.com/studies-in-costume-performance> (12.4.2024).

Introduction

Knowles, Ric. 2004. *Reading Material Theatre*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Miller, Daniel (ed.). 2005. *Materiality*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Monks, Aoife. 2010. *The Actor in Costume*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Pantouvaki, Sofia and Peter McNeil (eds.). 2020. *Performance Costumes: New Perspectives and Methods*. London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts.

Smart Martin, Ann and J. Ritchie Garrison (eds.). 1997. *American Material Culture: The Shape of the Field*. Winterthur, Del., Knoxville, Tenn.: Winterthur Museum.

TDR/The Drama Review. 2015. Vol. 59, No. 4 (Winter 2015).

Theatre Journal. 2012. Vol. 64, No. 3. Special Edition: Theatre and Material Culture (October 2012).