

## Introduction

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The relationship between philosophy and theater could be and has been approached in many different ways. My own interest comes from the fact that while a philosophy professor I happen to have also become involved in theater in New York City. As a result, I have had occasion to reflect on the question of why a philosopher would be interested in theater. My contribution to this volume tries to address that question. As the editor, I invited others who had an interest in or experience of both theater and philosophy. Consequently, the contributions which make up this issue are not for the most part academic investigations of “the philosophy of theater” if there is such a thing, or aesthetics or any other clearly delimited sub-specialty in philosophy. Rather, they are the reflections of philosophically engaged persons who are also involved in or deeply interested in theater. They approach the issue from a number of perspectives.

William Desmond’s article as well as my own address the issue of philosophy and theater from a metaphysical perspective. We are of the opinion that the nature of reality is in some way revealed through philosophical reflection. We believe that theater does this as well, in important ways that complement philosophy. I use Wittgenstein’s distinction between saying and showing as a way of thinking about the differences and similarities between philosophy and theater and how both reveal something about the nature of reality and our place within it. Desmond’s approach is governed by his “metaxological philosophy,” i.e., his dialectical understanding of human being as a “being-between,” to reflect upon how the theater uniquely stages this aspect of the human reality.

The articles by Dan Friedman and Steve Waters address the political aspect of theater. Friedman is concerned with how a performance-based methodology might enable social change without devolving into ideology. Steve Waters, a playwright, reflects on trends in British and American theater which, successfully or unsuccessfully, have attempted to take on the crucial political issues of our time.

The articles by Craig Wright, Paul Woodruff, and Mitties DeChamplain consider three separate though related topics: human freedom, education, and finding meaning in the sacred space of theater. Wright, a playwright, explores the way in which the live performance of a play, with an already written script, reveals the limitations of human freedom. He illustrates how in his own plays, he tries to display the peculiar nature of our “freedom.” Woodruff looks at theater from the perspective of its newest competitor, digital communication. He takes up the very timely question of the value of technology in the task of education and questions whether the necessary “presence” can be found in digital communication. Mitties DeChamplain explores the theater as a sacred space in which the human need for transcendence is nourished.

What becomes apparent from the articles in this issue is that even starting from different angles and written in complete independence from one another, all are drawn to a number of the same themes: performance as a revealing, communion, communication and betweenness, sacred space and presence, the moral and political nature of theater, and the questions of freedom and education. Plato, Wittgenstein, and Marx make repeated appearances. What I think has been accomplished here is a beginning: a beginning of what can and ought to become a robust discussion of how theater and philosophy shed light on each other’s tasks even while they very much remain their own form of activity. And these are two activities that clearly define us as human beings.

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