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## Editorial

**ANIKA MARSCHALL & IAIN HARVIE**

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## Editorial

ANIKA MARSCHALL & IAIN HARVIE

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### **Hope, radical inclusivity and artistic collaboration in times of political uncertainty**

In heightened times of political uncertainty about the future, this issue of the *Scottish Journal of Performance* invites the reader to hope. Hope is a slippery, messy, yet powerful affective narrative, which does not always directly point to the future, but yet compels us to move forward, to make creative forms of change, to act in solidarity and to transform our social imaginations. But hope is also inherently linked to hopelessness, as Mary Zournazi suggests in *Hope: new philosophies for change* (2002, p.15), hope as that ‘what sustains life in the face of despair’. During the editing of this issue, we were often to face the feeling that our political times might be catalyst to the loss of hope: a continued, unresolvable negotiation on Brexit at Westminster, consequent emotionally heated divisions across the country and continuous right-wing populist xenophobia against immigrant and refugee communities. The contributions curated here powerfully counter this feeling; their narratives, theatre practices, artistic methods and performances are indeed hopeful, generating a more joyful and crucially, *liveable* present.

Our contributors give hope, by reflecting and analysing on how to not only make political art, but how to make art politically—to paraphrase the renowned film poet Jean-Luc Godard. It is a pleasure to host our first editorial for the *Scottish Journal of Performance*, because this issue continues the journal’s young tradition to celebrate a diversity of voices and create space for a range of progressive methodological approaches to art making. In this issue, the authors reassess the political stakes of

performance and consider the potency of new encounters and collaborative forms for meaning-making. Our contributors' lived experiences and emancipatory art practices confront wider historical legacies and violence against marginalised communities, and they challenge dominant knowledge-power relations based on ableist, racist and citizen-ist practices of exclusion.

The feminist scholars Rebecca Coleman and Debra Ferreday write in the *Journal for Cultural Research* 14(4) (2010) that hope is 'central to marginal politics which speaks of desires for equality or simply for a better life'. This issue maps a wider cultural desire to express a new critical and creative togetherness in times of conflict, mapping new responsibilities in both artistic and scholarly workings for a progressive politics of equality. These responsibilities are not mapped through a linear, neat, concise creative product, but emerge when focussing on the often invisible, exhaustive, transformative ethics and messy forms of collaboration, rehearsal and devising process. The process of granting each other creative agency, of continuous learning and the social reality of labouring bodies takes centre stage in this issue. Making critical reflections public in a peer-reviewed academic forum like this journal, also means a radical act of sharing and carries the weight of activist engagement in the academy. At times, the discomfort with and negotiation of the ethics of research goes unpublished, but here, we aim to contribute to a futurity of practice-based-research which allows for the scholar's particular vulnerability as well as turning traumatic, marginalised lived experiences into creative forces.

Catherine King continues the journal's engagement with the progressive research and art practices coming out of the Royal Conservatoire Scotland and its educational programmes on Sign Language Interpreted Performances for diverse audiences. In *Weaving patterns in performance: dramaturgy and the art of performance interpreting*, King discusses the theatre industry's aim to make theatre accessible for Deaf audiences, and critically sheds light on her experience as performance interpreter.

She considers five guiding principles to take seriously and understand the interpreting work during performance rehearsals and on stage as dramaturgically-driven undertaking, which contributes to a richer, more diverse creative landscape for *all*, audiences, actors and directors.

‘Equal access to unjust systems is not liberation. Just because they give you a seat at the table, doesn't mean they want you to eat at the table’—poignantly, Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan made clear in her spoken-word performance at the University of Kent on 20th March 2019 that access or representation does not always already mean inclusive practice. In her deep self-reflexive analysis of devising workshops with marginalised immigrant communities, the artist researcher Catrin Evans wrestles with Western-centric, logo-centric epistemology and asks how an artistic workshop space might foster radical inclusivity. By engaging with the wider project of decolonisation, her analytic focus is on the collaborative participatory multi-art form project *Share My Table* which explored media representation of asylum seekers and refugees in Glasgow and beyond. Drawing on bell hooks and James Thompson, Evans argues that only through careful, embodied and affective attention on the ethics of collaboration, on the *doing*, art practice becomes a meaningful counter to dominant media narratives.

Helene Grøn's practitioner report opens wider discussions about belonging. Grøn carefully describes a series of playwriting workshops she undertook with refugee communities in both Glasgow, and in a detention centre near Copenhagen. She interweaves theoretical concepts of hospitality, a reflection on her embodied, ethical encounters with the communities. Through the communities' poetic responses to the contested question ‘where are you from?’, Grøn argues for the capacity of playwriting to make a diversity of voices affectively heard and thus, unsettle cultural norms of belonging.

Replacing the question of 'where are you from' with 'how far can you go' underlies the two performance reviews of Aby Watson's dance performance *-ish*. Lucy Hollingworth engages a careful and joyous review vocabulary by reflecting on her audience experience of *-ish*. Hollingworth's review draws attention to the performance's affectual residues and celebrates the creative inspiration and energy that comes with Watson's dyspraxic movement. We editors have juxtaposed her review with one by Timothy Cooper of the same performance *-ish*, giving critical insight into the generative nuances of contemporary dance. Cooper explores the paradigmatic postmodern question of performing self in performance and here in particular, the question of performing self as dyspraxic dancer. In his review, Cooper analyses how Watson represents her embodiment of a research persona on stage and the 'showing doing' of her fragile creative process behind the performance as vital part of the performance itself. Through their critical generosity Hollingworth and Cooper find liberatory and affective force in the dancer's perceived failures, imperfections and bodily exhaustion.

*Tide Times* is created by the theatre maker Laura Bissell and the electroacoustic composer Timothy Cooper. It presents a multi-disciplinary and site-responsive installation on Cramond Island on the East Coast of Scotland which ran during the summer months of 2018. In his review, Gregor Forbes elaborates on the island's rich geography, weather and the atmospheric soundscape which Bissell and Cooper explore in their installation through storytelling, walkabouts, poetry, sonic field recordings and displayed found objects.

James Slimings reviews Shona Mackay's *Creating Intimacy*, a one-to-one performance including video and a pre-recorded string quartet soundtrack. Slimings starts his review not at the beginning of the performance piece itself, but by looking closely into its institutional surroundings and the emotional status and habitus Slimings finds himself in before entering the performance. *Creating Intimacy* unfolds in a personal

setting which re-enacts Mackay's private living room. By offering space for intimate conversation with each audience member, as well as a curated peak into her personal composer diary, Mackay creates a profound personal connection with her audiences, that Slimings, as he recounts, is deeply affected by.

In *Twenty theatres to see before you die: a love letter to Britain's theatres*, Amber Massie-Blomfield portrays a personally selected range of theatre venues across Britain and the histories of the people behind the theatres, by drawing on architecture, historical context, contemporary performance and venue management. In his review, Ben Fletcher-Watson sheds particular light on Massie-Blomfield's analysis and portrayal of Edinburgh's Summerhall and the way the city becomes the real stage during the festival time each August—currently, being highly contested by local civic movements. Fletcher-Watson joins in with the author and invites readers to write their own love letters, to draw up and explore their personal map of favourite theatres.

This editorial and issue also present a love letter, dedicated to the critical thinkers, creative performers and theatre makers who make Scotland not only liveable but a hopeful, diverse and inclusive home in times of political uncertainty. Finally, the whole SJoP team would like thank Benjamin Redman for all his hard work, dedication and contributions to fostering cutting-edge research from emerging scholars and art practitioners, having been co-editor for the past three issues. We would also like to thank the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland for their continued support, the editorial team, advisory board, our peer reviewers, funders, and especially our authors.

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